

<b>Name of representative/organisation: Councillor Robin Milton, Farmer.</b>	<b>Answers provided to questions from the Committee:</b>
<p><b>1. How do you see the current state of agriculture in North Devon? What is its primary role and how do you think it contributes to the wider North Devon economy?</b></p>	<p>Precarious and under substantial pressure financially and environmentally. Primary role is food production although not exclusively with its contribution to the wider ND economy being difficult to quantify but substantively more the directly attributable to the food production element.</p> <p>It includes food, environmental delivery and management, tourism, landscape and cultural aspects as well as the local economic value -every £ spent in agriculture is multiplied many times in the rural and ND economy.</p>
<p><b>2. What are the challenges and how do you see they can be overcome?</b></p>	<p>Challenges include financial security of farm businesses, environmental impacts and mitigation requirements, government targets and changing schemes for the rural economy, lack of understanding of agricultural economy, demands of land use for development, green energy, environmental mitigation, food production, varying scheme targets, water impacts, environmental lobbying.</p> <p>Can only be addressed by more inclusive joined up thinking rather than the current disjointed approach often driven by single issues ( including environmental organisations looking for media presence):</p>

<p><b>3. What are the opportunities going forward for farming and what can farming contribute to the future of North Devon as a whole?</b></p>	<p>Opportunities are considerable. Food is a basic requirement of any civilisation and with the precarious state of world affairs currently this is increasingly important.</p> <p>A stable and well managed agriculture is vital to ensure the best use is made of the rural economy in conjunction with environmental and social demands whilst not offshoring our environmental responsibilities and impacts in pursuit of cheap food.</p> <p>Collaborative actions recognising the importance and value of agriculture especially as the principal land management activity must be actioned by farmers, environmentalists, policy makers to give multiple benefits and multiple income streams.</p> <p>It is agriculture that that stands to gain or lose most from poor policy and ND as a whole that will ultimately be the loser if better rural inclusivity is not developed.</p>
<p><b>4. What can North Devon Council do to support the situation with agriculture in North Devon?</b></p>	<p>I will leave this to other panellists to answer.</p>