



INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Farmer's Name: Andrew Clough

Age: late 50s

Location: Tappington Hall Farm, Denton, Canterbury

Size:

Type: Mixed (arable, sheep, forestry)

Interviewed by: Anca Maimasche

Date: 17 July 2015

Anca: Ok, it's working. Right. So first of all I'd like to know a bit about your farm, at the present moment what type of farm do you have?

Andrew: It's... mixed lowland farm, sheep, arable, forestry, tenanted and farm business tenancies.

A(nca): Farm business. Ok, you said arable as well?

Andrew: Yes. Yeah, sheep, arable, bit of forestry. Well this isn't much but yeah.

A: So do you own your land?

ANDREW: No, it's...this is tenanted. We work two farms, but this one is tenanted. We've got a farm at Barham, but it's easier just to do the one farm. We're.. we're running as separate businesses.

A: Right. So who works on the farm? How many workers do you have at the moment and, I don't know, a bit about them, are they family, relatives?

ANDREW: Right, ok, right. I've got one step-son who works for me full-time whose 30.. ish.. one, and one elderly man who still works full time who's 83.

A: Right.

ANDREW: He's worked for me since we started here 30 years ago.

A: Ok.



ANDREW: And he lives on the farm but he rents his house separately. And my wife helps at lambing time, but we don't have any other casual labor.

A: Right. So what do you personally do at the farm, what are your responsibilities?

ANDREW: Well, management and... everyday, I do everything, anything.

A: Could you, I don't know, maybe tell me what's a typical working day on the farm? For example, in this season...

ANDREW: It's very seasonal because it's mixed farming, lambing time is a completely different day to harvest time. But a typical day, we start work at 8 o'clock, say what we're doing for the day and delegate the jobs and then we get on with it. I mean, today I've been checking the sheep, which is what I do every day, unless I'm away then one of the others does it, and then we had one to sort out, it had a problem. I've got to go to the bank now at some point, pay some money in and this afternoon we'll be hay-making and we'll probably finish about half past four. So that's an average day, but at harvest time, the longer lambing time, it's a long day. So lambing time I start at 7 o'clock and finish at about 10 o'clock and then my daughter takes over, does 4 hours, and then my wife goes out at 2 o'clock in the morning, goes through till 8 o'clock. So it's a completely different day. That's what I like about the job is it changes from day to day. Depends on the weather. Yeah. You wake up and decide what you're going to do and then the weather changes and you do something different. But we're normally doing an 8 hour day...but it is 7 days a week.

A: 7 days a week.

ANDREW: But at the weekends it only might take 2 hours to do the work.

A: Ok. About your produce, what happens to them? Who do you sell to and how?

ANDREW: The lambs are all sold through Ashford market because there are no abattoirs in this corner of the country. We used to sell direct to the abattoir but they've all closed, so now they all go to market. The wool goes to Kent Wool Growers to be sorted and sold on, and the wheat we normally sell through a grain dealer - wheat and barley.

A: Have you ever worked with supermarkets or are you working at the moment?

ANDREW: We did when we could sell lamb direct to an abattoir, but we don't work with supermarkets now



A: Is it just because you're not working with an abattoir anymore, or are there any other reasons..

ANDREW: It's uhm.. *[phone rings]*. It's not for me, I'll record it won't be for me. People don't phone me on my landline. Uhm.. uhm.. it's.. it's the convenience. We can sell 60 lambs a week or we can sell 30 lambs a week and we can take them up to the market and they're done. Yeah.

A: So you.. you told me about the fact that the abattoirs in the area have.. that they're closed.

ANDREW: Yeah, but there are small abattoirs. There's still a small abattoir and we can do private kills there, but they can't kill commercially the numbers we're producing.

A: So how do you feel about that? What do you think that caused these changes?

ANDREW: Well it was because they needed to be bigger and they failed EU regulations. There was one in Canterbury - and we could just take them in, it was very convenient - that closed, then there was one up at Charring, that's just closed. So there are none in Kent I don't think now that can kill commercially.

A: Right.

ANDREW: So we have to put them on a lorry, pay for the haulage.

A: Right.

ANDREW: That's a bit of a..

A: So you mentioned, mentioned EU rules..

ANDREW: Well I, I think that they, the abattoirs found, found it difficult to upgrade..

A: Upgrade...

ANDREW: To...so that it was more economical to close.

A: Right.. so the bigger you are the better you can...

ANDREW: The big abattoirs killing hundreds of thousands can afford it, the smaller abattoirs couldn't.



A: So how much food would you say that stays local in Kent and how much it goes into the EU/global market? And... we're talking here about the lamb.

ANDREW: The lamb, maybe 5% stays locally, less than that. I don't know what happens to them when they're sold in the market, I don't know where they go.

A: Ok.

ANDREW: And yeah, we do sell a few to friends and family. We eat quite a lot ourselves.

A: So how about the arable?

ANDREW: The wheat and the barley often goes to ports to be exported. The last lot went down to Bristol to a mill.. some went up to.. but no, I.. I deal with Openfield normally, who sell globally, if they're filling a boat they'll take it and put it on a boat.

A: So I suppose, do you know where these products go?

ANDREW: Well I do at the time. They're going to a port - Tilbury - but you don't know where they're going from there..

A: From there...you don't...

ANDREW: No.

A: About the Russian embargo, did it affect you personally in any way?

ANDREW: It helped with food prices, with grain prices I think went up when didn't they. But at the moment grain prices are reduced because of the strength of the Pound against the Euro, 'cause it.. it's global market. So.. so I think generally almost farm prices are down: wheat, milk - locally produced milk -and it's because we can't export it, economically.

A: And why is that?

ANDREW: Because of the strength of the Pound against the Euro,

A: Right.

ANDREW: So it makes it less competitive.



A: About organics, what is your view on organics? Do you grow organic... are the lambs or any...

ANDREW: No, no, there isn't much of a premium on organic lamb, and it's quite difficult to do it. My views on organics is...if I had a choice I'd eat organic, but I don't think you can feed the world, organically.

A: Yeah. I came across this view...

ANDREW: I think Prince Charles, and High Grove, he can afford to be organic can't he? Cause it's what he believes in, you've got to have the principle and stick with it. My brother in law, dairy farmer, went organic, went through the.. and then...and then he wasn't getting a big enough premium for the milk, so he reverted to conventional farming.

A: A lot of hassle I suppose.

ANDREW: Yes.

A: Ok.

ANDREW: Sourcing the feed is difficult and things like that.

A: So there are farmers that produce organic. Do you think they thrive or what makes them...

ANDREW: I don't know anyone who is organic, so I couldn't comment on that.

A: Ok, right. Ok. Next I would like to talk about the history of your farm and a bit about your background in farming. Have you always been a farmer?

ANDREW: Pretty well, yes. Did do a bit of teaching, well after University I did VSO, so I got the degree and went and worked abroad for a while, before I came home, because I knew eventually I would come back to the family farm.

A: So did you study anything related to farming?

ANDREW: Studied agriculture. Yes.

A: Ok. So is this a family farm, you said that it's a family..

ANDREW: The owned farm is a family farm, which is a mile away from here, so I was actually born there and brought up there.



A: So where is that?

ANDREW: Barham.

A: Barham, ok. I actually live there.

ANDREW: Alright. I was actually born in the house of Barham, so I think I'm local.

A: Mhm. And for how many generations..

ANDREW: I was second generation. Father was first generation farming, he was more interested in the forestry initially, but then, got that to go with the farming.

A: So about your interest in farming where did it come from?

ANDREW: I think it cause it, you live on a farm and it's there the whole time, it's part of your life isn't it?

A: Yeah, you said that your father was more interested in forestry so when you.. when did you pick up the business when did you start to manage it and..?

ANDREW: He's still alive so, he's still alive but he's 93, and he's still involved in the farming. But I came home in about 1981, and then I was working on the farm and running the sheep business, and then in 1983 the tenancy of this farm became available, so we had enough space to do our own thing.

A: Ok. So now about the main ways in which your farm has changed during the past 50 years. For example, have you always been growing lamb and sheep and..

ANDREW: As I said, we took over in '83 and I knew about sheep and I knew about cereals, and we have more or less stayed with the same for 30 years...we are more involved in environmental schemes now.

A: Could you tell me a bit more about that? When...

ANDREW: It was about 11 years ago we went into country-side stewardship, because it's a marginal farm, it's not a productive farm, and... I was interested in the environment.

A: I suppose this one here...



ANDREW: Yes, I'll talk about this one, cause it's easier for me rather than talk about the two farms.

A: Ok, yeah.

ANDREW: Yeah. I was interested in it and...enjoyed doing it, and then when that came to an end after 10 years we just went - not automatically but - into a higher-level environmental scheme and we put more capital into fencing and establishing wild-flower meadows, which aren't very productive, but I enjoy them.

A: Are you doing this for financial reasons as well, for example..

ANDREW: Yes, because as I say the farm is marginal so we're doing it for what income we can get.

A: Yeah.. how about umm..

ANDREW: I think probably machinery's changed a bit over 30 years, we're probably using slightly bigger machines, but we do still rely on labor, which is unusual for a smaller farm here.

A: Mmm.. how about subsidies?

ANDREW: Subsidies...

A: Have you seen any changes in the Common Agricultural..

ANDREW: Well more of it has been diverted towards environmental schemes, the basic payment comp. goes down, and this is another reason why we've gone into the environmental schemes. It keeps it topped up. It would be very difficult to farm without the income we get from Europe.

A: So...

ANDREW: Makes up quite a large percentage of our income.

A: So I suppose given that the farm...you said that this farm is...

ANDREW: Marginal.

A: Marginal. Ok, yeah. So I suppose the fact that they're emphasizing a lot on environmental..



ANDREW: It does help us.

A: It helps you, yeah. Do you know about many, maybe the other farmers around you.. are they happy about..?

ANDREW: Well there are some who are going into environmental schemes and some who are going for production, but they have the investment in machinery and they have...larger farms tend to be.

A: Did the University of Kent have any impact on your farm?

ANDREW: I get more... not really no. How big an area are you covering for the survey then? How close to the University is...it's within..

A: It's just... the entire region of Kent.

ANDREW: Kent. Yeah. Because the actual University is spread out there, isn't it.

A: Right, so this is more of a personal question. What does farming mean to you and what does your farm mean to you?

ANDREW: I'm doing it for the way of life, not for the money. I enjoy it and as long as we can pay the rent and stay ahead, I'm not looking for a vast income. I do enjoy walking around the farm, and I've farmed this for 30 years and although I was born on the other farm and we owned it, I feel closer to this land cause I've had an impact on it...

A: And how do you see your farm developing in the future? Do you see it, I don't know, maybe extending?

ANDREW: Well, we gained another 90 acres last year, because the land owner bought more land, and it was offered to us. But I'm happy with the acreage that we've got really, I'm not looking to expand.

A: How about challenges, do you see any major challenges in the future?

ANDREW: Well, global warming affects the weather I'm sure it's going to affect farming. That's something that I would worry about, if I was younger, hopefully it won't have too large an impact on my life time.

A: Do you see any changes now? Do you see it...have you seen..

ANDREW: I'm sure it has changed in 30 years yes, weather patterns always change.



A: Are you affected personally by it, is your farm affected by global warming?

ANDREW: It seems that Augusts are wetter than they used to be, which makes harvest difficult. Sun always used to shine in August, it doesn't seem to now.

A: Right. I want to check that I've covered everything. Is there anything else that you'd like to add, something that maybe I haven't touched on, but you think it's important?

ANDREW: You don't mention succession. You know, we've got a family, but although one of them works for me, none of them are trained in agriculture so I'm not sure what will happen when I stop.

A: Right. So there...

ANDREW: I think succession in farming, you're always thinking about the next generation...

[phone rings followed by phone conversation].

A: So what do you think that this....you mentioned that they don't have..

ANDREW: Formal training.

A: Formal training.

ANDREW: ...and whether or not they actually want to go into it, I don't know.

A: Have you ever discussed with..

ANDREW: We don't really discuss it. No. It's...but they would say: "Oh when you die we'll take over" but...hopefully it's a while off, yeah. Cause they all live on the farm in mobile homes, all our children, 'cause they can't afford houses.

A: Can I ask how many...how many children?

ANDREW: Well, there are 3 between us. Yes and we've got 3 mobile homes.

A: Are they...

ANDREW: Although they all have an interest in some sort of the farming, whether or not they'd be able to take over...



A: So that's an issue that...

ANDREW: It will be a worry, yes.

A: Do you think it's just a problem in your case, or is it more generally...

ANDREW: I think generally, a lot of young people don't want to go into farming, they say it's not...and this is why farms do get...farms do get bigger. People do drop out and move on.

A: Do you think...I don't know...maybe technology could solve this problem, do you see that happening?

ANDREW: Well, I think smaller farms are becoming less viable, so it's inevitable that unless you specialize in something and do it very well, that small farms will fold, or unless you have an income outside farming.