INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Farmer's Name: Martin Twyman
Age: 75
Location: H W Twyman, Littlebourne
Size: 1200 acres
Type: Arable/Veg

Interviewed by: Louise Rasmussen
Date: 8 July 2015

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Louise: Well then maybe I'll start by asking you if you could tell me a bit about your farm? And the main ways in which you think it has changed over the past 50 years.

Martin: Right. It's a family farm that my father started back in 1935. With no education in farming but he wanted to get into farming. And he rented 30 acres of a council farm, so he rented it. And then the war came in 1940 and because he was a farmer he didn't have to go to war cause he was producing food, which was important. So he stayed here and he was in the home guard, and very much sort of supplied shops with vegetables around, which were things like potatoes, sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, all those sort of things, beans,… and then he had a market round, so he took a lorry round to shops in Canterbury. And then after the war, people were coming back from the war, he, his business was doing well because food was wanted, and there were very few machines, so that was really the start of machines coming in. And so we had a staff of, after the war, he would have had a staff of 2 or 3 and the family business grew and in 1946 he took this farm on, and then, he then took another farm over, which was next door two years later, and so the business was sort of growing from nothing, really. And then he was obviously increasing his productivity and staff as well. And people coming back from the war wanted jobs, and when I joined the farm, which was 1958, my brother was there 2 or 3 years before me, and so the business was growing and he and I were coming into the business so there was room, and then father then managed to buy this farm, having rented it, and it kept growing and things were going well – because food was wanted. And not any for shops, but what they call a wholesale business throughout sort of this area wanted all those commodities. He then put some fruit trees in, these out here, this is the third crop I think of apples out here, and in 1949 he started going in for apples, and, so that was a new business to him, he got help from friends, got advice. And, considering he had no background of agriculture or going into agriculture. And he was, he liked pigs as well, and he got up a very big pig herd,

outdoor pig herd, Saddlebacks, and ended up being one of the top three in the country with Saddlebacks. And we had, I came in, I think it was 58, and I didn't, I couldn't go to university cause I got no brains, cause I didn't have any O Levels, so I went away for a year to learn on somebody else's farm, and gain experience there, and then gradually came into the business. And in the 1960s I suppose, we joined, father had us into partnership, and it started growing, and we had 60 employees then. When, back in the sort of, I would have said late 60s. Because things like sprouts all had to be picked by hand, potatoes had to be picked up by hand, and machines, potato harvesters didn't really come in until sort of the 19, early 1970s, I think, probably. So we had a, things like, runner beans, have you heard of runner beans?

Louise: No.

Martin: Bean is, it's a long bean like that, you don't see many of them around now but they were very much… This was be grown in July and August…and September. And it was one of the staple diets in, beside you having your lettuce and that sort of thing, so that was a big thing. And sweetcorn as well, all picked by hand. So, … things started to really changed when they got into the mid 1970s I suppose really, when mechanization came in. And farms got bigger, they amalgamated, and up til about, I think 1980, you could say that the bandwagon, as I call it, of farming, was very much wanted, food was wanted, and there wasn't much imports going on, like there are today. You know, imports are all over the place now, and we're in a world commodity situation now, so if things are short they can come in very easily now across the water, where in those days really it was very difficult to actually come in to get…grain, especially. And so we were, sort of before then we were an island, and it was not easy to get food from other countries, and obviously the thought of having strawberries at Christmas like you can now, you can buy strawberries all the year round where today, sorry, that is today compared with many years ago, you know that was a luxury. And the strawberries were only in season during, you know, during summer. And now you can go and buy anything you want from your shop. And that's a shame really, because you've lost the, sort of what I call the fresh produce market of having it in season, which is old fashioned. Yourself, your sort of age group wouldn't perhaps appreciate that you can, you go into a shop and you've got so many things to choose from.

Louise: But I think you can still taste the difference when it is in season, say if you buy British strawberries when they are in season, they still taste much better, and they taste different…

Martin: You think so?

Louise: Yeah.

Martin: Good, that's nice to hear. Because now for instance, you, we're not in strawberries, but you can go and buy strawberries as you say, out of season, and even in season now, the next door farm that do grow strawberries, they have to compete in the middle of summer, their crop with foreign imports, which is a great shame. … But I'm digressing a little bit from our business. So the sort of commodities that we were very big in, in shall I say the 60s and 70s, were apples, pears, a few blackcurrants, potatoes we were big in, sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, beans, sweetcorn…what else in the big… I think there are, oh then of course there would be the cereals, which would be the barley, wheat, peas, … and so we're, now, what do we grow now, we've cut out sprouts, we've cut out cauliflower, we cut out cabbage. Why? Because growers have got bigger, and they're better at it. But the young fraternity like yourselves are not eating so much, so many potatoes now. You don't, sprouts for instance, which was very much a wanted product, isn't, the youngsters don't like sprouts. And those sort of things have disappeared purely because the younger people haven't wanted it. They go for rice, pasta and those sort of things, so you've got the differences of the, your, not in your taste but in your choice. And today, our main commodities that we're growing would be apples, blackcurrants for, blackcurrants all go to Ribena, have you heard of Ribena?

Louise: Yeah.

Martin: And then, there would be potatoes, still big in potatoes, and then there would be malting barley, milling wheat… micronized peas, beans for the export market for Egypt, and we don't grow rape, we've grown linseed up till last, up until last year, and that isn't an easy crop to grow. So those are our basically differences, and we've only got 6 employees rather than 60. So that's how things have changed. And out of those 6 that we've got. 4 are full-time and the other two are part-time. And then we would have up to about 40 picking apples, and that would be what I call casual people for about 6 to 8 weeks. So that's how we've changed on this farm. We've grown the business from my father of 30 acres to 1200 acres, but there are a lot of farmers even bigger than us. We think that we are big enough for what we do. My two children are partners, and I don't think that they will want to get any bigger than we are now, we've got enough to do. I'm over 45, so I should be retiring but I haven't done. Likewise with my brother and there's still plenty for us to do and we work basically full-time. Whereas other people retire at 55 we are still going on, and hopefully being useful and fit. So that's how we, how our business has changed. We've, as far as pigs are concerned, we've got no pigs, we came out of that in 1984, we were in beef cattle and we were in turkeys. And our two stockmen were, decided to retire, and so we left it to specialists and we decided not to keep them anymore. I had a lot of back trouble and hip trouble and I was the one that looked after stock, so I miss 'em. I still judge pigs, I took over from father with the pigs and the name so… something that I was very proud of. And the buildings we converted what we had on

the pigs, although a lot of them were outside and the cattle we converted those buildings to storage and that sort of thing. And so we've lost the livestock, which is a big change. Every farm back in probably up to 1960 had some sort of livestock; pigs, cattle, a few turkeys, chicken. And sheep has grown, and, but cattle and pigs have been very specialized and if you had a look in Kent to see how many pig herds there are, which would be very, very small. Very, very small. Quite a few cat…Dairy farms have gone down so much. So in, around here in Kent, you can say the change has been very little livestock now. You have to go quite a long way to see a pig, a cow. Lot of sheep around… And the other thing that's changed is hops, which is, was very big, up until sort of 1980. And gradually the hop farms have gone down because hops weren't, they cut their consumption in, and the hops that went into the beer business. And long hops were grown during war for dyeing clothes and that sort of thing. And that's sort of, you'll see so many oast houses around here, which would've dried hops, and now how many hop farms would be within the Canterbury area? 3, probably, very, very few, where every village had a hop oast. Quite extraordinary. Some had two. So that's been a very, very big change. Apples for instance, now apple trees, when I came into the business, you had cherry trees that were enormous; they were probably 30 foot high, cherries now, very few trees are bigger than the height of this room. Apples were big and they wanted ladders, now you've got the trees outside here, they all can be picked by hand, but the new type apple trees – I don't know whether you've seen them – they're like on fences now, and poles, not this type of poles, these are, you have wirework and even concrete posts that hold apple trees up in like a hedgerow system and they're growing taller now – believe it or not – so what's happening, how do we pick those? Now machine comes along that carries people up on a stage, so the top ones are all gonna be picked by pickers that are literally on this, what they call gantry. And so things are, you know, are still changing. Here, the, what we've got here, we've got just over a hundred acres of apples, and those are all picked by hand from beginning of September through till, … you could say…beginning of November. And the differences now of the varieties that, when I came into the business, have changed dramatically. The only thing, one that's really stayed is Cox, which is an old fashioned eating apple, which people like. You youngsters would probably like a harder one. Gala? You heard of Gala? Gala, Braeburn… So, we are now, sort of, we used to be 70% Cox, we're down to 30% Cox now, a third Gala, a third Braeburn and one or two other varieties. And the other varieties that have gone are, were old fashioned, and because now there are imports you can get from all over the world, where 1960, '70 an import of apples was very rare. So to start with your first few apples for the first month were what we call an early apple pollinator, which you don't grow now, and they used to be picked because you wanted, people wanted apples, and there were no foreigners around, no foreign apples at all. So that's a dramatic change from looking into a crystal ball and seeing how things have changed over the sort of number of years really. Ehm… So that's how things have changed…Grass, there's probably more grass now, so there's a lot of sheep. Cattle are kept to bigger producers. As far as apples are

concerned, going back to apples, there are probably around the Canterbury area one, two, three, four very big growers. To have, in the olden days, to have sort of 20, 30 acres of apples was the common thing, nowadays, the lot of the small farms are gone out of apples because it's been taken over by 'the specialist'. Say we have a hundred acres, well, you got two producers that have I think probably between 2 and 3000 acres now. So they got massive. And the other two…round Canterbury… You live in Canterbury, do you?

Louise: Yes.

Martin: You do. round Canterbury was surrounded by one or two families who grew so many apples of the old fashioned trees, the sort of large ones, they've all disappeared and the families have disappeared, they've…why they disappeared the families? Very old fashioned looking at the farming industry and didn't modernise and Canterbury grew with the surroundings and suddenly they disappeared but now the, some of those orchards have come back 20, 30 years later with these other 2 or 3 big growers who have bought farms off those and are building up the apple industry. So that's tremendous change really, and of course with having green houses that you don't see a green house very much now, so what do you see, you see plastic. As you probably…some people don't like plastic, but it's a way of life or you go down to Thanet. You've heard of Thanet Earth?

Louise: No.

Martin: You haven't, right. Thanet Earth is a name of a nursery, which has come from a group of farmers in Holland. And they've put up these enormous greenhouses, glass. And they are enormous, and they're growing tomatoes, cucumbers, and … peppers, and they took over a farm that grew a lot of cauliflower. And I don't know what acreage they've got down there, they've probably got 200 acres of glass, and it's enormous and very well run. So they supply… that's saved imports because you always used to get your tomatoes all the year round from other countries. And there are one or two big places in … just north of round the Faversham area, and then there are quite a few in Sussex, so green houses have come back in a different way over the last sort of 10 years. And then the plastic tunnels have come back producing your strawberries, raspberries and cherries. Really, strawberries is the biggest probably, raspberries, cherries is quite small but they can grow wonderful fruit there now, and you can get your strawberry now grown around here from the end of April right way through till the end of October. Where, before, in the field you had strawberries probably about no more than 6, 7 weeks. Again, that's a dramatic change. And it's a demand that, of food, those specialised things like strawberries and raspberries, that's wanted. And quite a lot of the research has come from abroad where they've grown, in warmer countries, and like apples as well, they changed their way of producing apples because of new

varieties that have been worked on by the top nursery people in finding what apple, what strawberries is right for the region that can compete with the rest of the world. So those are very big changes. It's not so interesting now, farming, because you've, before, you didn't have to worry about paperwork, which is a mammoth lot now. I mean, say, my time taken up in, I should be out a 100% on the farm, and I would think 50% of my time now is having to be in the office. And my daughter, who works 3 days a week, she's full-time on paperwork as well. And the, what we call the red tape has gone bonkers, absolutely bonkers. So much of it, stipulations, health and safety, it's gone too far. And it's very hard for people to understand, your workers…and we've said, you know, I'm sorry, you can't do that, well it's ridiculous, common sense, I know but, it's one of those things that now you have to comply with to produce the paperwork. So when a load of something goes away you have to, sort of before you, somebody came in for a load, took it away, just gave 'em a ticket for 20 whatever it is, and now you have to produce paperwork to say what it was sprayed with, the date it was picked, the date it was grown, what fertilizer. And those are the things that are very hard for an old fashioned person like myself to understand, which is a, very much of a shame. And farming has got so, not only mechanical, and that's understanding machines have been brilliant the way they've come in to do things now and most, say all of our potatoes are picked by machine, the combines have all got bigger,… you still have to pick your strawberries and raspberries, but they're talking about trying to find machines to do that sort of thing. Crazy. … The weather situation has got much milder. Where we used to have, back in the sort of 50s, 60s, very hard winters, 70s, but now, to have snow is rare. And you can get produce from all over the world to come in, so it doesn't matter so much really. So the weather has got much milder, so you have to adjust with the crops that you got as well, because of the seasons, really. Those are the things that I can think of that are the natural things, I'll probably think about other things that I've forgotten to tell you about, but you ask me some questions, I might have forgotten something.

Louise: I was wondering, you spoke about different varieties of apples for example, and that you used to only have Cox whereas now there are many different varieties. How have they been introduced over time?

Martin: They've been introduced really over time by the nursery men. I'm not very high up in this, but it's sort of the pollination of certain things and grafting of varieties when they get, for instance, the new varieties of Braeburn, they've been, they're interlinked with seeding and that sort of thing. That is done…same thing with potatoes that it is, just trying to think what the word is, it's a type of … GM, you know what GM is?

Louise: Yeah.

Martin: Yeah. It's a type of GM, it's the same as, as your wheat and your barley varieties keep changing to get yield, get different specifications, and that's all done in the breeding of this, you know you got your, the nursery men, the breeders, are, the … developing of those varieties is the … horticulture industry. We have to…have…every year we have to put so much away to the horticultural development to help them in their scientific work for growing and breeding different specifications. And that's how your apples have suddenly…20 years ago you couldn't grow Braeburn here because the climate, and they didn't have the right type of Braeburn. They could in New Zealand and South Africa and those sort of places. Pink Lady, you heard of Pink Lady?

Louise: Yeah.

Martin: Well, we can't grow Pink Lady but we will do within a, I'm sure some are being grown over here now, just a few on trial spots, plots. And they will, Pink Lady will come in within the next 10 years. Gala, we didn't grow Gala … and so you know, there are so many different ways that things have vastly improved. Obviously, you couldn't keep an English apple much past February before, now you can keep them right away through to June, because it's not only the variety, that are harder and better than the old fashioned varieties but also the stores, have been so more efficient in keeping them longer. Obviously, when, for instance, the apples, we had to, this is during the blooming period, they had to take leaf samples, you put them in a polythene bag, send them up to a laboratory, and they can tell you how the growth of that is, and then during the, about a month's time, they'll take the small apple away that might only be as big as that, and then dissect it and then they will tell you even though your 4 months off picking, that you'll be picking that within a week of what they say. That's how things are done now. Quite extraordinary. So, and so testing of things are done very, very regularly. And I'd say before we have, do you now the word agronomy or agronomist?

Louise: I'm not sure I understand it, I've heard it before.

Martin: You have, right. Adviser? A farming adviser. They're not farmers but they're advisers to the farming industry, so we would have an agronomist. Let's say his name is Richard, he came around yesterday, and he's been trained to look at bugs on plants and he gives advice to say: look, I think you ought to spray that in the next 7 days, and also to help that you don't want any other bugs to come in, so you prepare another spray as well to stop that coming in, to stop the aphid. Aphid, you know?

Louise: No.

Martin: Aphid is like a fly. In the summer you have a thing called a green fly. If you go on to a rosebush and, you haven't got roses in your garden?

Louise: No.

Martin: No. Roses, you go into the rose and you'll see these green fly around that obviously … other predators love eating, but they will smother a rosebush and so we get those on vegetables and everything else. And so the agronomist will come around, he will do testing of your soil to say that you've got in the next 12 months you haven't got enough of potassium, or calcium, or manganese, and potash of lime, he would do testing of that to say that you gotta get the best possibility of getting the best out of your crops. So agronomists would take that on, and we have to have them around, and then he advises us, we needn't do it, but he would advise us to sort of put those on and spray, and they're on here, this time a year, they'll be on here every two weeks looking at things.

Louise: When did this start to be introduced with agronomists?

Martin: Properly… about 30 years ago, but the last 15 years far more, far more.

Louise: And why do you think that has come in?

Martin: It's demands that we have to be seen to up front to be doing the correct thing, we have to be seen to try and get the best out of our soil, and if you only produce half a crop you won't be here next year, you're gotta be so much on the ball, if you're not then you won't get a return on your investment and capital, so you gotta be, you cannot afford now to be inefficient. You've gotta be efficient, and it's very hard for me, I suppose you could call me an old boy in a way, for my age, but I would be different to my son, and be different to my grandson, on how we think…but they have to learn and somewhere we meet in the middle, really. And we have old fashioned values, and they have new ideas and so that's, that is difficult. But we have to be up with it really. It's like machinery, you've got to be, you gotta be up front in going for the reasonably, the most modern equipment. But if you make a mistake and buy the wrong machine, which people do, they go out and spend a lot of money and then they suddenly find that within two years, it's not what they want. And suddenly a machine that they buy for, let's say a £100.000, that's a round figure, the second-hand value of that, deteriorates so quickly. Where the, when you go in and buy a car, and you buy a car for £20.000 as soon as it's driven out of the show room, it's worth about 18,000. And within 3 years it's down to 10. With the farming, a tractor holds it's value very well. If you buy a tractor for a 100,000, the 5 years where a car has lost, or within 3 years a car would lose half its value, a tractor wouldn't. But the bigger machinery, if it's not wanted, you paid a 100,000 for it, you might only get in 5 years, no more than 10,000 for it. So you gotta be very careful you buy the right machine. For instance, like, in the vegetable world, things like bruising potatoes, if you got a machine that's harvesting and it's bruising potatoes,

that's a disaster. Because suddenly your commodity isn't worth what it was, and you got your crop, which is a commodity that is vulnerable, and a perishable good, because if it's bruised, it will lack quality and will deteriorate. And you gotta sell it by a certain time. Likewise with apples, if you've got a gang of people picking apples, say 40 people picking apples, you have to have somebody out there, nowadays, which you didn't have to 30 years ago, for quality. And you, at the end of the day, you have a look at the, what's in the bin they've picked, and with an apple, if you go an pick an apple like that, and you close your fingers, you close your fingers round an apple, you find bruise marks. Did you know that? So you pick an apple with the palm of your hand and if you pick an apple with the bruise marks, that is thrown away. And you have to have a quality control person. I go round and look after 40 in the summer, and they're just literally walking and just discipline, and making sure that they're picking right. I have two people underneath me doing the same sort of thing, but I have to look after the whole thing, and say to Fred, just go and look at that sample there, that person is not picking correctly, just go and see what they're doing. And I'll come out there in a minute and just check. And then next morning, you have a look in that bin, and if you find all those marks are still there, you will say to that person 'I'm sorry, you can't work here', because that will be thrown away, a waste. And those sort of things have changed where in the olden days, bruises on apples didn't worry, bruises on potatoes didn't worry. But they do now. I think it's also that the varieties of those things have got so modern and, you were asking about the way that things have changed in producing certain varieties and that sort of thing, that is another thing that has happened, that the 'old fashioness' of certain varieties have disappeared. Hence you got more bruising, and more problems. But you've got better quality and you've got …better quality and quantity as well. So there are big, big changes that have happened really.

Louise: How about specialization and becoming bigger growers rather than before, why is that?

Martin: Land has been a big concept because…when you take…When I first bought a pint of beer, a pint of beer would have been…1 shilling, which will be 5 pence. Agricultural land in those days would have probably been a 100 pounds an acre. Now, agricultural land is give or take, let's say 10.000 pounds, it can be 5.000 pounds or it can be 12.000 pounds but say a figure of 10.000 pounds. So the supply and demand of land has changed and you gotta have land to produce, so a lot of the land is rented from big estates, big colleges, Cambridge University, those sort of thing, the Church are very big landowners around. And the small farmer, like ourselves, with my father being progressive, he bought very shrewdly, land here, land there. And we've done likewise, but you have to borrow money to actually do that. So although you say that we're very lucky to have 1000 acres, lot of that is borrowed money. If you've been lucky with the bigger farmers, specially the fruit farmers, what they've done, how they've built their business is that they bought

farms on the edge of a town or a village, and they managed to sell off that little piece there for building, for developing. And the amount of that bit of money has produced so they can then go and buy another farm with it. So they've got bigger. So…whereas back in the sort of 60s, a 100 acres was quite a big farm, we're 1200 acres and that's not big at all. But because we grow specialised things on it, it is a bit bigger. But…now for instance, a cereal farmer that grows basic combine or crops of let's say wheat, barley and rape and he would have one man for 1000 acres and himself. And he couldn't afford to have anybody else. And he has to go and rent that extra land if he can't afford to buy it. So you'll find that in the 60s there used to be let's say 10 farmers around this area and now there are 4 of us. So we've gradually bought up the little farm next door because they've retired or they died, and that land's come available. And that's how you've collected and grown your business. And there is a demand there that if a farm comes up next door to you, you have to think about trying to take it on. If not your next-door neighbour will. And if you miss out, you'll find that you're getting too small and you're not commercially viable in 10 years time. So you've gotta try and keep your business growing, really. So that's how things have grown as far as that's concerned. And where will it all end up? I don't like us to think about it, really. It's, I'm, you know, pleased with my youngsters that they've got good security, where, when we came into the business, father had done a great lot, but we were quite small and we've got a very secure business, not big, big headed, but we own quite a lot of the land. And for my children, next generation, they're very lucky to have – as long as they're sensible, and don't do anything wrong – they have got good security here for, to sort of carry the business on. If they want to, I'm lucky that both my children wanted to be in farming, and my brother's don't want to. So…that's the way that, of farmers' offspring, if you got three in a family, you probably only have one of those that will be interested in farming, and some might not even have one. So things have changed because it's hard work, it doesn't pay very well, but it's a way of life. A way of life is very important, really. That's something that I'm lucky that it's what I call good values, and you appreciate of hard work, and it's a love for the farming business really, and you gotta be prepared to spend 7 days a week, if necessary. Live, eat and breathe farming. Which I was brought up to, sort of hard work, and if you didn't want it, you got kicked out, and…but now, that's…the changes. …I think the cat's here somewhere…

(Goes over and opens the door, cat comes in, jumps into the sofa)

Martin: I thought I heard her scratching.

…

Martin: Yeah, so we're animal lovers as well, so yeah…

Louise: When you don't have cattle and sheep then you still have a cat and a dog.

Martin: Yes, exactly. Yes, most farms have a cat or a dog and, you know, we're very lucky really. Hmm…

Louise: I think with every farm I've been to so far they've had a dog, actually.

Martin: Have they really?

Louise: Yeah, yeah.

….

Martin: Anything else that…?

Louise: I was wondering, do you have time still, a bit…?

Martin: Yes, that's fine.

Louise: The…the creation of the EU, or the founding of the EU and all their policies over the years, how has that affected your work and your farm?

Martin: …I think it's right to be in the EU, number one, especially after the War. I think it's good security. It's…the, one of the hard things is that…politics plays quite a big way in…with the EU. And the thing that obviously worries a lot of people is immigrants coming from Africa, those sort of countries, which is frightening. As far as, … you found a friend! (laughing) (Cat jumped into the sofa again). ... Across the water as I call it, the sort of the EU there is fine, integration is good…and with Poland coming in. During the war, a lot of Polish and Czechoslovakian helped us out during the war, and they are now part of the EU, aren't they? ... And for instance in those sort of countries, a pound here, what's it worth back in their country and the pound they take from here, and they take it back to mother or whoever is worth 3 and a half times more. So that's why that we're getting more of the labour force coming from abroad, and they're prepared to…they work much harder, they're more reliable, and they haven't got work for themselves in their own country, and that's why they are coming here. The policies of … some of the policies that are in the EU are very hard to understand. I'd say, about 20 years ago there was the wine lake. Did you hear about that?

Louise: No.

Martin: Too much wine being grown. So all the input of finance from every country goes into a big pot, and some people put far more in that pot than they get out. And for instance Italy, Greece, and France, those sort of places, were getting far too much

compensation for growing vegetables and milk and all that sort of thing, overproducing, but hadn't got a market for it. And they were growing too much wine, and we were paying to have the…we were paying into the EU fund and holding up their industry. And…the cost on some of these places, they can produce things much cheaper than we can, because they're labour wage is much lower, their rules and regulations are much lower. We seem here to…be very correct in the way that we think and we act, and if we do something wrong, we're penalized, where the French farmer, for instance, couldn't care very much. And they're having to change their ways now, and rules and regulations are an important factor. But it is, we're an island, luckily, so we can stand on our own two feet. But…farms are getting bigger and bigger. And … we've gotta stay within the European policy, I think it is right. Although some of the things we don't particularly agree with. And we've got to go to the European Court and our government have got to stand up and say, you know, you've made all these rules, certain countries they've got to stick to their rules, and why should we agree with lot of those. I'd say Denmark probably, are they in the EU?

Louise: Yeah. You mentioned paperwork before, briefly, about half your day now is taken up by paperwork compared to before. Is that mainly because of the government or is that due to the EU as well and their regulations…

Martin: Yeah, it's both, both yeah. … There's more paperwork that's come through the EU, without any question. Far more. You'd probably say the EU is responsible for probably 50% of that, I'd say the next one would be supermarkets, and then the government after that. And health and safety. But the supermarkets have got such a control now. Supermarkets are bigger…sorry … are bigger than the government, the way they control things. The way they control our lives, they way of how they pay us, how they price us, how their restrictions, how their freelance policy of going and getting produce from other countries before us. … But 80% of the food comes through supermarkets, that we eat. And, we have to have them, we can't farm without them. Because where would our produce go? So paperwork very much is … is governed and we think probably 50% of that is completely unnecessary, of the paperwork that we're asked. It seems to get worse and worse. And the audits we have... and the word commonsense, which I use an awful lot, when talking to businesses and other things that I'm involved with. If I'm, had to be chairing a meeting or sort of that, I very much old fashionly use the word common sense, because you have to have common sense about getting a balance right. And as soon as you hear somebody say well, you gotta do this, you gotta do that, my view is let's tear that up and say, right, now why – number one – and the other thing is, how much of that is unnecessary, and common sense should surely say that well people won't do that, but oh yes, they might. And that's where I think that there's a big red line there, really is. So paperwork, yeah, is a… a thorn in our side a bit, hmm…

Louise: Could you just say a bit more about supermarkets maybe, how they've influenced your work as well…

Martin: Yes. We can't do without them, we have to have them. For instance, if I tell you that this time last year, the prices we were getting for most of our commodities, which was good - we weren't making a fortune but it was good – compared with what we're getting today, I think there are very few products that we're producing at the moment that are making anywhere near like a profit, a lot of them are making losses. Why? That is because the world market has suddenly a bit of a surplus rather than a deficit. And the other thing is that certain commodities, luckily this country's come out of inflation over the last few years, luckily, because the government have been very strong, and they've recovered the country very well. But the supermarkets and the banks have got into financial trouble because they've been too greedy. Too big, too greedy, and they've suddenly said, we've gotta cut the costs. And we're gonna cut the costs … to the one that they buy from straight away. And they will turn around and say that…right, if we say we want 10 pence a pound for something and they say no we're gonna give you 5, and we said, no we want 10, then we get down to 6, they said no 5, and there's nought we can do about it and they will say right, we'll go to somebody else that will. So that's how they're so big now and so powerful. … And they've come unstuck with being too big, and like, you know rather like the banks have been too greedy … and we can't do without the supermarkets unfortunately. And now the Aldi and Lidl, and there's one other, who are the low cost ones, have improved their supply, they've been buying from the same people, you can literally, I haven't got proof of this but I know, of a conveyor belt that's going along, and you got a potato or a something, an apple or something like that, you've got your Waitrose, Sainsbury's, Tesco, 2, 3, others and then you got the Aldi and that sort of thing. And on the conveyor belt, the conveyor belt is going along, and they're all coming out of that conveyor belt, and yet it's a different price. It might only be the price of 10% lower, but when it comes to on the shelf, it's probably 20%. So that's where the big change is, and the supermarkets have suddenly had to reduce their costs and, I said 10 years ago, how on earth can Tesco, especially Tesco, keep on buying a property of land and building another supermarket, I think Canterbury is, I don't know how many supermarkets it's got, 5 or 6, and if it had been 3, that'd have been quite sufficient. And you got your shops around anyway. And they just got too big, too many, so what's happening now is that Morrison's are having to sell off shops, Tesco having to sell off shops, cause they got too many. … Which is something that I said, say, a long time ago, but they were literally, they've… they were supplying us with a return on … if we plant … our potato, which we planted… say the last week, we are still getting paid for last year's crop. We're having to fork out and all the growing costs of this year's crop that's gone in, we've had to buy the fertilizer, rent the land, … get the seed potatoes, the agronomy and yet all the supermarket does, it buys, the next day, they pay us, not in 4 weeks time, it's now 8 weeks time. And the reason that they changed from 4 weeks to 8 weeks is because that money

there, has gone towards purchasing more land to put another supermarket on. In other words, we're creating their turnover. And so all they have to do is to buy it from us, get the money off you going into get your pound of potatoes or pound of apples or whatever it is, you pay them, and they return that. If I can tell you that potatoes now, we're getting 5 – old money as I call it, old money – 5 pence a pound for potatoes, and they're selling at 25. And all they have to do is to buy it, put it in their shop, and do all the necessary, and for that 18 months that that's cost us to produce that, and we're getting very little. So you can see how it hurts us, and our strong views of all the hard work we do. And the little hard work that…

Louise: Yeah that they do…

Martin: Yeah, exactly.

…

Louise: In general, how do you feel about these changes? Or what do you think about them, now that we've talked about the changes…

Martin: One has to accept them, a lot of them. It's sad when we have to say that it's not economic to grow a particular … commodity that we've been experienced to grow. But it all comes down to value or return of what our commodity's worth. And that's the saddest thing really that…old-fashioned values have disappeared, and we have to accept… we're in a world of change and we have to compete. And to compete we have to have a return on our money, and if we don't, we know that we shan't be here. The value of what my son and daughter would think, compared with what I think is different, and that's bound to be anyway, cause they've been brought up a different way…we were brought up in a hard life where discipline meant an awful lot, and if we stepped out of line, … we were punished. And nowadays it's freedom is…has changed so much. You can go and do things, and people wouldn't turn a blind eye. There's freedom to move because … when I was brought up, we didn't have a television. That pays a big…in one's life now of having a television, and watching it. Before you went to the cinema to see a television, you had a car, a car was, you know, now you jump in a car. You could always jump in a taxi, but to have the ownership of a car back in the 50s when I was brought up…was quite something. And now it's, you can go and hire a car, you couldn't in those days. You just…it's extraordinary change, it really is. But it's, it's obviously for the better. We haven't had to go through as horrendous times of war where First World War, Second World War, that our fathers, grand-fathers went through. I don't know whether people appreciate now, the youngsters of what our fathers, mothers, grand-fathers have…did for us. Because, had we lost the Second World War, your country as well as…you know, after ours, you know, you weren't really in the war as such. But if we hadn't had won that war, I wouldn't be here, I know that. And they would've just

overrun the place, and it would be a completely different world, really would. And the smaller countries around Europe would be decimated. It would be one big horrible area, you know. I dread to think of that. So, I think there's the, in the schools they should really, really make the youngsters realize how much that our parents did for us to keep us safe in where we are today. Whether you think I'm being a little bit romantic about…that sort of thing, but it, home life and that sort of thing is…something that, family life, that we wouldn't have, I know that. We have to thank, our forefathers to thank for the security really, and happiness of what we have today really. So that's it really. Hmm…