

Argyll & Bute Agricultural Forum

BRIEF FOR MARKET RESEARCH AND EVALUATION of CONSUMER FOCUSED MARKETING OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP – AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Requirements:

Argyll Agricultural Forum is working with a number of producers in Argyll¹ to develop marketing communications on a range of products with a view to better understanding how best to make the links for consumers between quality food and drink and the rich environment it is nurtured in.

It is important to understand from a consumer perspective what messaging resonates with them in relation to biodiversity and the environment. This research seeks to establish the messages that consumers identify with and respond to, in relation to the biodiversity credentials of particular products.

Our requirements therefore are in three parts:

1. Background context desk research - We need to explore consumer opinion in relation to the environment and their motivations and drivers to seek out various products with an environmental and/or biodiversity message. Where do environmental considerations fit amongst other food and drink purchase drivers? What aspects of 'environment' resonate with them most? What do people understand by environmental purchasing – the planet, the local area, the farm, avoiding waste and packaging etc? Where does biodiversity fit within this? How do they currently receive these messages and how could these be improved? This will help develop the marketing approach to be used for each product.
2. Consumer research - What do the customers of the producers involved feel are the motivators and drivers that makes them seek out the various producers particularly with respect to the environmental message?

These two requirements are represented by the 'Background desk research' and 'Consumer research' aspects shown in red in the overall project diagram below. As these aspects precede other work on the project, they require to be completed by Friday 26th November 2010.

3. Evaluation of effectiveness. - We need to understand how effective the biodiversity-based marketing of the products over a period mid-December 2010 to mid-March 2011 has been and any effect it has had on consumers and potential consumers and their interest in and desire for the products. Have their decisions on purchasing been affected by the biodiversity branding message?

This aspect is represented by the 'Evaluation' aspect shown in red in the diagram below.

Background to the whole project:

Broad aims:

To create information and advice for producers on the success of different approaches to marketing biodiversity and the environmental stewardship credentials of quality food and drink

¹ Listed in Annex 1

products. This will strengthen the reputation of Scottish Food and Drink among consumers and allow producers to highlight the real environmental strengths of their production systems.

Outline

This research will:

- Develop a number of marketing approaches connecting a premium food and drink product with stewardship of the environment and biodiversity benefits
- Analyse the extent to which consumers respond favourably to each approach and the extent to which this equates with sales success.

Rationale:

Market research completed by Argyll Food Producers has shown that their consumers value landscape/coastal scenery and the natural heritage when they think of the Argyll region. However this does not appear to be transferred into their decision making process when they make purchasing decisions.

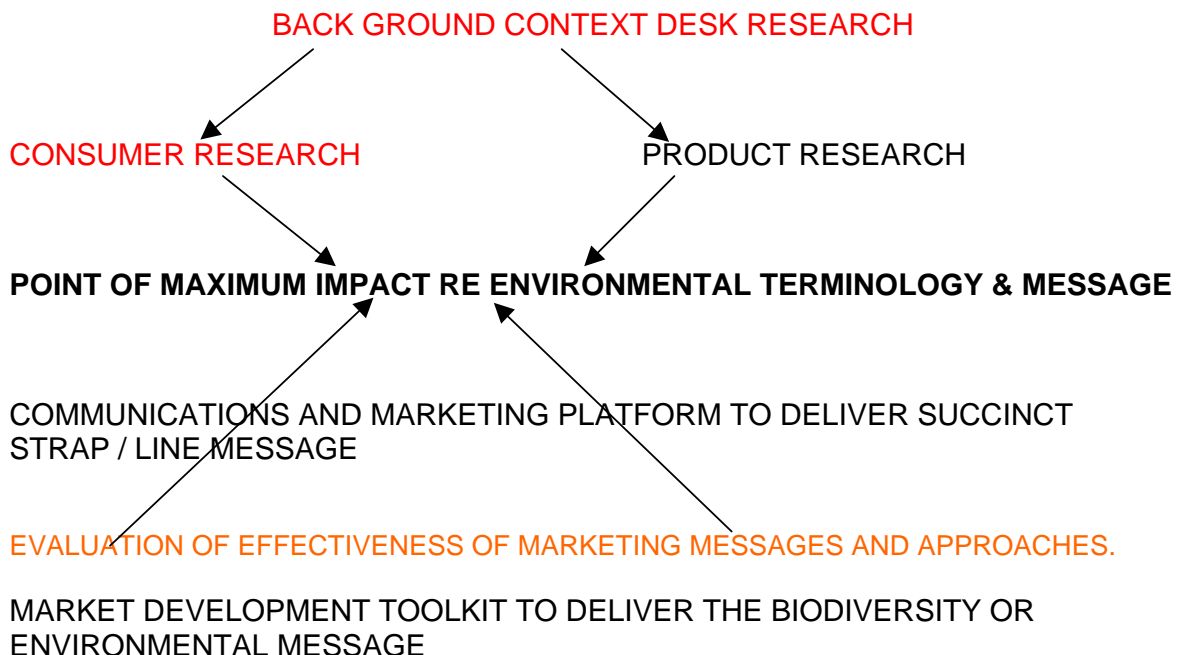
It has been suggested that messages about environmental stewardship and for example the biodiversity benefits of low-intensity grazing have tended to be science-based and have not caught the imagination of the consumer.

This research aims to test the messages about environmental stewardship that consumers are interested in and respond to when buying food and drink, in order to allow producers capitalise on the biodiversity benefits of production in certain systems and exploit regional strengths as niche marketing tools.

The research will combine simple biodiversity messages into the overall marketing package for a food product. i.e. biodiversity benefits should combine with other elements such as fair return to the producer, animal welfare and high quality.

Structure:

The diagram sets out how the overall research project will proceed. The work streams highlighted in red are those with which this brief is concerned.



Product research with participating producers will be carried out to ascertain product attributes and characteristics and what producers want to say about their products and more specifically about their environmental message. It will look at how they currently articulate these values and if and how biodiversity fits into their existing messages.

The information from stages 1 and 2 of this brief, will be joined with the producer research to ascertain how this all flows together and what the common themes are. This should allow for the distillation of a very simple clearly recognisable message about the environment and biodiversity.

Once these key messages are identified, they will be supported and reinforced by marketing effort (storyboards, leaflets, labels, artefacts, video, animations etc) from marketing companies taken on to develop a communications and marketing platform for the products.

Following on from evaluation of the effectiveness of the approaches used and the extent to which the message resonated with consumers, a toolkit of techniques and resources to effectively market a biodiversity message will be made available to food and drink producers.

Budget:

The maximum budget for this work is £12000 (including VAT)

Timescales:

Proposals must be received by 5pm on **Friday 22nd October 2010**. The contract will be let by Tuesday 26th October with an initial meeting with the successful contractor on Thursday 28th October. Work on phases 1 and 2 must be complete by Friday 26th November. A draft report on phase 3 must be received by 31st March 2011, with the final report received by Friday 29th April 2011.

Tendering:

Tenders are invited for this market research and evaluation work. Tenderers are requested to send electronic and hard copy to:

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ANNEX 1

Producers taking part in the study

Robins Herbs - an organic vegetable producer on Arran who grows really high quality salad and vegetables for restaurants. <http://www.taste-of-arran.co.uk/heroitem.asp?supplierid=8> At present marketing is through word of mouth and reputation. Robin has difficulties with salad leaf beetle that is hard to control without chemicals. It does not do too much damage but leaves wee holes in leaves which are then hard to market. Could we try and market these leaves that have holes - you can sell cheese with holes in it. Produce a leaflet that explains the philosophy of his growing for chefs and restaurants. This is then useful info for menus etc

Winston Churchill Venison - wild venison producer <http://www.winstonchurchillvenison.com> . He runs stalking holidays across Argyll and also adds value to the venison by selling all over west of Scotland which he processes in his own butchery. There is fairly obvious environmental benefit in reducing deer overgrazing on the hills and sensitive sites. How do we get this message across through producing added materials to support packaging on products to create a sense of environmental stewardship- for farmers markets and retail outlets.

Barbreck Farms - have their own farm shop with beef and lamb main products produced in their on farm butchery. <http://www.barbreckfarms.co.uk/> Looking at the landscape benefits of extensive grazing – open grazed grassland, ant hills etc. Doing this as part of the overall farm shop marketing package. Focus on the farm website to include landscape features that are influenced by extensive grazing. And perhaps target this into "eat the view" type of hampers into holiday cottages in the local area.

Argyll Hill Lamb Ltd - group of 14 hill sheep farmers supplying larger scale food service lamb product. <http://www.argyllagriculturalforum.com/projects.php> At present the main marketing is based around the quality, wild nature of the sheep and the shepherd and crook. This could be combined to produce a biodiversity benefit angle too whereby we are telling the story of each farmer and the benefits on his hill. This allows the brand to be built and for the wholesaler to give each outlet detail on the exact farm the produce is coming from. To capture the wildness of the mountain landscapes of Argyll and how extensive grazing at the right levels encourages a greater biodiversity. Marketing materials for going to trade shows etc can be developed around this messaging .

Cultural Identity of Meat on Islay

A group of 4 farmers on Islay who are looking to add value to their beef and lamb produce by creating an identity that tells the high nature value of farming on Islay but also links to the Gaelic heritage. Islay has some of the richest bird life in the world that is largely there due to the traditional livestock farming methods. Birds such as chough rely on cattle dunged habitat. Successful marketing from Islay in the form of whisky often follows the Cultural and environmental elements of the island. There Gaelic college on Islay are keen to work with the group to develop aspects the environmental/cultural identity. This identity would be used to explore the potential market for products with a cultural and natural heritage identity.