

Jersey Business helps Laurent Coenen of Potage Farm build and grow his farm diversification project

Farming, together with a love of the land is in Laurent Coenen's blood. As a child, he spent many happy hours working on the family dairy farm, milking cows and learning about the farming way of life on Jersey. He studied Agriculture & Land Management at Hartpury College in Gloucestershire knowing that farming was the career path he wanted to pursue.

In 2009, after his grandmother passed away, Laurent's mother purchased some land for Laurent that would allow him to start his own farming business. He took the decision to focus on selling eggs and start his venture called Potage Farm with just one free-range hen house. His brand has gone from strength to strength and he's never looked back.

In five years, he has built Potage Farm into a recognisable Jersey egg brand and now has over 3000 hens. His hen houses are solar powered, giving his brand an interesting renewable energy angle and Laurent has added a flock of sheep to his farm which allows him to offer home-grown lamb boxes which are sold directly to consumers.

Ambitious plans for growth that will continue the farming tradition in Jersey

Laurent is planning to extend his business by diversifying into 'agritourism', which is the point at which agriculture and tourism intersect to offer visitors a unique holiday experience.

Laurent explains: "Our goal is to live on the farm and provide accommodation to visitors who are interested in a holiday on a working farm. Our vision is to have B&B accommodation and some holiday cottages. We would also like to breed our own pigs so we can offer guests a fantastic Jersey farm breakfast from food that has been reared and produced on the premises. We envisage making Jersey food an essential part of the experience by introducing people to the amazing quality of local produce on offer across the island. Part of that would be creating a commercial kitchen where we could offer cooking courses to visitors as well as creating food products that we can sell as part of our Potage Farm range.

Our target audiences are people who are looking for a different experience from the 'bucket & spade' style beach holiday. Our approach will provide tourists with a great experience, but more importantly, it will help keep our farming traditions thriving for future generations."

Jersey Business is helping with the planning and approvals process

Jersey Business acted as a sounding board for Laurent and his ideas for expansion. He explains: "Our plans are both ambitious and exciting, but we knew we needed some assistance to turn them into a reality. We worked with Nick Steel at Jersey Business, who was very supportive of our vision. He helped us put a detailed business plan together. This included meeting with an accountant to get advice on cash flow forecasts, and presenting all our financial information in a format that would give us the best chance of being approved.

There were several government departments and people who needed to be involved in the process including the Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture, those involved in agriculture and tourism, plus organisations such as the Jersey Farmer's Union, the Jersey Hospitality Association and other statutory bodies. It was a tall order but Nick and his team spent a lot of time having conversations with the right the right people on our behalf to ensure our proposal would be heard.

Nick is a great person to work with. He's commercially savvy and is passionate about helping businesses in Jersey succeed. There's no pussyfooting around; he tells it like it is, and takes action, even if it means banging people's heads together to get them talking. Thanks to Nick we were able to submit our business plan and proposal feeling confident that it was in the appropriate tone and language, that our numbers were right, and that we had the support and from the right government departments and statutory bodies.

Our proposal has been approved and Nick has been with us every step of the way to help us deal

with any issues arising from the proposal as soon as they cropped up.

"Thanks to Jersey Business we were able to approach this in the right way. They are an excellent resource for anyone starting a business or wishing to grow and diversify an existing business. They combine commercial experience with knowledge on how to open doors and push things through the bureaucratic system that can sometimes be a barrier."

"In essence, Nick has been our champion. He raises our spirits and we leave every meeting with him feeling inspired. We're grateful for all the help and support he has given us."

Relevant Links

- Potage Farm