



One of the CALU horticultural exhibits at the Royal Welsh Show demonstrated the growing system adopted for the production of quality, fresh organic culinary herbs for the retail market. This exhibit presented the initial outcomes of a CALU project being conducted by the Welsh College of Horticulture.

Any successful production system must be demand led and to address the needs of the retail sector continuity

of supply throughout the year is essential.

The market demand for herbs, both culinary (fresh and/or dried) and medicinal (grown for essential oils) has increased dramatically over the last 5 years. In the U.K. in 2003 the value of the herb crop was estimated at £4 million and 99% of this supply was believed to be imported. Given this information, the opportunity to replace some of these imports with home grown herbs provides an opportunity to develop a vibrant market for a quality Welsh product.

In the initial stages of this project, factors influencing the choice of herbs to grow and market included:

- Appeal to local market
- Impact of growing conditions on cost effective production
- Cost : retail price rates
- Area and environment required to produce herb crop
- Length of the production cycle.

Three leading national retail outlets were surveyed and the range of herbs offered was compared to identify the initial production system. The information gathered was used to identify which herbs were most in demand and how were they offered through the retail outlets (cut, dried or potted herbs).



Market intelligence clearly identified potted fresh herbs as the market leader hence the project initially focused on the production of fresh organic potted herbs. The following were considered as the major herbs required by the retail sector.

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| Basil | Parsley |
| Chives | Rosemary |
| Coriander | Thyme |
| Dill | Welsh Onions |
| Spearmint | Peppermint |

Production systems for individual herbs have been evaluated and production programmes will be initiated to meet retail outlet demand from September 2006.

Further market research will be undertaken to evaluate:

1. the demand and use of field grown edible and medicinal herbs.
2. the need to develop and supply new markets for herbs e.g. catering use of fresh products
3. opportunities to add value to the primary product – herbs.

Market Development

To assist in supporting the development of herb products and marketing in Wales, CALU and the Welsh College of Horticulture are collating expressions of interest from producers from across Wales who would be interested in working with the College to establish a marketing co-operative, offering herbs grown using approved production techniques. The establishment of a pan-Wales Organic Herb Production and Marketing Co-operative, will be introduced through the support of an Interreg Project promoting co-operation and collaboration between herb growers to identify markets which the products can supply. Through co-operation this initiative will provide the opportunity to control the market and supply a quality product throughout the year.

For further information about the project and to participate in a Herb Production and Marketing Group please contact CALU