



Bedfordshire Growers celebrates 50th anniversary

2013 is a key anniversary for Bedfordshire Growers, as it marks a half century since the establishment of this major distributor of vegetable, potato and field lettuce crops to multiple retailers, food processors, caterers and wholesalers.

50 years ago, Bedfordshire was an important market garden area, supplying a diverse range of vegetable crops to the wholesale markets throughout the country as well as to local wholesale and retail trades. Most of the villages in the area had several vegetable growers, many of whom sold their products from stands at the side of the road near their farms. The range of crops encompassed everything from onions through to marrows, not forgetting the much derided Brussels sprout for which Bedfordshire was famous.



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In 1963, a group of local Bedfordshire farmers decided to form their own company to co-ordinate the production and marketing of their horticultural crops, and Bedfordshire Growers was born.

Many of the traditional sprout varieties were developed and grown in the area and most small growers had a few acres. Sadly, the availability of alternative and more 'consumer friendly' vegetables in recent years led to the decline in the production of this crop, so much so that it is



unusual to see even a small field of sprouts in Bedfordshire. However this decline in brassicas has been replaced by increased onion production. The light sandy and free draining soils in the area are ideally suited for producing good quality bulbs. The demand for Red onions started to increase dramatically in the early 1990's and Bedfordshire Growers was at the forefront of the development and supply of this

product and with successful establishment of controlled atmosphere storage, Red onions has become a very important part of the business.

The smaller family growers have declined since the heyday of the 1970s and the current membership comprises a dedicated group of growers committed to production on a large scale predominantly supplying the multiple retailers.

Bedfordshire Growers will mark this major milestone in its history later during this anniversary year, when the weather is less inclement, with a day of displays and celebrations at their site near



Biggleswade which will be open to the general public as well as the farming fraternity.

Biggleswade is the birthplace of the modern tractor, invented by Dan Albone in 1901. The 'Ivel' was the world's first petrol driven tractor and was the forerunner of all modern day tractors. To commemorate this landmark, Bedfordshire Growers will have a range of vintage tractors on display as well as Shire horses, which did all the hard work until mechanization transformed world food production.

To reinforce the rural theme of the event, country crafts and local produce will form a strong part of the displays to make it an enjoyable and informative day out for all the family.

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Date: 2 January 2013

Editor's notes

High resolution photos available on request

More about Bedfordshire Growers

Founded in 1963 Bedfordshire Growers started from a small wooden hut on a 17 acre site near Biggleswade. It was formed as a co-operative of local farmers and horticulturalists business to promote the highest standards of crop marketing and presentation that customers demand. The business focuses on packing and distributing the traditional Bedfordshire vegetable crops of onions and potatoes.

The first packhouse was constructed on the site in 1966, but has expanded and now includes three packing houses fitted with the latest crop grading and packing equipment, cold stores and long

term controlled atmosphere stores. The business occupies a 98 acres site which includes adjacent farmland. Bedfordshire Growers currently employs over 35 full time staff, which is supplemented by up to 60 temporary staff for grading and packing during peak periods.

The business also provides Requisite supplies to farms and local growers. The Country Store Farm shop offers Local Produce and Fresh Foods, Pet foods, Horse Feeds, and garden products for sale to the local community.

Still a grower-owned consortium, the group's success has attracted growers from wider fields and Bedfordshire Growers now distributes root and salad crops from growers throughout the Eastern Counties and Spain to multiple retail outlets, wholesale food services and food processors.

For further information

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