

Jack Scott

Location: Isle of Thanet, Kent, South East England



Challenges



Access to fertile land



Competition from supermarkets



Lack of funding for small enterprises

Rural Youth Project Involvement

Jack attended the Kent & Medway hack not hopeful about his place in the fresh produce and food sector. He left the hack envisaging a future for himself in the industry and in Kent.

Background

At just 18 years old, Jack Scott runs his own business on the Isle of Thanet, where he also grew up and now lives. Currently about to start his second year of university, Jack owns half an acre of land where he grows around 20 different vegetables and sells them to local people and businesses. With plans to expand his business and the amount of land he owns, Jack admits the Kent & Medway Rural Youth Project Ideas Hack re-energised him and made him more hopeful about his future in the industry.

“Before the Ideas Hack I been thinking that, in two years’ time, I would leave horticulture and agriculture completely. But the Ideas Hack has shown that there is a future for Kent - there is actually a future that I can now see for myself in the industry.”

Jack attended the Ideas Hack not feeling hopeful about his future doing what he does because he’s struggled to access fertile land for growing vegetables, because, he says, a great deal of land is being prioritised for housing; he also cites the lack of financial support as a challenge.

“I can’t get any grants. What I do is too small to be classed as agriculture because it’s only half an acre. When I get up to 10 acres, I could get subsidy.”

The Hack allowed Jack to meet likeminded people experiencing similar issues that otherwise he may not have met.

“It was a fantastic opportunity to meet people who you wouldn’t normally. In these areas, young people can be left, or even forgotten, so it’s good to see you guys [Rural Youth Project] making an effort to speak to them.”

One of the ideas generated at the hack was a support scheme for new farmers whereby 10 acres of land would be released on a five-year tenancy with funding from Kent County Council and support from the farmer. Jack favoured this idea as, he says, a scheme like this would benefit his business and give him the support he needs to expand and showcase his potential in the industry.



“Supermarkets have created this market; they’ve pushed down smaller competitors, and it’s just them now. ”

- Jack Scott

Background

Jack is passionate about giving young people like himself a space to come together and share their experiences and ideas, otherwise the sector risks losing them altogether. His advice to other people in similar situations is “keep persevering and don’t give up. Just keep going at what you want to achieve.”

As for the future of the sector, Jack sees small farmers and growers playing a key part in re-thinking UK food security with a strong focus on locally grown produce, and less reliance on global supply chains. Jack places value on understanding where food comes from as a society.

“Supermarkets have created this market; they’ve pushed down smaller competitors, and it’s just them now. Consumers can’t change what they are doing without changing their lifestyle, which is quite difficult to do anyway.”

Jack saw a higher demand for his produce during the pandemic but this has since died down with consumers returning to their previous habits out of convenience. To tackle this Jack would like to host ‘open picking’ on his land, where the public is welcomed to pick their own produce and connect with where their food comes from.

Jack believes we should look to the farming methods of the past as inspiration for the future at a time where the industry was a collective of smaller scale enterprises and food imports were considerably lower.

“You would never work against another farmer, you’d work together. If you look back to the 1950s, 60s, or even 40s, you would always want to try and harbour each other’s interests and increase your own productivity as well as theirs.”

The next step for Jack is to expand his land and he hopes to install poly tunnels to increase the variety of vegetables he can grow as well as chickens so he can supply fresh local eggs.

“I wouldn’t be looking to continue without attending the Ideas Hack, it spurred me to move ahead with my business and take it to the next level.”

Solutions

1. Jack is always looking to expand his land and when suitable land becomes available, he intends to increase his portfolio of fresh vegetables.
2. Jack plans to start ‘open picking’ on his farm to allow customers to connect with their food which supermarkets can’t offer.
3. To receive any subsidy Jack plans to expand his business to the required minimum of 10 acres.



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