

## **Opportunities for farming post-Brexit.**

A major opportunity to expand the horticultural and plant-growing sector beckoned in a post-Brexit world, said a leading Norfolk farmer and landowner.

Sir Nicholas Bacon, chairman of the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association, said that Britain currently imported £1.1bn of trees, plants and horticultural products but only exported £50m each year.

As president of the Royal Horticultural Society, he told about 120 members of Stalham Farmers' Club at its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner at the Norfolk Mead Hotel, Coltishall, of this major market opportunity on the doorstep.

Sir Nicholas said that farmers had overcome massive changes, depressions and other challenges over the past two centuries. Volatility in crop prices, for example, was ever-present, he said.

In 1841 when the club was founded, wheat prices were 64/4d per quarter (£3.22) but 10 years earlier, they had been 38/6d (£1.93). And shortly after the RHS had been founded in 1804, wheat was making 97 shillings or £4.85 per quarter in 1810.

Sir Nicholas, who also farms at Raveningham in south Norfolk, was confident that farming could rise to a post-Brexit challenge. He remained optimistic that over the longer-term the industry could prosper and thrive. And maybe in 10 years, farmers might look back and reflect on the dramatic changes in the industry.

When New Zealand scrapped farm support in 1984, farmers made radical changes. "New Zealand has the highest wheat yields in the world," said Sir Nicholas. "We have all got to look outside the box," he added.

Sir Nicholas said that farming would remain a key element of the Royal Norfolk Show as organisers ensured that "really good agriculture" was promoted. It would continue as a shop window for a key industry in the county and the show would not become a glorified car boot, he added.

He was invited by the chairman, Jonathan Deane, to present the club's trophies.

Earlier, Ken Leggett, honorary vice-president, had been invited to say "Grace" and Henry Alston, later thanked the guest speaker and presented him with a copy of Alec Douet's history of Norfolk agriculture and a club silk tie. He also thanked the secretary Michael Pollitt for his efforts in organising a highly-successful 175th anniversary dinner.