

Dear Mr. Danks

I am writing to give my opinions on the ability to grow sugar beet *without* irrigation and on a wide variation of soil types. This is in response to the assumption made by Sunnica regarding their proposed 2500 acre solar power plant. Their plan is to put this on very versatile and productive agricultural land on the Suffolk/Cambridgeshire border.

I am part of a two-person team which grows about 2500ha of beet on contract to British Sugar. This is circa 2.5% of the UK crop, so a very good representation of the considerations needed to grow beet. All our land is rented on an annual basis and the criteria we base our choice is very detailed and bespoke to the land type that we are negotiating on.

The type of soil we rent is variable, from light sand to clay; organic black fen to grade one silt. Having a range of soil types enables us to be able to harvest the crop throughout the harvest season which is September through to March. Starting with heavy lands in late summer, early autumn and moving to lighter soil profiles as winter progresses provides work for contractors and hauliers throughout the winter months when other crops are already mostly dealt with.

Soil is integral to the crop. Having a wide range of soil types not only allows for us to spread harvest but also manage risk. The weather can be very temperamental, often favouring one soil type one year and another type the following year. This year is a great example of that. Some very light land that might be categorised as infertile and far from ideal in some people's views was far and away our best yielding block at over 100mt/ha - this far exceeds this year's average. This light, prone to drought, stressed land had no irrigation, it had nothing extra to any other crop. What it did have was a very well managed rotation and sensitive farming policies.

Last year less than 5% of our crop was irrigated, this year that will be even less. Not one block of land was refused because it didn't have irrigation. Land was declined for many reasons; some financial, some agricultural and some because they were too far from the factory.



My knowledge is built on what I have learnt from agricultural college in the early 1990s, working for multinational seed & chemical companies and (before joining British Sugar) 15 years of working as an independent agronomist with my father. I have been BASIS and FACTS qualified in the region of twenty years. I was awarded my advanced BASIS in Sugar Beet several years ago, in the first year that the course was run. The connection of sugar beet goes further back that, as my father was a British Sugar Fieldsman and then a Trials Officer for many years, in the early 1970s.

We are very proud at British Sugar that the average distance to the factory for our beet to travel is about 30 miles. I am very fortunate to live in a village called Snailwell; unfortunately our village is under direct threat of Sunnica and their Power Plant. The wide variation of land that this will swallow and take out of food production is a very key area for us to keep growing beet on. Low roads miles, a wide variation of harvest opportunities and highly productive land. To say that this land is only good because of irrigation is simply wrong. This land like all land is improved with irrigation. It makes it even more versatile but it doesn't make it worthless without it.

Sugar beet offer farmers an opportunity to leave stubble over winter, or cover crop it with benefiting mixes for soil and wildlife. It gives employment and opportunity for the present and future for so many industries - agricultural, engineering, machinery sales and support and many more associated industries.

With my agricultural knowledge I feel strongly that the local land provides us with an excellent source for food production which should be nurtured now and for future generations.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Anthony Hagen

Crop Production Manager  
British Sugar

