

'We must reconnect with our children'

PRINCE CHARLES believes that linking school gardens to family farms is a way of "reconnecting children to the food they eat".

And the Prince has revealed that he, like many Welsh farmers and as a landowner himself, has been affected by the TB movement restrictions that are in place to try to limit the spread of the disease.

Prince Charles shared his thoughts with members of the Women's Farming Union as they enjoyed a royal reception at Highgrove, Gloucestershire.

The Prince championed the work of the organisation as front-line ambassadors for the cause of British agriculture.

He praised their education programme and the "remarkable resilience" of the farming sector in the face of appalling weather conditions.

And he explained that he was working to ensure a strong family farming structure because it was of "crucial importance".

"I have nothing but unbounded admiration for the way so many of you work so hard to get the message across about what food and farming is actually all about," he said.

"In this age of increasing disconnection it is a real challenge.

"I have been pursuing my own farmers' markets initiatives particularly in the uplands, where family farming is so important and

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Charles calls for school gardens to be linked to farm communities

also where tourists want to go.

"We are integrating food, farming, and tourism and, bit by bit, I hope that some of these initiatives might take root."

The Prince of Wales said he was impressed with the efforts of South Wales farmers Charlotte Edwards and Lynette Thomas, who regularly take a cow into schools as part of their mission to explain where food comes from.

He warned that a trick was being missed because the importance of the school garden and the school farm wasn't fully understood.

It was only by allowing children the experience of growing food that there could be a re-connection, he said.

President Ionwen Lewis said she was delighted to have won royal recognition for the extremely successful schools education programme.

It was vitally important that the lobbying and educational work started by the founder members continued and people were persuaded to buy British.

Chatting to many of the 130 WFU members who had first enjoyed a tour of the garden, Prince Charles showed a clear understanding of and sympathy with their problems, including TB and the difficulty of sustaining village life.

For Diane Evans, 43, from Carmarthen, the spread of bovine TB was a concern, after she had to have 18 cows slaughtered in one week after positive tests.

She said: "The Prince asked me about how we were affected by TB because he said it was something that he was worried about and that he had been affected by the movement restrictions."

Prince Charles accepted a bottle of Early Windsor Apple Juice from award-winning Kent grower Roz Day and shared a joke with Ample Bosom bra supplier Sally Robinson about the importance of support on the family farm!

Highgrove House, near Tetbury, in Gloucestershire has been the private residence of the Prince of Wales since 1980.

The Duchy of Cornwall ac-



MEETING ROYALTY: Prince Charles chats to, from left, Eira Edwards, Charlotte Edwards and Lynette Thomas

quired Highgrove House from the MP Maurice Macmillan, son of former Tory Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, in 1980.

The purchase added to the nation's speculation that the Prince was considering marriage and it became the first home for Charles and Diana's young sons Princes

William and Harry.

Prince Charles has used the 37-acre estate to promote his interest in organic farming and gardening.

In his book *Highgrove: Portrait of an Estate*, he writes: "I had absolutely no experience of gardening or farming, and the only

trees I had planted had been official ones in very official holes.

"I knew I wanted to take care of the place in a very personal way and to leave it one day, in a far better condition than I found it".

He is reputed to have spent £500,000 on the gardens at Highgrove.