

Reviving Agriculture in Asia through Innovation & Community Engagement – Two Case Studies on Jeremy Clarkson’s Farm & Four-Leaf Farm in the UK

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1. Background

1.1 The confluence of Global and Asian Agricultural Challenges

Agriculture, as we all live on, is a critical industry for human civilization. However, currently, agriculture is confronted with unprecedented challenges that threaten food security, economic stability, and rural livelihoods. These challenges include the pervasive and unpredictable effects of climate change, which manifest as extreme weather events such as extended dry or rainy seasons, and the persistent volatility of international commodity markets (World Bank, 2025). Facing such a different situation, farmers cannot use the wisdom from ancient times that they've been using for thousands of years but have to adapt with modern generation. Moreover, in a more micro side of the problem, farming communities are facing an internal crisis as younger generations migrate to urban centers, leading to an aging workforce and a decline in labor availability. This phenomenon is not simply caused by the idea that farming is not a 'cool' job, but more led by the fact that farming requires tremendous effort and money without an equivalent nor predictable reward.

In Asia, these global challenges are magnified by specific regional dynamics. Small-scale family farms, which form the bedrock of Asian food production and produce an estimated 70% of its food, are particularly vulnerable. A recent report highlights that these farmers are often trapped in a cycle of poverty and are disproportionately affected by climate change due to limited access to technology and financial resources (Earth.org, 2024). Issues such as fragmented supply chains, where intermediaries (private companies and government organizations) capture the majority of the profit, and a lack of access to quality seeds and modern irrigation, are common. Same as but more severe than the same problem globalwise, the aging farming population is a pressing concern, with data from sources like the Korea Times showing a rapid decline in the number of young people entering the profession (The Korea Times, 2025). This situation is further compounded by a lack of public awareness regarding the immense effort and risk involved in farming.

Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the earth in the UK, but facing the same difficulties, there are two farms worth attention which I honourably had a chance to pay a visit this time—Jeremy Clarkson's Diddly Squat Farm and the Rauch family's Four-Leaf Farm—as case studies for identifying transferable strategies. While the UK and Asia possess totally different agricultural landscapes, the shared struggles for profitability, sustainability, and generational continuity make a comparative analysis highly relevant. This report summerizes two distinct farming operations in the farm and offers possible solutions to these complex challenges, particularly in Asia informed by adaptable, grassroots models.

1.2 Planning and Activity Schedule

The schedule was slightly different from the protocol, according to the actual environmental/personal conditions.

Table 1. Experience-Based Learning (EBL) Itinerary.

Date	Time in the day	Activities
250806 (Northern Ireland)	12:00-13:00	Driving from Belfast to Four-Leaf Farm
	13:00-14:00	Casual talk and warm-up
	14:00–15:30	Hands-on experience working on the farm, including egg collection, poultry care, farm tour.

	17:00-18:00	Interview with Mr. Rauch about circular farming economics and direct-to-consumer sales.
	18:00-20:00	Dinner with Rauch family. Informal discussion on their motivations and life as farmers.
250807 (Northern Ireland)	07:00-08:00	Breakfast with Rauch family.
	08:00-11:00	Participating in morning routine of a farmer: follow Mr. Rauch to help with morning routine
	11:00-12:00	Driving from Four-Leaf Farm to Belfast
(There were few days in between of two case studies due to personal trip schedule)		
250812 (Oxfordshire)	07:30-10:20	Train from Manchester to Oxford
	10:30-12:00	Driving to Diddly Squat Farm, Chipping Norton
	12:00-13:00	Lunch at farm-owned restaurant using farm-sourced ingredients.
	13:00-14:00	Chatting with visitors / farmers in the restaurant. Listening to their concerns or thoughts on agriculture.
	14:30-16:00	Drive from the farm restaurant / shop to the farm area, observing from the road on the scale and routine work of farmers.
	16:00-17:00	Drive back to Oxford

1.3 Aim of the Study

This EBL aims to learn experiences of representatives of farms in the UK, compare the different situations of East-Asia agriculture and the UK, and then summarize the strategies or inspirations that can be applied in East-Asia farming business. By interviewing the owners of farms, spending a day experiencing the farmer's life and observing the management of the farm in the UK, meanwhile reading academic papers or government documents on Asia farming, the researcher intended to gain profound insights from the experience and propose possible suggestions for East-Asia agriculture.

2. Literature and Resource Review

Asian agriculture is grappling with a complex web of modern challenges. This literature review session focuses on scholarly work from the last ten years (2015-2025) to provide an academic overview of the key existential threats to farmers in Asia area.

2.1 Low Profitability and Economic Vulnerability

The persistent issue of low and unstable income for small-scale farmers, who constitute the majority of Asia's agricultural workforce, has caught attention from researchers. Despite their critical role, these family-based farmers often struggle with low profits due to a combination of factors. A study (Otsuka et al., 2015) argued that as economies develop and salaries of other jobs rise, the labour-intensive nature of small-scale farming becomes increasingly inefficient, leading to a decline in productivity relative to larger, more mechanized farms in Asia. Furthermore, farmers' incomes are highly susceptible to market fluctuation. Research by the Asian Development Bank (2019) highlights how global food price increases, driven by factors like urbanization, commodity market speculation, policies controlled by capital, and energy-food price linkages, directly reduce the real income of the rural poor. The lack of robust market infrastructure and poor access to timely information further lowers farmers' bargaining power and ability to make beneficial decisions about what to grow and when to sell (R.B. Shrestha, et al., 2022).

2.2 Unpredictable Production: Climate and Political Factors

Agricultural production in Asia is increasingly unpredictable, a result of both environmental and political forces (M.H. Rahman et al., 2018). The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (2019) has documented the devastating impact of climate change, with extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heat waves, and intense rainfall patterns directly reducing crop yields and damaging infrastructure. Beyond climate, the farming harvest also depends on political factors. While almost all Asian countries, in their history, have always relied on smallhold family-based farming, the policy they are adopting now is not necessarily beneficial and sustainable for farmers. The Asian Development Bank (2019) report points out that ineffective policy responses, particularly concerning export and import regulations, have contributed to instability in important product markets like rice.

2.3 Population Shifts and Generational Crisis

The outflow of young labour from rural to urban areas is a critical challenge in any country. A study by Chattopadhyay and Kundu (2024) on agriculture in West Bengal, India, found that farming is increasingly "nonviable as a primary source of occupation," pushing people to seek more stable and profitable opportunities in other jobs. This out-migration creates a labour shortage, which can lead to a decline in agricultural output unless offset by mechanization or other technological innovations, which are believed to need passionate young brains and physical labour forces too. Another main reason for the crisis is a lack of interest among the younger generation in agriculture, often due to a perception that the work is unrewarding and lacks social esteem (SEARCA, 2024). This reluctance to inherit family farms threatens the generational continuity of farming knowledge and practices, further damaging the industry.

2.4 Barriers to Innovation Adoption in a Smallholder Context

Undoubtedly, a fair number of inventions or innovative actions have been put to use in farming in Asia. However, some research highlights significant barriers to their widespread application among small-scale farmers in Asia, the main two are listed as follows:

- **Financial and Institutional Barriers:** Many small-scale farmers lack access to the credit and capital necessary to invest in new technologies, such as advanced machinery or precision farming tools. The absence of supportive government policies and unfavourable regulations can also hinder innovation (L.R. Campuzano et al., 2023).
- **Knowledge and Perception Gaps:** Research suggests that farmers' adoption of new technologies is heavily influenced by their perceived usefulness and risks (Dung, 2020). Many farmers have low awareness and a lack of scientific or technical training, which makes them hesitant to adopt practices they do not fully understand.

3. Experience-Based Learning Results: Observations and Experience from the Field

The EBL trip provided an opportunity to move beyond theoretical knowledge and engage directly with two distinct agricultural models in the UK. The observations and informal interviews conducted during these visits form the core of this report's analysis.

3.1 Four-Leaf Farm: The Small-scale, Family-based Regenerative Model

The visit to Four-Leaf Farm in Northern Ireland was a hands-on experience, providing a direct view of a small-scale, regenerative farming operation. The farm, run by the Rauch family, is a powerful example of how a focus on ecological health and animal welfare can translate into a resilient and profitable business model. (The Peoples Hub, n.d.)

Thanks to the great warmth from the Rauch family, I stayed in their current house for two days and experienced the actual farming practices. As what was planned in the proposal, we should have visited the movable house of Rauch's on the first day. However, the tiny wooden house on wheels was broken by an aggressive storm months ago, and they haven't fixed the house due to the limited time between their busy schedule. Consequently, the visit to the movable house was cancelled.

Based on the interview with Mr. Rauch and my experience of brief working in Four-Leaf Farm, the farm's innovative practices can be mainly summarized in the following three aspects:

- **Regenerative egg production**

When first hearing about egg farming, people usually think of some factory-based chicken house with cold walls and zero sunshine. The egg farm in Four-Leaf Farm is the exact opposite of the image. They possess a big free land just for more than 800 hens to wander around, so that they can live happily picking up some of the worms or organic particles from the soil. Of course, except for the snacks from the natural environment, Mr. Rauch gives them nutritious feeds twice per day, together with smashed fresh seafood shells to help them restore calcium for laying eggs.



Figure 1, 2: Egg farm area in Four-Leaf Farm

More impressively, the whole design and installation of the chicken house was done by Mr. Rauch, which provides a warm, safe and comfortable room with a soft mat for hens to lay eggs, and shelves of different heights for hens to stay during the rainy season when they prefer to stay indoors. After the hens lay their eggs, the electric structure can be operated to tilt the bottom of the egg room so that they can collect eggs from outside the chicken house with great ease. The self-made structure, no wonder, brings efficiency to the farmers' working process while respecting the natural habitat of hens.



Figure 3, 4: Inside the chicken house, Mr. Rauch was explaining the mechanism and how he built the structure.

Besides the egg farm area is a cow farming area, which is owned by father of Mrs. Rauch but they are managing them together. “We move the chicken house and cows every half a year”, Mr. Rauch said. In this way, the soil that was under the house can be preserved, and the new area will be where the cows used to stay and produce faeces, which will give both hens and soil extra nutrients.



Figure 5 (left): The cow area besides egg farm area).

Figure 6 (right): Mrs. Rauch, their dog and me with the new member of the Rauch family.

- **Adapt to the scale of the family**

Although Four-Leaf Farm used to have a more ambitious scale of service, which not only provides nutritious eggs, but also a wide range of pollution-free vegetables. “We really enjoyed growing good quality vegetables, harvesting them and bringing them to people”, Mr. Rauch said, and this has been the motivation for them to keep working on it. They also said that although farming is busy and exhausting physically, it can be flexible and adaptive at the same time. With the birth of another member in their family, it became more difficult for them to manage the time and effort on different types of work. Since Mrs. Rauch confirmed her pregnancy, the vegetable business has been paused, but the egg field was expanded so that the profit from egg can still cover the cost of

living, while a single pipeline, concentrated working content allows them to spend more time to strengthen the bond inside their family.

- **Focus on local community**

The farm's financial sustainability is rooted in its direct-to-consumer approach. Instead of relying on volatile wholesale markets, the farm utilizes a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model (Si Z, et al, 2020), where consumers subscribe to receive a weekly share of produce. This provides the farmers with a predictable income and builds a loyal customer base. The farm also has established a symbiotic relationship with local customers, including famous pizza restaurants, bakery shops, pantry services, and a lot of personnel buyers from local community or social media, which covers about 20 miles around the farm. They combine the traditional selling method (bringing products to local markets) and modern order path (they have social media account so that people can contact them and order online), providing high-quality, seasonal produce that is marketed as a local, organic and sustainable choice.

The farm's ethos extends beyond its economic model. The Rauch family's decision to return to farming was motivated by a desire for a more connected, purpose-driven life. Their story, and the community that has grown around their farm, counters the narrative of rural decline. The farm demonstrates that a viable business can also serve as a hub for community engagement, offering a compelling alternative to urban life for young people considering a career in agriculture.

3.2 Jeremy Clarkson's Farm: The Media-Driven Model

The visit to Diddly Squat Farm in Oxfordshire provided a totally different but equally insightful contrast. Jeremy Clarkson's operation is not merely a farm but a high-profile media project that has had a profound impact on public perception about agriculture in the UK. The Amazon Prime series, *Clarkson's Farm*, serves as a powerful medium for showcasing the realities of farming—from the punishing effects of weather and a labyrinthine bureaucracy to the thin profit margins (JAE Online, 2025).

Unfortunately, the actual farming area was not open for the public to visit. Instead, I visited the farm shop and restaurant (pub) where farming products produced by DiddlySquat farm and farms nearby were freshly delivered and processed for everyone to purchase. All the staff were hired from the local community with a fairly good salary.



Figure 7 (left): The signboard of the Diddly Squat Farm pub/restaurant (The Farmer's Dog), emphasizing the local community cooperation.

Figure 8, 9 (right): The merchandise in the farm shop, including processed jam, seasoning sauce, and fresh vegetables with fruits.

Combined with the review from the documentaries and my experience during the visit to the open farm area, what makes Jeremy Clarkson's farm special can be concluded as follows:

- Local Farmers' concern:** By interviewing, or more precisely, chatting with visitors and farmers the researcher randomly met in the farm restaurant/shop area, it's not difficult to realize that western farmers share the same concerns with farmers in Asia. The constantly changing policies, unpredictable environmental problems, and unbalanced work and life routine make farming hard to persist. A good example can be the tuberculosis burst in the area around Chipping Norton recently, which caused the loss of a lot of cows (due to the law, cows that test positive must be eliminated). But the main carrier of TB bacteria – badgers, cannot be caught or eliminated, also due

to the animal protection law. So all the financial or livestock losses caused by this disease have to be borne by farmers themselves. It's more like a gamble than a reliable work, they said.

- **Business Model:** The core business model of Diddly Squat Farm extends far beyond its agricultural output. While its primary function is farming, its main source of income and influence stems from the farm shop and related media products. The farm shop serves as a brand extension and a direct retail outlet, selling not only the farm's own produce but also products from neighbouring farmers. Meanwhile, they also only hire the local people as employees in the farm, shop and restaurant. This collaborative model, which supports the broader local community, is a key component of its success. The financial success of the show, as one analyst from Insight Associates put it, lies in its clear illustration of the long and unpredictable cash cycle of farming and how diversification is essential for survival (Insight Associates, 2025).
- **Public Perception and Advocacy:** As noted by farmers in publications like *Farmers Guardian*, the documentary series has done more to raise public sympathy and awareness for the actual difficulty of farmers than traditional protests (Farmers Guardian, 2025). By presenting a genuine and often difficult portrait of farming life to a global audience, the show has created a new kind of agricultural advocate—one who understands the complex economics and challenges from a farmer's perspective. This model demonstrates how a powerful narrative can generate both



Figure 10 (left), 11 (top right): Menu of the restaurant/pub, food on the right was very fresh and decently made while slightly pricy.

Figure 11 (bottom right): Farmers are welcome to enjoy free drinks and discuss here in this pub, but unfortunately not open to the public.

economic returns and cultural capital, which, in the long run, may help increase the ratio of young population working as farmers and lead to political revolution from the government side.

4. Discussion: Bridging the UK Experience with Asian Agricultural Development

The EBL trip provided critical insights into how two very different UK farming models are successfully navigating the challenges of modern agriculture. The lessons from these case studies are highly relevant and adaptable to the context of rural revitalization in Asia.

4.1 Small-scale Farmers: Innovation and Adaptability

As a typical small-scale, family-based farm, Four-Leaf Farm is very impressive for its creative management and profitability. Four-Leaf Farm's focus on regenerative agriculture and a circular economy offers a highly relevant blueprint for small-scale Asian farms. By wisely organizing land usage schedule in the farm, and making use of the waste from livestock, they grew high-quality vegetables (not any more) and produce free-range eggs that are popular in the market. This approach can help farmers mitigate climate risks, improve soil health, and reduce the need for costly external inputs like fertilizers. In a region where water scarcity and soil degradation are growing concerns, such sustainable practices are not just an ethical choice but a necessity for long-term survival.

On the other hand, as a bachelor's graduate from the engineering major, Mr. Rauch designed and constructed a lot of structures in Four-Leaf Farm. This is a great example of the fact that knowing the science and methodology of farming equipment or tools helps farmers to create a more efficient workflow and facilitate higher profits. Given the reality of the high unemployment rate among graduates from university, encouragement should be abundantly offered to them to utilize their ability and knowledge in agriculture, which, against the traditional mindset, is a promising field.

4.2 Community Engagement

The success of both farms is deeply tied to their ability to build a community around their products. Four-Leaf Farm's CSA model and direct relationships with restaurants or other shops demonstrate how a strong local network can provide a stable financial foundation. Diddly Squat Farm's brand, while globally recognized, is also built on a foundation of local collaboration, as it actively promotes and sells products from neighboring businesses. The benefit is not only in selling agricultural products but also in solving young people's job worries by providing more delivery, service positions. This model of "coopetition" could be a powerful tool in Asia, where traditional agricultural cooperatives (like the JA in Japan) are struggling to adapt. By focusing on a strong, local brand built on quality and authenticity, Asian farmers can transform their products from anonymous commodities into high-value goods, improving their income and ensuring the generational continuity of their farms.

4.3 Public Involvement and Branding

Another key lesson from Diddly Squat Farm is the power of a compelling narrative. For many in urban Asia, farming is an invisible and often misunderstood industry. As demonstrated by Clarkson, a farmer's story can be a powerful marketing tool. By leveraging social media, short-form video, or even reality television formats, Asian farmers can connect directly with urban consumers, building a brand identity and fostering a sense of shared purpose. Like the TV series 'A Bite of China'(China) or 'Egg Farming Family'(Japan), farming, together with interesting storylines happening to the lives of real farmers, can be appealing to a wide range of the public. This public engagement can lead to new revenue streams, reduce

reliance on intermediaries, and attract a new generation of talent who see farming not just as labor but as a creative and entrepreneurial endeavour.

The Diddly Squat model highlights the value of diversifying beyond core agricultural production. The farm shop, which supports a wider network of local producers, could be adapted in Asia to create a hub for local artisans and farmers, fostering a more resilient and integrated rural economy by building a mature travel route, a plate made out of freshly harvested farm products or a novel experience for potential tourists. Admittedly, the success of The Diddly Squat Farm largely depends on the celebrity effect of Jeremy Clarkson, but together with the effort of encouraging policy, a considerable amount of investment with proper management, such as advertising with related and popular celebrities, Asian farms are no less charming than their counterparts.

5. Conclusion

The Experience-Based Learning trip to two British farms, together with background research on Asian agriculture beforehand, provided me with a rich and detailed understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing modern agriculture. The core lesson is that the future of farming, particularly in Asia, will be defined not just by technological advances but by a fundamental shift in business models and public perception. By embracing strategic communication, diversification, and community-driven branding, Asian farmers can transform their operations, secure their economic futures, and attract a new generation of talent. Though the two case studies are rooted in the UK context, they offer a compelling and optimistic vision of a global agricultural future where tradition and innovation can coexist, and where farms are not just places of production, but hubs of commerce, community, and culture.

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