

A farmer worth £5bn gets £326,000 a year in subsidies—while others struggle to stay in business

By DANIELLE DEMETRIOU

SUE JACKSON begins work at Newhouse Farm in the Peak District every morning at 5am. She attends to her seven pedigree Dexter cows and 115 Dorset cross sheep, on the 29 hectares of damp hillside outside Chapel-en-le-Frith until late at night. It has been a similar pattern of unyielding toil for the past 34 years.

Gerald Cavendish Grosvenor is also a farmer having inherited an 11,000 hectare estate near Chester. Sir Gerald holds the title of Duke of Westminster and is Britain's richest man with an estimated fortune, based largely on extensive property holdings in central London, of nearly £5bn.

The current system of farming subsidies rewards the duke with an estimated £326,000 a year in EU hand-outs. Mrs Jackson, by contrast, receives little more than £5,000 from the public purse.

The charity Oxfam published the first findings yesterday of a report detailing how much of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was finding its way into the pockets of Britain's super rich.

At the same time, the charity said, thousands of farmers of small and medium-size holdings were embroiled in a daily struggle. Many are surviving on less than the minimum wage and struggling to make a profit.

Seven of the wealthiest landowners in the country, including the duke, received an estimated total of more than £2m a year in EU cereal subsidies, the report said.

Kevin Watkins, author of the report and head of research at Oxfam, said the report sought to highlight the apparent failings of a system that did not impose an upper limit in terms of its financial aid.

But he said: "The picture that emerges is one of a perverse system of social welfare, with billions of pounds in taxpayer finance benefiting some of the UK's richest families and wealthiest agricultural regions.

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Question

Explain how and why the system presented in the article is described as 'perverse'. (200 words)