My Name is Angela Hurrell and I have had a business in Dumfries and Galloway for over 10 years. My business has moved from a fruit and Veg grower into a Tea Grower as well as still growing a smaller selection of fresh veg.
My business is Garrocher Market Garden and Tea Garden. I am one of the small amount of Tea grower in Scotland and the second tea grower, being the first lowland tea grower.

Since 2006/7 I have been attending the local community and Farmers markets. I have also been on the committees of two of these markets and the Dumfries and Galloway Farmers and Community Markets Association (DGFCMA, ) DGMarkets.org Apart from my early connection with the DGMarkets committee when there was a council presence as part of the Savour the Flavours intuitive. I cannot say that I have noticed any impact from any government supported initiatives.

There have been some business promotions. Like business week and business networking days. As far as I am concerned it seemed like the room was being talked at by speakers who had a point to make but little effect and rather less to offer than hot air. To be uplifted and encouraged it’s all very well but if there is no actual help after the initial speeches the statement of ‘you are a credit to the Scottish Food and Drink Industry and we will use you to make us look better’ is hardly helpful.

One thing we did have in our favour at one time was the group that DGMarkets worked with Savour the Flavour.

This group connected up all the markets in D&G and with their help markets were strengthened and help was at hand when new markets were formed. The group gave markets confidence and gave much needed support to the organisers and committees of the markets in D&G.

It must be stated that all the markets in D&G are run by producers and the committees are all voluntary. None of the markets have any council involvement. Ether in the running or in the set up. As far as the running of the markets are concerned the only connection with local government is where space is needed or halls booked. I know of little in the way of concessions being made for the markets. When funding was withdrawn and Savour the Flavours wound up we lost the only support wholly dedicated to promoting the D&G food industry and supporting small producers. There has been nothing since. Savour the Flavours and it's expertise is much missed.

Recently there has been some move from the council to make it look like there was help for the small and micro producer. Many of whom are family businesses and single artisan producers. This 'help' was usually by way of workshops often being held at inconvenient times and in not always convenient places. The funding for the business experts mostly went to faceless PR companies that may know how to do a
powerpoint presentation but know very little about the people they were speaking to. This may have looked good as far as the organisers were concerned but did little in the way of helping the producer. Funding for these business indulgences could have been better used in small amounts to help small producers to take the next small step. Rather than on generic branding -as the latest connect local programme. A scheme that has as far as my contacts are concerned very little or no worth and a waste of public money. This money could be put to better use elsewhere in supporting the D&G food industry.

Most of the small businesses I know and work alongside do their own promotional work, mostly through SM. They/we go out knowing that there is no support from any agency dedicated to promoting their business locally or nationally. It seems extreme to say that if the food and drink industry in D&G isn't better supported at grassroot level the 2030 ambition will be doomed. The small producer who week after week keeps their quality and production at the highest level, whilst juggling families, weather conditions and organising the weekly and monthly markets will struggle to carry on.

Without support from a local inituitive that truly supports these producers the producers cannot progress.

When it comes down to it We the producers of food and drink in D&G make alot of people look good who have little or no contact with the producers and consider us to be just a box to tick.

To say we are a tad fedup with the situation is an understatement.

Angela Hurrell,
Garrocher Market Garden and Tea Garden.