**Stelios, 68, Farmer, Evrichou**

**1. Can you tell me a few things about yourself? For example, when and where you were born? Did you study for anything? Have you travelled or lived overseas?**

*I’m 68 years old and I was born in Evrichou. I finished elementary school and then I stopped going to school so I could help my father in the fields. We have a lot of land and my father grew potatoes that he sold, so he always needed help. He would bring in workers to help him and my mother, but when I got older I started to help him because he would always say that one day all the land would be mine.*

**2. Have you ever owned another business in the past? How long have you been an owner of a business? How many businesses have you owned in the past?**

*I’ve never owned another business in the past. My father was a farmer and I inherited the land from a young age. It was my destiny to take on the business. I started working in the fields when I was 10 years old and it’s been my life ever since.*

**3. Can you tell me about the history behind your business?**

*My father owned this land which he inherited from my grandfather. My story is much the same, because my father didn’t go to school either so he could help his father with the crops. When I was young he would always say that the land would be mine one day and that I should always take care of it. So I followed the family tradition from a young age. My wife would help me in the fields because I couldn’t work be myself and now I have workers who help me out too. They’re seasonal workers, and help me when it’s time to plant, and then to harvest and distribute the potatoes. When my father passed away, I decided to grow other crops too, like cucumbers, tomatoes, watermelons for the summer and other vegetables. Even though I don’t make that much, it supplements our income.*

**4. What advantages did you see in starting your business?**

*It was something that my family was already doing. I inherited all the land and carried on the family tradition. I’ve been working here from a young age and so I know all the merchants and where to go to sell my potatoes. Planting and growing potatoes is a very difficult job, but over the years you learn from experience, then it becomes a routine that anybody else would have difficulty in keeping up with every day.*

**5. Are you facing any obstacles or problems in keeping your business going?**

*During the past few years we’ve had trouble with the price of potatoes. There’s a lot of competition, especially with the potatoes from the red soil region [villages that are found north-east of Cyprus which are well-known for their red soil and the high quality potatoes that are grown there]. We have our suppliers who we sell our potatoes to but the prices they pay us are low. Watermelons and cucumbers sell for better prices but again, I only make a small profit. When the borders with the occupied areas opened up a few years ago that made matters worse. There are some suppliers who bring in potatoes from the occupied areas because they are much cheaper but this affects us [he is obviously annoyed with the government’s position on this]. Also bad weather is a serious problem and each time we have hail storms the crops are ruined.*

**6.** **Why don’t you retire since there are so many problems with your job?**

*It’s easy to suggest retirement, but have you asked how much of a pension I get? €320 a month. Having worked in this job all my life, I don’t get the same pension as others do. So, I’m forced to carry on working for financial reasons. Don’t forget that there aren’t that many jobs in the mountain areas either. So I still work, and apart from that, it’s the business that my father left me to carry on and I can’t stop just like that.*

**7. Considering the experience that you have built up over the years but also the experience that you are going through now, would you say that you are still able to maintain the business and deal with the problems that affect it?**

*There are quite a few problems with this job, but I would never stop. It’s something that my father passed on to me that was my grandfathers, and my great-grandfathers. I thought about stopping and starting something new, but I can’t do it because I feel as though I would be letting my father down. Even so, we’ve managed to survive up to now and for as long as I still have the strength in me, I’ll carry on doing the job.*