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Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



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Investment Funds Programmes
2014-2020

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Rural Voices:

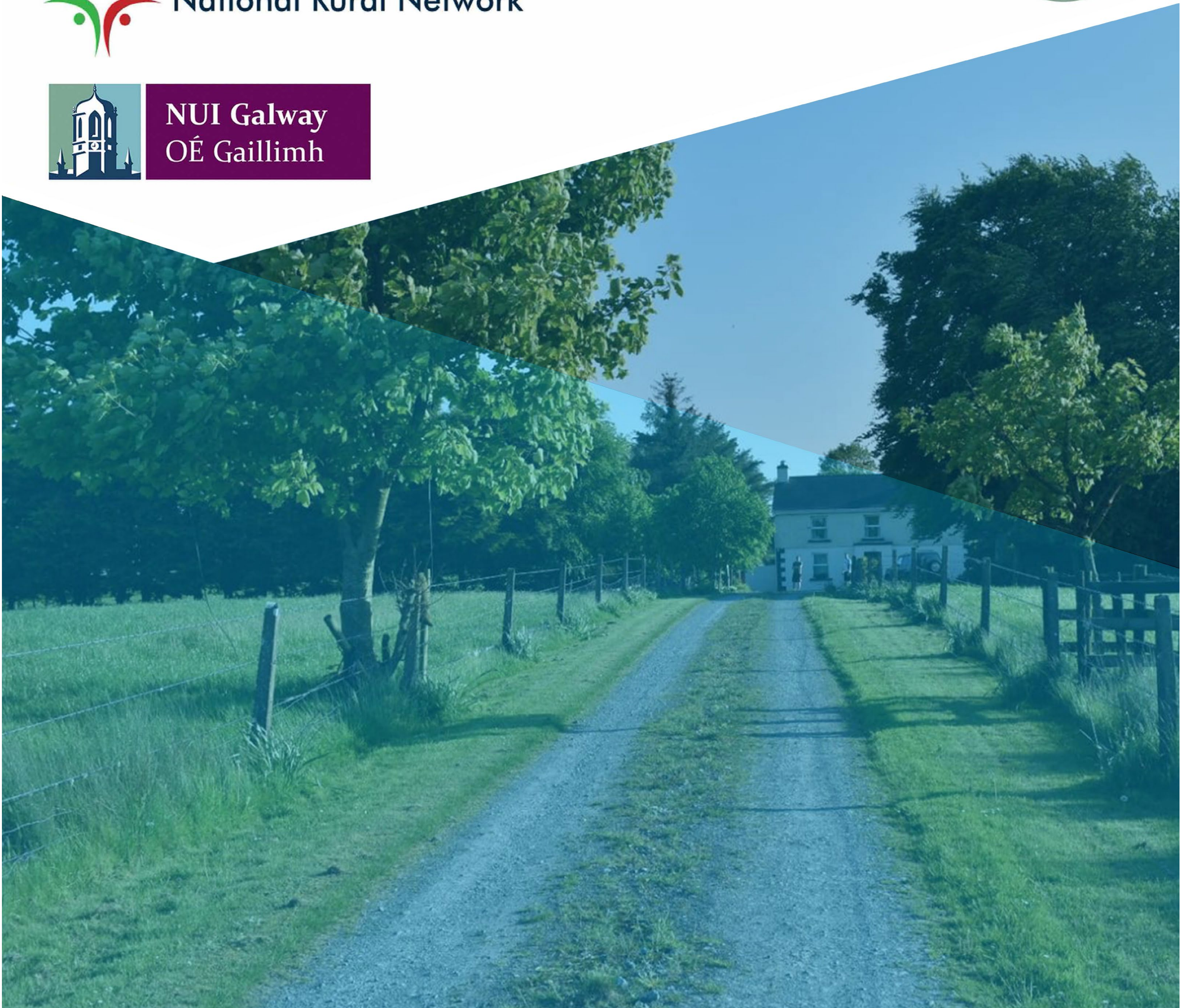
Farm Viability and Competitiveness Guest Blogs
Rural Development Programme (RDP)
2014-2020



National Rural Network



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh





Prepared by the National Rural Network team at NUI Galway on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

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Guest Blog Author Profiles

Dr Aisling Murtagh, Postdoctoral Researcher in the Discipline of Geography's Rural Studies Unit at NUI Galway.

Dr Murtagh is a Postdoctoral Researcher with the RURALIZATION project at the Rural Studies Unit, Discipline of Geography, National University of Ireland, Galway. She has worked on a number of rural development related national and European research projects in areas such as cultural and creative industries, short food supply chains and food cooperatives. Before joining the RURALIZATION project she worked as Research and Development Officer with the National Rural Network where her work is particularly focused on the LEADER programme. Twitter: @Ashmurta



Dr Maura Farrell, Lecturer in the Discipline of Geography's Rural Studies Unit at NUI Galway.

Dr Farrell is a Geography Lecturer at NUI Galway. Maura's teaching reflects her research specialism, which revolves around Rural and Agricultural Geography and her interests focus on processes of social, cultural and economic change for rural inhabitants. Dr Farrell successfully led NUI Galway's bid to run Ireland's National Rural Network in conjunction with three other national partners IN 2015. Internationally, Dr Farrell is a member of a Geography partnership that forms part of a wider European consortium that won a 5-year Horizon 2020 IMAJINE project in 2016. In 2016, Dr Farrell was also one of three Geography staff who successfully applied for a project under the Northern Peripheries and Arctic Programme, examining peripheral livelihoods and land uses. In 2018, Maura again successfully led the NUI Galway's bid for the EU Horizon 2020 RURALIZATION project, which has 18 EU partners and received over €6 million funding. Maura has published and presented her research work extensively on a national and international basis and participated in numerous national and international rural conferences and seminar sessions, in addition to being an invited guest on numerous occasions for rural events and conferences. Twitter: @MauraFarrellNUIG



Tara Kate Linnane, Horticulturalist and Permaculture Entrepreneur

Tara is a Horticulturalist living in Co. Cavan. She was runner up in this year's RTÉ Super Garden Competition and holds a BSc degree in Horticulture, Landscape and Sports Turf Management from the School of Agriculture and Food Science at University College Dublin (UCD) as well as a MSc in Marketing. In addition to writing a weekly column for the Anglo Celt newspaper called 'The Gourmet Gardener' she has recently founded a permaculture and sustainable living business called The Foodscape Design Co., that has a particular focus on designing gardens using edible plants.





Guest Blog Author Profiles

Paidi Kelly, Research Officer based at Teagasc's Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Centre

Paidi is a Research Officer based at Teagasc's Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre in Moorepark, Co. Cork. His work project is titled 'Career pathways in dairy farming' and is focused on collaborative farming models and projecting national labour requirements. Originally from a dairy farm just outside Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, Paidi graduated with a degree in Agricultural Science from UCD in 2012 and went on to work as a Dairy Specialist in the Irish Farmers Journal for over a year before then joining Teagasc. Paidi is also involved in a dairy farming partnership which operates on non-owned land. Twitter: @pake144



Dr Shane Conway, Postdoctoral Researcher in the Discipline of Geography's Rural Studies Unit at NUI Galway.

Dr Conway is a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Discipline of Geography's Rural Studies Unit at NUI Galway. Shane's research interests are in Rural and Agricultural Geography, with a particular focus on generational renewal in agriculture, the human side of farming and rural sustainability. Dr Conway has published widely in peer reviewed academic journals and is currently leading Ireland's participation in the International FARMTRANSFERS Project. He is also a member of the National Rural Network research team at NUI Galway, where he has initiated and led the design, development and implementation of a number of multi-method communication strategies being employed by the NRN to highlight and promote projects funded under Ireland's RDP 2014-2020 on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Rural and Community Development, such as EIP-AGRI Operational Groups and the LEADER Programme. Shane is a member of the European Network for Rural Development's Thematic Group on 'Smart Villages', and is Ireland's national expert on the new 'Smart Rural 21' European project. Dr Conway is also on the judging panel of Ireland's National Farming for Nature Awards. Twitter: @ShaneConwayNUIG



Dr Jessica McKillop, Evaluation Officer with Fáilte Ireland

Dr McKillop is an Evaluation Officer with Fáilte Ireland where she supports the design, execution and delivery of appraisals and evaluations of funding requests and investment decisions to support the strategic objectives of Fáilte Ireland. Her research career began in Teagasc, where drawing on the literature from economics and sociology, she undertook doctoral studies in the area of innovation. Utilising the Schumpeterian framework of innovation her study focused on process and organisational innovation within the young farming population. Some of her key interests include local, regional and economic development; public and social policy; research methodologies; as well as agriculture and rural life.

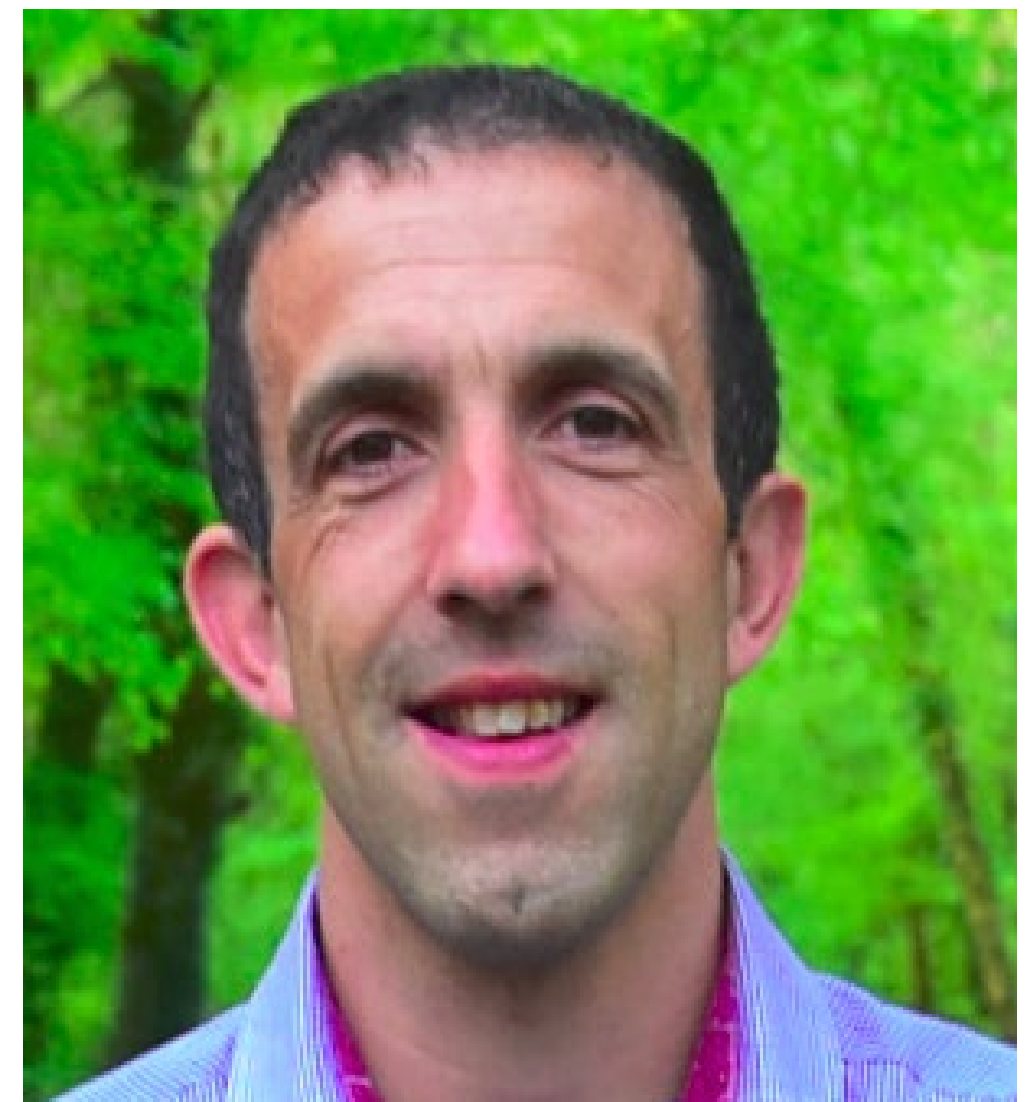




Guest Blog Author Profiles

Dr Peter Mooney, Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science at Maynooth University

Dr Peter Mooney is a lecturer in Computer Science at the Department of Computer Science in Maynooth University. Peter teaches both undergraduate and postgraduate courses on topics such as Database Technologies, Spatial Data Analysis and Mobile Application Development. His main research interest lies in the generation, management, analysis and usage of all types of geographic data. In particular he is interested in how citizens' lives can be improved with better usage and availability of geographical data and information. Peter was born and raised in Co. Meath and retains strong connections to his rural community and the countryside.



Dr Liadh Kelly, Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science at Maynooth University

Dr Kelly is a lecturer in the Department of Computer Science at Maynooth University, teaching students on topics in the space of multimedia technologies and data access and retrieval. Her research interests revolve around intelligent search and multimodal information access and retrieval. She is particularly interested in understanding individuals' information needs and developing digital systems which automatically respond to these needs, and which support understanding, task completion and decision making.



Aisling Molloy, Drystock Adviser with Teagasc

Aisling Molloy hails from a suckler beef and tillage farm in Co. Offaly. She completed an Animal Science degree in University College Dublin (UCD) in May 2015, where she carried out work experience on dairy, beef, sheep and pig farms. She then travelled to South Dakota in the U.S.A for 2 months to work on a dairy farm that was expanding from 3,000 to 4,000 cows. In September 2015, Aisling began the Teagasc and UCD Masters in Agricultural Innovation and Support Programme. As part of this programme, she spent 4 months in UCD studying various modules and in January 2016 commenced a 15-month work experience placement in the Teagasc advisory office in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. Aisling completed her thesis entitled 'How Teagasc Advisory Services Can Improve Engagement with an Empowerment of Farm Women' as part of the programme in conjunction with her supervisors Dr. Monica Gorman (UCD) and Jane Kavanagh (Teagasc). Since January 2017, Aisling has been working as a Drystock Adviser with Teagasc. Aisling is also one of the founding members of the hugely successful South-East Women in Farming group.





Guest Blog Author Profiles

Eamonn O'Reilly, Agricultural Advisor with AIB Bank

Eamonn is originally from Granard, Co Longford, from a beef farming background. He completed his Green Cert in Multyfarnham Agricultural College, followed by a Degree in Agricultural Science in UCD, and is a Qualified Financial Advisor. Eamonn is highly experienced in all areas of Agri Finance, having held various positions in Agri Finance and Leasing and Agri Banking over the past 20 years. In his current role, Eamonn has responsibility for Agri Lending in the 15 Northern Counties and heads up the AIB Northern Agri Team.

Twitter: @eamonnmoreilly



Dr Anne Cassidy, Rural Resource Officer with Galway Rural Development.

Dr Cassidy is a Rural Resource Officer with Galway Rural Development. She was previously a Postdoctoral Researcher working on the Mainstreaming and Development Programme with particular responsibility for the Meitheal and Child and Family Networks Evaluation at NUI Galway. Anne is an experienced researcher with interests in a range of subjects including rural youth sociology, gender, community development and transitions to adulthood. She also held a postdoctoral research position in a joint Teagasc-NUIG project on increasing women's participation in agriculture.



Hannah McNelis, CAFRE Beef & Sheep Adviser

Hannah is CAFRE Beef & Sheep Adviser in Northern Ireland and an Agricultural Science graduate from University College Dublin (UCD). She is also co-founder of the 'North West Women in Farming' group.





RURALIZATION: The Opening of Rural Areas to Renew Rural Generations, Jobs and Farms

Dr Aisling Murtagh & Dr Maura Farrell, Discipline of Geography, NUI Galway

In this National Rural Network guest blog, Dr Aisling Murtagh, RURALIZATION Postdoctoral Researcher in the Discipline of Geography's Rural Studies Unit at NUI Galway and Dr Maura Farrell, Lecturer in the Discipline of Geography at NUI Galway and RURALIZATION Principal Investigator, provide us with an insightful overview of the four-year, €5.9 million RURALIZATION Horizon 2020 project which is exploring innovative ways of overcoming issues of rural decline, as well as supporting rural regeneration and generational renewal.

Urbanisation is a dominant trend that sees increasing population movement away from rural areas and towards cities. This trend is also driven by declining rural and growing urban economies and job opportunities. The RURALIZATION project has been set up to look at how to create a counterforce to urbanisation, where the rural is regenerated, providing opportunities for new generations to stay, return or move to rural areas. Funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, the RURALIZATION project will generate new knowledge to support policy and practice that enables this counterforce of 'ruralisation'.

The RURALIZATION project is exploring innovative ways to overcome issues of rural decline, support rural regeneration and generational renewal. But how can more opportunities for new generations be created in rural areas? The project looks at this from a number of different angles.



RURALIZATION

When concerned with renewing the rural economy, farming is a crucial area of focus. It is not just a source of rural jobs, but also a key part of the rural environment, landscape and culture. RURALIZATION has a strong focus on farming to understand how to facilitate new entrants and successors into farming. These new generations face many, diverse challenges in creating a sustainable livelihood, including building a viable farm business and harnessing innovation to support future development. Existing research has suggested access to farmland is the greatest challenge facing new generations of farmers. RURALIZATION is working to identify, assess and explore the potential transfer to new contexts of promising, innovative practices that facilitate new entrants, successors and address the issue of access to land.

RURALIZATION is also aware that important to rural regeneration is harnessing new economic opportunities, diversifying the rural economy and



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moving away from a reliance on primary sectors such as agriculture and forestry.

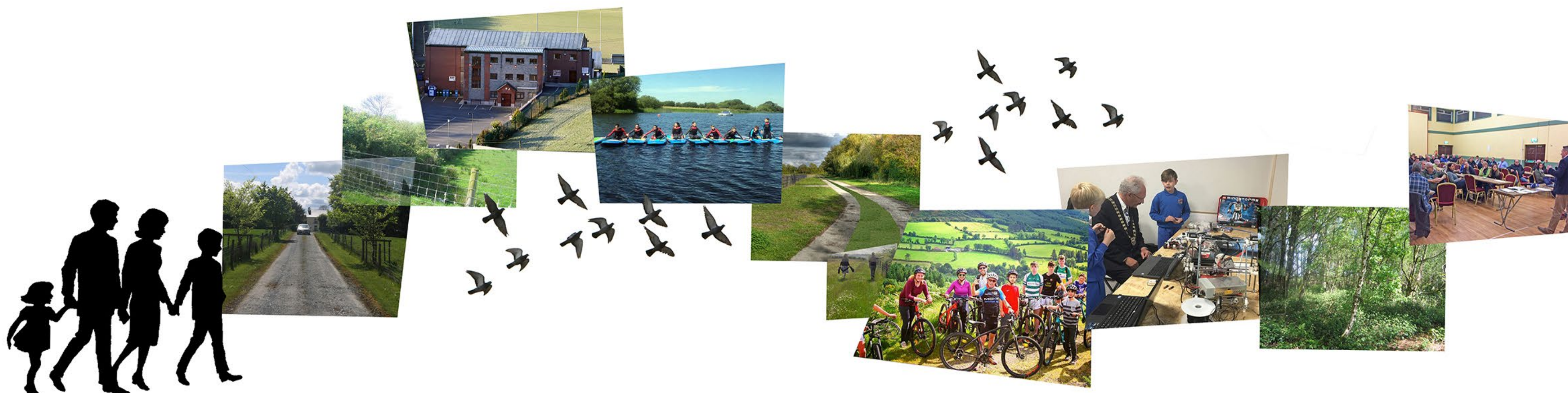
The project also focuses on attracting newcomers to rural areas, which does not just help to alleviate population decline but depending on the type of newcomer, can also generate new job opportunities (e.g. entrepreneur newcomers) or fill skills gaps helping support wider economic growth (e.g. labour migrants). RURALIZATION will also identify, assess and explore the potential transfer to new contexts of promising, innovative practices that facilitate rural newcomers.



Another aspect of RURALIZATION involves foresight analysis and assessing what can make rural areas more attractive to rural youth. This involves an innovative visioning exercise where in regions in 10 European countries data is gathered to understand the 'dream' futures of youth in relation to livelihood, accommodation and lifestyle. A second phase involves engagement with key stakeholders to understand if and how these dream futures can be made come true and finally, a policy agenda will be designed to focus on removal of obstacles.

The RURALIZATION project started in 2019. Since it commenced, it has endeavoured to understand what it can learn from existing research, develop the concepts and theory to assist our analysis, select case studies and gather data on the future dreams of rural youth. RURALIZATION will continue until 2023. Towards the end of the project, the knowledge developed will feed into proposed new regeneration tools and policy options.

The opinions expressed in this article reflect only the authors' view and in no way reflect the European Commission's opinions. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

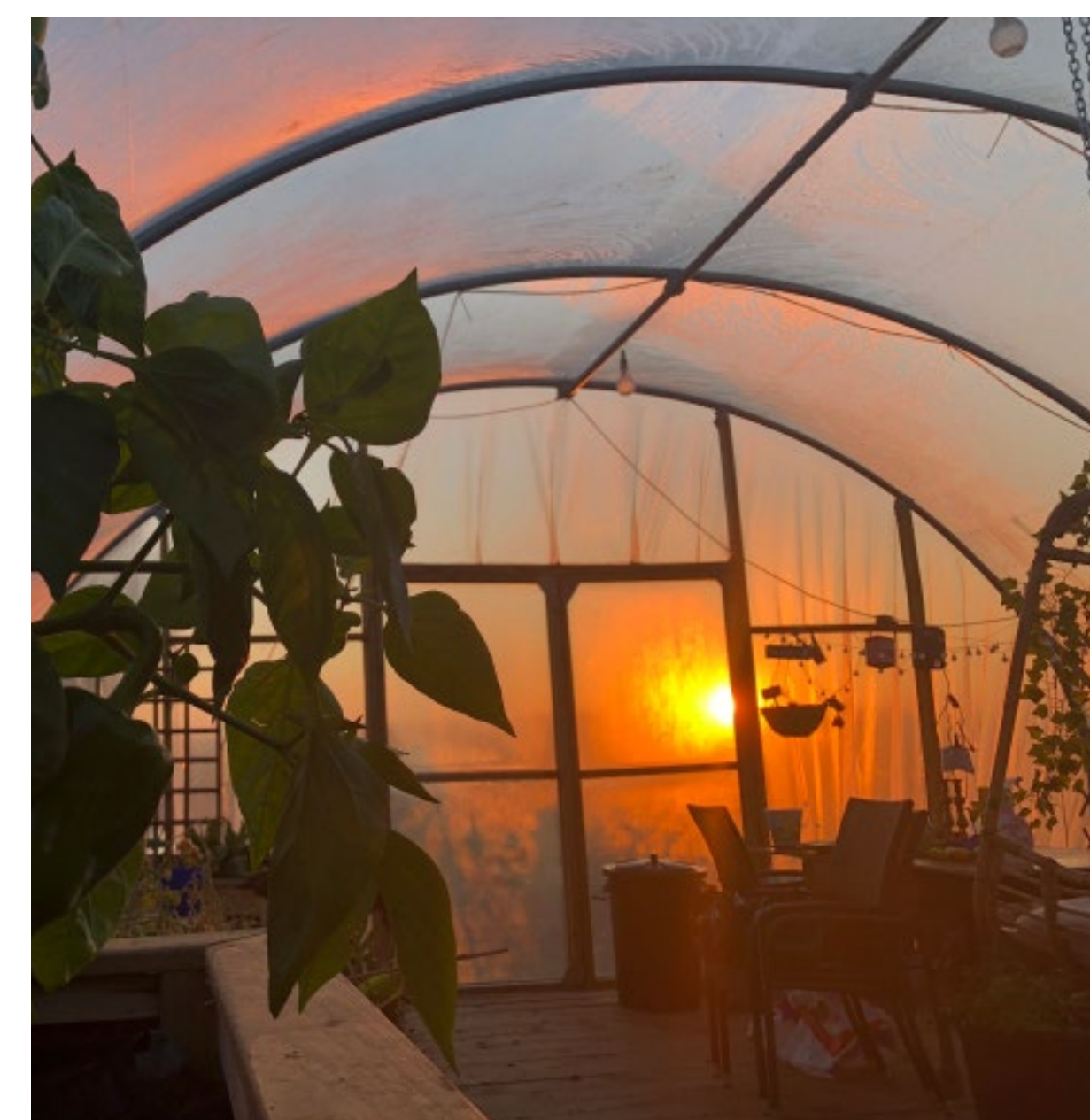




New Entrant to the Agri-food Sector - The Gourmet Gardener

Tara Kate Linnane, Horticulturalist and Permaculture Entrepreneur

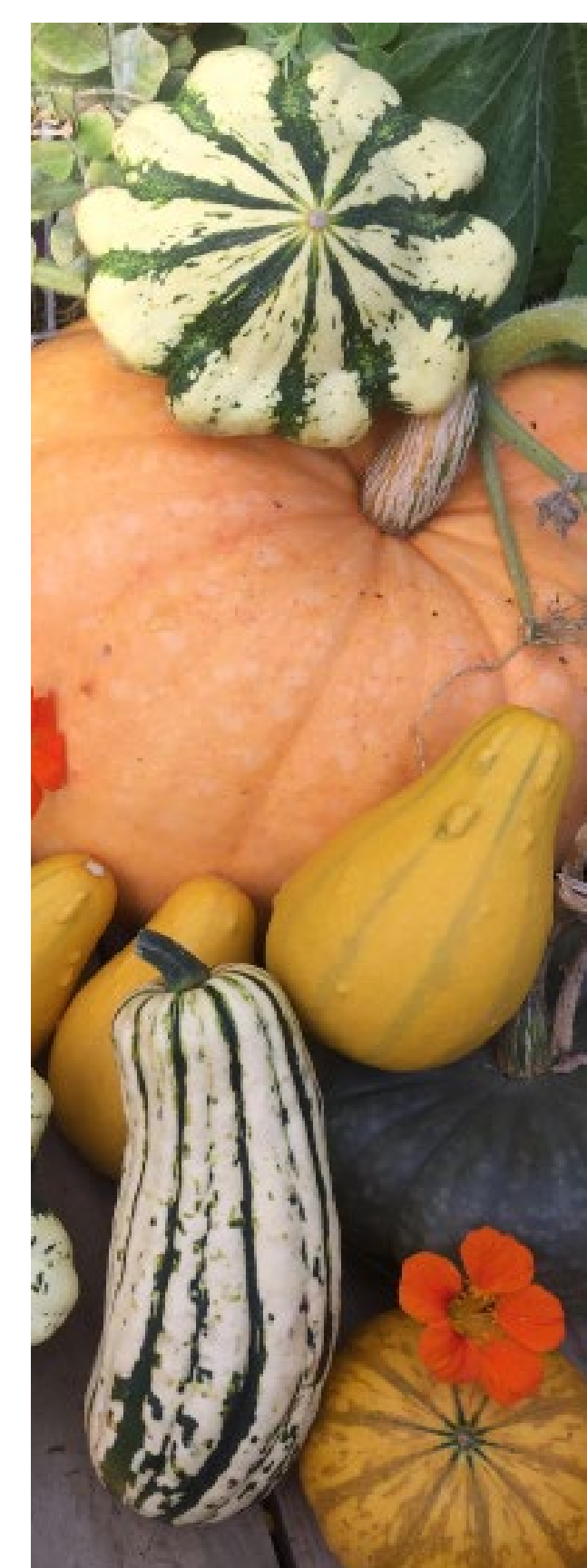
In this National Rural Network guest blog, Horticulturalist Tara Kate Linnane, who was runner up in this year's RTÉ Super Garden Competition, outlines her educational and professional background in the agri-food sector to date. She also provides us with an insight into her passion for growing fruit and vegetables at home, and how a weekly column she writes for the Anglo Celt newspaper called 'The Gourmet Gardener' has provided her with an ideal platform to recently set up a permaculture and sustainable living business called The Foodscape Design Co., that has a particular focus on designing gardens using edible plants. Tara also highlights the therapeutic benefits of such horticultural activities.



As a nation we are going through tough times. Times that are quite uncertain for some and lonely for others. However, every challenging situation provides an opportunity. I feel that these unprecedented times have given me the chance to explore my passion for sustainable living and begin to build a business around it.

My education in horticulture began in the School of Agriculture and Food Science at University College Dublin (UCD), where I studied a Hons BSc degree in Horticulture, Landscape and Sports Turf Management. It was there that an interest for sustainability was sparked, and in particular sustainable practices in small businesses. This led me to study a MSc in Marketing with a focus on Corporate Social Responsibility in the Agri-food industry. My journey continued, meandering through various aspects of horticulture from working in crop production with Breffni Mushrooms, to landscaping and eventually building the confidence to share my knowledge and passion through a weekly column I write for the Anglo Celt newspaper called 'The Gourmet Gardener'. This column is not only an outlet for my passion, but also a source of encouragement to readers to grow your own food at home and the benefits of doing so.

The feedback from the local community has been so rewarding particularly through lockdown as many turned to their own gardens for comfort. The Gourmet Gardener weekly column follows my own journey of growing fruit and vegetables at home in a polytunnel. I believe that this is something that everyone can do a little more of, even on a small balcony or patio. This naturally complimented my interest in design, and so, I embarked on building a business called The Foodscape Design Co., that focusses on designing gardens using edible plants. The concept is inspired by permaculture and sustainable living, and I believe that the principles can be successfully adapted to suit domestic gardens. The business is in its infancy stage, and I am working to develop it. I believe that as the nation looks towards spending more time at home, the importance of health and wellbeing will become magnified. Creating edible gardens can provide physical, physiological and ecological benefits, helping to pave the way for a more sustainable lifestyle. This approach to garden design benefits not just the environment but our own health and can be easily achieved whether you have space for an orchard or a small courtyard.





New Entrant to the Agri-food Sector - The Gourmet Gardener

Tara Kate Linnane, Horticulturalist and Permaculture Entrepreneur

Through my research I have identified that confidence and previous experience are aspects that hold people back from growing their own seasonal food at home. Providing guidance and helping to build knowledge on how to get started are key objectives of my new business venture. I believe that this testing time will draw people back to nature and back to a simpler way of living with sustainability at the core. We need to educate each other on the advantages of growing our own food and the enormous benefits of letting children see how fresh food is grown.



Growing vegetables is fun. Yes, it requires work, but it comes with enormous rewards – food is fresh, tastes better than produce which has been deep chilled or flown halfway across the world, and you have complete control over what goes in the soil to feed your crops. If you want, you can keep your fruit and vegetables pesticide-free. While sustainability is a grounding factor, the benefits of growing your own vegetables are not solely focused on it. In fact, there have been numerous studies linking the benefits of gardening to mental health. I know the positive impact myself, getting out into the garden is almost like a therapy session, and during this time of isolation we could all do with some therapy. This passion for growing and knowledge sharing is what is leading me on my new path, and I am excited and intrigued to see where it brings me.





The Key Aspects of Collaborative Farming

Paidi Kelly, Research Officer at Teagasc's Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre

In this National Rural Network guest blog, Paidi Kelly, Research Officer at Teagasc, Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork, outlines the growing interest in collaborative farming arrangements in Ireland. He also outlines the key aspects to ensure collaborative arrangements operate successfully.

Since the removal of milk quotas in 2015 there has been a significant increase in collaborative farming arrangements (leasing, partnerships and share farming) in Ireland. The Collaborative Farming Grant Scheme (Measure 16 of Ireland's Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014 -2020), introduced by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, has assisted greatly in supporting farmers who are interested in supporting and establishing collaborative farming arrangements. Indeed, supporting young farmers wishing to enter the agricultural sector or improve their farm holdings, is a key priority of the RDP 2014-2020.

Through my role in Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority in Ireland, I've seen over 40 new dairy farming arrangements (between unrelated parties) put together in the last three years. This is creating a new avenue into farming for people who don't have the immediate access to land to farm full time. They may be from small farms or even not from a farming background at all, but they have a passion for farming and the skills to run a profitable farming business.

Collaborative farming is also creating a new option for established farmers without a family member interested in farming. Through a collaborative arrangement they can work with a highly skilled farmer to continue to progress their farm. They are giving an opportunity to a progressive person to get into farming and can continue to earn the same, or potentially more, income from the farm through either expansion, improvements in productivity, or through more efficient tax structures (e.g. long-term leasing).

The success of the Macra Land Mobility Service is testament to the growing interest in collaborative farming. Led by Programme Manager Austin Finn, over 400 collaborative arrangements consisting of over 35,000 acres have been completed since 2014. I believe we have only scratched the service on the potential collaborative farming opportunities have in rural Ireland.



However, there are a number of essential components to collaborative farming arrangements that must be in place in order for them to be successful. I summarise these into three broad categories; the right skills, the right supports, and the right structure.

• Skills:

It takes a phenomenal amount of skill to run a successful dairy farming business. Dairy farmers need to understand the science of profitable farming and apply it to how they manage their grass and cows. In a collaborative farming arrangement a person must have these skills, but also excellent skills around working with people and managing their finances. People skills are crucial. Developing an effective working relationship is the corner stone of every collaborative arrangement. Farming will always



The Key Aspects of Collaborative Farming

Paidi Kelly, Research Officer at Teagasc's Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre

throw unsuspected challenges (drought, snow, price volatility etc.) so there must be a strong working relationship between the two parties to allow them work together to overcome different obstacles. Financial skills are essential to ensure the pie is big enough for everyone and is being split in a fair way. The beauty of collaborative farming is not every party needs to have every skill – that's the beauty of working together – but if cumulatively the skills aren't present then the arrangement will struggle to succeed.

• Supports:

With collaborative farming arrangements a huge amount of time and work is invested before the arrangement even begins. This is because before anything can start everyone needs to be fully clear on the different aspects of the arrangement e.g. financial (who is investing what and what are the returns), legal (exploring the different what if's) and operational (who will be doing what once the arrangement starts). A good support team when putting an arrangement together is crucial so as to get the best possible package in place. This support team should include professionals such as your advisor, accountant, solicitor and banker but also the wider farm family and ideally some farming contacts with prior experience. The better the support structure the more successful the arrangement is likely to be (it will help to put the arrangement together and also help it operate successfully). But from my experience even the best support structure will struggle to support an arrangement if the skills mix is not right at the start. The aforementioned current RDP 2014-2020 includes a grant for the cost of putting a partnership agreement together helping to pay for the input of the different professionals in the support team.

• Structure:

This is often the aspect of the arrangement discussed most – should it be a lease or a partnership? If a partnership what should the profit split be? Etc. etc. In my experience with the right mix of skills and a good support network, it's relatively easy to decide on which structure is best. Teagasc have guidelines to leasing, partnerships and share farming available online. A considerable amount of effort (reviewing budgets etc.) is needed to get the structure right at the start but once this is done correctly (with legal agreements clarify different roles) it sets up the parties to focus on operating the arrangement successfully.



In summary collaborative opportunities offer a huge amount of benefits to farmers, but having the required skills, a strong support team, and the right structure are key.





Assessing Access to Land Across the European Union

Dr Shane Conway, Rural Studies Unit, Discipline of Geography, NUI Galway

In this guest blog, Dr Shane Conway, Researcher in the Discipline of Geography's Rural Studies Unit at NUI Galway provides us with an insight into the importance of land mobility (i.e. transfer of land from one farmer to another, or from one generation to the next) in achieving generational renewal in agriculture, and the obstacles preventing farmers gaining access to land. Dr Conway also provides us with a number of examples of policy initiatives and farmers' projects in existence throughout Europe that are successfully addressing challenges in generational renewal by linking farmers to available land, as well as connecting new farmers with older ones, leading to a better return for all parties involved.

Given the importance of land mobility (i.e. transfer of land from one farmer to another, or from one generation to the next) in achieving generational renewal in agriculture, and the extent to which low levels of mobility can hinder structural development and growth within the farming sector, increasing access to land for young farmers and new entrants across EU Member States is one of the European Commission's key priorities in the upcoming CAP reform (Dwyer et al., 2019). The limited supply of land available for purchase or secure rental in several European countries however, in addition to the prevailing high price of land that is available, have resulted in extraordinary socio-economic challenges for new entrants aspiring to pursue farming as a career however, as well as for young farmers seeking additional land to develop a more viable farming enterprise (Zagata et al., 2017; Conway et al. 2019).

Furthermore, stubborn adherence to traditional patterns of inheritance, combined with the senior generation's reluctance to release their grip on the business, often results in the younger generation having to wait 20 to 30 years to assume managerial control and ownership of the farm (Conway et al., 2017). Keating (1996) notes that such a long period of family apprenticeship is 'analogous to that of Prince Charles, heir to the British throne (p.414). His mother, Queen Elizabeth II, is still in control. By the time Prince Charles succeeds to the throne, his own son will be ready to assume the role and somewhat ironically his son, Prince William, may also find himself spending most of his adult life as an apprentice in the family business' (ibid). This predicament may also be the case for many 'younger' farmers worldwide, resulting in significant difficulties gaining access to land (Ingram and Kirwan, 2011).



As every farm and farmer is unique throughout Europe, there are no uniform or easily prescribed solutions to resolving the intergenerational farm transfer and land mobility conundrum. Innovative 'match-making' models of collaboration between generations to help young people commence and develop their farming careers known as 'Joint Farming Ventures' (JFVs) however have been advocated within policy discourses as ideal stepping stones to help overcome obstacles to land access by enabling young farmers to become formal partners in the family farm business. JFVs including arrangements such as farm partnerships, share farming and contract rearing, also allow the older generation to remain active and embedded in the farming community in later life, something that is considered to be crucial to their mental health and wellbeing (Conway et al. 2019).



Image Credit: Dr Shane Conway, NUI Galway



Assessing Access to Land Across the European Union

Dr Shane Conway, Rural Studies Unit, Discipline of Geography, NUI Galway

Match-making People and Land throughout Europe

Match-making people and land throughout Europe
Examples of policy initiatives and farmers' projects
in existence throughout Europe that are successfully
addressing challenges in generational renewal by
linking farmers to available land, as well as connecting
new farmers with older ones, leading to a better
return for all parties involved, are listed below:

Ireland



Land Mobility Service

The Irish Land Mobility Service was established in 2013. It is a dedicated, proactive support service for farmers and farm families who are contemplating expansion, changing enterprise, or stepping back from farming. It provides a confidential and independent match-making service to introduce older farmers and/or landowners with young people who want to develop their own career in farming in order to establish sustainable and mutually beneficial business arrangements. The main aim of the service is to facilitate access to land through various forms of collaborative farming arrangements. Since its inception the service has been involved in excess of 500 arrangements covering more than 47,000 acres (19,020 hectares). Today, the Service actively engages with over 200 people who are either looking for opportunities or their options. These people fall into three categories: landowners who wish to retire, new entrants to Farming, and existing farmers looking to expand.

Land Mobility

Working towards a shared future

Home Options Background Information Long Term Leasing Collaborative Farming Partnerships Corporate Structure Downloads

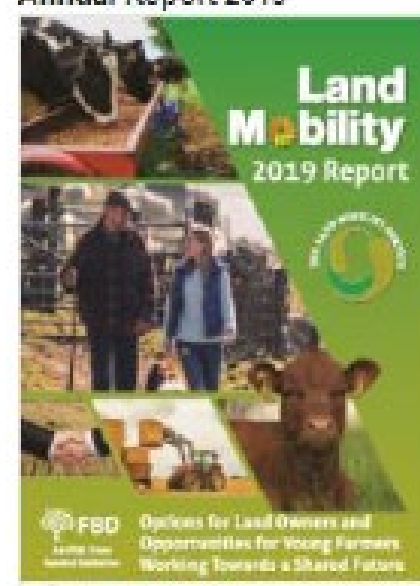
Land Mobility 2019 Report

The 2019 Report on Land Mobility was recently presented to Minister Creed. The Departments of Agriculture and Finance have strongly supported Land Mobility and The Land Mobility Service since its inception in 2014. Income Tax Reliefs for Long Term Leasing and The Farm Partnership Register are just two examples of this support. Such supports together with the confidential expert service established by Macra na Feirme and FBD Trust has facilitated Land Mobility.

Land Mobility progress has been phenomenal, the Service has moved from a pilot to a



Annual Report 2019

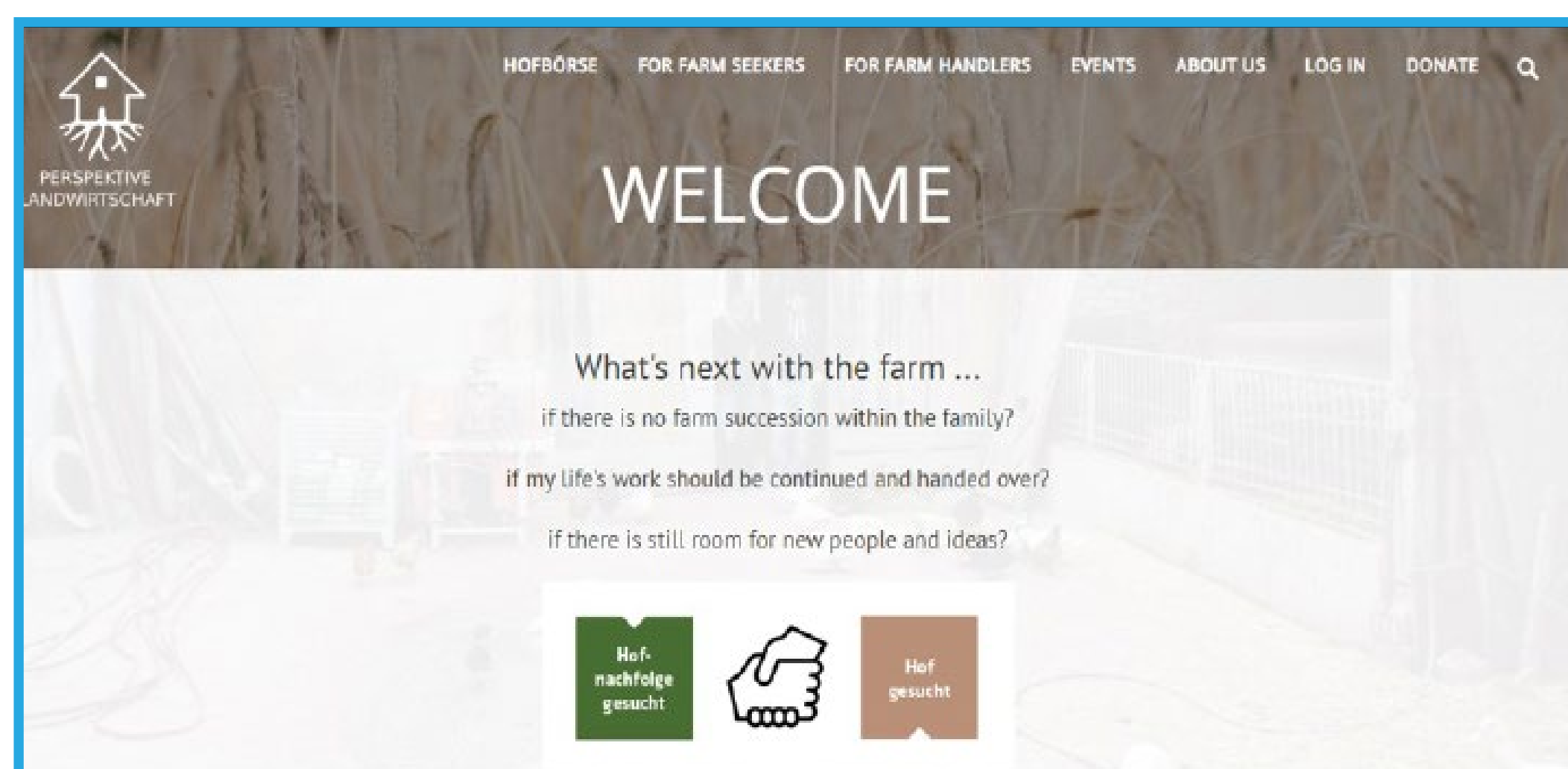


Austria



Perspektive Landwirtschaft (Perspective Agriculture)

In Austria, NEL, a non-profit Austrian association supporting new entrants into farming and raising awareness on farm succession by means of adult education, information, advice and research have been providing a matching programme called Perspective Agriculture (Perspektive Landwirtschaft) since December 2017. This farm start-up platform connects farmers without a successor to prospective, aspiring farmers. The programme's website provides information on extra-familial farm succession and farm start-ups and collects contacts legal consultants by region for example.



Germany



Hof sucht Bauer

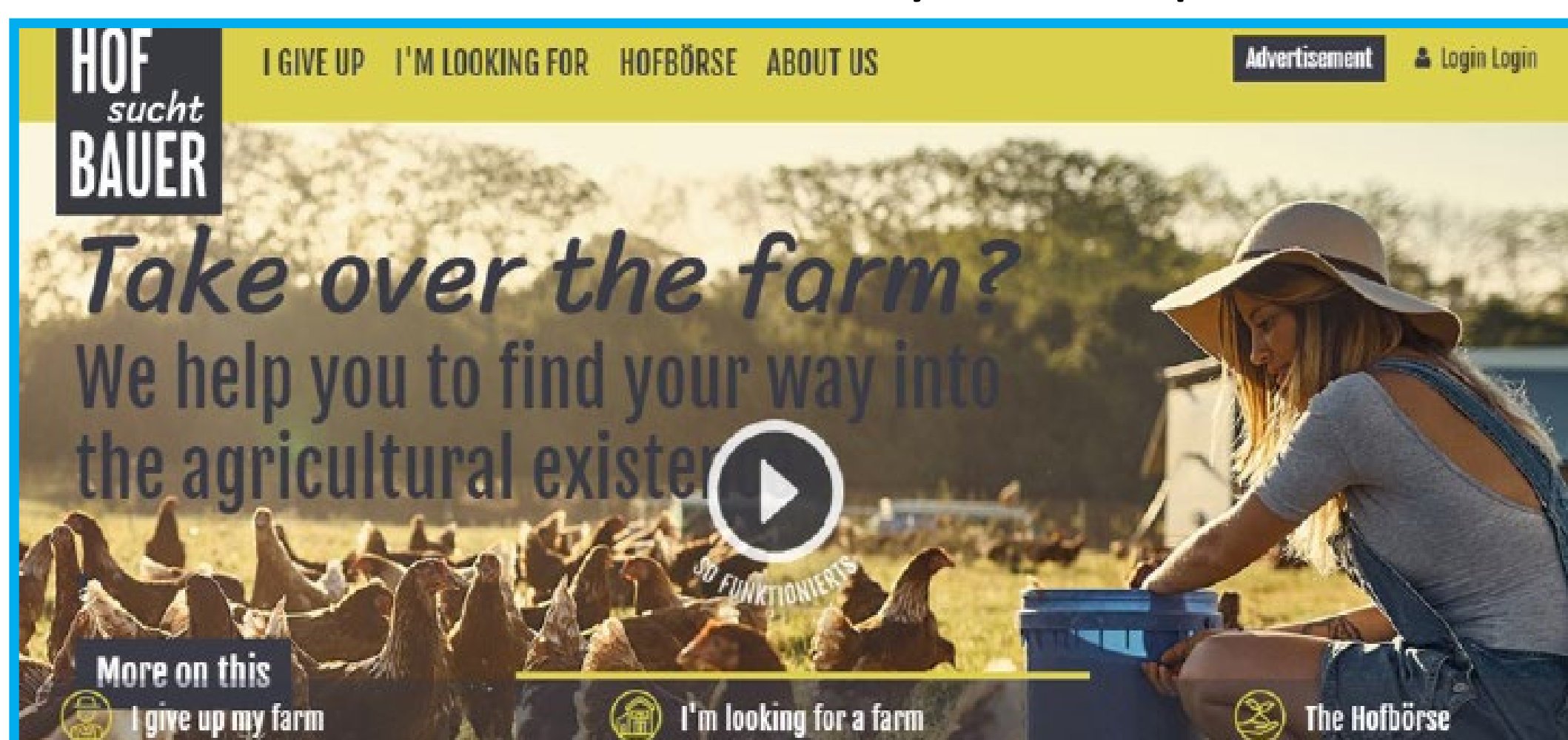
Hof sucht Bauer is social enterprise in Germany that offers advice and information on farm succession and business start-up in agriculture. It aims to help preserve existing agricultural businesses and ensure the future survival of farming in Germany by facilitating the successful intergenerational transfer of farms from both inside and outside the family, depending on the circumstances. The organisation's internet portal (hofsuchtbauer.de) offers a useful online matchmaking platform called 'Hofbörse' to connect and support farm owners with young, well-trained people who want to get established in agriculture throughout Germany. Hof sucht Bauer's



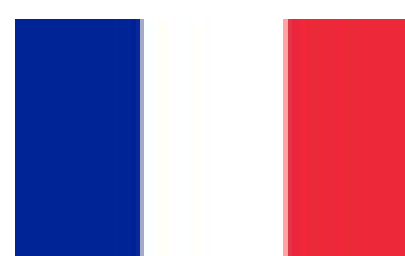
Assessing Access to Land Across the European Union

Dr Shane Conway, Rural Studies Unit, Discipline of Geography, NUI Galway

specialized advisory service also offers support to both sides involved in the consultation and handover process in a personal, yet professional manner to enable a successful transfer of the farm to occur. Hof sucht Bauer also organise nationwide information events that focus on domestic and non-family farm handover. Their seminars also include contributions and reports on successful succession from specialists such as tax consultants or lawyers and practitioners.



France



Répertoire Départ Installation (Directory Departure Installation)

In France, the Répertoire Départ Installation (RDI) is a national farm transmission tool led by experienced advisers within the French Chambers of Agriculture. This system allows farmers seeking to sell their farm or wishing to find a new partner to connect and be put in contact with candidates looking to farm. It publishes over 6,400 offers annually on its directory. The RDI also provides essential information on farm transfer and organises transmission meetings.



Italy



Banca delle Terre Agricole (National Bank of Agricultural Lands)

In Italy, BancadelleTerreAgricole, hereinafter referred to as 'Banca' effectively allocates farmland to new farmers. It is managed by ISMEA (Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare) and operates at a national level since its establishment in 2016. Banca provides a complete inventory of the supply and demand of agricultural land that become available in Italy as a result of abandonment of production activity and early retirement or land operations carried out by ISMEA. Banca is a freely accessible tool that provides open information on the natural, structural and infrastructural characteristics of the land on offer, as well as on the terms and conditions of sale and purchase of the same.



Image Credit: Dr Shane Conway, NUI Galway



Assessing Access to Land Across the European Union

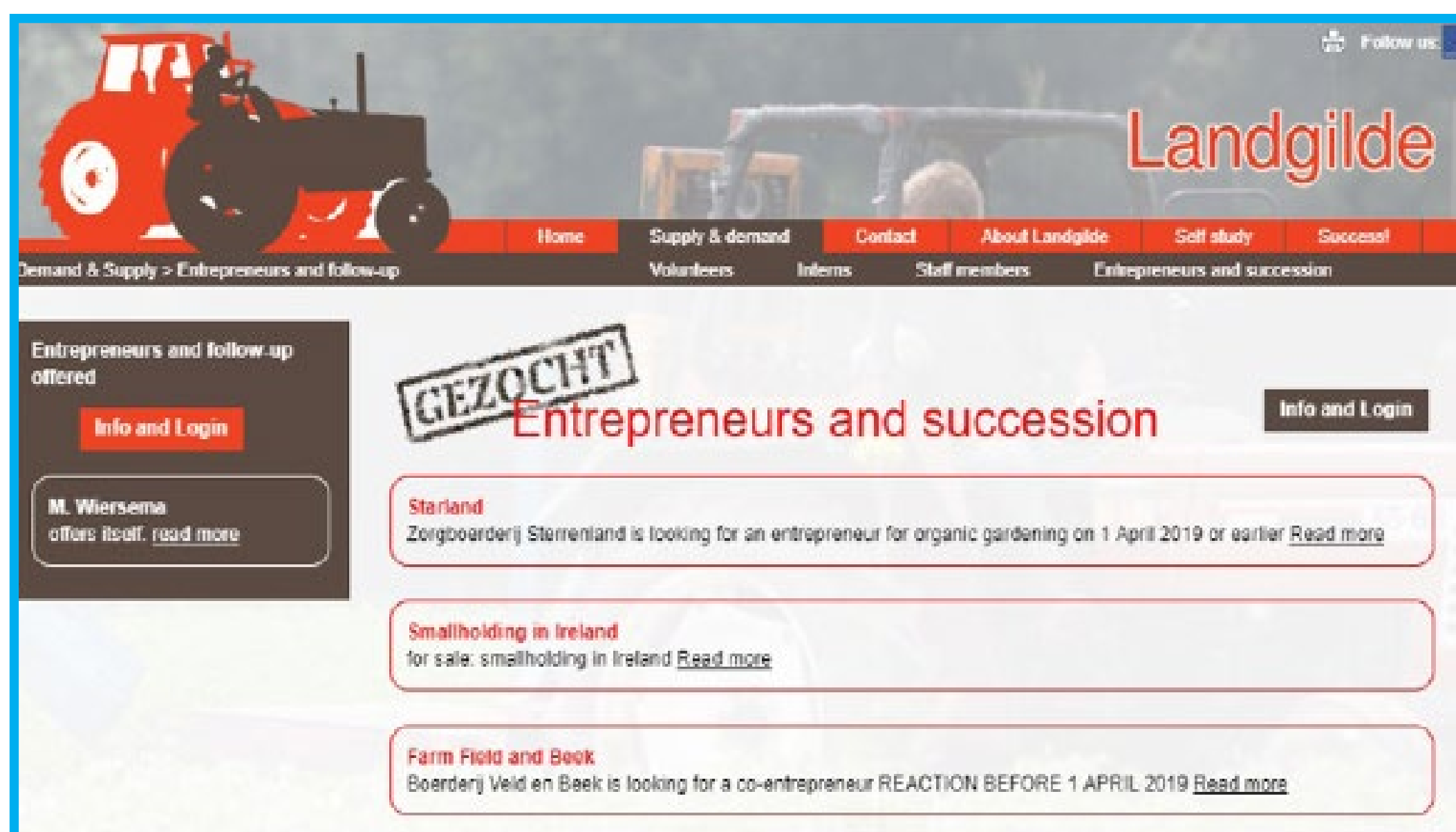
Dr Shane Conway, Rural Studies Unit, Discipline of Geography, NUI Galway

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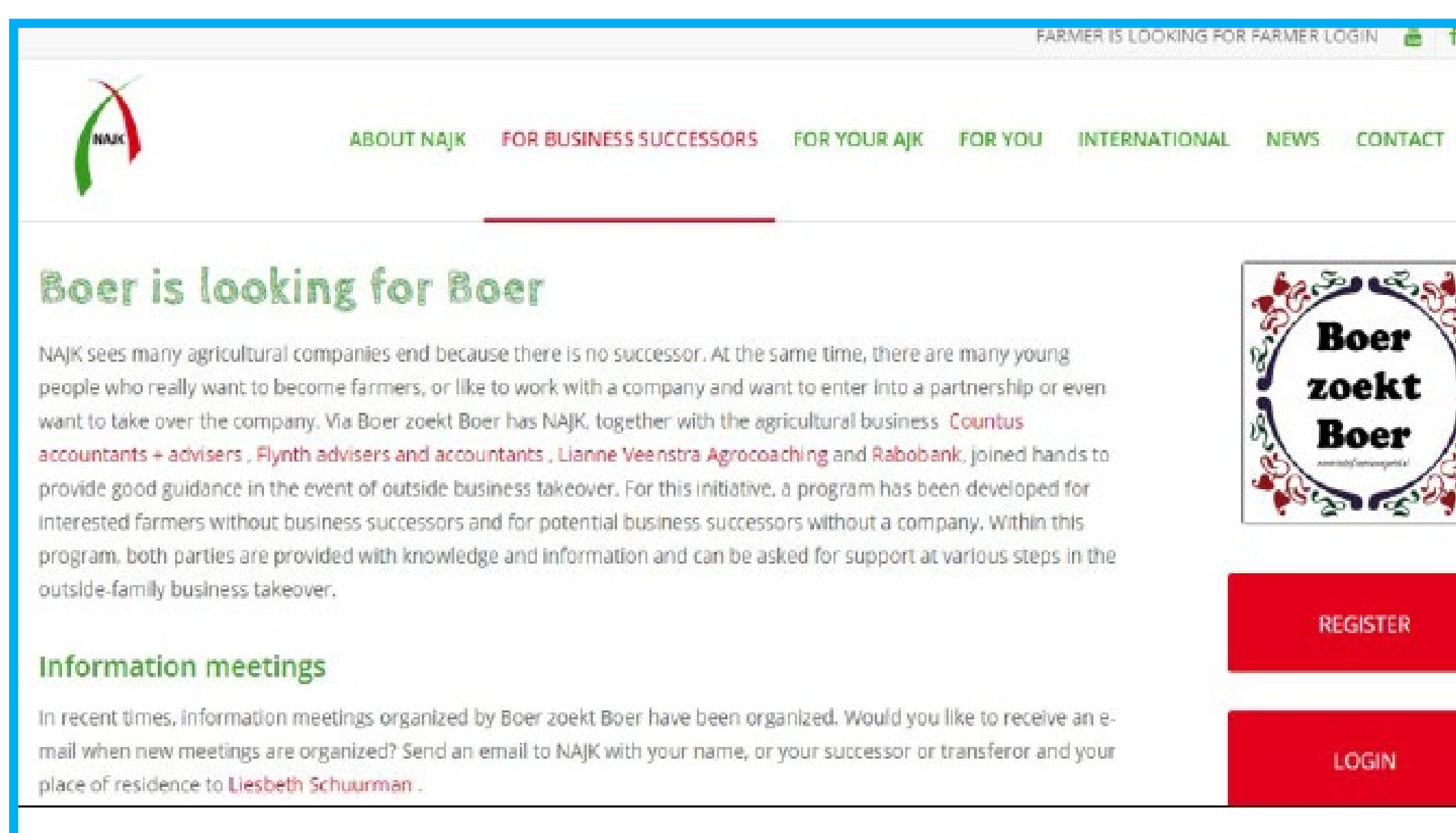
Landgilde

Landgilde is a Dutch initiative established by Land & Co that aims to match young and old farmers in order to facilitate extra-familial farm succession. The model is based on the idea of a guild, making it possible for beginning farmers of different levels of experience and skills to connect and meet with each other, and find working and learning opportunities with older farmers. Landgilde also offers information, guidance and training on farm succession and farm continuity.



Boer zoekt Boer (Farmer Seeks Farmer)

Boer zoekt Boer is an online platform created by the Dutch Agricultural Young People Contact (NAJK) that brings retiring farmers without a successor together with young people who would like to take over a farm. The programme then guides both parties towards a successful intergenerational farm transfer process outside of the family.



Civic Initiatives Supporting New Entrants into Farming

Interestingly, of the 10.8 million family farms in the European Union farms, two thirds are less than 5ha in size. As land is the core asset for productive agriculture, securing long-term access to additional land is thus imperative for young and new entrants to farming who want to put together farm holdings of an efficient size that will increase their productivity and viability. In the context of current trends of land concentration and price increase, several civic initiatives have been developed over the past decade throughout Europe in an effort to challenge commonly accepted perceptions of land ownership and farm succession. Civic Initiatives are networks and organisations from civil society which are operationally involved in supporting new entrants, promoting access to land and sustainable stewardship. The idea that land should be a public common is far from mainstream but is growing, in light of the emergence of a number of such initiatives in many European countries to support land mobility. These civic initiatives are mostly community and/or farmer-led initiatives which aim for a closer relationship between farmers and community members/consumers. They also engage with a broader range of stakeholders and attempt to protect the environment through agriculture as a 'public good' (Hagenhofer 2015).

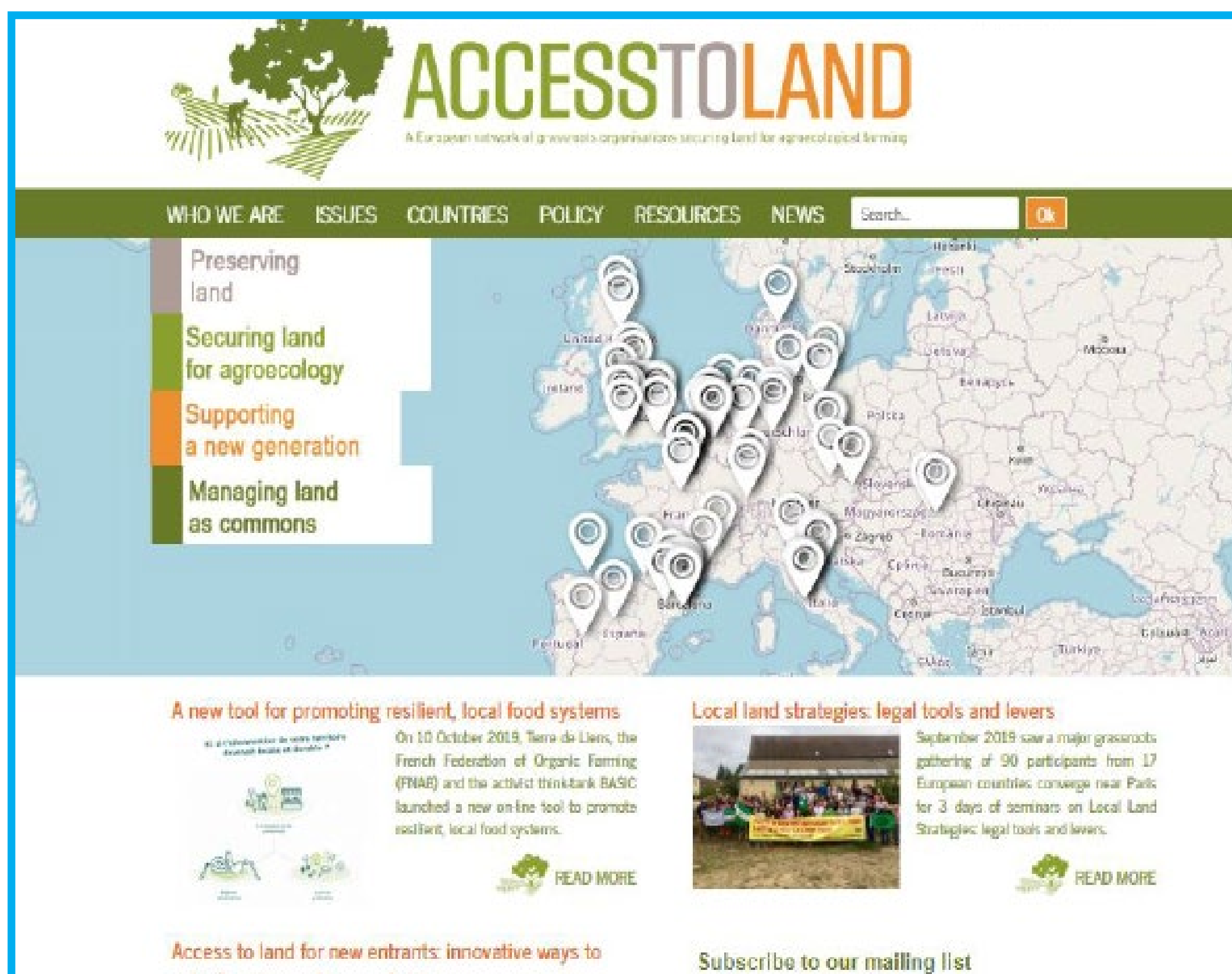
European Access to Land Network

The European Access to Land Network brings together such organisations from across Europe to share experiences, practical ways of assisting farmers in accessing land and promote the significance of land mobility for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 20 organisations from Belgium, Spain, Italy, France, U.K., Lithuania, Germany and Romania. The network aims at reconsidering land as a common good where citizens, farmers and public authorities collaborate. The network's main objectives are to consolidate and disseminate initiatives on access to land, and to put land issues in the spotlight.



Assessing Access to Land Across the European Union

Dr Shane Conway, Rural Studies Unit, Discipline of Geography, NUI Galway



One of the most notable and well-known civic initiatives helping to facilitate land mobility in Europe is Terre de liens in France. Founded in 2003, Terre de Liens is regarded a major actor in the field of access to land for ecological agriculture. Terre de Liens directly acquires farmland, which it holds in perpetuity for current and future generations. Terre de Liens' land is let to farmers, the majority of whom are organic and small scale. To acquire such land, Terre de Liens has created two financial tools: la Foncière, a solidarity investment company; and le Fonds, an Endowment Trust which collects investment or donations in cash or kind. A study on European civic initiatives by Hagenhofer (2015) highlights that such bodies have the potential to become drivers of a new agro-social paradigm in European agriculture.



Image Credit: Dr Shane Conway, NUI Galway

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Young Farmers, Decision-making and Innovation

Dr Jessica McKillop

In this National Rural Network guest blog, Dr Jessica McKillop, Evaluation Officer with Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority of Ireland, former Teagasc Walsh Fellow, highlights the key role young farmers play in ensuring the sustainability and future prosperity of agricultural production in an era of unprecedented growth in global population levels. She also provides us with an overview of empirical findings from her PhD research on young farmer innovation and its capacity to develop and grow the family farm model into the future.



Global challenges, such as an increasing world population and the subsequent demand for agri-food products, has resulted in a greater pressure being applied to farmers to become more production orientated (Wheeler et al., 2015). In this ever-evolving society, young farmers in particular are critical in ensuring the sustainability and future prosperity of agricultural production, as they are the future landowners. The important role young farmers play in ensuring the continuation of the family farm is widely recognised in literature, however their input and contribution to the agricultural sector is not without its difficulties.

By exploring organisational innovation in farm families, in particular intergenerational farm type arrangements, it is evident that different scenarios arise for young farmers. Innovation in agriculture plays a key role in producing more food without depleting natural resources. A positive environment for innovation is hypothesised if the family farm arrangement generates autonomy in decision making for the young farmer; a situation, which is likely to arise within a formal arrangement. A formal arrangement refers to farm partnerships and lease agreements whereas informal arrangements refer to the more traditional farms where a young farmer farms alongside a parent or both parents without any legal agreement in place.

Common to the formal farm arrangements was a history of intra family communication about the future of the farm, prior to the establishment of the formal arrangement. Such communication facilitated smoother intra family working relationships in general, which in turn created an environment more conducive to changing farm practices and trying out new ideas.





Young Farmers, Decision-making and Innovation

Dr Jessica McKillop

Young farmers realise the importance of developing strong communication with family members around the day-to-day management of the farm as well as the future of the farm. However, such conversations over the decision-making on the farm were evidently very difficult for some young farmers where an older generation had not considered the new working relationships, which need to develop to ensure the viability of the family farm into the future.



These discussions evidently need to be more supported at a national policy and extension level to ensure that young farmers can have greater control and ownership over the decision-making process on the farm allowing for greater innovation which in turn should allow the farm to grow and develop for future generations.

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How do we Transition to Smart Farming in Ireland?

Dr Peter Mooney and Dr Liadh Kelly, Department of Computer Science, Maynooth University

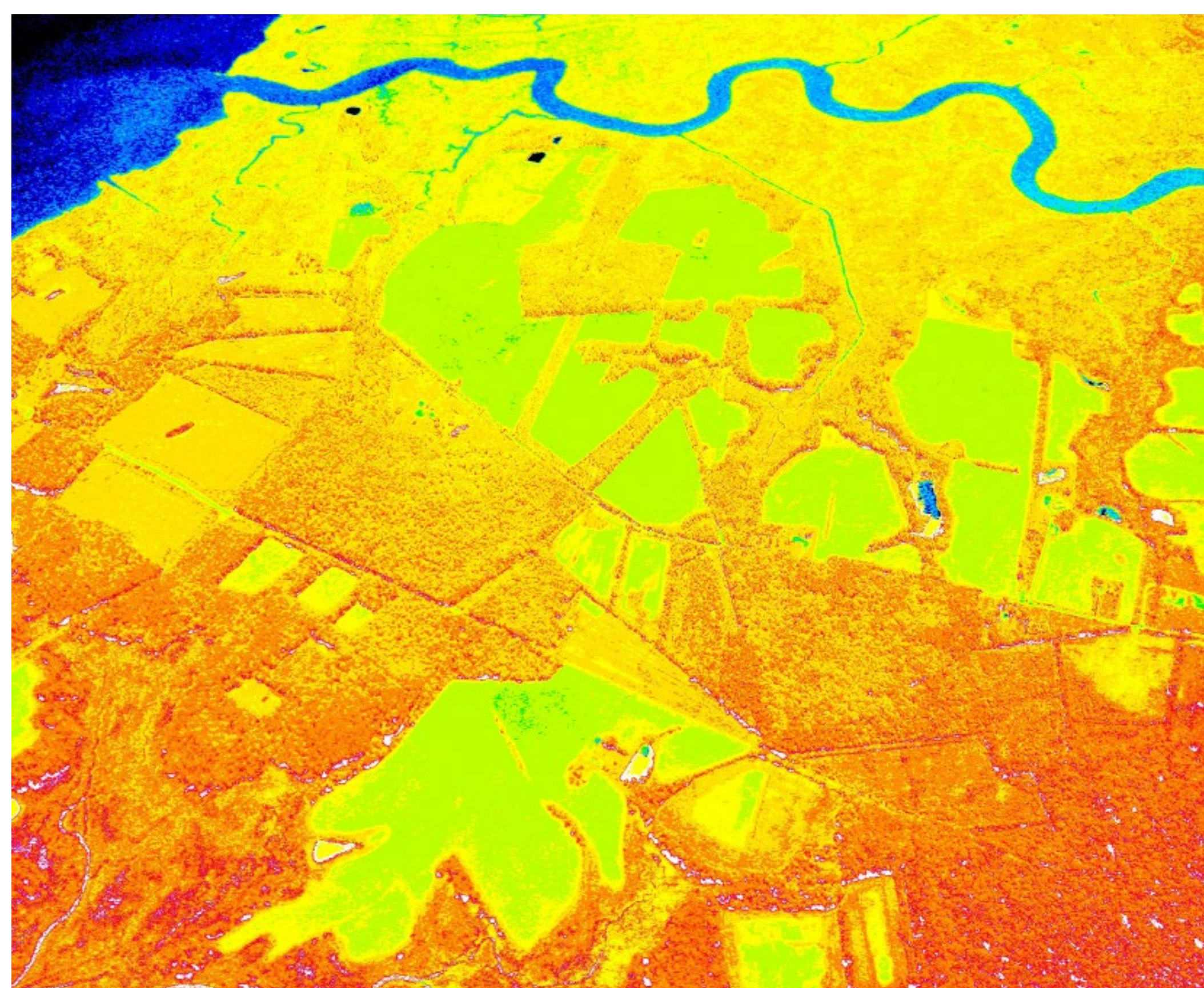
In this National Rural Network guest blog, Dr Peter Mooney and Dr Liadh Kelly, Lecturers in the Department of Computer Science at Maynooth University, provide us with a comprehensive insight into the huge potential of Smart Farming Technologies to improve the efficiency and productivity of Irish agriculture, and how such a transition could occur. They also highlight that such technologies are emerging to complement and enhance the existing skillset and knowledge base of the farming community, but not to replace them.



Every farm in Ireland has the ability to become a smart farm. A smart farm is one which uses technologies such as sensors and mobile-phone applications combined with agricultural, environmental and economic data to assist farmers in their decision making, planning and farm management. By exploring and integrating these types of smart farming technologies we believe all farms from small holdings upwards can become more efficient and productive.

Why is a transition to smart farming in Ireland a good idea? Today's farmer is not just a person who makes their living from agriculture. Today's farmer also needs to be an accountant, an economist, a planner, a manager, etc. A transition to smart farming can supplement and assist farmers in the multi-faceted day-to-day workings of the modern farm. This will help farmers make decisions more quickly and with greater certainty. The knowledge and skills of farmers are supplemented and not substituted.

Imagine the following smart farm scenario. Machinery such as combine harvesters, sprayers, tillage machines, etc. are collecting data about harvests, yields and soil conditions. This data can be integrated or joined to relevant, local, and up-to-date environmental information, weather data, etc. Animal herds are wearing GPS enabled trackers, enabling the creation of maps and analysis of their grazing, movement and other habits. Drones fly above crops and fields, with the ability to take high resolution photographs which can be automatically analysed to identify crop disease, poor soil patterns, etc. This scenario is not one of science fiction but is one of technological reality.





How do we Transition to Smart Farming in Ireland?

Dr Peter Mooney and Dr Liadh Kelly, Department of Computer Science, Maynooth University

How does the transition to smart farming in Ireland actually happen?

To mainstream this vision of Smart Farming in Ireland will take effort, investment and time. However, the best time to start is now! Efforts must be made to mainstream smart farming into education and training, such as Agricultural Science curriculum at Leaving Certificate, College and University levels. Policy makers, research institutions and farming organisations will need to put effort and resources into disseminating and demonstrating successful Smart Farming use-cases at the farm level. This can be driven and facilitated by peer-to-peer exchanges, training and demonstration of Smart Farming, demonstrations at events such as the National Ploughing Championship or Tullamore Show.

Smart Farming Technologies are a new and innovative set of tools which can be used by farmers on their farms. They provide the fabric to close the gap between agricultural research and rural development. Farmers will be able to make more environmentally sustainable decisions. Crucially, it can provide farmers with more time to spend on other activities within their rural communities.



These technologies are not an endpoint in themselves. Smart Farming Technologies are emerging to complement and enhance the skills and knowledge of farmers but not to replace them. Rumours of a future where robotic machines take complete control in agriculture are greatly exaggerated, inaccurate and generally unhelpful. There's no need to throw away the boots and overalls just yet!





Promoting Irish Farm Women's Engagement with Agricultural Advisory Services Aisling Molloy, Drystock Adviser with Teagasc

In this National Rural Network guest blog, Aisling Molloy, Drystock Adviser with Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority in Ireland, one of the founding members of the South-East Women in Farming group and former Teagasc Walsh Fellow outlines the key role women play in agriculture, and provides us with some findings and recommendations derived from her MAgSc research thesis entitled 'How Teagasc Advisory Services Can Improve Engagement with an Empowerment of Farm Women', that she carried out as part of her Masters Degree in Agricultural Innovation and Support Programme at Teagasc and University College Dublin (UCD).

The link between women's active role on farms and the potential for multi-functionality and innovative farm enterprises has been highlighted in numerous studies throughout the world (Gorman, 2006; Jarosz, 2011; Mulhall and Bogue, 2013). Furthermore, Rahman (2010) found that technical efficiency is significantly improved where females are working on a farm.

Women's role in agriculture, is often understated however and in many cases, invisible. According to the CSO (2012), 74,092 women worked on Irish farms in 2010, making up 27% of the agricultural workforce. However, only 4,829 are registered clients with the public farm advisory service (Teagasc); meaning that there are over 69,000 farm women in Ireland not engaging with agricultural advisory services. Factors contributing to this low level of engagement include traditional gender roles and relationships in farming, as well as structural or cultural barriers in the way that advisory services are provided.

Research findings from my Masters in Agricultural Innovation and Support research thesis, carried out with 233 women working and/or living on farms in Co. Wexford, indicate that agricultural advisory services need to make a more conscious and concerted effort to include farm women. Empirical research findings illustrate that the majority of research respondents engage with advisory services less than 3 times per year, despite having a keen interest in learning about cash-flow planning, business planning, soil fertility, animal nutrition, personal development and computer skills, all of which would ultimately aid in the development of their farms.



Farm women's learning needs must be considered when designing future agricultural advisory programmes. Based on the study results, I propose that the lack of engagement currently being experienced could be eradicated by naming family members in correspondence (i.e. letters/invites to events/newsletters etc.) and by publishing gender-balanced material.





Promoting Irish Farm Women's Engagement with Agricultural Advisory Services

Aisling Molloy, Drystock Adviser with Teagasc

Furthermore, training should be provided to agricultural advisers to make them aware of farm women's needs. Moreover, the surge in interest and activity from the various regional groups of farm women in operation throughout Ireland, such as South East Women in Farming, West Women in Farming, North West Women in Farming and Meitheal na mBan - Rural Women Munster, offers an increasing opportunity for Teagasc and other agricultural organisations to collaborate further with female farmers in attendance at the various meetings they organize and to gain a greater insight into the type of information and specific needs that farm women require. Female discussion groups could also be piloted by such organisations to evaluate whether or not they could be effective in increasing women's engagement with agricultural advisory services. Highlighting female farmers more in the media is another key strategy that may increase engagement.



Overall, I believe that a greater engagement with agricultural advisory services would enhance and empower women's contribution to decision making processes on the farm around key areas of technology uptake for example, ultimately benefiting viability and competitiveness on their home farms, and the agri-food sector more generally. Indeed, on a global scale, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (2011) have estimated that if farm women had similar access to resources as their male counterparts, agricultural output could be increased by as much as 4% and global hunger reduced by 12-17%.

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Key Considerations when Planning Farm Investment

Eamonn O'Reilly, Agricultural Advisor with AIB Bank

In this National Rural Network guest blog, Eamonn O'Reilly, Agricultural Advisor with AIB Bank, outlines the grant-aid funding available to younger farmers under the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS II), and its role in helping to meet the considerable capital costs associated with the establishment and/or improvement of farm enterprises by providing young farmers with an incentive to upgrade their farm buildings and/or purchase equipment. He also highlights the key considerations that should be taken when planning farm investment.



Young farmers by their nature are continually looking at how best to position their farms for the future, and with the availability of grant-aid under the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS II) farm investment schemes, many are upgrading farm facilities to increase output and/or improve on farm efficiencies. TAMS II was launched under Ireland's Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020 in May 2015 and is co-funded under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Indeed, supporting young farmers wishing to enter the agricultural sector or improve their farm holdings, is a key priority of the RDP 2014-2020.

While it is important to make the most of opportunities as they arise, I would encourage all young farmers to thoroughly plan any farm investment and devote adequate time and resources to the pre-planning phase. It is important to get an understanding of the total costs involved and how they will be funded. I sometimes find that this part of the process does not always get the attention it deserves.

Preparing Costings

From my experience farm development often takes longer to complete and costs more than was originally planned and budgeted for. In addition, while many farm investments will contribute to increased profitability in the longer term, they can in some cases place pressure on the farm current account in the immediate term if not fully costed correctly or where the farm tries to fund the investment from cash flow.

Consequently, before undertaking any farm development, it is important to cost the development fully and it is prudent to include a contingency cost of c. 10-20%. It can be easy to overlook some costs at the planning stage, such as legal fees, county council's fees and other pre-construction costs.





Key Considerations when Planning Farm Investment

Eamonn O'Reilly, Agricultural Advisor with AIB Bank

To get an idea of the costs involved, it is good advice to get quotations from a number of different contractors. Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority in Ireland also have standard costings available which can be a useful reference when developing costings for your own development.

Many farmers will require some level of bank finance to support their on-farm investment plans. I have outlined below some of the key considerations if applying for Bank Finance:

1. Come and talk to your bank at an early stage. In most instances an Agri lending application form will have to be completed. Your AIB relationship manager can offer guidance on what supporting information will be required for your application, the appropriate structure for your request, and give indicative repayments on the proposed term of the loan.
2. It's important to assess the average profitability of the business over a number of years (the previous 3-5 years) rather than looking at the profitability in any one year. This gives a truer reflection of business performance and helps to avoid making investment decisions on the profitability of your farm in a particularly good year.
3. It's also important to understand the difference between farm profit and available cashflow to meet new loan repayments. The available farm profit generated in any one year may have to be allocated to other areas before the free cashflow available to fund new repayments is evident. For example, a farmer's living expenses, tax payable and existing farm repayments may all have to be deducted from farm profit before the free cashflow to meet new repayments is evident.
4. Finally, I would encourage farmers to term their loan over as long a period as being offered from their bank, as they have the option, on variable rate interest loans, to make out of course reductions over and above the annual agreed repayment structure. Also, with any on farm investment, there will be a 'bedding in' period and the cash benefits of that investment may not be readily evident for a number of years. It's important during this bedding in period that the farm is not under cashflow pressure caused by large repayments over a short term.



AIB is committed to supporting the development of the Agri sector. For farm development finance we offer terms of up to 15 years and also offer bridging finance if a farmer will be in receipt of a grant and/or vat rebates on the project. I would encourage any farmer considering an investment on their farm to engage with an AIB Business Advisor at an early stage and see how we can help increase the sustainability and efficiency of their farm holdings in the months and years ahead. In summation, grant-aid support under the TAMS II scheme is a successful method of improving individual farm incomes, as well as increasing the competitiveness of the Irish agricultural sector as a whole, and helping to ensure the future sustainability of rural communities.

Lending criteria, terms and conditions apply. Credit facilities are subject to repayment capacity and financial status and are not available to persons under 18 years of age. Security may be required. Allied Irish Banks, p.l.c. is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.



Is it Time to Rethink the 'Ideal' Farm Successor?

Dr Anne Cassidy, Rural Resource Officer, Galway Rural Development

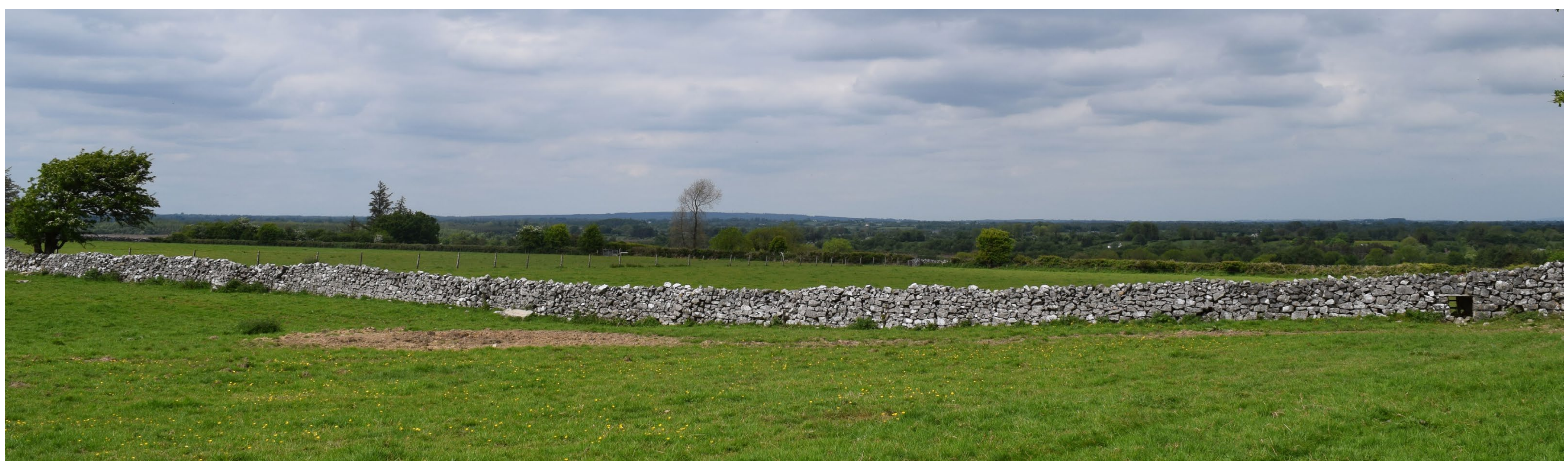
In this National Rural Network guest blog, Dr Anne Cassidy, Rural Resource Officer with Galway Rural Development explains why it is imperative that modern, contemporary society widens the idea of what constitutes the 'ideal' farm successor, to include daughters as well as sons, and how such a shift in mentality can provide a lifeline for not only the traditional family farm model as we know it here in Ireland but also for the wider sustainability of the rural Irish economy.



At a time of increasing concern about the next generation's willingness to enter the farming industry and worries over the capacity of the family farm model to provide a stable income it is surely worth widening our idea of what constitutes the 'ideal' successor to include daughters as well as sons. While women's vital contributions to farming have long been recognised this is usually as helpers rather than the 'farmer'. So what if they were to be seen as a potential successor?

In many ways this might seem to be an illogical idea. If we are unable to retain young men who are brought up with the idea of becoming the farmer and who 'fit' the ideal type of what it is to be a farmer then how would including farmers' daughters, who do not conform to this image, help to increase the numbers of young people in the industry or build a more competitive model of farming?

Yes, it could be argued that daughters often show little real interest in the working life of the farm. However, their apparent disinterest could lie in the subtle segregation of the sexes on the farm from a young age with hints given from an early age as to who can legitimately count themselves as a farmer and who cannot. Ever thought about the fact that girls 'help' and boys 'work' and the messages this sends from a young age-what if we shifted this to include girls? What affect might that have on their attitudes towards the farm and their place on it?





Is it Time to Rethink the 'Ideal' Farm Successor?

Dr Anne Cassidy, Rural Resource Officer, Galway Rural Development

Also, the idea that daughters' apparent disinterest means that they are less committed to the farm than their brothers or lack the capacity to take on this role should be questioned. The continuation of a model where the farm is largely passed on to one heir accompanied by the lack of land sales (under 1% per annum) points to the fact that daughters are not agitating for the land to be sold and the proceeds equally divided. Also with the increasing mechanisation of farming as well as access to specialist contractors and the resulting shift in work practices the physicality involved is perhaps diminishing.

Secondly, research shows that where women are centrally involved with the farm there tends to be higher levels of business diversification. In fact, a study carried out in Norway showed that young female farmers were more likely to be open to change than their male counterparts, in part because they had fewer fears about not conforming to social expectations about what it was to be a 'farmer'. An increasingly competitive business environment threatens the capacity of small-scale family farms that specialise in sheep or beef farming to earn a viable income. It is this diversification away from traditional ways of earning that might not only save an individual farm enterprise but also provide a much needed boost to the local rural economy.



So perhaps it is time to embrace the possibilities and opportunities offered by widening our idea of the farm successor to include daughters - not only in how we consider their role in succession as adults but also how we integrate them as children into the life of the farm. While this jars with what we imagine a farmer to be it might just provide a lifeline for not only small family farms but the wider rural economy as well.





North West Women in Farming Group – Strengthening the Voice of Women in Irish Agriculture

Hannah McNelis, CAFRE Beef & Sheep Adviser

In this National Rural Network guest blog, Hannah McNelis, CAFRE Beef & Sheep Adviser in Northern Ireland and University College Dublin (UCD) Agricultural Science graduate, tell us about the 'North West Women in Farming' group's on-going activities and progress to date since she co-founded it in May 2017.

I originally set up the North-West Women in Farming group with Donna Maskery in May 2017 upon returning home to Donegal after graduating from UCD and realising that there were very little resources or supports in my area for women involved in farming. The group was officially launched at our inaugural meeting on the 19th of May 2017 in Ballybofey, Co. Donegal with 55 women in attendance. There were also a number of speakers present on the night to discuss a diverse range of important topics relevant to women in farming, as well as broader issues relating to Irish agriculture.

The North-West Women in Farming group aims to bring together a network of women involved and/or interested in farming. By creating a community where women can meet and engage with like-minded others, the group can tackle topics relevant to the family farming, provide training in areas related to the farm to improve the future sustainability and progression of their farms, subsequently strengthening the voice of female farmers in the North West and also very importantly create a social setting for women in the region.



The group have held a number of other meetings to date. For example, taking into consideration that farm safety was an urgent topic the group wanted to address, we held two important farm health and safety walks in July 2017. These walks were facilitated by the HSE and were held in Carndonagh and Donegal Town to facilitate all members in the county. With thanks to former MEP Marian Harkin, nine of our members also travelled to Brussels, Belgium to visit the European Parliament and meet with Commission officials in October 2017. Our group was very fortunate to meet with a number of other Irish MEPs during this visit and this provided us with ample opportunity to raise important issues relating to farming in the North West such as weather and flooding, direct payments and inspections, decline in suckler cow farming and CAP 2020 and reform in legislation. We also discussed issues affecting the rural communities in Ireland, in particular the lack of broadband in rural areas and how this affects the small start-up businesses in these areas.



Our group continues to gather numbers and bring together the community of women in Co. Donegal and the North-West region. It provides an excellent outlet to women in rural communities, those who farm in isolation, those who care for elderly parents and those who regularly attend the mart and other farming events and are the only female present. The group creates an environment where women can express their views, build their knowledge and socialise.

Notes





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**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
Department of Agriculture,
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The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
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