

New Pathways – New People

Securing the Sustainability of Scottish Farming

Sustaining a cohort of new entrants is crucial to the ongoing vitality, resilience, and competitiveness of agriculture and rural areas in Europe.

New entrant farmers and crofters are wellsprings of entrepreneurship and innovation, as they bring unique skills, networks, income streams and agricultural production pathways to the agricultural sector. 'New entrants' can be individuals or families initiating farming or crofting enterprises for the first time, or as successors to previous farming generations. Such innovation is important to the productivity and sustainability of Scottish farming.

In Scotland, the high cost of land in some regions and limited availability of tenancies have impacts for those who wish to enter farming as new entrants, as do challenges around access to capital and skills development. Existing farmers and landowners who would like to move towards retirement and succession also face socio-economic challenges and uncertainties, including future housing options, income security, and retaining a connection to their former livelihood. Relationship and network-building are crucial to the future sustainability of Scottish agriculture.

The James Hutton Institute has two research and networking projects funded by the European Commission and Scottish

Government to explore new and alternative business models for new entrant farming businesses (**NEWBIE project**), and to support farmer-to-farmer demonstration to encourage farmers, crofters and landowners to consider options for knowledge exchange and support for new entrants (**NEFERTITI project**).

Farmers and advisors are **encouraged to participate in the networking opportunities** arising from these projects, to share experiences and gain support with on-farm demonstrations. Links to the project webpages can be found below or by speaking directly to the Hutton researchers involved.

These projects seek to answer the following questions:

- How can aspiring new entrant farmers/crofters access the agricultural sector in Scotland? How can key barriers such as access to land and capital be removed?
- What types of novel business models exist and where can new entrants look for business support?
- How can existing farmers/crofters be encouraged to pass on their knowledge and experience to those aspiring to join agriculture? What tools do they need to become mentors or demonstration farmers?

This research will build understanding of alternative routes into farming (as illustrated below), and therefore how to achieve more diversity in farming communities. Overleaf we present options for policy makers to support the next generation of farmers in Scotland, promoting a sustainable and profitable agricultural sector.



HOW CAN NEW ENTRANTS SECURE A FUTURE IN SCOTTISH AGRICULTURE?



Learn through school-based courses and extra-curricular activities



Train at agricultural college and through modern apprenticeships



Inherit or be gifted farm land or a farming business from a family member



Create a share farming arrangement with a farmer or landowner to develop a new business



Establish a contracting business, using your own machinery or skills to contribute to the farming activity of other businesses



Buy farm land/a croft or take on a tenancy



Partner with an existing farmer or another new entrant to set-up a new farming business

SUPPORTING NEW ENTRANTS TO AGRICULTURE IN SCOTLAND – OPTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

The Scottish Government's Farming Opportunities for New Entrants group (FONE) and other partners including the Rural Innovation Support Service and Scottish Land Commission are considering the **opportunity for a Land Matching Service for Scotland**, building on the NFUS Joint Venture Hub. It would be underpinned by funded enabler/facilitator roles to coordinate networking between those with land/business opportunities on their farm and those who aspire to work in farming/crofting. These facilitators are critical to coordinate the Land Matching Service and act as trusted advisors to all parties¹. The service could be supported by guidance for new entrants on how to find land-based opportunities, and by a **positive campaign to promote confidence amongst landowners** in making opportunities available to new entrants. Trust and effective communication are necessary to build productive and resilient relationships between farmers/landowners and new entrants.

New entrants to agriculture in Scotland would benefit from more **individual and institutional training opportunities**. These opportunities should include: formal education through schools, colleges and universities; peer-to-peer knowledge exchange like mentoring and Monitor Farms; facilitated networking such as Women in Agriculture events, and talent development through 'future leaders' initiatives such as the Rural Leadership Programme. A targeted programme of training opportunities could be established that focuses on new entrant business development and is clearly communicated at the local and regional scale to aspiring or early-career new entrants.

Future research should develop a richer understanding of landowner perceptions regarding risk, motivations for landownership and place attachment, to overcome barriers to land access for new entrants. It will also be **important to bring novel research on new entrant farmers** on knowledge systems, identity formation, alternative food networks, and farmer training, together with established research on land access issues like powers of exclusion, dispossession, property and land use.

For more information about this research, please visit the project webpages:

NEFERTITI: Networking European Farms to Enhance Cross Fertilisation and Innovation Uptake Through Demonstration - nefertiti-h2020.eu

NEWBIE: New Entrant NetWork: Business models for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Resilience in European Agriculture - www.newbie-academy.eu²

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¹ See: McKee, A.J.; Sutherland, L.; Hopkins, J.; Flanigan, S.; Rickett, A. (2018) Increasing the availability of farmland for new entrants to agriculture in Scotland. Final Report to the Scottish Land Commission, 76pp.

² The NEWBIE project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 77283, and the NEFERTITI project under grant agreement No. 772705.