

June 2021

Submission on the Draft Agri-Food Strategy to 2030



nwlc
National Women's Council

Introduction

Founded in 1973, the National Women's Council (NWC) is the leading national women's membership organisation. We represent and derive our mandate from our membership, which includes over 190 groups and organisations from a diversity of backgrounds, sectors and locations across Ireland. Our mission is to lead and to be a catalyst for change in the achievement of equality for women. Our vision is of an Ireland and of a world where women can achieve their full potential and there is full equality for women.

Women want to continue to be part of rural Ireland and be valued for their contribution to the economic and social fabric of rural communities. Our work has identified an undervaluing of the contribution of women to rural communities and a lack of access to power and resources. Resourcing and supporting the engagement and participation of women in all their diversity, is essential to the sustainability and viability of rural communities. Agriculture is an important part of rural life and women on Irish farms make a substantial contribution. Positive action and specific targeted measures are required to address the persistent gender gap in land ownership and ensure that young women can benefit from the investment and strategies developed to tackle generational renewal and deliver on our climate justice obligations.

We welcome the opportunity to make this submission to the Agri-Food Strategy 2030 following engagement with our members and stakeholders in rural communities. Our recommendations reflect existing obligations under the National Strategy for Women and Girls (NSWG) and United Nations Convention Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. In the Concluding Observations that arose as a consequence of Ireland's examination under the Convention in early 2017, they recommended the following;

*“The Committee recommends the State Party to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in the new Action Plan for Rural Ireland currently being developed and to provide information in its next periodic report on the overall situation of rural women highlighting the impact of the measures taken to **improve on rural women's land ownership and participation in agriculture** as well as access to social services including public transport childcare, health services, employment, education and training.”*

We welcome that the role of women has been highlighted in the draft plan calling for an enhanced role for women in the sector through the development of networks for women.

“The Strategy supports an enhanced role for women in the sector and recommends the establishment of female farmers’ networks and other supports to better understand and meet the needs of Irish women farmers, fishers and rural female entrepreneurs.”

The National Women’s Council welcomes the Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConalogue’s commitment to improve gender equality on farms but believe that concrete measures are needed at Government level and under Pillar II funding in the next CAP to ensure that Ireland tackles the gender gap on farms.

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Women and Land Ownership

Ireland has the fifth lowest number of female farmers in Europe and despite successive women and agriculture campaigns over the last decade only one farm organisation has a concrete Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) to encourage more women to enter into farming.¹ Women’s contribution to farming can go largely unnoticed and unrecognised in statistics and policies despite the fact that over a quarter of those working on farms (71,700) are women.² The Central Statistical Office (CSO) figures from 2018 reported that the women farmers make up just 12% (16,100) of the 137,100 family farms in the country. Just 3.8% of farms are registered with the Department of Agriculture in joint female/male names. There has been no increase in women’s ownership of land since 2010. By way of contrast, in Austria, 33% of women are farm owners. In Norway, to increase access to land for women; they introduced a law in 1974 where the eldest child is the legal heir. Inheritance is usually not based on ability or interest but on gender. A 2017 study undertaken by Macra supported by the Irish Farming Association (IFA) on Land Mobility and Succession, shows that this imbalance is unlikely to change in the short to medium term, as only 11% of those identified in the report as potential successors, are women.³ Teagasc has acknowledged that young women account for just 10% of their students. In another study, 57% of all men responded to say gender did not influence succession plans, however only 35% of all women respondents agreed with this. 63% of

¹ <https://www.farmersjournal.ie/women-overlooked-in-next-cap-624482>

² Anne Byrne, Nata Duvvury, Áine Macken-Walsh, Tanya Watson (2013) Gender, Power and Property: In my own right. The Rural Economy Development Programme (REDP) Working Paper Series. Working Paper

³ IFA Submission to the National Strategy on Women and Girls 2017 - 2020

women said gender does influence succession plans.⁴ The patriarchal and traditional succession system of passing farms from father to son has been a huge barrier for women's access to land, as recognised in the work of Dr Sally Shortall.⁵ Irish farms are still transferred to sons and most women enter farming through marriage.

In 2014, Tanya Watson, NUI Galway reported in her study, that state subsidised training and knowledge transfer is mainly directed at the land owner, which despite the reality of farm living being a household process, typically remains male. Women were slightly older than their male counterparts, with an average age of 62 compared to 56 for men. 31% of female farmers are over 80 years of age.⁶ The age of women farmers suggested many come to inherit farms when they become widowed and affirms that they are not actively considered for succession. The Rural Development Programme recognised that men account for more than 90 per cent of farm holders and this could be '*detrimental in terms of the human capital capacity of the sector and may also inhibit technology uptake and structural change.*'⁷

Common Agricultural Policy Reform

The farm owner who receives the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) payment is the public face, just eight percent of the €1.2 billion of Ireland's EU CAP Single Farm Payments went to women farmers in 2012.⁸ Only 10% of the land in women's ownership is eligible for basic payments. Analysis reveals further inequalities in payment amounts; on the top and bottom 60 CAP payments across 5 counties in the North/West Irish women farmers make up on average 3% of the top payments while making up on average 20% of the lowest payments.⁹ **There are very few areas of public expenditure, where 90% of public investment is going to one gender.** Data from a publication on direct payments, broken down by age and gender from the Ministry for Agriculture in Spain show that 36% of Spanish farmers were women and that they received 27% of total Single Farm Payments.¹⁰ The gender of CAP recipients across

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cmef/farmers-and-farming/pilot-project-exchange-programmes-young-farmers_en

⁵ <https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2021/0308/1201578-ireland-women-farmers/>

⁶ <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/publications/2017/AnnualReviewandOutlookFinal270717.pdf>

⁷ Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2014). Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 (2014), p. 29.

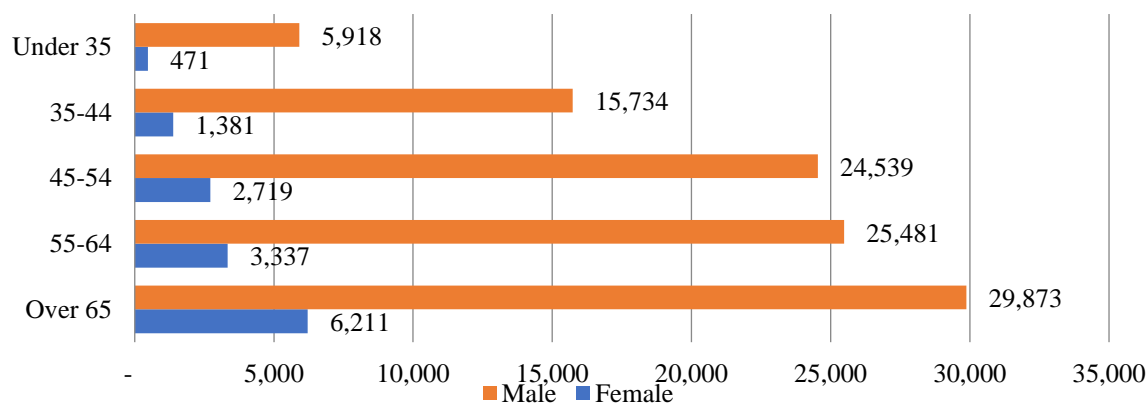
⁸ Anne Byrne, Nata Duvvury, Áine Macken-Walsh, Tanya Watson (2013) Gender, Power and Property: In my own right. The Rural Economy Development Programme (REDP) Working Paper Series. Working Paper

⁹ Research courtesy of Bridget Murphy

¹⁰ <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/publications/2015/AROFinalVersion2015Amended210915.pdf>

the EU should be recorded. Such data would allow for more meaningful inter-regional comparisons and allow progress to be tracked over time.

Farms in receipt of Basic Payment Scheme payments by Gender, 2015¹¹



It is estimated that there 3,000 joint herd numbers. Women generally experience difficulties accessing a herd number and cannot qualify for other schemes, subsidies and supports without a herd number. Information from the Young Farmer Scheme shows that in 2018 only 819 out of 4213 participants were women.¹²

The contribution of women in the farming household is often hidden, taking place in the private realm-completing accounts and administration work for example¹³. Their professional roles and contributions are often downplayed and ‘undercounted’ thereby reinforcing the identity of the farmer and decision maker as male.¹⁴ The CAP 2023 offers an opportunity to review the role of women in agriculture and their contribution to farm viability. Generation renewal is one of the main objectives for CAP reform programme. CSO figures published in 2018 showed that over half of Irish farmers are over 55 years of age, with 30 per cent of farmers over the retirement age. From 2013 to 2018, the number of farmers under 35 fell from 8,200 to 7,100. The agri-taxation working group identified barriers to greater participation of women in agriculture.¹⁵ Supporting women in agriculture in the context of generational renewal is also

¹¹Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

¹² September 2019 Response to parliamentary question

¹³ The role of women in completing the domestic and caring labour necessary for the farming household is not counted at all of course

¹⁴ Shortall, S. (2017) Changing Gender Roles in Irish Farm Households: Continuity and Change Irish Geography, 50(2), 175–191, DOI: 10.2014/igj.v50i1.1321

¹⁵ <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/agri-foodindustry/agri-foodandtheeconomy/agri-foodbusiness/agri-taxation/>

identified in Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 “*The farming sector cannot reach its full potential without the active engagement of women and proactive efforts to facilitate their participation.*”¹⁶ Incentives and specific measures for girls and young women must be prioritised including seats at the decision-making tables.

*“The family nature of most farming businesses in Ireland is recognised but not adequately supported in terms of ensuring the visibility and voice of women on farms. Many aspects of farm productivity and profitability as well as health and safety could be more effectively supported through engagement of advisory and support services with farm women.”*¹⁷

Gender and Equality Budgeting

The NSWG contains a commitment to develop a process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening social and economic rights as well as ensuring the institutional arrangements are in place in government departments to support this work. The Department of Agriculture was not one of the departments that participated in the Gender and Equality Budgeting pilot project. However, given the Departments role in recognising the value of diversity and gender equality¹⁸, it is particularly important that its resources are allocated in a way that promotes gender equality. While there is currently no statutory obligation on government departments to carry out gender and equality proofing, the OECD have included this in its recommendations to Ireland.¹⁹ In light of the highly gendered nature of public investment in this aspect of the Irish economy, the Dept of Agriculture should as a matter of urgency review the expenditure of public monies under their control and ensure they are supporting the development of more equal and diverse agricultural sector. All government departments do have an obligation to promote equality and protect human rights under the Public Sector Duty.²⁰

Recommendations

Land mobility, generation renewal and succession

- NWC supports the proposed policy of the Irish Cattle and Sheep Association (ICSA) that a top-up payment should be provided to Knowledge Transfer groups under the next

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/132413/433aebac-f12a-4640-8cac-9faf52e5ea1f.pdf#page=81>

¹⁷ UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science Submission on Review of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Post-2020

¹⁸ DAFM Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2024

¹⁹ <https://www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/equality-budgeting-in-ireland.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/>

CAP who have at least three women participants. This top-up payment should be in the region of 15% per participant.

- Given the low number of joint female/male farm holders, only 3.8%, NWC is proposing that all joint farm partnerships where a woman is a named partner should receive a 60% Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) grant, in the next evolution of TAMS in CAP. This is similar to the current young farmers scheme which provides a 60% TAMS grant to eligible young farmers.
- Over two-thirds of women farmers are over 55 and NWC is concerned that young women farmers have been repeatedly overlooked by farm organisations and the Department of Agriculture. Currently young farmers receive a 25% top-up on their annual farm payment and given the low number of young female farmers, NWC is seeking a 35% top-up for young women farmers under 40 years of age in the next CAP.
- Collect and publish gender disaggregated data on take up of all schemes and measures
- New women entrants over 40 to get a 25% top up on their single farm payment.
- Pillar II pilot scheme that would directly address women in agriculture focusing on land mobility and installation aid for young women farmers.
- The identification in the CAP strategic plan of women farmers as a specified group and the need for their improvement under the next CAP period. This should include a Department of Agriculture target to reach a 25% sole or joint female farm ownership level within the next CAP strategic plan.

Womens representation in Agri business and Co-operatives

Traditional perceptions of women's position in farming organisations still hold. Currently 7 out of 29 chairpersons of Irish Farming Association (IFA) branches are women.²¹ Five chairs of the forty-one committees are women and there is only one woman on the National Council. They have launched their diversity strategy towards 2025.²² We have seen the emergence of women farmers networks such as the West Women in Farming Network and South East Women in Farming Network on a provincial basis, however they do not have seats at the decision-making tables nor are they resourced to participate. CERES (The Women in Agribusiness Leadership Network) have consistently highlighted the lack of women's representation on boards. Lakeland Dairies, an Irish Dairy Co-operative, continues to have an all-male board.²³

Recommendations

Promoting women's participation and leadership in agriculture

- Given the current poor representation of women in the agriculture sector, NWC is calling for gender balance and gender expertise on the board of all future stakeholder groups, such as the Agri-Food Strategy, to ensure that gender goals outlined nationally within Government and the recent Citizen's Assembly are addressed and given representation at a national level in the agriculture sector.
- Promote and report on women in leadership roles in the agri-food sector, including improving gender balance in stakeholder organisations and State and company boards in the sector.

²¹ <https://www.ifa.ie/county-chairs/>

²² <https://www.ifa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/IFA-Diversity-Report-A4-Sep19-FINALWeb.pdf>

²³ <https://www.lakeland.ie/about-us/our-board>

- NWC supports the draft Agri-Food Strategy recommendation to establish women farmers' networks and the need to hold a national dialogue on women in agriculture. Both will require adequate funding and resourcing from the Department of Agriculture to ensure their success and effectiveness.
- Promote women's participation in farming through Knowledge Transfer (KT) Groups facilitated by a female advisor. This is in keeping with the spirit of the KT Programme where like-minded farmers who experience similar challenges and opportunities form groups.
- Hold a National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture and commission a report into women in agriculture similar to the study carried out by the Scottish government in 2016
- Promote and support women's networks, such as CERES (The Women in Agribusiness Leadership Network), and mentoring programmes for rural women entrepreneurs such as ACORNS.
- Promote and support women's return to work programmes, such as that developed by UCC and Taste4Success Skillnet 'Rejuvenate'. These are important for increasing women's participation in the agri-food labour force.

Appendix

CSO Farm Structure Survey

137,100 farms were classified as family farms in 2016 CSO figures.

- Over 88% (121,000) of family farm holders were male while 12% (16,100) were female farm holders – the number of female farm holders was the same in the 2013 CSO figures.²⁴
- Over a quarter (71,700) of those working on farms were female. However, less than one quarter (16,100) were holders of the farms on which they worked.²⁵
- Just 5% of farm holders were aged under 35 but for every one female farmer aged less than 35 years, there were 11 male farmers.²⁶
- A Macra Na Feirme study pointed out that farmers identified female successors in just 11% of cases.²⁷
- According to Department of Agriculture's client database women account for 13% of farms; 10% of eligible land; and 8% of payments – the difference in female ownership of land and the drop-in number receiving payments suggests women have inherited land from their deceased husbands and are renting it out rather than farming it themselves.
- Just 3.8% of farms are registered in joint female/male names (DAFM).
- Across the EU, 29% of farms are managed by women. Latvia and Lithuania have the highest with 45% female managers respectively, while Ireland is in the bottom five countries with just 11% of farms managed by women.²⁸

²⁴ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-fss/farmstructuresurvey2016/da/fofi/>

²⁵ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-fss/farmstructuresurvey2016/da/fofi/>

²⁶ <https://www.irishexaminer.com/farming/arid-20270984.html>

²⁷ <https://www.irishexaminer.com/farming/arid-20270984.html>

²⁸ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/women-farmers-essential-for-future-says-french-agriculture-minister/>