



# Women in Agriculture

Progressive  
Scottish Farming

## Acknowledging Women in Agriculture Taskforce Progress Report June 2018



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## Foreword by First Minister

It is my pleasure to offer a few words to the progress report of the Women in Agriculture Taskforce.

I was delighted to be able to launch this initiative at the Royal Highland Show 2017, in response to the Women in Farming and Agriculture Sector research.



The research affirmed that women are an inherent and critical part of Scotland's farming and agriculture sector but are a group whose strengths and contribution remain somewhat marginalised. It has provided a solid foundation upon which to act – and I feel strongly that government has a moral obligation to act to address gender inequality right across our society and economy.

There is no doubt, that women play a much valued and valuable role within the farming and agriculture sector in Scotland. However, inequality in the sector and invisibility in leadership roles stops women in rural Scotland from achieving their full potential. That holds us back as a nation and damages the rural economy.

I expect the Taskforce to help deliver solutions that support the achievement of gender equality in Scottish agriculture. It is already offering a strong and challenging voice, exploring innovative and thoughtful solutions to achieve progress.

I hope that the taskforce's work in the short term will help introduce longer term change. That change is needed to help us to move to a culture which enables women and girls within farming to be more empowered and for the sector to make the most of the undoubted skills and abilities they have to offer.

I am extremely encouraged with progress to date, and I look forward with interest to their final report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicola Sturgeon".

**Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP**  
**First Minister of Scotland**

## Foreword by Co-Chairs of the Women in Agriculture Taskforce



In compiling the Taskforce membership, we wanted to identify individuals who are both influential within their own organisations and able to deliver industry-wide change, driven by a commitment to what they do, and recognition of the value it brings to the lives of families and communities across Scotland. We think we have found a group who own those qualities and a group who, most importantly, can operate as a single voice in representing the industries which make up Scotland's farming and agriculture sector.

We would like to take this opportunity to offer sincere gratitude to the time given to this important work by each and every member of the Taskforce.

The important thing in all of this is that we reach out to grassroots level. We need to change inherent cultures enshrined in farming tradition. There is no doubt there are some traditions which make Scottish farming the success story it is today, but there are those which are suppressing growth in the sector and we need to liberate those ties.

The authors of ***Women in Farming and Agriculture Sector*** have tremendous insight and sector vision and have produced the baseline evidence needed in examining women's contribution to Scotland's farming and agriculture sector. The information we now have lets the sector better understand itself and it offers the Taskforce a strong foundation on which to build policy making decisions and further recommendations.

We will continue to drive forward and work with the Taskforce towards better acknowledgement of the role and contribution of women in Scotland's agriculture sector and towards realising equal opportunity for all in a progressive Scottish farming culture.

**Fergus Ewing**  
**Cabinet Secretary for the Rural**  
**Economy and Connectivity**

**Joyce Campbell**  
**Hill Farmer**

## Background and Introduction

Scotland's farming and agriculture sector is a thriving industry with potential to deliver more. The Women in Agriculture Taskforce, established by the Scottish Government in response to the ***Women in Farming and the Agriculture Sector*** research report (June 2017), is considering the research recommendations and aims to deliver medium to long term sustainable cultural change by providing practical solutions. As part of this they are working towards providing an environment where the industry can more fully realise its potential by recognising and supporting everyone who contributes to it.

The research provided the first baseline understanding of Scottish women working in farming and the agriculture sector. Its main findings and recommendations highlighted a number of key issues for the agricultural industry and rural Scotland, including a number of cultural behaviours which can have a negative or limiting impact upon women in agriculture.

The research provides insight into the real barriers facing women in the farming and agriculture sector. Lived experience of those interviewed confirmed both conscious and unconscious bias experienced in Scottish agriculture. The cultural norms such as male inheritance of the farm and other such customs and practices have been shown to encourage the assumption that a female will not be required to become familiar with the workings of the farm business.

A growing body of research, including studies conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), demonstrates that equality and cohesion are good for the economy, as well as for individuals.

Gender equality has been highlighted as a personal aim by the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon. She has particularly identified the need to press forward for women's opportunities to participate in Scottish life and employment.



It is generally accepted that farming, and the agricultural sector as a whole, is an area in which women's contributions can be overlooked, with a poor record of women holding industry leadership positions and thus influencing roles. This, by today's standards, is not only failing to advance equality; but by excluding a major



participating group from decisions which will shape the future of the industry, also depriving the sector of a rich source of opportunity.

It was with this in mind that the collaboration of Newcastle University and the James Hutton Institute was commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2016 to produce the ***Women in Farming and the Agriculture Sector*** report. The aim of the research was to establish a baseline position on women in farming and the agriculture sector and to identify barriers and opportunities to inform policy making.

The ***Women in Farming and the Agriculture Sector*** research looked to learn more about consideration of women's entry into farming and farming careers; their participation in on-farm and off-farm work; and barriers to women taking up leadership roles in agriculture. The research project investigated women's role as per the following categories: daily life; aspirations; career paths; leadership; comparative analysis with other family businesses; safety; and succession and inheritance.



The Women in Agriculture Taskforce seeks to build on this research and this publication illustrates progress to date and our future programme of work.

## Women in Agriculture Taskforce

The First Minister announced the establishment of the Women in Agriculture (WiA) Taskforce at the Royal Highland Show in 2017, to deliver sector transformation.

The remit of the Taskforce is to tackle inequality in Scottish agriculture and ensure the potential of women in farming is fully realised. Its activities are centred around but will not be limited to, the research report recommendations.

The Taskforce is aiming to create increased opportunities for women in the agricultural sector through encouraging a change in mindset coupled with positive and practical support.



The Taskforce is Co-chaired by Mr Fergus Ewing MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity, and Joyce Campbell, hill farmer in Sutherland. Other members, listed below, include industry leaders, academics and representatives from a range of sector based organisations.

Each Taskforce member was appointed on the basis of the skills of the individual. You can find out more about the individual members on the Scottish Government website.

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/Women-in-Agriculture/Task-Force-Biographies>

## Taskforce Membership

**Chair**  
Mr Fergus Ewing MSP



Cabinet Secretary for Rural  
Economy and Connectivity

**Co-Chair**  
Joyce Campbell



Hill Farmer

Nina Clancy



Chief Executive of RSABI;  
Director SAOS and  
AgriScot and Partner in a  
sheep enterprise in the  
Borders

Patrick Krause



Chief Executive of the  
Scottish Crofting  
Federation

Professor Wayne Powell



Principal and Chief  
Executive of Scotland's  
Rural College (SRUC)

Dr Lee-Ann Sutherland



Senior Researcher, The  
James Hutton Institute

Professor Sally Shortall



Duke of Northumberland  
Chair of Rural  
Economy, Newcastle  
University

Dr Annie McKee



Social Researcher in Land  
Management, The James  
Hutton Institute



Andrew McCornick



Andrew McCornick, a beef and sheep farmer from Wigtown, was elected as President of NFU Scotland in 2017

Andrew Marchant



(QMS Monitor Farm) - new entrant, tenant farmer, upland farm, Clonhie Farm, Nithsdale, Dumfriesshire

Sarah Jane Laing



Executive Director Scottish Land & Estates, Lives on family farm in the Borders

Sandy Hay



Bank of Scotland Area Director, Agriculture, Scotland representing the Bank on agricultural matters across Scotland

Anne Rae MacDonald



Partner of an arable farming business in Easter Ross, Director of Highland Business Services co-operative and a council

Janelle Anderson



Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs

## **Taskforce Approach**

The Taskforce recognises that much has already changed in agriculture over the last 20 years in relation to the role of women, but there is still much more that can be done.

The cornerstones of the work of Taskforce are:

- ❖ to create greater awareness and recognition of the contribution that women are already making to the industry; and
- ❖ to encourage a culture of enabling all individuals within farming to make the most of their skills and abilities, in a positive and practical way.

The primary focus of the Taskforce is on attaining the long term goal of changing mind-sets. Key to achieving this must include everyone in the industry actively promoting a progressive way of thinking which is aligned with supporting future generations and facing future challenges.

The research report highlighted a number of issues and wide ranging recommendations. To date, the Taskforce has concentrated on the following overarching threads; namely:

1. Increasing Recognition of Women's Contribution and Benefits of Inclusivity
2. Education & Training – Enhancing Skills on the Ground and for Leadership
3. Leadership Roles – Encourage Inclusivity and Greater Participation
4. Supporting Business & Organisational Diversity

The Taskforce has focused its initial activity on progressing the following key themes:

### **Women in Leadership**

A development programme to provide training, support and confidence for women to secure leadership positions throughout the sector.

### **Training**

The development of a strategic training framework to support the design and provision of future training, enabling equality of access to opportunity in the sector.

### **Charter**

A sector engagement programme to help businesses make the best use of their resources, and improve gender equality in farming and agriculture.

Members of the Taskforce act as ambassadors, speaking to groups, publishing in the media, promoting the ambitions of the taskforce and Scottish Government to bring about change.

The Taskforce meets regularly to discuss its work-plan and has also been heavily engaged in raising awareness and understanding of women in agriculture and rural areas with many audiences.

A number of other themes remain to be addressed by the Taskforce, not least:

- Succession planning and inheritance
- Improving farm safety
- Supporting female new entrants
- Addressing gender inequality in crofting tenure

The Taskforce hope that the work being progressed through the identified themes will help to deliver significant change within the sector.



## Women in Leadership

The Taskforce is focused on the following recommendation:

*“The establishment of a Talent Bank of suitably qualified women for farming positions (identifying their skills and interests, offering training opportunities, and encouraging farming organisations to recruit from this pool when positions became available).”*

### Key Research Findings

- Women play a major role in Scottish agriculture and across the full spectrum of farming activities.
- 33% of farm operators in Scotland are women.
- Despite this, women are significantly under-represented in terms of office bearers, board positions and other senior roles. This includes the elected leadership of a number of our influential agricultural organisations.

Feedback from a large proportion of those surveyed by the researchers expressed a strong desire for this last part to change and to see more women in such leadership roles, with approximately one third expressing an interest in taking up leadership roles themselves.

In response, the Taskforce is developing a strategy to encourage greater involvement of women in leadership positions, make better use of **all** our best people and more accurately reflect the role women play in agriculture.

This will ultimately be of benefit not just to women but also crucially to the industry as a whole, with the benefits of diverse boards, businesses and leaders being well documented.



Extensive research has shown that in order to make a material difference to their culture and gender diversity, an organisation or board should aim to have at least one third of their numbers comprising women. The industry has some way to go.

An individual is selected for a role because they have a set of skills, knowledge and experience required for the post. However, there are very few women in leadership roles when there are undoubtedly women more than capable to take on such roles. Why is this?

We will all have some unconscious bias, if not conscious bias to some degree – often borne out of our environment or experiences, or because of traditional ways of working. Both research and anecdotal evidence show that often the process of identifying prospective candidates for leadership positions is dependent on “who we know that we could approach”, thus potentially missing out on a wider pool of talent.

The Taskforce recognises that there are barriers to women taking up leadership roles. The nature and structure of organisations operating within agriculture is diverse - in some cases, directors or office bearers may be elected by a wider membership or drawn from a base of regional organisations. Roles are often undertaken on a voluntary basis, and therefore compete with other business or domestic time constraints.



Key therefore to the success of achieving greater representation of women in leadership positions must be accepting that the change may be challenging to deliver, but must ultimately be achievable and sustainable in the long term and be to the benefit of both women and the businesses/organisations involved.

For these reasons, the Taskforce believes that the promotion and adoption of a multi-faceted approach involving the Taskforce, women in the sector and farming organisations is the most appropriate way in which to achieve greater diversity and ultimately help facilitate the effectiveness and resilience of our industry going forward.

The following workplan components have been identified in the design and delivery of the Women in Agriculture Development Programme.





## Identification of Suitably Qualified Women

- Identify existing qualified women and work with them to ensure they are ready to take on leadership roles in the industry.

## Establish a Development Programme for Women

- Design and delivery of a development programme aimed at both encouraging women to consider leadership roles and unlocking the potential talent of women to secure office bearer roles, leadership roles and senior positions in Scotland's farming and agriculture sector through structured training and support.



## Engagement with Farming, Agriculture Businesses and Organisations

- An engagement strategy aimed at senior influencers in the sector to consider using the network of existing qualified women for leadership positions and encourage consideration and use of the Women in Agriculture Development Programme as part of their recruitment and retention strategy.

## Training

In looking at training provision for women in agriculture the Taskforce are focussed on the following recommendations:

- Short courses designed for women new to farming to be made available.
- Practical as well as financial and management training courses to be targeted at women.
- Courses targeted at women to take into account their needs, including childcare.

- Although the highest level of demand is for training in applying for grants, the research identified a clear need for more vocational, practical training for women entering agriculture. Over 200 survey respondents identified their interest in further training in each of: livestock husbandry, animal health, accounting, business entrepreneurship, large vehicle driving, environmental protection and legal compliance.
- Existing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training is perceived as oriented towards men. Women, even women working in the agriculture sector, found attending CPD events daunting. About a quarter of survey respondents agreed that they would be uncomfortable at an agricultural training course because they are mostly attended by men.
- Women working in the agriculture sector have access to CPD through their employment and they all find it useful for their farm. Those who 'married in' to the farm appeared to have less access to CPD. They said they would have particularly valued training soon after entering farming.
- Both men and women recognised the particular implications for women of not receiving practical training. It cannot be assumed that women have the same exposure to on-the-job training growing up on the farm as men.

The following elements have been identified in the translation of the research report recommendations.

### **Mapping Out Learning and Development Provision for Farming and Agriculture Sector in Scotland**

- An audit of the profile of current training provision for the farming and agriculture sector in Scotland setting out the training delivery body, delivery and funding methods, as well as indication of accessibility through metric of take-up by gender ratio.

## Learning and Development Needs Analysis

- Assessment of learning and development needs for women in the farming and agriculture sector in Scotland. Findings will enable gap analysis against current provision, market demands and policy drivers.

## Learning and Development Framework for Women in Agriculture

- A Learning and Development Framework setting out the findings and recommendations of the Training workstream. Based on the pilots outlined below, and further research, the Taskforce is preparing recommendations for practical steps towards an inclusive, community-based training provision.

The Farming Advisory Service recently worked with the Taskforce to deliver a programme of women only knowledge transfer events from the Borders up to Orkney, with courses delivered in Aberdeenshire, Caithness, Inverness, Moray, Argyll and Lanark in Spring 2018. A range of topics were covered, from accounts and mental health awareness to diversification opportunities and the role of social media.



All events were well attended, often to full capacity. All 248 women participants were asked to provide a range of information relating to their farming and agriculture experience as well as learning and development requirements.

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) piloted four women-only practical, on-croft, training events, two on strained wire fencing and two on sheepdog handling. This followed on from feedback and research within an SCF training project that identified suitable interventions in terms of a female-only teaching model, using technology and appropriate timing of training to overcome attitudinal, situational, structural and systemic barriers that women encounter. The two days attracted 24 trainees and there is further demand for training from 800 women, many of whom have requested women-only training in practical skills courses.

It has become clear that soft and informal, yet structured networks, often originating from social encounters, are key to pulling together women with similar farming and agriculture business, interests, ambitions, challenges and desires to find solutions and learn.

## **Charter for the Future**

A key part of the remit of the Taskforce is to consider practical solutions for businesses of all sizes in enabling them to make the most of all of their resources on the farm. To help deliver this, work has been undertaken to develop a Charter for the Future to enable businesses and organisations to improve gender equality within the sector.

The Charter will be a voluntary scheme supporting businesses and organisations in the Scottish agricultural sector to make the most of their resources, including people, and improving access to opportunities for all.



In exploring the development of the Charter, a range of approaches were considered, including the Nolan Principles of Public Life, the Athena SWAN Charter scheme and Northern Ireland's Gender Diversity Charter. All approaches acknowledge that advancing gender equality demands commitment and action at all levels of the sector, and in particular active leadership from those in senior roles. In this way the Charter will help businesses make better use of their assets, enabling them to expand and develop.

The Charter aims to create an inclusive culture that advances equality of opportunity, advancement and outcome for all, and is based on a number of key principles, including:



- Advancing gender equality within the agriculture sector
- Encouraging and promoting career development and progression for all
- Tackling the gender pay gap
- Ensuring that normal succession and inheritance practices do not act as a barrier to gender equality.



A small sample of organisations and businesses from across the farming sector will be identified to participate in a pilot project to test the practical application of the Charter.

The pilot will include a benchmark survey prior to the application of the Charter, followed by research to quantify the business benefits from attitudinal and behavioural change within the business and organisations.







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