

We need more newbies...

New entrants bring innovation and entrepreneurship, practical skills and positivity to the industry. However, they face considerable challenges. This EU project aims to support new entrants

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The average age of farmers in Ireland in 2016 was 55 years of age, while the number of family farm holders who were aged less than 35 years old was just 7.4% (one in 13). This age profile mirrors the statistics of other member states across the EU. New entrants are vital to the future of farming, rural communities and the wider agricultural industry in Ireland and across Europe.

The 'Newbie' project
Teagasc has collaborated with eight other EU member states in a new Horizon 2020-funded project called Newbie. The project which runs from 2018 to 2021, will focus on new entrants to farming right across the spectrum of farm-based enterprises.

Who are new entrants?
New entrants are defined in this project as anyone who starts a new farm business or becomes involved in an existing farm business. They are made up of a wide range of ages, agricultural experience and resource access. Newcomers and successors can enter farming at any stage in their working lives. They face common barriers: access to land, labour, capital, housing, markets, knowledge and the networks needed to acquire these resources.

Focus of the project
The Newbie project will focus on the challenge of enabling new entrants to successfully establish sustainable farm businesses by learning from new entrant farmers and highlighting the ways in which these challenges were overcome. This will include:

- Gaining a better understanding of new entrants who are choosing farming as a career
- Highlight the pathways and modes of entry.
- Highlighting the businesses or enterprises that new entrant are involved in.
- Developing a European network of new entrant farmers.
- Establishing a unique platform by bringing together new entrants, successors, advisors, researchers, important regional and national actors and relevant stakeholders in national networks.

Information updates will be posted on the project website which can be found at the following link. <http://www.newbie-academy.eu/>

Activities
There are numerous activities planned over the lifetime of this project. The project will organise a diverse range of activities, both at national and European level.

- Two regional discussion groups will be established with new entrants and relevant stakeholders.
- Work is already under way to create a video channel with a library of inspiring new entrants' visual stories from all participating countries.
- An opportunity for travel on a bilateral exchange of new farmers and advisors across Europe.

If you are a new entrant farmer in any enterprise and you would like to get involved to share your experiences through the discussion circles during the project. You can email the project at newbie@teagasc.ie to be included in one of these discussion groups on new entrant farmers.

Discussion circles
At the core of the project are national discussion circles of about 50 participants (new entrants, successors, advisors, educators and research), which will meet twice a year in every participating country. In these networks, the new business models will



Teresa Sheehy (above) is starting a novel calf-rearing enterprise.

be presented and discussed, toolkits validated and experiences from the participants will be exchanged. Furthermore, the results of the national discussion circles will be shared and discussed with all discussion circles through a special monitoring and evaluation programme.

Steering groups
A steering group has been set up. The steering group will consist of 10 to 12 people meeting twice a year to discuss

the flow of the project at national level. They will contribute by building the discussion circles, prioritising topics for the discussion circles and can be regarded as ambassadors of Newbie.

The steering group will also guide the consortium towards the optimal selection for the international training. The Newbie network will provide an international forum for young farmers who want to establish a career

in farming with the opportunity to engage with other new entrants and learn how barriers to entry might be overcome. The project will also highlight various types of farm-based enterprises which may be an alternative or addition to the existing enterprises on farms.

Interested in joining a European new entrant to farming network?

• Visit the Newbie website <http://www.newbie-academy.eu/>

PROFILE: Teresa Sheehy, Co Limerick

Young, travelled, entrepreneurial, Teresa Sheehy from Feohanagh, near Newcastletwest in Limerick is typical of the new entrants the Newbie project aims to support. Teresa is starting up a novel calf-rearing enterprise. Having worked on a large-scale calf-rearing unit in New Zealand Teresa aims to offer dairy farmers the opportunity to outsource the rearing of their replacements. Teresa will take calves as young as 14 days and return them to their home farm in-calf at 24 months. "It's still fairly rare for calf-rearers to take animals that young," says Teresa who also works with DeLaval. "Keeping the heifers healthy is obviously the key point and I aim to take large groups from the same farm rather than mixing a lot of animals from different sources."

Teresa credits Teagasc advisor Joe Kellegher with helping her develop a business model based on rate-per-day, calf performance targets, etc. "The farmer pays for meal and vet costs, I provide fodder, labour and facilities," she says. "I think it's a system that will grow in popularity as it allows new entrants to get into farming without the need for an enormous amount of capital and dairy farmers can concentrate on fewer asks."