

Access to land through the Land Mobility Service

Question

How to identify existing farmers to collaborate with?

Problem

In Ireland the majority of land is owned by the farm operator and is seen as the essential asset for productive agriculture. Land ownership and transfer of land can be a sensitive issue for many farmers and their families. There is a tradition among many farmers in Ireland to keep the land in the 'family name' and that it is 'actively farmed'.

Gaining access to land is a major barrier facing new entrants attempting to enter the agricultural sector across Europe. This barrier to land is created by a number of issues including reluctance from older generation's to step aside, low supply of land for sale or rent in many areas and the high price of available land which many new entrants are unable to afford.

Generation renewal is becoming an issue of concern in Ireland with figures showing that in 2016 30% of Irish farm holders were over 65 years of age. Another alarming statistic from research carried out was that 50% of farmers had no successor identified.

This lack of successors and aging farm population provides challenges but can also provide potential opportunities. There are opportunities because there are other farmers (new entrants, young farmers, and developing farmers) who are eager to gain access to additional land.

Since the early 00's Teagasc has played an important role in developing all the collaborative business structures available and used by practitioners such as solicitors, accountants and the Land Mobility Service.

The Land Mobility Service was set up in 2013 by Macra na Feirme, a national voluntary youth organisation, to link landowners and potential farmers interested in

collaborating and developing sustainable viable farm enterprises.

The purpose of the service is to facilitate collaborative arrangements tailored to suit any specific situation.

Solution

The Land Mobility Service is a support service for farmers and farm families who are contemplating expansion, changing enterprise, or stepping back. The service allows people explore their options and helps match farmers interested in long leases and collaborative arrangements. The service identifies opportunities for farmers wishing to expand or new entrants wanting to develop their own career in farming. The overriding aim of the subsidised service has been the delivery of land mobility and access to land through collaborative farming arrangements.

The service has three key elements:

- Create awareness and provide information
- Deliver arrangements
- Support operating arrangements

The client profile of the service is; 26% New Entrants, 29% Expanding Farmers and 45% Farmers wanting to Retire. The service has facilitated over 500 arrangements to date, representing a change in land use or land mobility for 47,000ac. The service supports all enterprises and has facilitated arrangements across all.

The impact of the service has led too:

1. New and Innovative Land Use Models
2. Sustainable Arrangements
3. Progression for New Entrants/ Young Farmers
4. Supply Security and Supply Enhancement for agri industry

Collaborative farming arrangements such as farm partnerships, share farming, contract rearing and long term leasing have actively been promoted as ideal stepping stones to help overcome obstacles to land access.

The process of the service involves firstly the service being contacted from an interested party. An initial



consultation takes place where various options and scenarios are outlined. Family option and preferred collaborator options are explored. If no potential collaborator is known or none exist the Service helps in trying to identify potential collaborators. The service works for potential agreement.



Family farm partnerships are an integral part of succession planning on the family farm

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NEWBIE Dynamic Learning Agenda

This practise description is developed to answer one of the questions from the NEWBIE dynamic learning agenda.

Theme: Access to land - What are innovative solutions for new entrants to gain access to land?

Question: How to identify existing farmers to collaborate with?

Find more practise descriptions and the dynamic learning agenda on www.newbie-academy.eu/publications

Practical recommendations

- The most important thing is finding the right person
- The arrangement type and price or share will be what works for everyone
- Think about the suitability and the sustainability of the arrangement
- Can both parties make this opportunity work
- How does this fit in with your longer term goals
- Does the farm plan and budgets make sense
- Agree a plan as to what both parties want to achieve
- Implement a formal agreement

Read more

<http://landmobility.ie/>