

**Central Service and Contingency Planning  
Group**  
Central Management Branch



Nick Henry  
Clerk to the Committee for Agriculture,  
Environment and Rural Affairs  
Room 243  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Belfast BT4 3XX

Assembly Section  
Room 430, Dundonald House  
Upper Newtownards Road  
Ballymiscaw  
Belfast BT4 3SB  
Telephone: 028 9052 4252  
E-mail: [Michael.oliver@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.oliver@daera-ni.gov.uk)

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Dear Nick

**Barriers to Women in Farm Management**

Please find DAERA's written submission to this mini-investigation at Annex A below.

Please bring this to the Committee's attention.

Yours sincerely



**Michael Oliver**  
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

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## Annex A : Submission - Barriers to Women in Farm Management

### Background

The AERA Committee has commenced a mini-investigation into Barriers to Women in Farm Management. This submission sets out DAERA's current support for women in agriculture and plans for future policy implementation.

### Gender data relating to Farm Businesses in Northern Ireland

#### **EU Farm Structure Survey 2016**

The most recent information on the gender of farm business owners is available on the DAERA website at the link below:

[European Union Farm Structure Survey 2016 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/eu-farm-structure-survey-2016)

This survey shows that, in 2016, 76% of farm workers were male and **24% were female**. However the proportion of **female managers was 5%**.

DAERA does not record the gender of applicants to **Area-Based Schemes**.

#### Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020

Information on females benefitting from a range of RDP-funded schemes managed by DAERA is as follows.

#### **Farm Business Improvement Scheme 2021**

The number of approved applications submitted by females for Tier 1 Tranche 3 of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme in 2021 was 148 which represents approximately 5% of the total applications.

#### **Business Development Groups (BDGs) Scheme 2021**

The BDGs scheme is part-funded by the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. It uses a group training approach that allows sharing of knowledge with the aim of improving the technical efficiency and profitability of farm businesses. There are currently 3119 members of Business Development Groups of which 4% are female. A breakdown by county is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: BDGs Scheme – participation by females**

County	Groups	Members	Female	Male
Down	40	829	30	799
Tyrone	37	728	32	696
Antrim	30	599	24	575
Derry/Londonderry	24	473	8	465
Armagh	18	336	18	318

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Fermanagh	13	278	12	266
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>3243</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>3119</b>
			<b>4% Female</b>	

### **Farm Family Key Skills (FFKS) 2021**

The FFKS scheme is part-funded by the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. The Scheme offers short course awareness training on topical issues that can help with on-farm decision making. Training themes include Business Planning, Animal Health, Environmental Sustainability, Health and Safety and ICT. Since Scheme was launched in 2016, a total of 18,171 farmers, farm family members and employees have been trained, of which **3094 (17%) were female**.

### **CAFRE Courses**

DAERA's College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) is increasingly supporting females through the delivery of Further and Higher Education Agriculture Courses which include modules relating to farm management and these are summarised below. For the current 2021/22 academic year CAFRE has 1869 students of which **844 (45%) are female** studying Further and Higher Education courses across the disciplines of Agriculture, Horticulture, Food and Equine. The enrolment data indicates that Further Education Courses (Level 2 and Level 3) are predominantly male, whilst Higher Education courses (Foundation and Honours Degrees) are predominantly female. The only exception is the Level 4 Work-Based Diploma which is predominantly male.

### **Level 2 Certificate in Agricultural Business Operations (Open College Network Northern Ireland)**

CAFRE has delivered this one year course over 20 weeks each year since 2014. This course was originally developed to meet an eligibility requirement for those applying for the Young Farmers' Payment / Regional Reserve and includes a module on Farm Business Management. To date over 4000 people have successfully completed this course. In 2021/22 **there are 35 (27%) female** and 132 male students on this course.

### **Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Agriculture – Farm Business Management content (City and Guilds)**

Students who graduate from this course may be able to progress on to Foundation Degree or Honours Degree courses in agriculture. Alternatively they can avail of employment opportunities such as supervisory posts in the feed, agrochemical and fertiliser sectors as well as herd and farm management roles. There are **70 (33%) female** and 140 male students on this course.

Modules which relate to farm management and/or farm business management are detailed as follows:

#### **Business Management in the land based sector, including**

- Importance of agriculture to the NI and UK economy
- Range of businesses associated to the industry Range of businesses associated to the industry
- Business structures, resources and job roles
- Business marketplace and supply chains
- Quality Management practices
- Financial and physical records

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**Beef Production, including:**

- Beef Management data and performance standards

**Sheep Production, including:**

- Economics of store lamb finishing

**Dairy Production including:**

- Gross margins
- Milk Contracts

**Crop Production, including:**

- Production of costs and Gross Margin

**Business Planning and Improvement, including:**

- Strategies to improve business performance (consolidation, SWOT etc)
- Key performance indicators (farm business data)
- Plan for achieving business improvement
- Business planning

In addition to these modules, students have also received talks from outside speakers in the banking sector and have the opportunity to visit farm businesses to learn about management.

Students complete a period of work placement as Year 2 of the course. It comprises of a 52 week work placement where students develop skills in commercial decision making, enterprise management and problem solving.

**Level 4 Work-based Agricultural Business Management (City & Guilds)**

This course gives students the flexibility to combine work and education. The course reinforces production, business and management skills. Students must be working on their home farm or working on a farm where they have access to the financial performance of the business. They are required, as part of their course, to benchmark their business. All assessments are based on their own work situation. There are **4 (11%) female** and 31 male students on this course.

Areas of study include:

- Produce, monitor and manage forage plans including grazing
- Plan, manage and monitor the operation and performance of the enterprise
- Plan, monitor and evaluate the nutrition of production ruminants
- Plan, manage and evaluate site hygiene and biosecurity
- Plan and manage the health and welfare of livestock
- Plan, manage and evaluate breeding programmes
- Plan, monitor and evaluate the nutrition of mono-gastrics
- Plant nutrients and fertiliser planning
- Prepare and produce a plan for your business
- Make changes to improve a business
- Estimate financial needs of your business

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- Improve the Financial Performance of a Business
- Make a cashflow forecast

### **Foundation Degree in Agriculture and Technology (Ulster University)**

Students who graduate from this course may be able to progress on to Honours Degree courses in agriculture. Alternatively they can avail of career opportunities in farming and enterprise management as well as marketing, sales, contracting and consultancy. There are **43 (55%) female** and 35 male students on this course.

Successful students are well prepared for employment leaving with skills in production agriculture, business management and science and technology.

Modules which relate to specifically to farm management and/or farm business management are detailed as follows:

- Developments in agriculture
- Financial management on the farm
- Sustainable production systems
- Work-based learning

All students undertake a work placement for either a full year, or a minimum of 400 hours, during which they develop technical and commercial expertise in the agri-food industry.

### **BSc (Hons) Degree in Agricultural Technology (Queen's University Belfast)**

Graduates with an Honours degree develop professional, technical, management, interpersonal and problem solving skills to enter management roles in the Agriculture Industry and follow careers as farmers and farm managers; farm liaison representatives; researchers; consultants and technical advisers. There are **37 (52%) female** and 34 male students on this course.

Degree modules which relate to specifically to farm management and/or farm business management are detailed as follows:

- Introduction to business and research methods
- Agri-food business marketing and management
- Business innovation and entrepreneurship

Students completing the Degree over three years spend four months on work placement whilst a four year option is available where students undertake a one-year work placement as Year 3 of the course.

### **BSc (Hons) Degree in Sustainable Agriculture with Agri-business and Land Management pathways (Ulster University)**

This Honours Degree is particularly relevant to those interested in agriculture and the environment or agriculture and business. Students can select the pathway they wish to study during the first year on the course. The course offers students the opportunity to complete one year of work-based learning. There are **28 (55%) female** and 23 male students on this course.

Degree modules which relate to specifically to farm management and/or farm business management are detailed as follows:

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- Academic and professional skills
- Financial management on farm
- Future challenges for agri-food
- Agri-food policy and human resource management
- Farm performance management
- Marketing and entrepreneurship

### **DAERA Policy Initiatives**

A summary is provided of current and developing policy initiatives which aim to enhance support to females pursuing a career in agriculture.

### **2021/22 Changes to FE Support**

Following the 2018 Review of Further Education (FE) Support and Charging Policy at CAFRE financial support for part-time Further Education students was introduced at CAFRE for the first time. A grant of up to £400 per year is available to part-time students studying at CAFRE to help with the costs of resources and travel. The maximum corresponding part-time FE Grant delivered by the Department for the economy in the wider FE sector is £265 per annum. Eligibility for the grant also provides access for eligible part time students to the CAFRE Childcare Allowance and the CAFRE Hardship Fund. Childcare Allowance is an important support mechanism for women hoping to complete a course of study and past student data has shown that twice as many as part-time students have children as full-time students.

It is hoped this initiative will encourage and support more women who wish to make a career in farming.

### **CAFRE Widening Access & Participation Plan (WAPP)**

CAFRE are developing their first Widening Access & Participation Plan (WAPP) for implementation 2022. The CAFRE WAPP sets out CAFRE's strategy to address under-representation in its courses, this includes specific actions and targets for improving any gender under-representation. A range of initiatives are being considered many of which should encourage and support women who wish to enter farming. The initiatives currently being explored include: bursaries to help with the financial costs associated with education; the potential move to more course delivery online; examining improving access to courses such as horticulture in urban areas of NI and increasing the number of student support officers available at the College.

### **DAERA Future Agricultural Policy proposals - Generational Renewal**

One of the work streams included within the DAERA Future Agricultural Policy proposals is Generational Renewal. The transition of farming businesses to the next generation is a complex issue which may not only require planning for succession but also planning for restructuring of the business and addressing sensitive family and social issues. The Generational Renewal work stream is being progressed to explore a more comprehensive approach to this challenge focusing on both the successor and the exiting farmer. This programme aims to encourage farming families to consider their succession plans and will support the development of the capacity and capability of the identified successor. This focus on planning for the future provides an opportunity to encourage more females into the industry.

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