



MAgrSc Innovation Support Programme 2015-2017



Study title: A Knowledge Transfer Approach to Collaborative Farming Structures for the Dairy Industry

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Study Objectives

1. To establish the future aspirations of the high profit dairy farmers (HPDF) in terms of collaborative farming structures (CFS)
2. To assess the opportunities and challenges that they may face in the future in relation to CFS
3. To design and develop a CFS guide for the dairy industry with the assistance of an industry working group

Methodology

Analysis of secondary data: financial(e-PM)and grass production (PastureBase & AgriNet) to establish current farm performance



Focus group with the HPDF



Detailed interviews with 3 HPDF



Industry stakeholder focus group

Thesis Structure / Chapters

Chapter 1

- The first chapter serves as an introduction to the study. It provides a background and outlines the rationale, methodologies used, research objectives, sample size, utility and layout of the thesis.

Chapter 2

- The second chapter reviews the current literature relating to industry targets, Irish dairy farm characteristics, farm profitability, farmer decision making and innovation and collaborative farming structures– benefits, barriers, examples in Ireland and internationally and finally competencies required for effective collaboration.

Chapter 3

- Chapter three presents the secondary data analysis, findings of the HPDF focus group, HPDF interviews and the industry stakeholder focus group.

Chapter 4

- This chapter serves to summarise the main findings of the research in relation to the objectives, conclusions and recommendations from this thesis which shall benefit the dairy industry in the future.

References

Appendices

- Letter to HPDF, focus group summary, interview template and industry stakeholder email.

Key Findings

Objective 1: To establish the future aspirations of the HPDF in terms of collaborative farming structures

- Use CFS to progress their business
- HPDF have a desire to facilitate succession and to acquire more cows, land and/or labour
- Education needed for many industry stakeholders
 - Knowledge of many industry stakeholders deficient
 - Lack of trust with many industry stakeholders
- A need for specialised personnel in this area
- An independent broker may be needed to facilitate the “win-win” for both parties in these arrangements
- Support needed for farmers interested in contract heifer rearing
- Information needs to be farmer friendly

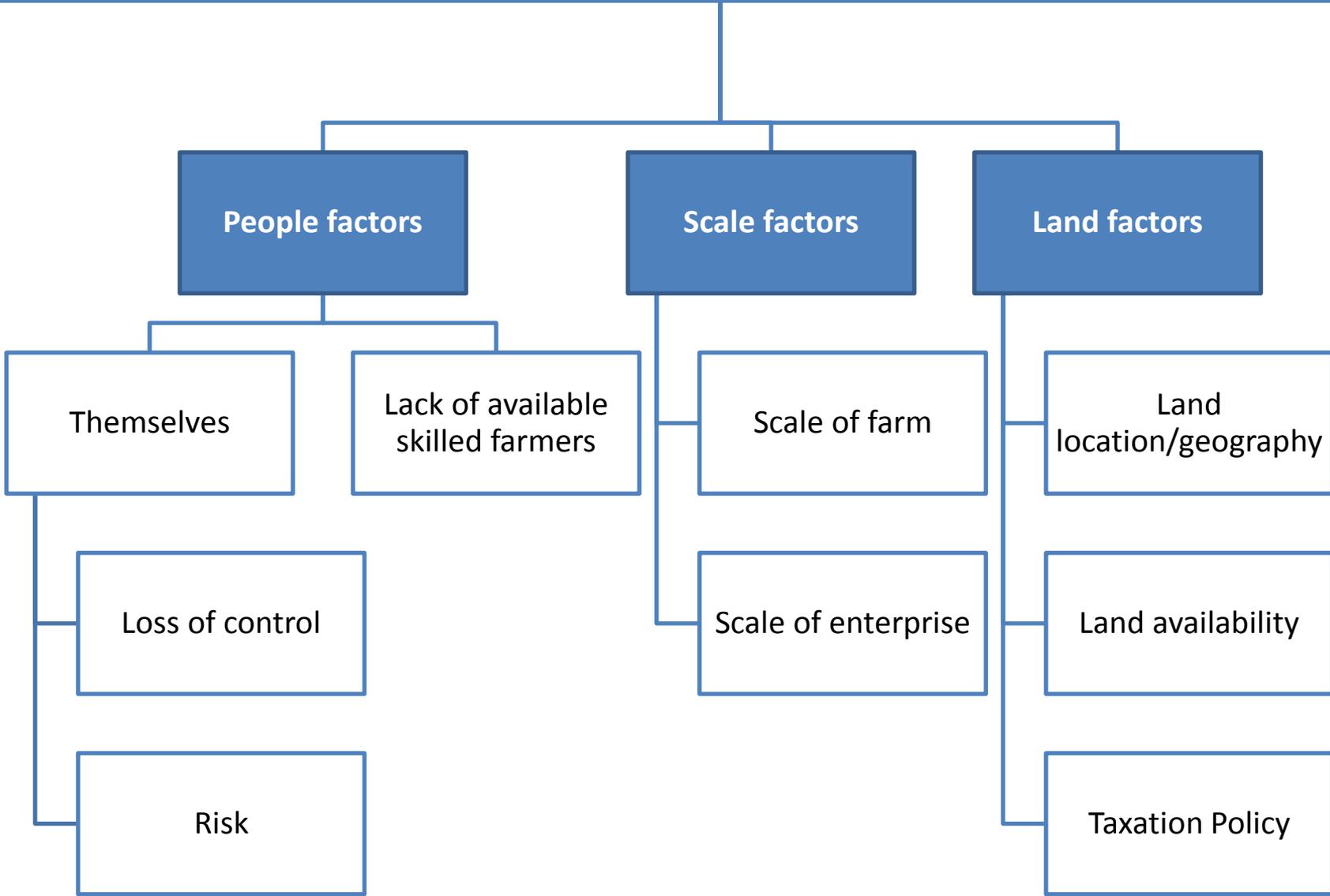


Key Findings

Objective 2: To assess the opportunities and challenges that they may face in the future in relation to collaborative farming structures

- HPDF are ready to avail of any opportunities – keep extra heifers
- CFS provide the opportunity to progress the business forward in terms of cow numbers and farm size
- CFS can address challenges such as succession and availability of skilled labour
 - Important to make farming attractive to the next generation
 - “I’m very careful at the minute to try and be home early and I don’t bring him up to the yard on a bad day. I want to make it look attractive to him as a few years down the road I would be open to change because that’s the way the world is going”
 - Collaboration provides shared responsibility and security to both parties

Challenges to Collaborative Farming Structures



Conclusions to date

- The HPDF have progressed their businesses post quota
- CFS will be crucial to meet industry targets
 - Can address future challenges such as average farm size, farmer age, succession and labour availability
- People factors and the “win-win” most important for these arrangements to be successful
 - Trust, developing a working relationship and regular communication fundamental
- The discussion group, family and Teagasc are key influences in the farm decision making process
- More KT support is needed regarding farmer decision making in relation to farm business structures

Steps to completion

1. Hold industry stakeholder focus group (March 3rd)
2. Write up guide
3. Finish writing up results
4. Make corrections to literature review
5. Summarise main findings, conclusion and recommendations
6. Complete write up and submit