Off-Farm Employment Challenges for Irish Farm Households

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Paper Structure

- Trend in Off-Farm Employment
- Age Group Variability
- Education
- Sectoral Issues
- Regional Issues
Off-Farm Employment Rate (Working Age Couple)

Farmer Off-farm Employment gain of 15 years – wiped out in 3 years
Spouse less of an issue
Vulnerability → strongly age related
- Focus today on working age alternative opportunities
- Pension age solutions ~ social welfare & retirement savings. However, challenges for land use (52% of land for vulnerable and 24% of all land held by over 65)
Highest Level of Education of Farmers Aged < 65

- Leaving Certificate Modal Highest Education Level of Working Age
- Low Education Level issue

The Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority
Vulnerable Farms by Education Aged < 65

Except for lowest education level vulnerability declines with education level – skills an issue
Vulnerable Farms by Ag Training Aged < 65

Vulnerability lower for those with Agricultural training too – so general and specific skills an issue.
Job Loss Rate by Education Aged < 65

Job loss rate worse for lower skills levels
Agriculture (such as contracting) has replaced construction as the second highest share of employment between 2008 and 2013.
After sharp decline and bouncing along bottom, increasing evidence of a recovery - More recently improvement in personal consumption and construction.
Employment Growth

Employment growth since lowest point in 2012 Q1
Continuing contraction in Construction employment, but growth in all sectors, particularly agriculture

- Reliance on construction remains a challenge for off-farm employment
Employment down 13% since peak in Q3 2007
- Border and MW Worst, Dublin Best

Employment up 3.5% since trough in Q1 2012
- SE and Dublin best, MW worst

The Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority
Change in Vulnerability of Working Age by Region since 2008-2011 (Brackets vulnerability rate in 2013)

Vulnerability increased most in Border. However worrying increase in “Strong” Agricultural areas. More Resilience in areas with stronger part-time farming tradition.

Vulnerability Ratio 2011 - 2008:
- Louth, Leitrim, Sligo, Cavan, Donegal, Monaghan: 0.35
- Kildare, Meath, Wicklow: 0.13
- Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath: 0.11
- Clare, Limerick, Tipp. N.R.: 0.10
- Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Tipp S.R., Waterford: 0.25
- Cork, Kerry: 0.22
- Galway, Mayo, Roscommon: 0.19

The Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority
Take-Home Message

- 15 Years of growth in Off-Farm Employment of Farmers wiped out in 3 years post crisis
- While vulnerability was more pronounced for pension age, an important issue for working age
- Education and skill levels are an important driver of employment and vulnerability
- Reliance on construction remains a challenge for off-farm employment
- Border most challenged region
- However worrying increase in “Strong” Agricultural areas
- More Resilience in areas with stronger part-time farming tradition
Thank You

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