

Lessons learnt to date from NEWBIE and NEFERTITI projects

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Summary

- Teagasc is involved in two EU projects looking at encouraging new entrants to farming (NEWBIE) and promoting farming as an attractive career (NEFERTITI).
- New entrants can bring innovation, entrepreneurship, practical skills and positivity to the dairy industry.
- Current dairy farmers can play an important role in encouraging new entrants/successors to the industry.

Introduction

Falling farmer numbers and the decline in young farmers is a constant threat to the agricultural sector. A Central Statistics Office report in 2016 showed that there were 137,100 farms in Ireland, down from a total of 141,527 farms in 2000. On 30% of Irish farms, the farm holder was over 65 years of age. Teagasc have reported that 6,000 people are required to enter the dairy industry by 2025. These numbers highlight the importance of new entrants to Irish farming. New entrants can bring innovation, entrepreneurship, practical skills and positivity to the industry.

New entrants face considerable challenges in entering the sector. The NEWBIE project aims to address the challenge of enabling new entrants to successfully establishing sustainable farm businesses while a theme from the NEFERTITI project aims to promote careers in dairy farming.

Lessons learnt from New Entrant farmers

New entrants face quite a number of barriers with the most common hurdles including access to land, access to capital and access to labour. Ten in depth case studies in Ireland were conducted (90 in total across Europe) and success factors of new entrants were compiled. Some success factors/ways of overcoming challenges for new entrants included:

- Collaborative farming models e.g. partnerships: Led to easier access of finance and to an increase in knowledge through multiple personal involved in the farm business.
- Funding supports for new entrants: Examples include young farmer capital investment scheme, young farmer's scheme, national reserve, collaborative farming grants, succession farm partnership scheme, leader funding etc.
- Access to knowledge: There are a number of courses and supports available to new entrant farmers such as 'Teagasc Dairy Start Up Course'. New entrants also stated that discussion groups offered them support and back-up.

Key aspects for farmers to promote careers in farming

One of the themes of the NEFERTITI project is promoting farming as an attractive career. Current dairy farmers play a key role in promoting careers in dairy farming to younger generations. They can display dairy farming as a positive career through a number of different actions:

- Promote a positive image of dairy farming to their children. Encourage it as enjoyable work that offers the potential to earn a high income when done correctly.
- Open their farm to demonstration events to promote dairy farming. Target audiences could include local school children.
- Share their story on how they became a dairy farmer — this can be particularly interesting for the audience if they come from a non-farming background. A possible method to do this would be through social media platforms that farmers are active on.

Conclusions

Sustaining a cohort of new entrants is crucial for the agricultural sector. While there are many challenges for new entrants, especially when starting their farm business, there are ways of overcoming these challenges and supports are available. Dairy farming must be portrayed as a positive career with multiple opportunities to encourage new entrants/successors to enter the industry.

Acknowledgment

NEWBIE is an EU horizon 2020 project aiming to create a network that offers guidance of overcoming challenges for new entrant farmers. Register on <http://www.newbie-academy.eu/> to join the NEWBIE network, keep up-to-date with the project and to see new entrant examples from Ireland and across Europe.

NEFERTITI is an EU horizon 2020 project aiming to networking European farms to enhance cross fertilisation and innovation uptake through demonstration. 10 themes are addressed with one them being Farm Attractiveness. Register on <https://nefertiti-h2020.eu/> keep up-to-date with the project and demonstration events that will be ran in your region!

