



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture

Report

Economics & Planning Division
January 2024



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the Guest Speakers, Discussion Panellists and Workshop Rapporteurs who gave their time and shared their lived experiences while participating in this event. We would also like to thank Teagasc for their support and assistance in running the workshops and facilitating open and constructive discussion on the themes of the day.

All views, thoughts and opinions expressed in this report belong to those women who participated in the National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture, which took place on 1st February 2023, and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of any entities they represent.

This report serves as a record of the discussions that took place at the Dialogue and is not intended to reflect or represent the position of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, or the experiences of all women working within the agri-food sector in Ireland.

The report has been compiled from an audio recording and transcription of the Dialogue.



Foreword

The National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture, hosted by my Department on 1st February 2023, was a day full of collaboration and inspiration, which has been extremely well received, and has provided much to think about around gender equality in agriculture.

The work of women on farms is often unseen and not fully appreciated and this Dialogue explored what impediments might exist and how these may be hampering women's efforts to take more active and prominent roles on farms in Ireland. It is time to take the role of women farmers out of the shadows and put them firmly in the spotlight, giving them the recognition, they deserve. I am of the view that the Dialogue yielded tangible outcomes that we can take forward to improve the position of women in agriculture.

The Programme for Government recognises the need to do more on gender equality across Irish society. When aligned with the gender equality objectives of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and core principles of the European Union, it is clear to see the significant policy support and momentum building on gender balance globally.

As Minister for Agriculture, Food, and the Marine, I am delighted that the new CAP Regulations place a new focus on promoting the role of women in rural development, with special attention to farming. I am genuinely proud that we have seized this opportunity and have included, for the first time, several measures in Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan to support greater equality. Food Vision 2030, our shared stakeholder-led strategy for the agri-food sector, recognises the importance of gender balance to its long-term sustainable future and includes actions to promote and improve gender balance at all levels. To complement the work under the CAP Strategic Plan and Food Vision 2030, I was pleased to announce at the Dialogue that my Department recently commissioned a research project on women in agriculture. The **HER-SELF** project will establish a baseline position on women in agriculture and provide evidence for future policy in the area.

In 2022 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a paper outlining how fostering gender inclusion can positively impact global food systems and the challenges it faces regarding food stability security, job security and environmental sustainability within the food supply chain. We cannot meet those challenges if gender inequality persists in farming and across the sector. Positive engagement with stakeholder groups and farm representative bodies and strong leadership will create opportunities to deliver new initiatives improving the lives of all agri-food stakeholders. I believe achieving our target of 40% female participation on State Boards under the aegis of my Department, and the resulting visibility of female leadership, will encourage more female participation at all levels in the sector.

I extend my thanks to those who volunteered their time and shared their experiences at the Dialogue, guiding and encouraging open and constructive debate on the future of female farmers. I especially wish to thank Mary Coughlan, for agreeing to chair the Dialogue. As Ireland's first and only female Minister for Agriculture to date, she has been a pioneer in changing the narrative on the role of women in agriculture.



I would like to conclude by encouraging stakeholders to embrace the opportunity to work together with a singular focus to contribute in a meaningful way to positive change for women farmers in Ireland. I look forward to working with you in forging the future for Irish agriculture and ensuring women have their rightful place and equal place of leadership of our great sector.

Signature

Charlie McConalogue.

Charlie McConalogue T.D.
Minister for Agriculture, Food, and the Marine





Mary Coughlan

It was an honour to have been invited by Minister Charlie McConalogue to chair the National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture. The recognition of the role that women have played in the development of farming enterprises and the agri-food sector is often taken for granted and the Dialogue afforded the opportunity for women to have their voices heard.

This Dialogue has set the tone to pursue the necessary measures which will ultimately lead to greater visibility of women in farming and the agri-food industry and address any bias that may still exist. We must explore all the barriers and all the opportunities, and through incentivisation and mentoring of women's roles, bring better gender balance, which is a key goal of Food Vision 2030.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the Economics and Planning Division of the Department, Minister McConalogue, Minister Hackett and Minister Heydon and their staff, our eminent speakers and most importantly the participants on the day who ensured the Dialogue was both informative and enjoyable.

Mary Coughlan
Former Tánaiste and Minister for Agriculture





Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Foreword | 3 |
| Highlights | 7 |
| What issues were addressed? | 7 |
| How did we address these issues? | 7 |
| What did we learn? | 7 |
| What happens now? | 7 |
| Executive Summary | 8 |
| Introduction | 8 |
| Current Position | 8 |
| Food Vision 2030 | 8 |
| CAP | 9 |
| Conclusions | 9 |
| Panel Discussion – Women in the Agri-Food Sector | 12 |
| Guest Speaker Julia Klöckner | 15 |
| Panel Discussion – Women in Farming, Challenges and Opportunities | 17 |
| Minister of State, Martin Heydon T.D. | 20 |
| Workshops | 22 |
| Leadership & Visibility Workshop | 23 |
| Education & Awareness Workshop | 25 |
| Financial and legal Workshop | 27 |
| Sustainability Workshops | 29 |
| Minister of State, Senator Pippa Hackett | 31 |
| Conclusions | 33 |
| Recommendations | 34 |
| Appendix 1 –Herd Number/Herd Keeper Policy | 39 |
| Appendix 2 - Women in Agriculture Stakeholders Group Submission | 40 |
| Appendix 2 – Twitter Engagement | 43 |
| Appendix 3 - Slido Poll Results | 44 |
| Appendix 4 – Event Attendee Survey | 46 |



Highlights

Food Vision 2030 recognises the importance of gender equality to the long-term sustainable future of the agri-food sector and includes actions to promote and improve gender balance at all levels, including a commitment to hold a National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture. The Dialogue, held in Portlaoise on St Brigid's Day (1st February) 2023, was well attended with circa 160 delegates representing farmers and stakeholders across the sector.

What issues were addressed?

The Dialogue sought to explore gender issues encountered by women within the sector and to draw conclusions, identifying barriers and possible solutions, and making recommendations to inform future policy on gender equality in farming. Some of the issues addressed were in the areas of education, leadership, sustainability, and financial and legal.

How did we address these issues?

The issues were addressed via panel discussions in the morning session on the topics of "The Role of Women in the Agri-Food Sector" and "Women in Farming – Challenges and Opportunities". Guest speaker Julia Klöckner, former Minister for Agriculture in Germany, outlined the similarities and differences between the Irish and German landscape regarding women in agriculture. The afternoon saw delegates break out into four dedicated workshops exploring the areas of Leadership and Visibility, Education and Awareness, Financial and Legal Matters and Sustainability.

What did we learn?

The discussions that took place in the afternoon workshops have yielded useful conclusions and recommendations for consideration in relation to future policy decisions around improving gender balance in agriculture in Ireland. Some of the main themes emerging included the requirement for visible and measurable change, specific actions and targets, more inclusion, connection and community, education, and communication. While there was acknowledgement of the improvements to date, there was a strong sentiment that more needs to be done to level the playing field.

What happens now?

This report of the Dialogue details the barriers identified by delegates during the event and outlines the conclusions and recommendations arising. It will be published on the Department's website www.gov.ie/agriculture for public information and will be used to inform future policy making.



Executive Summary

Introduction

The current Programme for Government recognises the need to do more on gender equality. As well as being a priority for Government, gender equality is a key objective of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and a core principle of the European Union. The new Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) Regulations place new focus on promoting the role of women in the socio-economic development of rural areas, with special attention to farming.

Current Position

The CSO's 2020 Census of Agriculture provided a detailed snapshot of agricultural activity and the structure of farming in Ireland. The results indicated women account for only 13% of farm holders in Ireland. At the same time, results showed female farm workers equated to 27% of total farm workers in Ireland at the time. This points to a significant volume of women, working in Irish farming, without visibility or farm holder status. The trend in the proportion of workers in the primary agriculture, forestry and fishing sector that are female has only increased very slightly in recent years. Women, therefore, continue to be very under-represented in the sector.

According to the Department's client database, 13% of active individual herdowners in 2022 were women. Analysis of these figures shows just under 7% of females were under 40, over 60% were over 60 and 15% were over 80 years of age.

Women occupy various roles in farming as independent producers, business managers, agriculture helpers and farm homemakers but in common with the EU overall, there is unequal participation by women and men in agriculture in Ireland and the work done by women on farms continues to be largely invisible and without status as farm holder or registered herdowner. To align with the gender equality expectations and commitments of the agriculture sector in Ireland and in Europe, the visibility, equality, and status of women in farming should be an integral part of the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of future policy strategies. However, more research is required to expand the evidence and knowledge base available to policymakers.

Food Vision 2030

Ireland's stakeholder-led shared strategy for the agri-food sector, recognises the importance of gender balance to the long-term sustainability of the sector and includes actions to promote and improve gender balance at all levels, such as:

- Promoting women's participation in farming through Knowledge Transfer Groups.
- Capturing and publishing gender data on policy implementation.
- Representation of the agri-food sector in the next National Women & Girl's Strategy
- Promoting/improving gender balance, particularly at senior management/board level.
- Promoting/supporting women's networks and mentoring programmes, e.g., ACORNS programme for rural female entrepreneurs, established in 2015 and funded by DAFM.



- Hosting a National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture.

CAP

The CAP Regulations place particular focus on promoting the participation of women in the socio-economic development of rural areas, with special attention to farming, supporting women's key role. The Common Agriculture Policy 2023-2027 includes the objective to promote gender equality under CAP Specific Objective 8 Vibrant Rural Areas and interventions have been designed in this regard.

Ireland's €9.8 billion CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) identified gender inequality as a weakness, while the economic benefits of increasing female participation was identified as an opportunity. In consultation with stakeholders, several measures have been included in the CSP which will support greater gender equality. These measures include:

- An increased grant rate of 60% under the Women Farmers Capital Investment Scheme (WFCIS) to fund investments by trained women farmers, launched in June 2023.
- The promotion of women-only Knowledge Transfer (KT) Groups via the new KT Programme, expected to launch January 2024.
- Improved recording and reporting of gender data and the leveraging of the National CAP Network to increase the involvement of all women in the implementation of CAP.
- All CAP interventions developed with a gender-aware perspective to ensure no inherent barriers to women's participation.
- In addition, European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) provide an opportunity to develop initiatives that will promote women's participation in farming. A public consultation seeking potential themes for EIP-Agri projects was launched in May 2023.

Conclusions

This report encompasses a wide range of views and perspectives expressed by the agriculture stakeholders in attendance at the National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture. The dialogue identified areas of reform for consideration to increase the promotion and improvement of gender equality in agriculture in Ireland. The resulting recommendations seek a re-evaluation of current attitudes and practices and the recognition of role of women in farming and the agri-food sector.

While some resistance to change can be expected, to achieve gender equality in Irish farming it is important that decisive policy action is taken. To ensure a targeted and meaningful approach to effecting this necessary change, the Dialogue gave rise to several detailed recommendations for consideration, which are laid out under the different workshop headings below.

While there were many suggestions and recommendations made on the day, one recommendation that emerged as common to all four workshop thematic areas was the importance of more inclusive language and changing the narrative around women in Irish farming, moving away from outdated stereotypes when framing conversations. This will



improve women's self-confidence and the confidence of others in their ability to actively contribute to the farming sector. Working with the media to engage in more positive national coverage to change the perception of farming in Ireland will assist in changing the narrative. Delegates identified the need to move away from the male farmer as the default on news bulletins and farm stories.

Next Steps

The detailed recommendations on Leadership & Visibility, Education & Awareness, Financial & Legal and Sustainability will be the basis for an Action Plan, to be progressed by the stakeholders.

Background

The World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index benchmarks 146 countries progress towards gender parity via Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment. The WEF reports gender parity has a fundamental bearing on whether economies and societies thrive. Developing and deploying one-half of the world's available talent can only improve the growth, competitiveness and future-readiness of economies and businesses worldwide.

The 2022 Global Gender Gap Index Report identifies gender gaps in the workforce as an emerging crisis. Gender gaps are driven and affected by various factors, including long-standing structural barriers, socioeconomic and technological transformation, as well as economic shocks. More women are moving into paid work and leadership positions, yet globally societal expectations, employer policies, the legal environment and the availability of care still impact females' choice of educational and career paths. In addition, geopolitical conflict, and climate change impact women disproportionately while the projected deepening of the current cost-of-living crisis is impacting women more severely than men, as women continue to earn and accumulate wealth at lower levels.

In 2023, the gap has closed by 68.1%. However, at the current rate of progress, it will take 132 years to reach full parity, a four-year improvement compared to the 2021 estimate of 136 years. Across the 146 countries covered by the 2022 index the gender gap has closed by:

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1. Economic Participation and Opportunity | 60.3% |
| 2. Educational Attainment by | 94.4%, |
| 3. Health and Survival gender gap has closed by | 95.8%, |
| 4. Political Empowerment | 22%. |

Overall Ireland ranks 9th globally with gender gap score of 80.4%, an increase of 0.4% on the 2021 score, indicating a slightly lower than 20% gender gap still to be closed.

Eurostat data published in November 2022 indicates that within the European Union, agriculture remains a big employer with approximately 8.7 million people working in the sector in 2020. They also indicate farming remains a male-dominated profession, with only 31.6% of farmers being women in 2020. The gender imbalance among farmers is particularly strong in the Netherlands; only one in every twenty farmers (5.6 %) was female in 2020. Female farmers



were also relatively uncommon in Malta (10.8 % of all farmers), Germany (10.8 %), Denmark (10.9 %) and Ireland (11.4 %). There was a closer gender balance in Latvia and Lithuania (with 44.8 % and 44.9 % shares respectively of farmers that were female).

The CSO's 2020 Census of Agriculture provided a detailed snapshot of agricultural activity and the structure of farming in Ireland. The results indicated women account for only 13% of farm holders in Ireland. At the same time, results showed female farm workers equated to 27% of total farm workers in Ireland at the time. This points to a significant volume of women, working in Irish farming, without visibility or farm holder status. The trend in the proportion of workers in the primary agriculture, forestry and fishing sector that are female has only increased very slightly in recent years. Women, therefore, continue to be very under-represented in the sector.

According to the Department's client database, 13% of active individual herdowners in 2022 were women. Analysis of these figures shows just under 7% of females were under 40, over 60% were over 60 and 15% were over 80 years of age.

Women occupy various roles in farming as independent producers, business managers, agriculture helpers and farm homemakers but in common with the EU overall, there is unequal participation by women and men in agriculture in Ireland and the work done by women on farms continues to be largely invisible and without status as farm holder or registered herdowner. To align with the gender equality expectations and commitments of the agriculture sector in Ireland and in Europe, the visibility, equality, and status of women in farming should be an integral part of the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of future policy strategies. However, more research is required to expand the evidence and knowledge base available to policymakers.

Ireland's stakeholder-led shared strategy for the agri-food sector, recognises the importance of gender balance to the long-term sustainability of the sector and includes actions to promote and improve gender balance at all levels, such as:

- Promoting women's participation in farming through Knowledge Transfer Groups.
- Capturing and publishing gender data on policy implementation.
- Representation of the agri-food sector in the next National Women & Girl's Strategy
- Promoting/improving gender balance, particularly at senior management/board level.
- Promoting/supporting women's networks and mentoring programmes, e.g., ACORNS programme for rural female entrepreneurs, established in 2015 and funded by DAFM.
- **Hosting a National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture.**



Panel Discussion – Women in the Agri-Food Sector



L-R Mary Coughlan, Siobhán Talbot, Caroline Bocquel, Karen Brosnan, and Christine Farrell

Panellists:

- **Siobhán Talbot** – Group Managing Director, Glanbia plc
- **Caroline Bocquel** – CEO, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)
- **Karen Brosnan** – founder of CERES, the Women in Agri Business Leadership Network
- **Christine Farrell** - Strategic Projects Manager, Bord Bia & co-chair of AGDIF

While there was a specific focus on women in farming for the National Dialogue, this panel explored the female position and experience to date in the wider agri-food sector for context. While there are still challenges, the wider sector has made more progress than in the primary producer sector.

Each panellist gave a short introduction to the group, with some personal perspective on the “The Role of Women in Agri-Food”.

Specific areas addressed during the panel discussion included female leadership roles and the supports required to encourage more females into those roles.

Siobhán Talbot (Glanbia) cited three aspects for consideration in terms of promoting and facilitating female leadership. The first one is **culture**. The culture must ‘talk the talk’ in terms of inclusive leadership across all different dimensions. There has always been very strong intent, but the difficulty has been in translating it into real action. Secondly is **education**. Unconscious bias presents significant difficulties for females wishing to take up leadership roles. And thirdly, **targeted supports**. The debate about the merits of inclusive leadership is over, the case is so compelling for inclusive leadership and females can bring an awful lot to leadership roles. Supports are important and sometimes that is as simple as saying ‘why not?’ rather than ‘why?’.



Caroline Bocquel (BIM) added that **visibility**, particularly in the primary producing sector, is an issue. There are many women who are already providing leadership, effectively running small businesses, doing everything from the invoicing to paying wages and yet there's a complete lack of visibility around that. There needs to be a focus on promoting and reporting on those success stories to illustrate that increased female leadership is achievable and is already in progress. **Training** and supports are also important in this regard, specifically around creating stronger women's **networks**. And there is a role for the State to ensure that these women are visible. There's a piece of **education** required to increase the level of visibility that exist.

Karen Brosnan (CERES) added that **self-belief** is a core trait of leadership. CERES research has found that belief that 'I'm not suitable' or 'I'm not enough' or **imposter syndrome** is prevalent among females in the sector. Being part of female groups/networks is a useful space where women can overcome their own gender blindness and unconscious beliefs and gain the courage to call out gender bias or gender blindness in others.

Finally, Christine Farrell (AgDif) confirmed there's no doubt that women are well suited for leadership and there is a place for them within existing leadership structures. When it comes to recruitment for leadership roles there needs to be a focus on **culture**, having and clearly communicating a company culture regarding gender equality and balance at all levels within the workforce. This balance at all levels is now the number one thing that staff are looking for when applying for promotions or new roles. It is also important in terms of staff retention and job performance. Bord Bia has found that **mentoring** and **coaching** is key, and women need more of it. Christine also pointed out the importance of shifting the focus from this being a woman's issue, to being an 'everyone' issue.

Other areas explored during the discussion were the importance of, and the opportunities arising from **sustainability** and diversity of agri-food enterprises. An example was given of rural coastal communities where women who come into or marry into an enterprise are expanding it and looking for opportunities to do new things. To continue to achieve such **diversification** it is important that the relevant **supports** are in place and easily accessible.

Mentoring and **inclusion** were also considered to be key to supporting female leaders in the sector. Flexible working options allow for the increased inclusion of mothers in the workforce. Creating engagement, listening to people, and developing a deeper understanding of the barriers will lead to successful solutions. Women are innately resilient, robust, and are excellent multitaskers and what is required now is the creation of the right environment to facilitate, encourage and nurture that female participation.

Challenges touched on through the panel discussion related to **difficulties trusting new people**. It means continuing to look at available networks and how to expand existing networks to ensure diversity of knowledge and expertise. Asking the question "Who are the people (both men and women) to be talking to?". Reaching out to broaden the network is paramount.

Gender Pay Gap reporting was identified as presenting a barrier. While it is widely acknowledged that "what gets measured gets actioned" there is a fear that women are becoming tokens to achieve these set targets and it is contributing to a culture of belief that



women are not necessarily being recruited, promoted, or appointed on their experience and expertise.

Work/Life Balance presents its own difficulties for women in the workplace. Government and Organisations have a major role to play in providing equal choice in this area, acknowledging existing barriers and providing workable options to those seeking to balance family with a career. Flexibility is key to a successful work/life balance. There needs to be a greater shift away from the traditional position of women taking on sole caring responsibilities. The emphasis going forward needs to be on creating flexibility within the workplace. Covid-19 and the resulting shift to remote and flexible working policies saw more options being made available for flexible working than ever before, yet anecdotal evidence suggests more women than men are availing of these remote and flexible work arrangements so that they can balance home and work commitments. Organisations and employers need to reach the understanding that you don't need to forego productivity for flexibility. It's about Smart Working which is becoming more and more important from a talent acquisition point of view. People can, and are, more productive when they can be flexible in their approach to work.

State Board positions – The stick versus carrot approach. It has been 30 years since government introduced a target of 40% females in state board positions but progress in this area has been less than satisfactory. Many women feel that this approach is leading to increased hostility towards women in leadership roles, claiming that it has led to a perception that women in those high-level positions are only there to meet quotas and not on their own merits. At present there are 213 co-op board positions in Ireland and only seven of those are currently held by women. This equates to a 1% increase per decade. It needs to be accepted that quotas are only a short-term solution to reach a critical mass and the necessary change in culture and perception.

Audience interaction during this panel centred around;

- I. Women need to be more confident in their abilities and put themselves forward more. It was the opinion of some delegates that family friendly work arrangements can sometimes put women at a greater disadvantage e.g., working reduced hours leads to less income, less experience, and less visibility within the workplace.
- II. Government and organisations **infrastructure and policy strategies** need to support more choice for both genders regarding caring responsibilities which will lead to sharing and equality of responsibilities and a cultural change. Women need to see more visible leadership, women and men in high level positions leading by example, availing of family friendly arrangements, this gives “permission” to people throughout the organisation to mimic that behaviour, regardless of their level or gender.
- III. **Sustainability and Climate Action** within Agri-Food Businesses. Women globally are the poorest and do the least to damage the climate and our environment but are most affected by the impacts of climate change. Industry recognition of environmental and social governance must be forthcoming. While Government policy dictates our Net Zero Commitments and Carbon Footprint measuring goals, consumers demand it. Becoming a sustainable business/food producer is heavily dependent on communicating that with the end consumer.



Guest Speaker Julia Klöckner



Ms. Klöckner began by outlining her background as a woman in agriculture. Growing up on a vineyard in rural Germany she knows all too well what it takes to be a woman running a family business. She entered politics in 2018 as a Member of Parliament, and later became Federal Minister responsible for Food and Agriculture. She was heavily involved in the CAP 2023-2027 negotiations which resulted in a specific CAP focus on women in farming to assist in achieving gender equality within the sector. She expressed the importance of visible role models for women, the need for women to have a seat at the table when decisions are being made, and to be supported in their jobs and be an example to young women and girls.

She told delegates of how, in Germany, they regularly hold similar conferences, to bring women, and men, in agriculture together to discuss the issues and challenges they face. She congratulated the Minister and Department of Agriculture for hosting this historic initiative. She referenced, from a German perspective, that the Irish agriculture sector should be very proud of what it has achieved to date.

Ms Klöckner compared the agriculture sectors in Ireland and Germany, the differing conditions applicable to each country and next steps on the journey for the future. Like in Germany, the Irish agricultural sector remains heavily dominated by men. Only around 13% of Ireland's farms are managed by women. In Germany, it is not any better with only 11% of German farms to be managed by women. However, there are certain areas within the sector in which women are more visible and present e.g., the wine and the agri-education sectors, with many lecturers at agricultural universities and colleges being female. In addition, in several European countries the agricultural ministers are female. She acknowledged that while there is still a long way to go, there has been a demonstrable increase in women running farming enterprises or managing agricultural business.

The results of the study also shed light on the differing working conditions which contribute to a reduced presence or visibility of women in the sector. Women still often bear the full weight of raising children and the double burden of career and family. They miss work during and after pregnancy or can only work to a limited extent. What is more, women often perform a variety of extra "unseen" tasks. They drive children to/from school, do the housework, cook, and care for relatives. Added to that outdated gender stereotypes continue to exist, and traditional inheritance practices make it extremely difficult for women to run or take over farms.

There's no simple or quick solution to the question of how we can effect change in this area. Weaknesses are apparent throughout the system, in terms of healthcare, old age pensions, divorce, or the death of a spouse, women continue to be disadvantaged. As a quick illustration – 13% of Irish farms are run by women. However, 27% of Irish farm workers are women. So, 14% of women working on farm are not even part of the conversation. Yet it is well established that women are more creative when running a business. Women often diversify and enterprise, ensuring multiple sources of income.



It is a similar situation in Germany. Women often see themselves as a co-entrepreneur with their partner but legally this is often not the case. Women oversee social tasks or animal husbandry while men tend to do field work and machine maintenance. Historically, this division had a reason. However, farms are more modern due to digitalisation and innovation, therefore physical differences no longer play their part. Dialogue is of tremendous importance to achieving change. It is a first step towards equality for women. It is important that gender stereotypes are broken. We need to change the status quo. It is important to ensure choice and opportunity is always available. Lithuania and Latvia are examples of how it is possible to achieve increased participation of women in agriculture. Both countries have 45% female farm owners or managers.

In Germany women often have a job outside the farm, or a non-agricultural qualification and acquire agricultural expertise on site. Offering continued professional development courses specifically for women, would allow them to secure formal Agri training and qualifications. Especially regarding technical areas. A 2018 international survey found 80% of women would like more training opportunities on new technologies.

Work and Home are often the same place for farmers. Farms hold a lot of potential when it comes to reconciling family and work, as everything occurs in one place. However, the reality is often different. Women do the lion's share of care work, sacrificing skilled work for management duties, not because they want to but out of necessity. This can have serious ramifications in terms of social security with pension/healthcare falling by the wayside. Many women are concerned about the constantly changing Agri-political frameworks, and increasing social demands on agriculture, and especially farming being blamed for climate change. Especially in Germany, people in the big cities are not able to grow a potato but they try to explain to farmers how to do their job. This contrast divides our society. We must underline and support people working in the agricultural sector. Education can & will help us.

We need to make sure that women do not get into this vicious circle in the first place. Basic services and public infrastructure close to home must be guaranteed so that women do not have to act as the stopgap. By this I mean not only schools or childcare facilities but also good local public transport infrastructure. Places where women can meet and share their experiences need to be created.

Finally, we must champion equal rights about caring responsibilities. This problem exists not just in the agricultural sector, of course. We are now seeing it in almost every sector of the economy. In Germany, we honour outstanding achievements in agriculture with the Professor Nicholas Medal. Professor Nicholas was the first Minister of Agriculture in Germany, and he was really concerned with hunger and food supply. This award has increasingly been presented to women in agricultural research. I, myself have given the award to younger people, many of whom were female. Some of them were agricultural influencers on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook and have done a great deal of educating the public on agricultural practices from the female perspective.

As we have seen the issue of women's visibility and work in the field of agriculture is a global issue. In Ireland you face similar problems as the women in Germany. We all want to improve the situation and work to make agriculture careers more appealing. Together we must support each other and relate positive examples. Solutions are not always universally applicable but our exchange and sharing of experiences provides an opportunity to make a difference.



Panel Discussion – Women in Farming, Challenges and Opportunities

This panel explored the position and experience to date in relation to women in farming and the challenges and opportunities they see from their positions as female farmers and advocates of female farmers in the sector. While the Agri-Food sector generally has made more progress in relation to gender balance, the primary producer sector is lagging somewhat behind.

Panellists:

- **Ciara Lynch** – Dairy Farmer & Chairperson of Dairy Women Ireland
- **Aoife Forde** – Suckler Farmer & Advisor, Teagasc
- **Maura Farrell** – Associate Professor, University of Galway
- **Edna Curley** – Principal, Mountbellew Agricultural College

Each panellist gave a short introduction to the group, with some personal perspective on the “Women in Farming – Challenges and Opportunities”.



L-R: Ciara Lynch, Aoife Forde, Mary Coughlan, Maura Farrell, Edna Curley

Firstly, the panel discussed issues around the need for cultural change, the need to support more women, and gender specific issues that they considered need to be addressed. Outlining how they believe change can be affected, and who should be responsible for driving that change.

Ciara Lynch spoke of her experience of moving into dairy farming from a marketing and advertising background. While not personally experiencing any **gender-based issues** herself, she noted that this does not mean that issues don't exist and are experienced by others. She is lucky enough to have an incredibly supportive husband and this is not the case for many women. For many women in farming, the impacts of not being jointly named on all documentation and accounts relating to the farm can have significant financial and legal implications. This is an area of grave concern in situations where a marriage breaks down, or on the death of a spouse. In such situations, women can struggle with simple things like paying



the bills. There is a clear role for men in eliminating this issue. We need to **foster a culture of inclusivity and equality**. This can be achieved by listening to women's concerns and experiences, asking the right questions, and not being afraid to change the status quo.

Maura Farrell discussed her **European gender-based research project FLIARA**; Female Led Innovation in Agriculture in Rural Areas. With a budget of €3m euro and fifteen partners across ten different countries, the project looks at innovative practices of women in agriculture and in rural areas. The aim of the project is to look at women 20-30 years into the future and see where we can position women to the best of their ability and knowledge. This will involve completing 200 case studies of female led innovative practices across Europe and Ireland. The aim for the agriculture sector regarding **gender balance** should be that people become more **gender aware** and **less gender blind**.

Aoife Forde discussed the **visibility of women in farming** and the benefits and opportunities she has encountered as a young female farmer and farm advisor. Aoife was involved in the family farm from a very young age. She quickly realised that her reality was not the reality for many young females. In the last 10 years there's been a noticeable shift in the visibility of women in farming. Changes are happening, and there is the need to build on that progress and to keep the momentum up. Seizing opportunities regardless of gender. Women in agriculture is not new, women have been on farm for hundreds of years, and have been the backbone of Irish farms. It is important for women to ensure they are jointly named on herd numbers and bank accounts. Changes are coming, it is a time to be more positive and to foster and develop these changes. People can drive culture change through their everyday actions.

Edna Curley spoke about the challenge of getting more women to see the **opportunities** that arise from attending Agricultural College. Only 5% of "Green Cert" programme students are women which compares poorly with the 30-35% of women students in university programmes. There is still a culture and a perception within the farming community that farming is a "man's job". As **educators** there is an onus to change that perception. While there are challenges in the sector there are also opportunities. These include today's dialogue which will facilitate **change**.

Succession Planning was identified as a challenge. Issues such as starting a farming enterprise and how to commence the process were raised. Like any business it takes a full year's cycle to understand the impacts of decisions made. Some supports mentioned include speaking to vets and the local Teagasc office. Social media provide a platform to identify women who are doing well and helping others to do well. Women need to be brave and look at established networks. On-line training and sharing information are key.

Older farmers experience difficulties in transferring farms to the next generation in time for successors to avail of young farmer supports. The importance of being well-informed to make sound decisions was emphasised through accessing advice from farm advisors, accountants, and solicitors before decisions are made.

Another issue centred around who should take over the farm. It is vital that the right person is chosen, be that male or female. The person with the most interest and who is most capable should be the successor. As we see more women taking over farms and more female names on boards, this is having a positive impact and paving the way for women to have a place. However, there are still significant barriers to those not inheriting and farming in rural areas. These include access to land, access to finance, and childcare facilities impacting women in



agriculture. While it was acknowledged that these issues impact both male and females the issue presents additional challenges to female farmers.

Work Life Balance was discussed, and it is believed that this can be achieved if there is a support system both at home and work. Encouragement and mentoring are important and there is value in having a kind word, in supporting each other and lifting each other up, and operating an open-door policy at all levels to give people the room to talk, to ask questions, and most importantly to learn. The difficulty is that these supports are not readily available and needs to be addressed by the sector as a whole.

A significant challenge experienced by women in farming, versus women in society in general, is the balancing/merging of the two roles of worker and carer. Policy makers need to find out what women want to be educated about, or trained on, and how that could best be delivered in a way that works around women farmer's existing work and family commitments.

It is about identifying the different education needs of women and supports required. Policy makers should recognise the practical skillsets that already exist, although not formalised and give it the recognition it deserves. The language used around a career in farming needs to be accessible and farming seen as a viable career option for people coming through the education system today and into the future. There needs to be a stronger emphasis on the rewards and joy that comes from farming. This will demonstrate to the younger generation, that it is possible to have a successful business in farming but also have a work/life balance.

The introduction of new **Education initiatives** such as the Burren Winterage project for people who have no exposure to, or experience of farming were considered beneficial. Getting the media to move to more positive messaging, highlighting the good as well as the bad when it comes to farming. Educating people outside of farming, giving them that farm experience, by letting them onto farms, facilitating agri-tours and initiatives that people can get inside the farm gate and have an opportunity to question and learn first-hand, will help them get a better understanding of farms.

Women are hugely **innovative** when it comes to farming. They can be the first people to see and accept that a farm is not making money and will need to make changes, diversify to grow, and remain sustainable and resilient. Members of the panel felt that farm diversification is an area that women can really lead on. The policy approach should be looking at ways of supporting diversification. It is never too early to start educating others, getting the information out there, and encouraging ownership and responsibility, promoting a sense of pride in your contribution to the agricultural sector in this country.

Career in farming - encouraging women to be farmers received a positive response from the panel outlining the opportunities such as educating our young people on the role of women in agriculture. Taking a risk is so rewarding and there are so many like-minded people that are there to support. It takes a lot of courage to put yourself out there. This event is the first step in cognitive change. Men are equally important in the context of supporting women in the agri-food sector.



Minister of State, Martin Heydon T.D.



In Minister Heydon's speech to the audience he spoke about what an honour it was for him to be in attendance and to have the opportunity to address everyone at such an important event, that the Dialogue can really progress **gender balance in farming**. He noted the impressive list of guest speakers and panellists, all of whom shared their knowledge on how to ensure a brighter more inclusive future for the sector. The Minister outlined the statistics around the participation of women in agriculture and explained

that these statistics tell only part of the story.

Farm Safety is an area under the Minister's responsibility. He talked about farm safety statistics and how behind these numbers are real families that have suffered an irreplaceable loss, and that is why he is so determined to bring about a change in the culture on our farms.

The Minister explained why events like today can make a difference. We must bring the lived experiences of women in agriculture to the fore, the barriers, and challenges but also the opportunities to help identify the ways in which we can effect change in the sector, now and for generations to come. This is a responsibility that we all bear.

Special mention was given to the fact that this event was held on **St. Brigid's Day**, 1st February marking the start of Spring and the old Gaelic tradition of Imbolc. The Minister spoke of St. Brigid's close link to the land. Saint Brigid is the Patron Saint of Livestock and dairy farming. She also found time to fit in poetry, learning, healing and being a blacksmith amongst other things.

The National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture is an action identified in **Food Vision 2030** and innovative measures were introduced as part of the new CAP. Social sustainability is all too often an overlooked dimension in agriculture, and in addition to gender balance covers fundamental issues like generational renewal, education and training, health and safety, mental health and wellbeing and broader rural development. And all these issues are linked to gender balance, whether it is the decreased likelihood of being the identified successor or barriers to accessing primarily male dominated education and training.

The Minister stated that **primary producers are the life blood** of our rural and coastal communities, and we must ensure social sustainability receives just as much attention as the economic and environmental parts of the stool. Under Mission 4 'An innovative, Competitive and Resilient Agri-food Sector Driven by Technology and Talent', the Department has set a task of attracting and nurturing diverse and inclusive talent. This is crucial for the long-term sustainability of not only primary production but also the wider agri-food sector. As part of his



responsibility in research and innovation he has seen the benefits of diverse teams working to solve challenges faced by this sector. We need to continue promoting and improving gender balance at all levels but particularly at senior management and board level.

A key element of **social sustainability** is the health, wellbeing, and safety of all of those who live and work on farms. The Minister said that farming is the most dangerous profession in all of Ireland and farmers are seven times more likely to die in a workplace incident than any other worker in Ireland. Progress is being made in reducing those figures but it's a reality of the sector and this must change. One fatality is one too many. It is a stark fact that over 200 people lost their lives on Irish farms in the last decade. 97% of worker victims on farms were male. We need to ask ourselves why that is. Is it that men are taking greater risks on farms or are women more likely to identify hazards and find ways to reduce the risks that are inherently associated with agriculture.

Teagasc's latest farm safety report indicates over a third of farmers have reported having a near miss with an animal, one in five reported a serious animal related incident in the last five years and well over half have engaged in unsafe farming practices. Minister Heydon believes this is another area where women can be leaders. Recent research in this area points to the fact that the biggest driver of change on farms is peer to peer learning or learning from the good practice of others.

Finally, the Minister spoke about mental health and physical health and their importance to safe farming. Busy times on farms such as calving and lambing season see people working long hours, and things don't always go to plan. A busy or distracted mind is as much a risk as a cracked manhole cover or a broken PTO shaft.

On that note, the Minister thanked everybody for their participation and thanked those who were involved in the organisation of the event.



Workshops

The objective of the afternoon workshops was to consider the information provided via the panel discussions and speakers from the morning session to discuss and identify specific issues around each specific workshop theme. The underlying questions addressed were:

- What are the main barriers in delivering on the ambition of gender equality?
- Where are the opportunities?
- What should we do next?

Each workshop was appointed a chair/rapporteur who was an identified expert in their specific workshop theme.

Rapporteurs:

- **Sinéad McPhillips** – Assistant Secretary General, DAFM
- **Dr. Anne-Marie Butler** - Head of Education, Teagasc
- **Aisling Meehan** – Agricultural Solicitor
- **Deirdre Ryan** - Director of Quality Assurance and Origin Green, Bord Bia

The rapporteurs then reported back to the plenary dialogue with several conclusions and recommendations arising from their workshop session.



L-R: Aisling Meehan, Deirdre Ryan, Sinéad McPhillips, Dr. Anne-Marie Butler



Leadership & Visibility Workshop

The objective of this workshop was to understand perspectives on how women can bring about greater environmental, economic, and social sustainability in agriculture. Sinéad McPhillips of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine acted as rapporteur for this workshop. The group broke into two smaller groups and examined the opportunities and challenges encountered in this space. It was interesting to note the significant crossover between the two groups on several of the issues and ideas.

Barriers

Issues in relation to culture, lack of inclusivity and outdated stereotypes both by men and by women themselves were identified. A perceived lack of skills and confidence were acknowledged as holding women back. Concerns were raised about becoming the “token” woman were raised, especially in instances where a woman is the *only* woman in a room.

The improper or inappropriate use of gendered language and how it contributes and reinforces existing or outdated stereotypes was also discussed in detail, with particular focus on the importance gender-neutral or gender-balanced language in all forms of communication to help change the mindset of the sector regarding female participation.

More robust acknowledgement of women’s interest in pursuing a career in farming and their capability to do so are key to the successful and timely transfer of farms going forward. Women are still one step removed from the farm succession planning process. Exclusion from this process has resulted in restrictions on female participation and representation in the future of farming in Ireland. It prevents and discourages women from expressing an interest in taking over a farm enterprise. The group emphasised the need for farm transfers to be informed by the suitability and interest of a potential successor, not by gender stereotypes or outdated traditional norms.

The distinct lack of inclusivity and diversity within farm organisation structures means female stakeholders can feel that their interests are unequally and inadequately represented. One contributing factor is the informal nature of some representative organisations. Another is the challenge for women in taking on the additional, voluntary responsibilities associated with representative duties due to family caring responsibilities, off-farm work, and other volunteering commitments in their communities. It was noted that while other sectors have implemented workable solutions to manage these challenges and support women’s participation, the agriculture sector still lags significantly behind when it comes to implementing the necessary changes.

A lack of networks and the need for more mentors and role models for women was also highlighted as a barrier for women trying to establish themselves be it as a farmer, entrepreneur or in the wider agri-food sector.

Opportunities

The group identified several opportunities that could give rise to measurable change in these areas:



Give women a seat at the table when decisions that may impact on them are being made. Women must be actively included in the decision making process. And not just one woman, but a critical mass of women at the table to reflect the reality of the sector and to ensure constant movement forward.

Champion women. Agricultural Industry leaders and representative bodies should provide mentorship programmes and leadership training. Get men more involved in the design and implementation of gender equality solutions.

In terms of policy, viewing issues from a gender aware perspective rather than a gender blind one. Analyse gender budgeting and reflect on the fact that 90% of CAP payments go to one gender which is highly unusual in terms of public spending. A need to incentivise farmers to give due consideration to potential female successors.

Do more to encourage the inclusion of spouses/partners to groups and events. Utilise inclusive language and not stereotyping farmers in terms of their gender.

Involve young people, boys and girls, men, and women, to become involved in the discussion around gender equality in all agricultural settings.

Educate young women on the benefits of mentorship and the need to acquire sponsorship as they go through their careers. Ask what they need/want instead of deciding for them.

Women are often considered more likely to innovate and diversify farm enterprise. Increased female participation can lead to environmental benefits from diversification and increasing sustainability.

Women tend to be more risk averse. There is an opportunity to mobilise women on farms to increase farm safety awareness and reduce injuries and fatalities occurring on farms.

There was a significant emphasis on supporting women-only groups to build confidence and skill and to combat social isolation.

Finally, there was an emphasis on the importance of farm incomes and the need for increased awareness on the Department's behalf of the implications of Department and CAP policies on farm incomes and the difficulties that arise for families trying to support two generations on the one farm.



Education & Awareness Workshop

This workshop group assessed existing agricultural education provision under the headings of Attractiveness, Awareness and Knowledge & Skills with a focus on utilising education and awareness to encourage more females to consider farming as a viable career.

Barriers

The existing culture within the sector needs to be addressed. At present a career in farming is not seen as ambitious enough or suitable for women or young girls.

Challenge of farm incomes & ability of farming to offer a good standard of living will continue to discourage potential farmers.

Childcare responsibilities leave women time poor resulting in a lack of ability to participate in education and training opportunities.

Access to land, farm size and succession/inheritance issues need to be addressed. Farmers often find their holding is considered too small to be viable however, competition for lease or purchase of land with more profitable enterprises reduces confidence & ability to progress and expand.

Lack of education opportunities for older women farmers and the lack of a practical skillset for non-farmers has led to women leaning towards more non-agri careers.

Media portrayal of farming in the context of climate change has led to a negative public image of the industry. The information being provided via media outlets needs to be more balanced.

Income volatility and the economic viability of farming have a significant impact on the level of new entrants and young farmers willing to enter the sector. For those who do take on farming they often find themselves also needing to have off farm income to support themselves and their families.

Opportunities

Diversification/ New Ideas/Perspective/Increased use and accessibility of technology for learning and advances in farm technology offer great options for female farmers & certainly enhance the attractiveness of the career.

Inclusive Language – a lot of language used can overlook women's contributions to civilisation. This means we are subconsciously giving men sole credit for humanity's achievements, picturing men and never women, therefore downplaying women's contributions to society and limiting their future contributions.

It's important that we actively replace these outdated phrases with gender neutral terms like businesspeople, face to face, personnel or labour, and chair or chairperson.

Remote working provides an opportunity for people to take up part-time farming. Job sharing and blended learning programmes could aid in the reversal of rural decline.



The Farmer-Time initiative should be rolled out to all Transition Year programmes in schools nationwide. This should be complemented by increasing the availability of Agricultural Science for Leaving Certificate students especially in urban areas. Transition Year work experience modules should include Farm Trips to increase awareness of agriculture and farming prior to entering the Leaving Certificate cycle. Finally, Career Guidance Counsellors should be actively promoting farming as a viable career path.

Solas could consider expanding and building on the current Level 6 and Level 7 Agriculture Apprenticeships programmes it offers. This would increase the availability of hands-on learning while receiving an income for those wishing to enter the sector therefore, providing more security to younger new entrants. Additional promotion of the existing programme offering, including highlighting the success story of an Agriculture apprenticeship would lead to increased awareness and uptake.

Education providers should implement better signposting for routes into farming for women, including education options, skills recognition, work experience etc.

Online information sharing forums, including social media, and Influencers should be leveraged to raise awareness, promote and building confidence in female farmers.

Recognition of existing transferrable skills, education or career knowledge, qualifications, and experience for those moving into farming from other sectors.



Financial and legal Workshop

The discussion focussed on the issue of giving women the recognition that they deserve on Irish farms. This workshop explored the current legal and financial position of women in farming and identified the main issue areas as seen by those experiencing it on the ground.

Barriers

Legal ownership - land and herd numbers are generally in the husband's name. There is a misconception that you go up the aisle with a full farm and you come down the aisle with half a farm. This is not true. Most women, especially older women, involved in farm enterprises have no ownership rights. The husband/partner is usually the owner of the farm. This leaves women in a vulnerable position. The farm can be sold or transferred without any consent or input into the decision-making process from the woman. The current legal position needs to be amended to address the legal standing of women on farms.

To claim CAT a person being gifted/inheriting a farm must pass the financial and active farmer test. However, while a child is entitled to the Group A tax free threshold currently Euro 335,000, a spouse is only entitled to the Group C tax free threshold currently Euro 16,250. Therefore, putting land into joint names almost always creates a CAT liability. Whereas if it is transferred to the child alone there will be no liability. This inadvertently encourages the transfer of land to a child rather than into joint names of a spouse/civil partner, putting women at a disadvantage when it comes to ownership. There is a look-through approach in Young Trained Farmer Stamp Duty Relief where only one of the couple needs to pass the conditions to avail of the relief. The same should be introduced for CAT and CGT Agri Reliefs.

Access to finance is a difficulty for women. There is unconscious bias when women go to the bank looking for money. Women involved in off-farm enterprises and diversification are faced with very high interest rates as they do not have a track record. Banks are quite happy to give money to dairy farmers but not necessarily to different types of farming.

Herd numbers- some felt that there is not a uniform application of the rules by the Regional Veterinary Offices, who deal with herd numbers. Those in the Financial and Legal workshop group reported very different experiences depending on location. In some cases, women's names weren't on the herd number even though they had taken steps to try to get their name on joint herd numbers. The impact of no name on a herd number is especially profound in a death situation where the payments cannot be released until a Grant of Probate is available which could be 12 months or more after death leading to cash flow issues. It also impacts on the availability of CGT Retirement Relief where land is in the joint names of a couple.

Schemes and education - women's involvement in Registered Farm partnerships will have a huge impact regarding the 60% uplifted grant rate on the new Capital Investment Scheme for Women Farmers (TAMS). Farm partnership rules are currently seen as restrictive. A farmer must either be farming for two years or have an agricultural qualification. In many cases a woman farmer would find it difficult to tick either of these boxes. At present a woman farmer can go in as what's called "another person" if they don't have the requirements but this lacks fairness. There should be a review of these requirements to try to facilitate more women being included on RFPs and being able to benefit from holding that status.



Trusted advisors – it is important for people to have access to professional and expert opinion, with people they can trust.

Opportunities

Access to Finance - Around the issue of legal security and guarantors it can be a double-edged sword for e.g., if a farmer was looking for a loan and maybe the spouse's off-farm income was being brought into it, this helped to get land into both names, and it helped to get milk supplies or co-op numbers into both names as it was a bank requirement.

Succession Planning -This group discussed getting the conversation started and to look at having information shared by possibly Teagasc and agricultural consultants on promoting succession planning and broaching the subject of making wills.

Cultural change is required around leaving the farm to the right person to take over whether it is a son or daughter.

Change in Law - There is a special protection for the family home, but there is no such protection around family farms where people are living and working on farms for their entire life. From an inheritance point of view, and from a tax perspective, it all favours land being put in a child's name. Following on, to transfer to a spouse result in additional costs and hassle. Tax policy changes should be considered to increase women's visibility.

Registered Farm Partnerships - There should be a review of these requirements to try to facilitate more women being included on Registered Farm Partnerships and in a position to benefit from holding that status. Data collection and analysis is key to providing evidence of what is working well and what is not and needs to be reviewed/amended in this area.

Management structures - Farm partnerships or co-operatives could be used as a vehicle to introduce more women into farm ownership.



Sustainability Workshops

A Sustainable Food System is profitable (economic sustainability), has broad-based benefits for society (social sustainability) and has a positive or neutral impact on the natural environment (environmental sustainability).

- Social sustainability refers to the social vibrancy of rural and coastal communities. It includes factors such as generational renewal, gender balance, education and training, health and safety, mental health and wellbeing and broader rural development.
- Economic sustainability refers to the financial performance, viability, and resilience of our primary producers and agrifood sector.
- Environmental sustainability includes factors that have a positive or neutral impact on the natural environment.

This workshop objective was understanding perspectives on how women can bring about greater sustainability (environmental, economic, and social) in agriculture. This group was divided in two and found there was a lot of crossovers and the same ideas cropped up repeatedly.

Barriers

Trust and confidence to join groups – women often find that they are in the minority and can feel outnumbered. They often lack the self- confidence to speak up and have their voice heard.

There is a difficulty in challenging the status quo and the cultural norms that are so embedded in society. It is hard to have conversations on topics within families that are not easy to discuss such as succession planning. It is vital that the right person is the one taking over the farm to ensure the farm is sustainable into the future, irrespective of gender.

Access to land is an issue. Someone that has worked on the farm for 20-30 years and does not inherit can find it difficult to access land as they have no proven track record.

Recognition of work – behind the scenes women are working in the family farm business carrying out tasks such as book-keeping and completing application forms but they are not receiving any recognition for the work or time spent.

Achieving a better work/life balance proves challenging for women to find adequate time to network, carry on farming duties and raising a family.

Farming is a lonely job and can lead to a person feeling isolated and alone.

Bank accounts - although women's names are often on loans their names are not on bank accounts, milk cheques or farm subsidy payments.



Opportunities

Driving Sustainability – females are aware of sustainability. They are more in tune with the social economy and more likely to have the propensity to adopt sustainability measures and drive this forward.

Innovate and diversify- women are more inclined to innovate and diversify a farm enterprise for e.g., organics. There is a huge benefit from getting more females involved in organics as well as the environmental benefits it will deliver.

Health and safety - accident on farms cause more deaths than in any other industry in Ireland. There is an opportunity for women here to lead the way forward and women are more safety-conscious and aware of farming hazards.

Networking is an important tool that can support sustainability. Engaging with networks such as Local Food Network would help support women and provide opportunities to create markets for food produce and to meet other producers.

Financial support - expand financial support to include universal basic income support and to addressing childcare costs and carer's leave. The targeted support of 60% grant aid under Women Farmers Capital Investment Scheme (WFCIS) is very welcomed.

Learning and Training - support investment into Lifelong Learning. E-learning modules and flexible training hours would facilitate work/life balance as finding time to attend in-person training courses can prove difficult to arrange with farm work and childcare responsibilities. Providing practical and technical supports that are demand driven.

Providing information on Succession Planning and Inheritance to facilitate and understand the process of planning for retirement, issues involved and unintended consequences.

Increasing the numbers of sustainability advisors to promote and support social farming.

Social Media can be used to identify other females in farming, provide a platform for networking and access to support.

Female Visibility -identifying female sustainability champions and climate leaders that can provide support to other women through mentoring, training, and building networks.

The introduction of Woman only Knowledge Transfer Groups can be used to support and bring women together, provide information and build confidence.



Minister of State, Senator Pippa Hackett

Minister Hackett attended the National Dialogue and noted the fantastic turnout, the motivation and enthusiasm of the delegates for this important topic. She acknowledged the progress over the last decade regarding gender equality in all walks of life but that this was not particularly true across the board for agriculture. However, she felt strongly that the Dialogue represented the green shoots of opportunity coming to the fore in a positive and meaningful way.



As a farmer and a Minister in the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine, she has first-hand experience on the front lines of the sector. And still today, whether at industry meetings, marts, or the local co-op it is very much still a male-dominated sector. The Minister said that while that may have always been the way, the position is slowly changing, as it needs to. Through her role as Minister, she has met many women pushing the boundaries of the traditional roles and achieving excellence in farming across the country. But, she added, that it is important to acknowledge not everyone finds it easy to be a woman in agriculture. It can be a difficult and sometimes lonely place for a woman. Minister Hackett expressed her hope that the Dialogue confirmed to women who feel that way that they are not alone and that soon gender won't be an issue. What will matter is that we are all committed to doing the work and doing it well, because as a country and as a people we do it very well.

The Minister spoke of her experience of being introduced as her husband's wife rather than a farmer in her own right with 25 years' experience. And, as a female Minister of State, she has often had questions directed to male officials at meetings rather than to her. While most of the time this is unintentional it does however, in a small way, condition the sector to seek male assurance, approval and management of farm enterprises. But it is time to actively challenge this status quo every day in every way. There are many examples of this already in action. The Women in Agriculture Stakeholder's Group (WASG) has been a fantastic voice for gender equality in farming providing invaluable contributions to policy within the agriculture sector, including advocating for the 60% TAMS grants for female farmers and female-only knowledge transfer groups. It is also important to acknowledge that these policies signal the existing political will to support and implement change.

Criticism of these policies, while disappointing, only serves to reinforce the Department's determination to do more for gender equality in farming. While it is important to acknowledge that some women have a hugely positive experience, Figures clearly reflect the current position on the ground with female farmers in Ireland owning just 13% of holdings. Department officials must never apologise for taking actions and implementing policies to balance the scale. Outdated attitudes and negative lived experiences show us that there is still much work to do to bring confidence and positive experiences to those who do not find it so easy, because there are many. Sharing experience and knowledge is key to overcoming this.

She found it interesting that former Minister for Agriculture in Germany, Ms. **Julia Klöckner**'s comparison of the Irish and German Agriculture Sectors illustrated how similar the situation for women in agriculture is in both countries. The next step towards improving gender equality in



the Sector in Ireland is for the Ministers and officials of the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine to examine the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Dialogue and pursue them via targeted policies and initiatives. However, she emphasised that Government and State bodies cannot do this alone calling on farm bodies, representative groups, and farmers, male and female, to be part of this effort.

The Minister stressed the importance of diversification and innovation, strong themes of the Dialogue, and the important role they play in ensuring a viable, sustainable agri-food sector in the future. She was excited about the endless possibilities diversification can provide for the sector and for female farmers. She specifically referenced the Department's support for the **Acorns Programme** which supports the innovation of rural women, many of whom are farmers. Significantly increased funding has been put in place under CAP 2023 – 2027 to encourage Irish farmers to diversify their enterprises, ensuring they are well-positioned to proactively respond to the sustainability challenge.

She mentioned the many impressive women leading the way in organics and forestry across the country. Women too have also been the driving force behind many of the successful European Innovation Partnership (EIP) projects across the country too.

The Minister thanked the impressive speakers and panellists, for sharing their insight and experiences of being a woman in the agri-food sector and playing their part in creating a better future for women and young girls considering a career in our sector. She also thanked all those who attended for the fantastic interactions and feedback on the various themes examined. She praised the strong show of support for the gender equality agenda by Department officials, representative bodies, and state agencies in attendance.

She finished by stating her belief that women are the change-makers our sector needs to embrace the challenges ahead. Whether that be improving farm incomes or taking proactive action on climate and biodiversity, these crucial aspects need to be addressed to secure family farm viability in the years and decades ahead. For too long women have been the unseen force behind the success of so many Irish farms. The Minister committed to do what she can to advance the cause of women on farms across Ireland to ensure that at every level, in every county, women must be seen as equals.



Conclusions

Having considered all the points raised and suggestions put forward, several conclusions can be drawn from the information gathered during the National Dialogue. The first and foremost is that the inclusion and promotion of women in agriculture can yield significant benefits, both for women and more generally for the future development of a resilient agri-food sector in Ireland, as women are more likely to innovate and diversify, driving sustainability and improving the social economy. In other sectors the contribution of female entrepreneurs to employment and innovation has been very significant and the removal of unintended barriers will enable women in the agriculture sector to achieve their full potential.

It was evident from the panel discussions and workshops that the issues women face varies, dependent on geographical location and farming sector. However, core issues emerged as being common to all including;

- Building confidence and encouraging participation,
- Changing the culture and increased use of inclusive, gender-neutral language,
- Recognition of women's existing hard and soft transferrable skills, and
- A sector-wide approach is required to achieve critical mass for change.

There are many opportunities available to make small but necessary changes to improve the female experience within the sector regardless of whether that is as a student, farmer, farm worker, executive or farmer's partner.

Harnessing the popularity, accessibility, and speed of message delivery via social media platforms, influencers and forums will be instrumental in achieving the wide-reaching visibility of the identified issues and proposed solutions required to effect change.





Recommendations



This report captures the wide range of views and perspectives expressed by agriculture stakeholders that we were fortunate to listen to, debate, and discuss over the course of the day at the National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture.

The dialogue identified possible areas of reform for consideration to promote and improve gender equality in agriculture in Ireland.

The resulting recommendations call for a re-evaluation of current attitudes and practices across the agriculture sector and the recognition of the vital role women play in farming and the agri-food sector.

While some resistance is to be expected, to address gender equality in the sector it is imperative that policy makers are supported in making bold decisions and taking decisive action to address these issues.

To ensure a targeted and meaningful approach to effecting this necessary change, the Dialogue gave rise to several recommendations for consideration as outlined below:



Leadership & Visibility



1. Remember the Importance of language – Change language to be more inclusive of females in farming and move away from outdated stereotypes when framing conversations. This will improve women's confidence in themselves and others confidence in their ability to actively contribute to the farming sector.
2. Give women a seat at the table – Take the time to include a balanced representation in discussions and negotiations going forward. Be cognisant of who should be in the room. Farm Organisational structures can do more in relation to inclusivity and equal representation.
3. Support lifelong learning - invest in lifelong learning, providing practical and technical supports that are demand driven including e-Learning modules that support work/life balance and provide wider access to training.
4. Increase mentoring, training, and visibility - identify female role models and industry leaders. Raise their visibility as well as building and supporting female networks. Encourage the establishment and development of those networks. Ensure men are involved in the development and implementation of the solutions.
5. Expand financial supports to encourage and support women in agriculture.
6. Incentivise farmers to consider female successors and consider imposing penalties on representative organisations and bodies for not having sufficient gender balance.
7. Tailored diversity solutions – implement solutions that are tailored to individual needs specifically in relation to gender, age and experience to enable targeted supports going forward.
8. Encourage more innovation - support and champion the visibility of women to innovate including social farming. 50% of those currently involved in social farming are women. Promoting such initiatives will provide economic support on farm as well as the social element of sustainability.
9. Gender balanced policy – Government and farm organisations must start to view issues through that gender lens, such as gender budgeting and reflect of the fact that 90% of CAP payments currently go to male recipients and how that can change.



Education and Awareness



10. Positive National promotion – significant investment is required to promote a career in farming for females (references made to the Defence Forces recruitment campaign as a template). More needs to be done to promote the visibility of female role models, positive promotion of women farmers, putting forward good news stories so women can see themselves as having and being able to have an integral role in agriculture.
11. Change the narrative - work with media to change the way farming in Ireland is illustrated and perceived. It is important to be more inclusive when including farmers on news bulletins and farm stories. We need more female representation and a full marketing campaign that promotes farming as a viable career choice.
12. Early intervention - getting into playschools, primary schools, secondary schools is vital to fostering a new culture and attitude towards farming as a viable career path for women and girls. Career guidance and Agricultural Science teachers have a critical role to play in this area. Positive affirmation is key to having open conversations around careers for women in farming. Transition year was highlighted to promote the positive experience of farming for teens and young adults. Normalising farming as a career from playschool age will lead to increased awareness and acceptance.
13. Farm mentoring – the introduction of a Government-supported farm mentoring programme was seen as a positive and necessary action to help provide a platform for people to avail of or provide mentorship in progressing their career in agriculture.
14. New education and training Options – Widen the remit of education providers and respond to existing needs. Provide multiple education and training offerings including part-time, full-time, farm diversification, etc. Consider the training currently provided versus what targeted training is required to address the needs and demands of the sector going forward. Consider the use of the micro-credentials models being used in other sectors. This, in tandem with recognition of existing hard and soft skills will help address the gap currently identified in the 40 years and over cohort of female farmers. Consider the expansion of existing qualification frameworks into other farming sectors e.g., a Green Cert for Organic Farming.



Financial & Legal



15. Examine the tax system to identify/remove unintended tax barriers - It is important to remove any unintended technical tax barriers to female farm ownership. This will contribute to on-farm diversification and increased female participation. It will also facilitate access by new entrants, supporting young farmers.
16. Review/Amend Capital Gains Tax Retirement Relief and Capital Acquisitions Tax Relief. Both reliefs currently favour sole farmer land ownership and in effect, penalise joint farm ownership. This leads to exclusion of women as farm co-owners. However, this inequality does not exist under Stamp Duty Relief for Young Trained Farmers. All tax reliefs should be aligned to ensure consistency and fairness and avoid unintended CGT tax implications for succession.
17. On paper vs on the ground – Implement a holistic approach to addressing land ownership issues for women farmers. In many cases, the male farms the land 'on paper' i.e., herd number, farm entitlements, milk quota and farming income is all in his name. Even when the spouse is actively involved in the farm, unless she can prove this on paper, she is not entitled to claim the relief. This is an issue for spouses who have not worked outside the home and spouses who work off farm, either part-time or full-time.
18. Retrospective recognition of farming partnerships - spouses who are effectively working in partnership but who did not claim so when making their annual tax returns can claim for a spouses' partnership status retrospectively. The criteria used by the Department of Social Protection and Revenue for determining whether a partnership exists is very restrictive and consequently is not a viable option for many farming couples. This should be reviewed in the interest of fairness and equity for all.
19. Gift splitting & clawback –In cases where inherited land is split into joint names with a spouse within 3 years of original gifting the Revenue will pursue clawback of the relief. Revenue currently accept that, where the transfer into joint names is at the insistence of the lender (for a mortgage) this will not be subject to clawback. The application of clawback for gift splitting should be reviewed and amended to promote the transfer of land to joint owners.
20. Review the current process for issuing and amending herd number to ensure a consistency across all Regional Veterinary Offices.



Sustainability



21. Invest in diversification - this will deliver more sustainability and female participation. There is much interest in diversification amongst females and they are more likely to diversify the farming enterprise into organics and forestry, delivering on environmental benefits and driving sustainability forward.
22. Increase awareness and education on Sustainability – invest in targeted and timely lifelong learning around the 3 pillars of sustainability as well as implementing practical and technical supports that will support work/life balance and access to training in the area.
23. Increase mentoring, training, and visibility of sustainability leaders – identifying female sustainability champions, climate leaders and raising their visibility through building and supporting female sustainability networks. Encourage individual ownership for the establishment and development of those networks.
24. Expand financial supports – the introduction of a universal basic income and addressing issues such as carers leave will assist with participation and uptake of sustainability initiatives within the sector. The targeted support of 60% grant aid under Women Farmers Capital Investment Scheme (WFCIS) is very welcome.
25. Commission Research & Quantification of women's work on farm - complete research to quantify women's work on farm to enable targeted supports going forward.
26. Encourage more Innovation - support and champion the visibility of women to innovate including through the social farming programme. Circa 50% of those currently involved in social farming in Ireland are women. Promoting such initiatives will provide economic support on farm as well as the social element of sustainability.



Appendix 1 – Herd Number/Herd Keeper Policy

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine advises that a herd number is an administrative device, issued for the purposes of disease control.

A herd number, therefore, does not imply ownership of land or ownership of any animals tested or kept under that herd number.

There are two roles associated with a herd number - a herdowner and a herd keeper.

It is possible for more than one person to be registered as a herdowner. There is a standardised process in place for registering the interests of other persons, companies, or institutions in the role of herdowner. The form ER1.1 used for this purpose can be found at gov.ie - [Apply for a flock or herd number \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie). Amendments to a herd number must be requested in writing to the relevant Regional Veterinary Office. This system has been in place for many years and there are many examples of herd numbers being associated with multiple registered herd owners.

The role of herd keeper can only be assigned to **one** natural person over the age of 18. This is to ensure that one natural person is assigned clear responsibility and accountability for the health and welfare of the animals in that herd. Changes to the role of keeper are catered for through the form ER1 and this form can also be found at gov.ie - [Apply for a flock or herd number \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie)

The single herd keeper policy in operation is in line with EU and National legislation in this area and it is not proposed to amend the current legislation or criteria to allow for the naming of more than one herd keeper. To do so would undermine the controls in place in relation to disease eradication and animal health and welfare.

However, in line with the DAFM digital agenda it is intended to hold a stakeholder engagement process in early 2024 in relation to removing the requirement for a bovine passport (more commonly known as a 'blue card').

Additionally, consideration is being given to greater visibility for persons other than herd keepers (joint ownership/joint ventures etc) on the Departments Animal Identification and Movement system in the context of the Department's IT modernisation strategy.



Appendix 2 - Women in Agriculture Stakeholders Group Submission

To whom it may concern

Thank you for the opportunity for the Women in Agriculture Stakeholder Group to make a submission on the National Women's Dialogue on Women in Agriculture event organised by the department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine on the 1st of February 2023.

WASG were delighted that the commitment given by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine under Food Vision 2030 to host a National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture event was organised and delivered in 2023.

The Women in Agriculture Stakeholder Group would like to acknowledge the verbal acknowledgement given by Ministers McConalogue, Hackett and Heydon on the day of the event for WASG's policy submissions and the collaboration WASG had with the Department officials in achieving a solid CAP Submission to address the EU Gender directives, Food vision 2030 and our national issues of gender inclusivity and recognition for women in Irish Agriculture.

A very positive first National Dialogue event hosted by former Agriculture Minister Mary Coughlan, attended by Ministers and senior civil servants in the Department of Ag and special wonderful guest speaker European minister Julia Klockner who spoke of their policies and commitment to addressing gender issues in agriculture.

- There was a very positive feel to the day and a celebration of women.
- Usually, meetings involving Agriculture are in male dominated settings so for many it was a first and they enjoyed the opportunity to network with other women in the sector.
- The workshops were short but focused and it was interesting for us to hear the results as they corresponded with what we had included in submissions after hearing directly from farming women over the past two years.

As you are aware the WASG was not invited by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to partake in any of the two discussion panels on the day at the National Dialogue.

We feel this was a missed opportunity by the Department as we are the one group with sector diverse Representatives that engage continually with women that are farming in **all sectors of Agriculture**. It would have been nice to share how the Groups positive engagement with policy makers helped create change and bring farming women's issues to the fore.

The Event held was a dialogue **on** Women in Agriculture not **for** Women in Agriculture.



- The time of year, the day and time was not suitable for women who are actively farming and have family / care roles which caused a lot of anger and gave the event an appearance of the Department being out of touch with farming women.
- Only 42.5% of women there on the day were actual farmers/full or part time.
- This event could have been live streamed for those who could not attend. Similar technology was available when the Department ran its online CAP meetings in 2022.
- Very few young people at the event -raises concerns that their opinions are not included on event day.

You may not be aware that our group has already made gender & equality submissions/suggestions and specifically on a National Dialogue for Women events, most of which are still relevant, and you can use. link below

https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_gender_equality/submissions/2022/2022-12-15_submission-women-in-agriculture_en.pdf

Items of concern not previously submitted but we would like to highlight to be included. We noted from the workshop results and questions/comments on the slido portal on the day of the event which we will be researching further and discussing going forward.

- Women in corporate/advisory settings within Agriculture have different issues to women who are farming.
- Women at various life stages have very different issues/barriers, so needs are different and need to be understood.
- Differences in Farm Size or Farm sector pose income/life challenges.
- Recognising previous government actions that have removed the recognition of some women who are working on farms (e.g., changes in 2016 to names being removed from cattle passports/ herd-numbers to one name associated with the farm by only having one 'herd keeper' recognised. In most instances the women's names were removed). This is currently being discussed by WASG and the department.

Below is an excerpt from WASG Oireachtas original submission 28-02-2022 specifically on the National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture

National Women in Agriculture Dialogue From board to primary producer level, the agriculture sector falls well below national average figures for female representation and the low number of young women in primary agriculture is a damning indicator of the future of the sector in terms of gender balance. Not one of the four biggest dairy processors in the country has a single elected female board member. On top of this representation issue, figures secured under FOI by the chair of the group confirm that fewer than 500 women under 35 years of age receive the Young Farmer Scheme top-up.

A commitment was made under Food Vision 2030 that a National Dialogue on women in agriculture would be undertaken. The Stakeholders Groups wants to ensure that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine adequately funds and backs this initiative and includes the participation of Teagasc, farm organisations, Meat Industry Ireland, and all the major dairy processors.



The Dialogue should also ensure that it is interactive and inclusive and include farm walks, workshops, and panel discussions where successful female farmers or joint female/male partnerships are already in operation.

The Stakeholders Group also expects the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to be proactive and lead the charge in encouraging female participation and recognition on farms. It expects the Department will commit to increase the number of female farmers from 12 to 30% by 2030 – to include new female farmers, young female farmers and joint female/male partnerships. It would like to see a similar commitment made by dairy processors and farm organisations where female representation at board level has been historically poor. For example, just one farm organisation, Macra na Feirme, has had a female president and it is the oldest farm organisation in Ireland. Across the dairy processors, fewer than 3% of the elected farm members are female, despite the role of women working on farms every day.

WASG will continue to engage with and support the Department of Ag in discussing the matters arising from the submission and with the running of regional National Dialogues events to give all farming women an opportunity to discuss what barriers they face on a day-to-day basis and give women to share how they have overcome issues and bias.

Looking forward to reading and evaluating the report once compiled and identifying how we could move forward with actions resulting from the report.

Kind regards

Mona Concannon and WASG committee

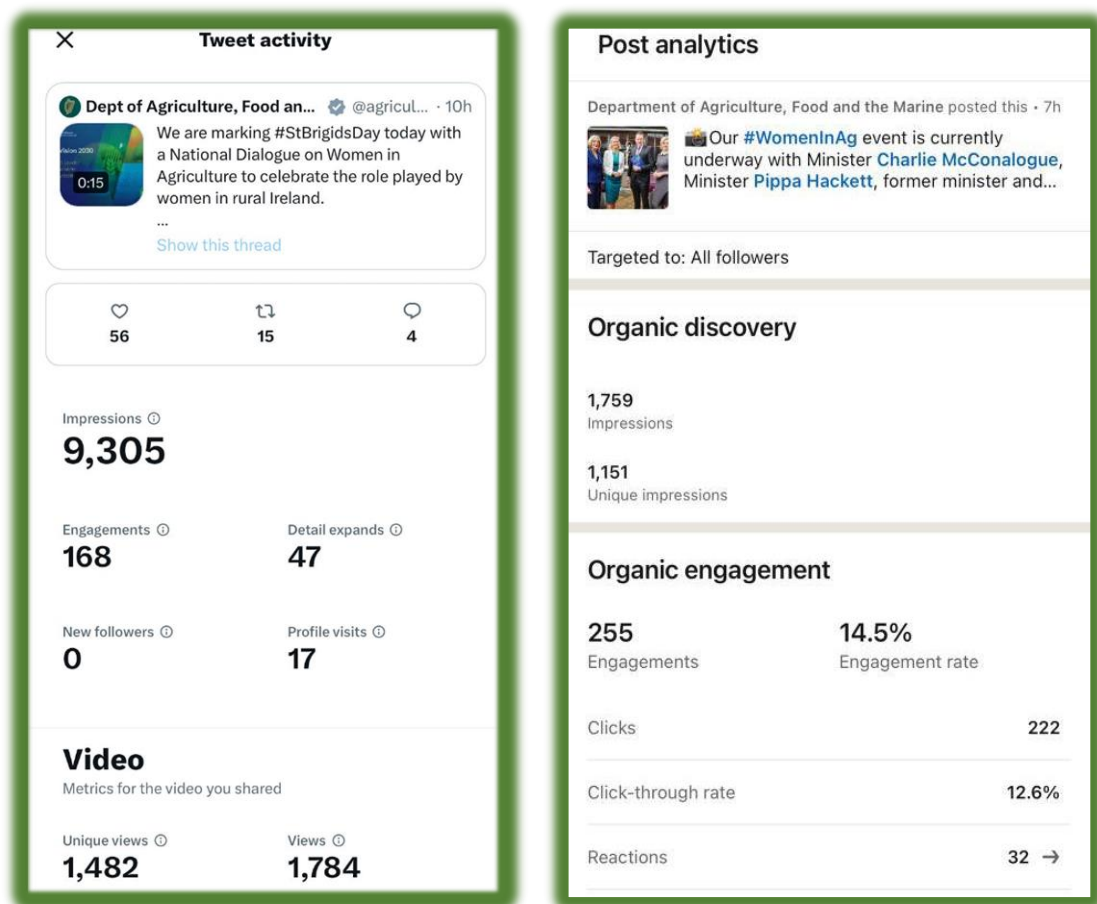


Appendix 2 – Twitter Engagement

Social Media engagement on the day was excellent with lots of interaction both from those in attendance and those who could not attend.

Tweet Activity from live tweeting of the event received 9,305 impressions, 168 engagements, 56 likes, 15 reshares, 4 comments and led to 17 new profile visits to the DAFM Twitter Account. Metrics for the accompanying video showed 1,784 views (1,482 unique views).

Post analytics for a later twitter post showed Organic discovery showing 1,151 unique impressions, 255 engagements (14.5% engagement rate), 222 clicks on the post (12.6% click through rate) and 32 reactions to the post.



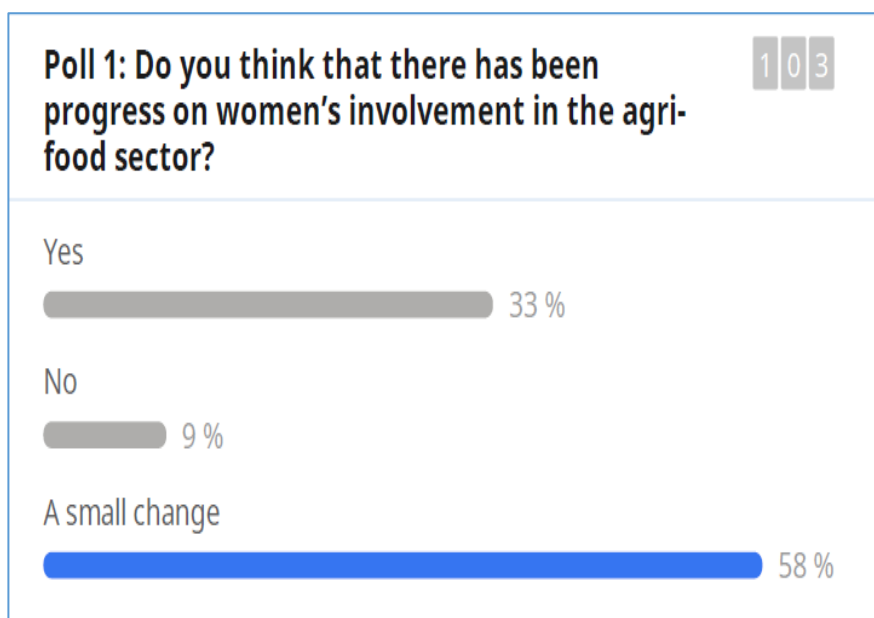
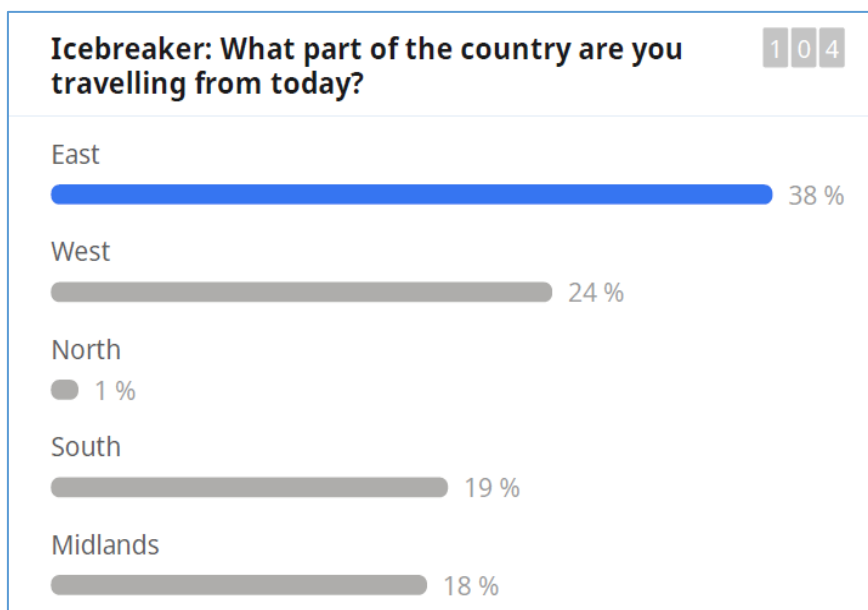
In addition, there was great use of the events hashtag, **#WomenInAg**, throughout the day on multiple social media platforms.



Appendix 3 - Slido Poll Results

Throughout the day, the audience had the opportunity of engaging interactively to compile polls and to submit questions anonymously to the panellist using the Slido facility.

Poll results as below:





Poll 2: Of the following list, which measure on gender equality under new CAP Strategic Plan are you most familiar with: (Choose 1)

0 6 6

Knowledge Transfer Women Only Groups

12 %

TAMS III –60% grant aid for women farmers aged between 41-66 years

58 %

Reporting of gender data across all CAP schemes

6 %

None of these

24 %

Poll 3: Do you believe the introduction of measures targeting women is the best approach to encourage more women into farming in the future?

0 1 9

Agree

89 %

Disagree

5 %

Not sure

5 %

Closing Poll: Please state in one word that sums up your thoughts on today's session: (Word cloud)

0 1 5

Focus Networking Positivity
Enjoyable Progress Visibility
Challenging Informative
Positive Inspiring
A start
Empowering



Appendix 4 – Event Attendee Survey

Please let us know any further comments you would like to make about the event, or priorities you believe are important for the future.

Well done to all in DAFM and Morrow for a very worthwhile conference! For future conferences I would like to see more men involved, particularly those in leadership positions in the farm organisations. Their role in promoting equality and recognition for women is key to a successful outcome.

Would like to hear more stories of how females succeed in this sector, from the women themselves - ordinary stories, they don't need to be headline people. Everyday heroes are very empowering and there are many on the ground working on farms doing amazing things and being very innovative.

On event timings, to support women to participate, particularly those with care responsibilities or female single-headed households a half day not within traditional 9 - 1 or 2 - 5 formula can be helpful. For example, a start time of 11 am with a finish time of 2/2.30 can allow for morning responsibilities to be taken care of without additional burdens and the finish time allows for school pickups or other responsibilities to be managed. We need to redesign not just our structures but also our ways of doing things. Ideally, where possible we should facilitate a range of dialogues at different times, and via both in-person and remote to allow for a range of voices to be heard.

I thought this event was for farm women working on farms and it should have been better advertised and perhaps in a bigger venue to ensure a larger capacity as I believe it was over subscribed

Promote attendance of primary producers.

Truly inspirational day. Mary Coughlan did a mighty job I would love to see her come to our farm women conference in October. About time women got the credit and recognition of their part in farming. Anything we do we do it mighty well. Gender balance is behind the curve big time on farms. We must change mindsets of parents too !!training and be seen be heard get it out there, farm journal farm papers and other papers. The men need not fear us we will get along mighty fine

Would like less speeches from the ministers. Let one speak instead of all three. Would be great to livestream speeches and panel discussion for those who cannot attend in person. Would like the event to be less Agri food and more women on farm focused.

While I look forward to the report and future policy that arises out of this conference, I'm not sure what was achieved on the day. Guest speakers were strong and interesting, but the discussions felt like box-ticking exercises. I was disappointed that the first question from the floor to the panel (and specifically put to Siobhan Talbot) was along the lines of 'How do you do it all? How do you manage a family and a career?' Would a man be asked this? The workshop was disorganized, rushed and more of a talking shop for individual women/farmers in the group rather than a focus on solutions.

Something tangible in terms of policy/recommendations which we can move forward with.



We work a physical job, women farmers need different support at different ages in their farming career, education especially in health, our bodies change so much, young-childbearing age - menopause. The workshop was rushed, my suggestions were not put on the board because I was a few dairy network women/IFA at my table, it made me feel excluded. It was great to see department officials at the event. Nice to see everyone in the Ag. sector. All the items that were flagged at the workshop was flagged in the women's CAP submission, fair play to them for that, they reached out to female farmers like me for our stories/experience. I'm a full-time female farmer my husband works off farm and many women farmers I know were really cross about the timing because of calving/lambing season. I was lucky that a neighbour offered to drive as I was too tired from many sleepless night of calving and feeding calves. It would be great if this type of event could be done regionally, we'd a two-hour drive to get to Portlaoise. Thanks.

I think the Minister is doing a lot to ensure women take their place in farming.

Questions being submitted should not be censored and blocked from viewing of all the participants. What is the point of questions otherwise. Regardless to how the organisers feel about someone's viewpoint they should be interested in seeing how the room feels by allowing the questions or comments submitted to become public for viewing and liking - then you would have a true view of the feelings of the room. If you must censor participants questions you may as well leave the participants at home!! PS I did not ask a question but was shocked at the number of women I met right across the board who had submitted questions that were not up on the system to view and like or ignore!!

I loved the dinner, so that again and you're golden. Really nice network vibe. Might be nice to have a breakout fun activity as a load of sitting all day. I'd like an activity like a team building exercise or acting workshop to get people engaged physically. But well-run event, great team on ground. Had plenty of people to ask for help. More sockets and maybe exercise included

Run it on a province basis to ensure more participation from peripheral areas. The first panel had little relevance to farm women.

It wasn't a good time of year to hold this event, it is a very busy time of year for farmers and that should have been taken into consideration when organizing this event.

the next event would prove to be more beneficial to many farmers if a committee with representative members of different farming sector was involved in the planning process, to ensure a more inclusive conference.

I would love to see leaders of the farm organisation present. They need to be held accountable for the limited female representation at county level.

Please advertise the event more strategically so as more actual farmers can attend, because the ratio of farmers to academics was heavily weighted against farmers. Diversification in agriculture (as discussed on the day) is always important, but as a dairy farmer I believe we should "never" lose sight of primary food producers as our role in global society going forward, is of the utmost importance. Please remember that for future events. Footnote: For the present landowners of Irelands farms (being primarily men) to pass on land to young women, I believe monetary incentives are going to have to be devised to encourage them to pass on their land. Perhaps also an advertising campaign favouring women as capable candidates for land inheritance would be a good idea in future. Thank you

Excellent day in the Midlands on La Fhéile Bride. Very stimulating, inspiring, and thought provoking. Thanks for a lovely day and well done to all involved in the organisation of the event.

Try to have more men involved.



| |
|---|
| Timing terrible for farmers due to calving etc. Not enough farmers there. It felt swamped by non-farmers. Were they all there to listen to the few farmers?? |
| There was very little chance for dialogue...the questions were all censored and not available for people to vote on and the rapporteurs for the workshops fed back their preprepared speeches rather than what was discussed. we need to ensure real income and pensions for women in farming and the misogyny in the media needs to be challenged |
| The first panel had very little relevance to actual female farmers. It was a suitable discussion for an event for women in the corporate world, not for the audience that I met around the room. They were excellent panellists, but it would have been a lot more interesting to hear from successful women running farms. No mention of organics, regenerative agriculture, soil health, improving prices for agricultural products. |
| It might be useful to get some perspective from younger females, for example those doing leaving certificate and those in third level education. |
| More encouragement for networking experiences would be appreciated. Regional and online participation would motivate higher attendance and motivate more involvement with all sectors. Not capping of numbers. Round tables were not appropriate for the event. I was disappointed with the numbers at the event and know of many people who would have attended only for the availability was gone. I was disappointed to hear a colleague couldn't get an invite when using her personal email but when she used her "professional" work email there was no issue receiving an invite. More encouragement of young people is necessary. Timing was very ignorant and poorly thought for a predominantly spring grass based agricultural industry. The collaboration with St Brigid's day was a nice idea but not practical. Workshops at the start of the day would have been more productive with the option to go to a selection of workshops rather than just one. |
| I felt that the second panel discussion was more beneficial than the first. I enjoyed the breakout sessions to network with others |
| This wasn't advertised in the farmers journal a lot of women didn't get a chance to attend, and it was very limited numbers so many advertise it 1st to get a feel for numbers and then decide on venue for capacity |
| I thought it was a very well-run event, kept on-time and ran smoothly. I think the panel discussions could have been slightly shorter, with the scope of running a second or longer workshop instead. The think the panel discussions were interesting however the first panel may have been slightly difficult to engage regards relatability. The reality is most women farmers are working on farm and not corporate boards. In addition, there appeared to be a real lack of actual women farmers there, there seemed to be a lot of representatives from various farm groups, organisations, the DAFM which is important, but it would have been wonderful to have a great number of everyday working women farmers present. |
| It is great to have a space for women to connect and brainstorm independently. Following on from these conversations and events the learnings could be integrated into a wider farming context / conversation. A dialogue framework feeding into the mainstream farming community to help create and shape the conversation and direction of the Agri agenda as a whole |
| I think the organisers need to be clearer on who the audience is, is it farmers or is it the Agri food industry as a whole |
| Continue engagement and fulfil the need for change |



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine