

# The Scottish Government's New Entrants to Farming Programme



## Katie Francis

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Katie Francis was raised on the family farm of Whitmuir in Selkirk. Unfortunately, due to bad health, her father put the 162 hectare less favoured area owned farm out for tenancy 20 years ago. In November 2013 the opportunity arose for Katie to take over the ownership of the unit and farm it in her own right.

Katie, whose husband works full time off farm, has three young children. Being on the farm full time allows Katie to focus all her efforts on the children and establishing the business.

Katie attended university and previously worked as a Land Agent. However she always knew she wanted to go back home and work on the land.

Katie produces 62 hectares of arable crop (winter wheat and winter barley) and is establishing a flock of ewes. The flock is being built up by purchasing breeding hogs, this process began in 2013. The sheep numbers will grow on the holding as fencing works and ground improvements are completed over the unit.

### What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

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The biggest challenge to date has been sourcing capital, to have enough money to buy start up equipment. Although the land is family owned there was no machinery or equipment. It seems I took over the business when there wasn't as much Government financial help available.

### Case Studies

Learn from the experiences of other new entrants in a series of case studies.

Guidance notes are also available which are tailored specifically to assist new entrants to farming, with their business needs.

Find further information, including links to other case studies and the guidance notes, at [www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants)

This programme is funded by the Scottish Government as part of it's New Entrants to Farming Advisory Activity.



## What hurdles have you had to overcome?

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The largest hurdle since I have taken over the farm is sourcing finance. As I am a new entrant, I didn't have any business credit history. Finance has been required for maintenance work on the holding, fencing, etc. and purchasing machinery and live-stock.

## What is your main motivation to farm?

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I have always loved being on the farm. As a young girl I enjoyed helping my father. The farm has been in our family for 300 years, and I feel a real sense of pride being able to carry on farming the same land my family has for generations.

## What financial and advisory assistance have you received?

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I applied for SRDP grant funding for an agri-environment scheme. I used my local agricultural consultant to assist me with applying for the funding, she was very helpful.

I have been very lucky having good neighbouring farmers they have been very supportive with helping me when I have needed anything, and I know I can ask them for advice anytime I need to.

*"It's very important to know where you want to be in the future and work back from there. Be realistic with your business plans and think carefully about your budgets."*

*Katie Francis*



## What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

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Be realistic when setting your goals, and remember not everything needs to be achieved in your first year.

## What are your future ambitions?

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There is maintenance work to be carried out on the farm such as fixing the fences. I'm looking at biodiversity and the wildlife elements of farming along with focusing on organics.

In the future I would like to have a closed flock of Cheviot Mules.

## Looking for some more information?

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There is a network of new entrants across the country who are in various stages of developing their businesses and achieving their goals. You can contact this network through various streams including:

- Regional workshops
- Facebook  
([www.facebook.com/NewEntrants](http://www.facebook.com/NewEntrants))
- Website  
([www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants))

For more details contact

Kirsten Williams, Agricultural Consultant, SAC Consulting, Clifton Road, Turriff, 01888 563333, [Kirsten.Williams@sac.co.uk](mailto:Kirsten.Williams@sac.co.uk)

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