

The Scottish Government's New Entrants to Farming Programme



Neil McKinnel

Neil and his family farm Garrarie in the south west of Scotland, near Stranraer. Neil's career in agriculture began when he left school and attended Barony college to study agriculture, whilst also working part time on the family farm. When Neil turned 20 he became a partner of the family business. Some 12 years later the business was restructured making Neil the majority partner.

The farm is spread over 500 acres of land which includes 60 acres of rented land. The stocking on the unit consists of 160 Simmental cattle with the progeny either being retained for breeding stock or sold store at 12 months old. In addition there are 250 pure Lleyne breeding ewes, with the progeny again

either being retained as breeding stock or sold prime.

The business diversified into harvesting wind in 2012, when a 15kW turbine was erected on the farm. Neil admits that it was expensive, but he feels it was a good diversification project.

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

Understanding all of the regulations from cattle records to cross compliance, a series of Statutory Management Requirements and Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions. It takes time to keep on top of everything, as even the smallest of mistakes can lead to significant consequences for the business.

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

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What hurdles have you had to overcome?

The largest hurdle for our business has basically been understanding legislation, ensuring that everything is being adhered to and that we are always compliant.

Our next hurdle will be readjusting the business so that it is still profitable with the new CAP reform system.

What is your main motivation to farm?

Our main motivation is basically success. It is to run the farm as a successful and profitable business. It is very rewarding watching calves being born and then a year later selling them for a good price.

What financial and advisory assistance have you received?

We have been awarded an SRDP grant for slurry storage and silage clamp. We obtained a 10% top up on the grant for being a young farmer. With this application we had assistance from our local agricultural consultants.

It is good to speak to neighbouring farmers as they may have previously been through similar situations.

“Ensure you do your homework and that you don’t over stretch yourself in any way. It’s great that you can get finance towards starting up the business but remember whatever you borrow you will have to pay it all back and that takes time.”

Neil McKinnel



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

I personally think it would be very difficult for someone to enter the industry without financial backing.

My advice would be to talk to established businesses and to do your homework. Take your time and don’t bite off more than you can chew.

What are your future ambitions?

The main aim of the business is to be profitable and I’m always on the lookout for new opportunities to expand the farm.

Looking for some more information?

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)
- Website (www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants)

For more details contact

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