

News from the Farm Advisory Service:



CROFTING MATTERS



Crofting Matters podcast: Routes to crofting

In this episode of Crofting Matters, we hear from two crofters who who took two different routes into crofting. Siobhan Macdonald is joined by Derek Dick, who is a relatively new crofter in Berneray, and Angus Ferguson, an experienced crofter in North Uist. Listen as they discuss how they gained their croft, the barriers, and hints and tips for aspiring new crofters.

To find this episode, scan the QR code below or visit www.fas.scot/sounds



Key dates to remember

30th August 2024

Revised closing date for the June Census 2024

1st September 2024

Scottish Upland Support Scheme Application window opens

Irrigation and organic matter

With climate variations, from wetter winters to drier summers predicted the agricultural sector needs to ensure that water supply is readily available when needed to maintain crop growth and livestock production.

Scotland's abundance of water has been a key characteristic of this country's heritage, however, water availability cannot be guaranteed. In this changing time, farmers and land managers need to incorporate management techniques and systems which can be implemented to help improve water availability when needed.



An important area to consider when incorporating these techniques into your farm is the quality of irrigation and organic matter in your soil. Soils are fundamental to your farm, ensuring and improving soil health can have great impact to how water is managed on farm and allow water in be stored situ for longer. By improving the structure and health of soil you can improve infiltration of water within the soil and allow the storage of water during wet periods, prolonging the moisture content within the soil from which crops can utilise. The improvement of soil structure can significantly improve water retention on farm.

Understanding organic matter

Organic matter can be defined as 'all living, or once-living, materials within or added to the soil'. The addition and enhancement of organic matter within the soil can:

Increase nutrients within the soil

Increase infiltration

Improve soil structure

Retain water

Reduce erosion risk

Provide carbon storage

Being able to improve soil organic matter can have great impact and improvement to the water retention, and help reduce the vulnerability of soil to erosion, therefore loss of soil to the water environment.

Furthermore, soil moisture sensors can optimise irrigation practices, enhance crop productivity, and contribute to sustainable water management. Technology such as wireless sensors provide real-time data on soil moisture levels, helping farmers to make informed irrigation decisions and reduce water waste. Using a soil moisture sensor can help farms apply the right amount of water at the right time, allowing farmers to take proactive measures when it comes to the risk of drought.

Matt Herbst, SAC Consulting

For the full article, please visit:

www.fas.scot/article/irrigation-and-organic-matter/

Free Events

At the Farm Advisory Service we run a range of events both online and in-person.

Visit www.fas.scot/events to sign up or contact the advice line and we'll help you get booked on.

Navigating the Future of Farming
Luing, 28th August, 1:30pm - 4:30pm

Farm Wildlife Walks - Campbeltown
Campbeltown, 28th August, 6:30pm - 9:00pm

Scotland the Bread - Heritage Grains & Diversification
East Neuk, 29th August, 1:00pm - 4:00pm

Borders WiA - Driving Your Business Forward
St Boswells, 29th August, 2:00pm - 4:00pm

Conducting a Biodiversity Audit Workshop - Dumfries
SRUC Barony, 30th August, 10:00am - 1:30pm

Mineral Requirements of Finishing Lambs
Online, 4th September, 8:00pm - 9:00pm

Diversification on a shoe-string budget - farm tours

With the latest Scottish Farm Business Income figures for 2022-2023 highlighting that farms with diversified activities earn around £38,300 more than those without, if there was a diversification enterprise that would complement and add value to your farming business, it is worth considering it further.

Given the significant increase in the costs of building materials and ongoing recruitment and retainment challenges; there has been increased interest in diversification enterprises that require minimal capital investment and very little labour.

While dog parks, farm vending, health & wellbeing activities are increasing in popularity, if you are looking for 'diversification on a shoe-string budget', then running farm tours and experiences could be a good option.

By using your own skills, knowledge, and experience, farm tours can be achieved with minimal investment and can provide a healthy return for your time. Having an online pre-booking system means tours and experiences can be offered at times of the year to suit the business.

A 1-2-hour farm tour can generate around £15.00 - £35.00 per adult and £7.50 - £15.00 per child. Offering refreshments/home baking is generally viewed as boosting the overall on-farm or croft experience.

A "day in the life of a farmer" where customers get hands on experience doing daily jobs on the farm can generate between £200 - £450 per person per day including a farmhouse lunch. Lambing days are always popular, but you might need to practice uttering 'goodness' when things go wrong before you sign up your first family!



Average farm income, farms with and without diversified activities, 2018-19 to 2021-23. 2022-23 prices

Calum Johnston, SAC Consulting
Edited by Christine Beaton

This article is part of August edition of Agribusiness News. More information can be found at: www.fas.scot/publication/agribusiness-news-august-2024/

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service is funded by the Scottish Government. It is delivered by SAC Consulting, part of Scotland's Rural College, and Ricardo Energy and Environment.

National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

If you need more advice on any topic, the Farm Advisory Service has a range of support and help available:

Advice line

For free telephone advice on a wide variety of topics including cross compliance, water framework directive requirements, climate change and other technical issues call us on **0300 323 0161** or email advice@fas.scot. The advice line operates between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Bespoke Advice and Grants

FAS can also help you to increase the profitability and sustainability of your farming business through Scottish Government grants including Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) – worth up to £2,000.

The ILMP will identify opportunities and cost savings for your business, based on an independent and confidential assessment of your business by an experienced farm business adviser of your choosing. As part of your plan you can choose to benefit from up to two further specialist advice plans.

Online

Our website contains articles, videos and much more at www.fas.scot