

Case study

Growing Confidence: Empowering Women in Agriculture

Support provided by FAS: Expert advice for women in farming



Name & business: **Laura Macleod, High Cluniter Smallholding**

Laura Macleod is the owner of High Cluniter, a smallholding in rural Scotland. As a woman navigating the agricultural sector, Laura has embraced both the challenges and opportunities that come with building a business from the ground up. Through the Scottish Farm Advisory Service (SFAS), she accessed tailored support to develop an Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP), helping her turn early-stage ideas into a structured and achievable vision.

What inspired you, as a woman, to pursue a career in farming or crofting?

What inspired me to start farming was the chance to be more present at home and build a life around the land we already had. I wanted to work in a way that felt natural and meaningful, and farming gave me that. It also meant I could involve our children from the start – teaching them where food comes from, how to care for animals, and the value of hard work. As a woman, it felt empowering to create something with my own hands that supports our family and connects us to nature every single day.

Why did you apply for SA/ILMP?

When we bought our new property and land, it felt like the perfect chance to finally follow our dream – but honestly, we didn't know where to begin. There was so much potential, but also a lot to learn. When we heard about the ILMP, it sounded like just the kind of support we needed to get started with confidence. It gave us a way to

plan properly, ask questions, and make the most of what we had. Applying felt like a natural next step to help turn our ideas into something real.

What did your adviser help you with?

I was a bit nervous about sharing our ideas at first, but our adviser Jenny was amazing. She listened carefully, helped make sense of all the thoughts in my head, and turned them into a robust and achievable business plan. Her energy and encouragement made a huge difference and we felt supported and excited. By the time she left, we were buzzing with confidence and couldn't wait to get started.

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Did the support help you address any challenges that felt unique to your experience as a woman in the sector?

Even though my husband helps a lot with the smallholding, I'm the one who runs it day to day. I used to worry people would assume it was the other way around. Working with Jenny really helped shift that mindset. She gave me the confidence to speak up, trust my decisions, and believe that women are just as capable in farming as men. Her support made me feel seen and valued, and that's made a big difference in how I approach things now.

What benefits do you anticipate for your business as a result of the SA/ILMP?

Thanks to the ILMP, we've been able to move forward with our smallholding much faster than we expected. It gave us a clear plan to work from, which made everything feel more achievable. It also opened our eyes to new ideas and opportunities we hadn't considered before. Having that kind of support and structure has made a real difference as we now feel more confident about the future and excited to keep building on what we've started.

Would you recommend SA/ILMP to other women entering the sector?

I would absolutely recommend the ILMP to other women entering the sector. It has been invaluable for us and we will continue to reap the benefits from it for many more years to come.

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What advice would you give to other women considering a career in farming or crofting?

My advice to other women thinking about farming or crofting is simple – go for it! Believe in yourself and the unique skills you bring. You don't need to have all the answers to get started; just be willing to learn, ask questions, and give things a go. Trust your instincts, lean on others when you need to, and enjoy the journey, mud and all!

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