



nirwn
**Northern Ireland
Rural Women's Network**

**Northern Ireland
Rural Women's Network (NIRWN's)
Response To**

**Consultation on Policy Options Arising from
the Reform of the Common Agricultural
Policy (Pillar I Direct Payments)**

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
(DARD)

NIRWN

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Introduction

NIRWN's vision is a rural community where women are respected and valued and where they have the opportunities, confidence and ability to visibly take up positions of power and influence in all areas of life.

NIRWN key objectives:

- Increasing the voice of rural women through giving them a voice at Policy level
- Playing an advocacy and lobbying role on behalf of rural women
- Encouraging women in decision-making and providing representation for rural women
- Information and networking opportunities for rural women
- Working within the Regional Support for Women in Disadvantaged and Rural Areas Programme, funded by DSD and DARD to give a voice to rural women

Mission

NIRWN's mission, as a rural regional support organisation, is to advance rural women's equality and participation in society. We will ensure rural women are recognised and supported to fully participate as equal citizens in the development of sustainable rural communities and society.

NIRWN, as a member of the Women's Regional Consortium funded through DSD, welcome the opportunity to respond to the Consultation on Policy Options Arising from the Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (Pillar I Direct Payments)

Comments

Q8. Do you agree with the Department's suggestion to set (i) the minimum area for which the establishment of entitlements can be requested and (ii) the minimum claim size at 5ha?

NIRWN does not agree with the Department's suggestion to set the minimum claim size at 5ha. The rationale presented by the Department that 'increasing the minimum size of holding that can establish and claim entitlements is based on the argument that holdings of this scale (i.e. less than 5ha) are unlikely to represent commercial undertakings'. It is our view that smaller holdings may well be commercial on a smaller scale and still have responsibility for land management and contributing to the maintenance of the rural environment, together with the costs and risks associated with this. This is particularly pertinent to prevent land abandonment. The Department later outlines that in fact; cattle and sheep farms will be adversely affected by this proposed change. It is our position that this is an unnecessary change to the current status and the minimum establishment of entitlements and minimum claim size should remain as they are.

Q17. What are your views on the Department's suggestion to make a Level III qualification in agriculture (or a closely related subject) a requirement for young farmers and new entrants to receive an award from the Regional Reserve?

Q.26. What are your views on the Department's suggestion to make a Level III qualification in agriculture (or related subject) a requirement for Young Farmers' Scheme eligibility?

NIRWN strongly support the Department's suggestion to make a Level III qualification in agriculture (or a closely related subject) a requirement for young farmers and new entrants to receive an award from the Regional Reserve and a requirement for Young Farmers' Scheme eligibility; providing the Department continues to ensure accessible provision of such training and qualifications.

NIRWN encourage the Department to actively target training to women as potential new entrants and young farmers. Gender mainstreaming challenges decision-makers; such as DARD, to question the assumption that policies and programmes, including, 'Policy Options Arising from the Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (Pillar I Direct Payments)' affect everyone in the same way. In education, training, work and public and political life, women are still not participating equally. The Department's Equality screening of this consultation acknowledges that in NI 'Historically farming is a

male dominated occupation'¹ yet goes on to identify that, 'There is no facility in the policy proposal to better promote equality of opportunity'². NIRWN disagree, this proposal presents the Department with a real opportunity to actively target set through training provision to encourage more women as new entrants and young farmers.

The barriers women face is, amongst other issues, connected to: lack of skills, qualifications and confidence and gendered career pathways.³Qualifications and training help develop confidence and career pathways. Research conducted by Women's Centres indicates that; very low confidence levels on entry, generally leads to a substantial increase in confidence and self-esteem, as evaluated by participants themselves, as a consequence of participating in a course⁴.

Gender differentials exist at all levels in Northern Ireland and it is these differentials which can still negatively influence the lives of rural women in Northern Ireland in terms of accessing opportunities and resources and their full participation in social, economical and political life. The 'Gender Equality Strategy' for Northern Ireland⁵ recognises that: 'treating men and women the same – that is being 'gender neutral' - is not the solution to eradicating gender inequality' (p.15) and later: 'treating men and women the same will not ensure equal outcomes because of the different experiences of women and men and the different economic and social positions occupied by them'. NIRWN encourage the Department to proactively target training to women as potential new entrants and young farmers.

Q29. Do you agree with the Department's suggestion to provide support to Areas of Natural Constraint (ANCs) via Pillar I from 2015 scheme year?

NIRWN agrees with this suggestion. Furthermore since the recent change to zero % transfer rate from Pillar I to Pillar II for the next RDP it is NIRWN' s position that with the secured funds available now under Pillar I; **only** Pillar I should be utilised for ANC and AE support under the new RDP. This should help the Minister for Agriculture with her aim now; '*to ensure a targeted and balanced RDP for the farming sector and all rural dwellers*'⁶ as a result of 0 % rate of transfer being notified to the European Commission.

¹ P.7 <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/pillar-i-equality-screening-template.pdf>

² P.8 <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/pillar-i-equality-screening-template.pdf>

³ *Women Living in Disadvantaged Communities: Barriers to Participation.* Dr Helen Mc Laughlin, 2009.

⁴ *Women Living in Disadvantaged Communities: Barriers to Participation.* Dr Helen Mc Laughlin, 2009.

⁵ OFMDFM. *A Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2016.* The Gender Equality Unit. 2006.

⁶ <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-dard/news-dard-130114-oneill-outlines-eu.htm>

Active Farming

NIRWN's membership seeks clarification from the Department on what will constitute an 'Active Farmer' going forward. This has particular implications for women who may find themselves head of holding through bereavement and inheritance. It is imperative that women in this position are not further disadvantaged economically by the definition of an, 'active farmer'. Maintaining a family farm business through ownership and oftentimes in preparation for children who may not yet be old enough or, finished their education to become head of holding, should be considered active farming.

There is still some considerable fear among rural families and rural women in particular; in light of the 2005 Mc Clean case that, land let in conacre may be seen in the future as a business and not an investment asset. The conditions to qualify for APR require the farmer to actively farm the land for the purpose of agriculture NIRWN seek clarification from the Department on what is considered 'actively farmed'?