

The Scottish Government's New Entrants to Farming Programme



Ian McKnight

Ian has always been interested in farming, it is in his blood, with his father being a tenant farmer.

Ian's agricultural career began when he left school, at this stage he studied at the Scottish Agricultural College and gained a BSc (Hons) in Agriculture. Following this he travelled on a working holiday to New Zealand and Australia, which he admits gave him valuable agricultural experience. When he returned from his travels he started employment with the Scottish Government Rural Payment and Inspections Directorate. However, just under a year later, Ian decided this wasn't the career for him as he missed the practical side of the industry. He then became an agricultural contractor working at various local farms.

Ian has always had a goal of farming on his own right, which became a reality in November 2011, when Ian inherited a traditional tenancy from his uncle. The hill farm covers 1,600 acres, with the tenancy being located next door to his family's tenant farm.

In the three years since entering the farm, Ian has been building up a sheep enterprise consisting of 500 Scottish Blackface ewes.



Ian continues to offer contracting services to neighbouring farmers to augment the output generated by the farm.

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

I had no Single Farm Payment, until I bought entitlements from my uncle after my first year farming. The first year was especially difficult as there was limited support available, yet all the costs still existed. There was no income until lambs were ready for sale, which made cash flow particularly difficult.

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?

Some day to day duties, such as learning how to efficiently process the paperwork. I'm fortunate I can ask family for advice.

Having enough time in the day and being able to bring in enough of an income to support the family. I didn't have any financial support for the first year.

What is your main motivation to farm?

I grew up on a farm and farming is something I have always had a passion for. I previously had a desk job but I missed the hands on experience and the enjoyment of being out on the land. I know I'm lucky that the farm became available, otherwise it would have been very difficult to obtain any land.

What financial and advisory assistance have you received?

I have had a whole farm review carried out on my farm funded through the Scottish Government. I have had some assistance for general farm accounts from my own accountant.

I have attended the New Entrants Workshops and found them to be very useful.

"Be prepared to work hard, you need to do the best job you can to get the desired results. New entrants may feel they aren't getting anywhere for the first few years but stick with it and you will get there."
Ian McKnight



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

My advice would be to stick in, keep your head down and work hard. The first few years are the hardest, but if you keep focused you will get there.

What are your future ambitions?

In terms of the farm, I would like to continue improvements and expand. Hopefully this will provide a more stable farm income so that I can reduce my contracting hours.

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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