

# The Scottish Government's New Entrants to Farming Programme



## Stuart Rutherford

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Stuart graduated from the Scottish Agricultural Colleges Auchincruive campus in 2005, with an HND in Poultry Production and Management. His career has seen him work for Grampian Country Chickens and Scotlay Farm Eggs. Stuart managed Scotlay Farm Eggs before setting up his own company—Nith Valley Free Range Eggs in March 2009. He supplied eggs to Scotlay Farm Eggs before becoming a co-director of the company in 2011. Since 2012 he has concentrated solely on his own business, which he is the sole director. The business started on a 10 acre rented site with 4,000 free range hens, increasing to 9,000 hens by 2011 and 14,000 hens today.

In 2013 Stuart took the step of purchasing 30 acres of land around a disused sandstone quarry and relocated his business. The laying

houses are located in a woodland site, which gives a point of difference when it comes to marketing his eggs.

In 2010 Stuart won a Princes Trust ,Young Entrepreneur Award.

(<http://www.nithvalleyeggs.co.uk/>)

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

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Everything!

The equipment required in egg production is all very expensive.

The purchase of land to secure the future of the business has been a real challenge.

### 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](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants)

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## What hurdles have you had to overcome?

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My biggest hurdle to date has been around the purchase of land in 2013. My bank demanded an unachievable deposit and in the end I had to change banks. This was eclipsed by problems around planning permission: prior to purchasing the site, a planning query was lodged with the Council to make sure hen houses could be built on the site, no objections were raised. When Planning Consent was applied for, it was turned down. It took a great deal of time, determination and money to have the decision overturned. If I'd failed, it would have been devastating for the business.

## What financial & advisory assistance have you received?

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The egg industry isn't supported by subsidy. I've used my own savings and I'm very grateful to my parents for their financial help in getting me started. I haven't had any specific advisory advice. I worked in the industry and managed other peoples businesses prior to starting my own.

## What is your main motivation to farm?

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I enjoy what I do. There are lots of different aspects to the job- from being an egg producer, a company director and a marketing manager. Being self-employed and in charge of your daily schedule is also a big motivation.

*"You have got to want it, keep focused"*

*Stuart Rutherford*



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

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Being self employed is hard work. Holidays and weekends off are a luxury (especially when you first start) - you have got to want it!

## What are your future ambitions?

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My main goal is to improve the marketing of the eggs and to gain a much higher share of the retail price. I've purchased a grading machine and I'm now able to sell direct to retailers with eggs under my own branding rather than sell into the wholesale market. I'm also looking at "egg vending machines" which have been very successful in Ireland: it allows a direct link to the consumer and a further point of difference over the opposition.

## Looking for some more information?

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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](http://www.facebook.com/NewEntrants))
- Website ([www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants))

For more details contact

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