

Report of the Advisory Committee on the Role of Women in Agriculture

Prepared for the Minister for Agriculture,
Food and Rural Development

September 2000

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH:
ARNA FHOILSIÚ AG OIFIG AN tSOLÁTHAIR

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INTRODUCTION

Background to the Advisory Committee on the Role of Women In Agriculture

The Government in the “Action Programme for the Millennium” made a commitment “to recognise the role of women in agriculture by setting up a special advisory committee to advise on, and monitor progress, with policy initiatives to support women in agriculture. This will include the setting up of a network of women in farming and addressing the specific training requirements of women in agriculture”.

The White Paper on Rural Development, published by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, stated that elements of its strategy for agriculture would include “the establishment of a special advisory committee to examine, advise on and identify responses to the particular problems experienced by women in agriculture and to address specific training requirements.”

With this in mind the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development:

- established the Advisory Committee on the Role of Women in Agriculture
- invited submissions from interested organisations or individuals as to the terms of reference of such a committee and areas of activities that should come within its scope.

Following receipt of those submissions the terms of reference were drawn up as follows:

- “1. The Committee will advise the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development on the policies appropriate to the promotion of the role of women in agriculture paying particular attention to the following areas:
 - education and training, including the use of information technology
 - the under representation of women at political and organisational level
 - social inclusion - practical support arrangements
 - personal finance, economic and other legal issues.
2. The Minister envisages that the Committee will have an input into the Department’s strategies in the rural development area and in particular

furthering the policies proposed in the White Paper “Ensuring the Future - A Strategy for Rural Development in Ireland”.

3. The Minister has asked that the Committee submit a report to him by mid 2000.”

In undertaking its task the Committee was conscious of a number of policy developments which provided a context for its work in particular:

- the White Paper on Agriculture and Rural Development which was adopted by Government on 14 July 1999 and concentrates on the maintenance of vibrant, sustainable rural communities
- commitments on gender, rural and poverty proofing contained in the National Development Plan 2000-2006
- recommendations on rural women contained in the report of the Second Commission on the Status of Women 1993 and subsequent monitoring reports on their implementation
- commitments on gender which Ireland agreed to in the Platform of Action at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) and under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women¹ which Ireland signed in 1985.

At the inaugural meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Role of Women in Agriculture on 30 November 1999 sub-committees were appointed to examine the areas identified in the four indents in the terms of reference referred to previously. These sub-committees are listed in Appendix 1. The full Committee and the sub-committees met 20 times between 30 November 1999 and 30 May 2000. These meetings were held in Dublin, Portlaoise, Galway, and Mullingar.

During the consultative process the Committee consulted and met with members of various departments, organisations and individuals such as:

Department Agriculture, Food & Rural Development
Department of Education and Science
Department of the Environment
Department of Health and Children
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Department of Public Enterprise
Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs
Midland Health Board - Mary Hegerty
Carers Association - Eddie Collins Hughes and John Farren
Rural Womens Unit, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

¹ At the 1999 examination of Ireland's report on Beijing the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women made recommendations regarding the collection of data to assist with the measurement of progress on gender equality with particular reference to the need for data regarding rural women.

New South Wales, Australia - Margaret Alston
Muintir na Tire - Vanessa Clarke and Bernard Kearney
ADM Ltd. - Aileen Gilchrist and Erin Cotter
Smallholders Initiative - Cormac Beehan
Representatives from the LEADER groups
Irish Farmers Association
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
Irish Co-Operatives Society
Macra na Feirme
Irish Country Women's Association

Representatives from 7 rural based New Opportunities for Women projects:

Macra na Feirme - Fionnuala Ruane
Comhdhail Oileann na hEireann Inis Oirr Arainn - Patrica Quinn
Longford ICA - Tess Murphy
Women of the North West, Moygownagh, Mayo - Marion Flannery
Institute of Technology, Tralee, Co. Kerry - Mary Fenton
Access 2000, Francis St. Wexford - Marion Power
Midas, Teelin, Carrick, Co. Donegal - Meave Mc Garvey
Ms Grainne Dwyer - Nutfield Scholar.
Longford Women's Centre - Sandy Palmer, Training Consultant
Farmers Support Network - Anne Allen
Teagasc Rural Enterprise Advisors
FÁS
Eurexcter School, University of Limerick
National Farm IT Centre
Agri Aware
Terence Cunningham B.Agr Sc. Teagasc Rural Enterprise Advisor
Tipperary County Council - Councillor Susan Maher and Angela Dillon White
Deputy Beverly Cooper Flynn TD
Deputy Mildred Fox TD
Deputy Breda Moynihan Cronin TD
Senator Mary Jackman
Senator Helen Keogh
Senator Madeline Taylor Quinn
Fianna Fáil
Fine Gael
Labour Party
Progressive Democrats
Information Society - Brenda Boylan
Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Solicitors - James
Winston and Denis Fitzsimons
The Irish Bankers Federation
Bank of Ireland - Angela Leigh Doyle, Sector Manager, Small Business
The Irish League of Credit Unions

The Committee held a Work Shop in Limerick on 22 March inviting representatives from LEADER², ICMSA, IFA, Macra na Feirme and Eurexcter School.

The Committee held a further Work Shop in Tullamore on 5 May inviting those who offered submissions as identified in Appendix 2.

The Committee considered and agreed that for the purposes of this Report the term “Women farmers” includes any woman who lives on a farm and/or works on a farm.

² LEADER is an EU rural development initiative, operated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, based on the bottom up concept to provide rural communities with the opportunity to involve themselves in the development of their own areas.

Chapter 1

Statistical Evaluation of Women Farmers

1.1 Introduction

Historically the farming industry is male-orientated and much literature and information on farming, both qualitative and quantitative, reflects this ownership pattern. Virtually all reports on the topic of rural women highlight the inadequacy of the statistical base. The approach was not blind to the sex of the workers involved in farming; rather it ignored the female workers entirely. Data on farm workers in each edition of Agriculture Statistics was presented under the heading “Males Engaged in Farm Work”. However the 1991 Census of Agriculture (COA) began providing information on farm work carried out by women. In addition, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) has been able to combine elements of the Census of Agriculture and the Census of Population databases to give more information on farm households and farm work. Tables prepared by the CSO for the report on Equal Opportunities under the Operational Programme for Agriculture, Rural Development and Forestry carried out by the Analysis and Evaluation Unit of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development are included in this Chapter.

However the Committee notes the inadequacy of the statistical information on women farmers. It recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development should initiate statistical research, not only into the role and position of women on Irish farms, but also into the structure of the family farm generally.

1.2 Women in the Agricultural Work Force

The 1991 COA shows that women make up 30% of the agricultural labour force and carry out an almost proportional amount of the total work (27%). For the purposes of the COA, time spent on farm administrative tasks was included in the definition of farm work. The COA shows that the labour input is usually substantial with almost 40,000 women contributing the maximum measurement (1 Annual Work Unit which represents an 1800 hour working year) to the farm enterprise. The numbers of women active in farming and their measured work is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Annual Work Units Contributed	Number Of Persons In Category	Number of Females In Category	Total Annual Work Unit	Total Annual Work Units by Females	% Of Total Labour Contributed by Females
0-0.24	28,546	10,827	4,282	1,625	38%
0.25-0.49	35,758	14,939	13,303	5,976	42%
0.5-0.74	39,114	17,180	23,424	9,767	44%
0.75-0.99	27,670	12,197	22,903	9,977	44%
1+	181,641	38,174	181,641	38,174	21%
All	312,729	93,317	245,199	65,612	27%

Source: Statistics prepared by the CSO for the report on "Equal Opportunity under the Operational Programme" for Agriculture, Rural Development and Forestry, carried out by the Analysis and Evaluation Unit of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development October 1998

1.3 Marital Status Of Women In Farming

The vast majority of female labour is contributed on farms where the worker's husband is recorded as the holder. Over 16,000 females are recorded as farm holders (i.e. 9.6% of land holdings are owned by women) and almost half of these holders are aged 65 years or more. When combined with the marital status provided for in the 1991 Census of Population, the age profile suggests that in many cases women only gain this holder status in their later years as widows, as illustrated by table 2.

Table 2

	Total	Single	Married	Separated	Widowed
Female Family Farm Operators	16,453	2,622	4,642	265	8924

Source: see Table 1.

1.4 Farm Wives And Other Female Farm Workers

The farm wives represent the largest group of women involved in farming, with 62% of the female labour input contributed by wives on their husband's holdings. This group is the subject of the analysis in this section. Tables 3 and 4 present a farm type distribution and compares the farm work input of the participating farm women with that of their husband.

Table 3 : Participation by wives on their husband's farms

Enterprise type	Holdings	% of male farmers married (A)	% wives participating in farming (B)	% of male farmers with participating wives (AxB)
Tillage	4662	75%	43%	32%
Dairying	39135	80%	79%	63%
Beef	63163	60%	52%	31%
Mixed grazing	27046	67%	60%	40%
Sheep	13522	65%	51%	33%
Crops & stock	3985	76%	66%	50%
Other	1966	94%	49%	47%
All types	153479	68%	62%	42%

Source: see Table 1.

Table 4 : Labour input of active wives relative to husband's farm

Enterprise	Husband more input than wife	Husbands input = Wives input	Husband less input than wife
Specialist tillage	61%	31%	8%
Specialist dairying	49%	48%	3%
Specialist beef	51%	34%	15%
Mixed grazing	50%	41%	9%
Specialist Sheep	52%	34%	13%
Mixed crops & live	58%	36%	6%
Other	47%	45%	8%
Total	51%	41%	9%

Source: see table 1.

The data shows that the labour contribution of farm wives is very significant, across a whole variety of enterprise types, enterprise sizes, and regions. According to the 1991 COA, on almost half those farms where the farm wife is active, her labour input is equal or greater than the labour input of her husband. The relative labour input of those wives who are active, relative to their husbands, does not seem to be determined by the type or size of farm: i.e. about half make an equal or greater input on large farms and on small farms, on dairy farms and on sheep farms. However, this refers only to the farm wives who are active on the farm and not to all farm wives and not all farms.

In summary 68% of farms are owned by married farmers and 62% of farm wives are active on the farm. Farm wives participate in the work of 42% of the 151,000 holdings owned by men. Half of these women contribute as much, or more labour, than their husbands to the farm enterprise.

1.5 Joint Approach to the Operation of Family Farms

The CSO Agricultural Labour Input Statistical Bulletin of December 1999 shows:

Number of family run farms:	143,700	
of which male operated:	130,700	91%
of which female operated:	13,000	9%

In 1991 68% of family farm operators were married. Therefore it is assumed that a similar percentage, or over 97,000, of the current operators are married.

The Client Database of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, which includes the registration of all farms with and without cattle, identifies:

Herds registered in male name:	135,980
Herds registered in female name:	18,915
Herds registered in joint ownership:	4,500
Undefined:	22,588

Total:	181,983

Using the CSO figures it is calculated that approximately 123,000 of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development registered clients are married yet only 3% or 4,500 of the client database are registered in joint ownership.

During the course of its work the Committee had access to academic publications and research. The Committee feels that the following data is relevant to highlight the need to encourage a jointly operated management approach to the management of family farms.

There is evidence to suggest that, where husband and wife are joint operators of farming businesses, profitability is enhanced. An analysis of data from 1.9 million farm households in the USA by Perry and Ahearn³ showed that, where women have joint managerial responsibility in the farm, the household had a higher average income. Table 5 indicates that jointly operated farms were more profitable, at \$10,213, as compared to husband only operated farms at \$8,301. The analysis shows that the combination of the husband and wife team proved the most efficient operational arrangement. The jointly operated farms had a

³ Perry, Janet E. and Mary C. Ahearn "Farm Women Blend Farm and Off-Farm Work", Rural Development Perspectives. vol. 9 (3) 24-31 1994

23% higher farm related income than husband only operated farms. This is a major argument for the adoption of a jointly operated management approach that would lead to the greater inclusion of women in the industry.

Table 5

	Joint Operator	Husband Operator	All Households
Total Household Income	37,160	44,599	42,218
Farm Related Income \$	10,213	8,301	8,159

Source: Perry and Ahearn see footnote 3.

1.6 More Women Inheriting Land?

In his thesis “Farm Families In Transition”, T Cunningham B. Agr Sc.⁴ highlights the effect that decreasing family size may have on the patrilineal system of land inheritance in Ireland. With families getting smaller, there will be more all single sex families. If farm families follow the national average then about 20% of all farm families could have an all girl family. This will effect the traditional patrilineal inheritance pattern in Irish farming and will have a major effect on women in agriculture. Table 6 demonstrates the effect.

Table 6 : Smaller families – More Female Farm Inheritors

Families by number of Children, as % of all families 1991	%	% with all female Children
With no children	19	
Families with one child	23	11.5
Families with two children	24	6.0
Families with 3 or more children	34	2.0 (approx.)
Total all female families		19.5

Source: Eurostat Yearbook 1995.

⁴ Terence P Cunningham, B. Agr. Sc.- A “Farm Families in Transition – A Study of Employment Patterns, Gender Issues, Impacting Forces and Some Possible Implications minor thesis for NUI Galway. July 1999.

Chapter 2

Education, Training and Information Technology

2.1 Introduction

During the course of its deliberations under this heading the Committee noted the many reports, such as:

- Agri Food 2010⁵
- Teagasc commissioned ESRI⁶ study of “ *the likely demand for training in Agriculture up to 2010,*”

that have identified the changes facing Irish farming. The Committee considered the issues against the background of:

- the dependency of many farms on outside income which gives rise to a broad range of training needs.
- the need for the agencies providing education and training to integrate and act in partnership.

The Committee notes the recent publication of the Report of the Task Force on Agricultural Education and Training⁷. The recommendations in this Report will assist Teagasc in serving the education and training needs of women farmers.

The Committee notes the recent White Paper on Adult Education⁸ which was published on 2 August. While a thorough examination of the White Paper was not possible the Committee welcomes its recommendations including:

- appointing Community Education facilitators whose role would include developing and encouraging partnership and links with statutory and other providers, liaising on accreditation and certification issues, promoting the development and nurturing of new community based learning groups and helping them to access funding
- improving adult literacy
- exploring innovative approaches to dealing with transport barriers to rural education

⁵ Report of AGRI Food 2010 - commissioned by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. March 2000. Available on web www.agrifood2010.ie

⁶ Economic and Social Research Institute.

⁷ Report of the Task Force on Agricultural Education and Training published by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. July 2000.

⁸ White Paper on Adult Education, Government Publication. August 2000. www.irlgov.ie/educ

However the Committee notes that the majority of women farmers may be ineligible for the:

- training allowance under the proposed Back to Education Initiative
- proposed abolition of fees for part time third level education

recommended in the White Paper.

The Committee recommends that the educational requirements of women farmers be properly represented on the National Adult Learning Council and the Local Adult Education Boards and recognised by the Community Education facilitators as referred to in the White Paper.

The Committee has identified the core issues for access to education for women farmers as:

- Provision of education and training for women in agriculture
- Training Allowances
- Integration of rural education and training
- Accreditation and Certification
- Problems of Access to Education and Training.

2.2 Provision of education and training for women in agriculture

The Committee focused on the following education groupings similar to those identified in Teagasc 2000⁹:

- School children
- School leavers
- Women who are late arrivals to farming through marriage or inheritance, who have no training in agriculture, and other rural women
- Rural women who have become isolated and have not participated in education and training.

2.2.1 School Children

The Committee believes that efforts should be made to develop agricultural awareness among school children and improve the image of farming as a career and way of life. The Committee notes the efforts being made by Agri Aware¹⁰ to promote agricultural awareness among school children and the general public. The Committee recommends funding of a variety of initiatives such as:

- Agri Aware Mobile Farm
- Agri Aware Schools Education Pack

⁹ “Teagasc 2000 – A strategy for Teagasc Services to the Food and Agriculture Industry in Ireland”. Published by Teagasc July 1998.

¹⁰ “Agri Aware” - established by Bord Bia, IFA, Irish Dairy Board, Farmers Journal and FBD Trust to improve the image of agriculture, farming and the food industry.

- Agri Detectives - the Agri Aware transition year programme aimed at developing rural awareness
- Urban-Rural Day – as organised by the Agricultural Science Association in conjunction with Teagasc and the Irish National Teachers Organisation.
- Teagasc should examine the possibility of producing an agricultural interactive computer package, website and video for primary and post primary schools.
- the development of agri awareness modules for after-school clubs funded under the childcare programmes of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The Committee recommends that the Departments of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Education and Science, and Justice, Equality and Law Reform should provide funding for these programmes.

The Department of Education and Science 1998 Leaving Certificate Programme statistics show that:

- 123,956 pupils participated in the Leaving Certificate Programme with only 6,149 (or 4.9%) taking agricultural science
- 63,828 girls participated with only 958 (or 1.5%) taking agricultural science
- 6,149 pupils took agricultural science of which only 958 (or 15.5%) were girls
- 161 girls' only secondary schools exist of which only 7 schools provide agricultural science as a subject option.

The Committee recommends that efforts should be made to increase the numbers of females, and pupils in general, taking agricultural science in the Leaving Certificate.

2.2.2. School Leavers

The Committee notes that while females account for one quarter of the entrants into Teagasc horticulture courses they only account for 4% of entries into Teagasc agriculture training in general. Improving the availability of agricultural science to female Leaving Certificate students would help increase the level of female entry into Teagasc and third level agricultural education and training. However there are still a number of issues for the entry of female school leavers into agricultural training that require addressing including:

- the perceived lack of information in schools about the availability and value of agricultural certificate, diploma and degree courses. Teagasc have made efforts to go into secondary schools however both Teagasc and the career guidance structure should develop the agricultural awareness

package already distributed to second level schools by expanding upon it to include a gender-proofed interactive computer package, website and video as referred to previously

- the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development should investigate, with the Civil Service Commission, methods of broadening the employment value of Teagasc certificate and diploma courses to allow for direct access to technical and administrative posts in the Civil Service
- the Committee considers it imperative that Teagasc continue to address gender balance within its organisation. Teagasc already investigated its organisational culture through the NOW¹¹ programme and they should continue to address gender issues with a view to making Teagasc education and training initiatives more attractive to female school leavers and women farmers in general.

2.2.3 Farm and other rural women

The Committee supports the assertion of the Agri Food 2010 report that total farm income will be vital for the economic viability of family farms. Women farmers must receive the education and training to develop earning potential. In the course of the Committee's deliberations the issues of childcare/elder care and rural transport were paramount concerns not only with regard to access to education and training but for the social inclusion of women in rural Ireland. The Committee believes that resolving the issues of child and elder care and rural transport are fundamental to achieving equality and a sustainable rural economy.

The Committee recommends that the following steps should be taken to afford women farmers access to education and training:

- immediate funding for piloting farm friendly childcare models
- increased funding to provide for mainstreaming of rural transport programmes
- examination of ways in which women farmers can access state subsidised education and training opportunities
- resources must be made available to identify the education and training needs of women farmers as part of an integrated approach to develop and sustain the family farm unit through the new Teagasc Rural Viability Service and the Smallholders Initiative¹² operated by ADM Ltd¹³
- education and training must be available to women farmers locally

¹¹ NOW programme – European Social Fund Employment Initiative “New Opportunities for Women” operated by the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment.

¹² Smallholders Initiative is operated by ADM Ltd and partly funded by the farming organisations to support low-income and smallholders to help them develop their farm and off farm income.

¹³ Area Development Management Ltd established by the Irish Government to support local social and economic development through Area Partnerships and community initiatives.

- scheduling/timing of courses to fit in with the many roles of women farmers.

These issues are dealt with in greater detail in other areas of this Report.

2.3 Training Allowances

During the course of its deliberations the Committee noted a degree of confusion about women farmers ability to access education and training courses with allowances. An allowance could be used for farm relief, childcare, transport, other care needs or any other expenses that women farmers would incur in order to undertake training. There is a perception among women farmers that they have to be on the Live Register in order to access education and training with allowances. The Committee notes that this perception, which is in effect declaring oneself as unemployed in order to access education and training with allowances, is under the current regulatory arrangements well founded.

The Committee notes that FÁS eligibility criteria allow spouses of farmers in receipt of farm assist to access Community Employment Scheme. The Committee is also aware that the issue of women's equal priority access to education and training has been considered in detail by the Partnership 2000 Working Group on Women's Access to Labour Market Opportunities¹⁴. The issue of most concern to the Working Group was the use of the Live Register as a gateway for access to education, training and employment programmes and the problems and anomalies which this has given rise to over the years. The Working Group was of the view that, while it had certain merits in terms of targeting the disadvantaged, the Live Register as a gateway to labour market programmes has significant limitations. The Working Group concluded that the best approach lay not in widening access to the Live Register but in providing alternative direct access routes for women wishing to enter education, training and employment programmes. The Working Group identified priority target groups and made specific recommendations in relation to their access to labour market programmes. Two of these priority groups namely:

- spouses in low income single earner families and
- women returnees to the labour force who have been primarily engaged in domestic and caring duties in the home

appears to give scope for women farmers to access education and training with allowances. The Committee endorses the approach of the Partnership 2000 Working Group, and notes the commitment given in the Programme for Prosperity to "progress without delay" the recommendations of that Working Group. However it may not address the immediate needs of women farmers to

¹⁴ Report of Partnership 2000 Working Group on Women's Access to Labour Market Opportunities published by Department of Social Community and Family Affairs in April 2000.

access education and training with allowances for the purposes of acquiring the skills they need to work in a farm business. The Committee urges that when the government departments concerned are implementing these recommendations recognition must be given to women farmers who require education and training to further enhance their on farm role as well as directing them towards off farm employment.

The Committee notes the recommendations of the Partnership 2000 Working Group on the provision of information and front line information providers. The Committee recommends that information providers to the farming community, such as the new Teagasc Farm Viability Service and the Smallholders Initiative, should access any information on education and training for women produced by the Department of Enterprise and Employment.

The Committee sees a role for the new Teagasc Rural Viability Service and the Smallholders Initiative in providing information to women farmers on any new education and training opportunities that may become available to women farmers following the implementation of the recommendation of the Partnership 2000 Working Group.

Given the current difficulties women farmers encounter in accessing education and training courses with allowances the Committee recommends that Teagasc courses undertaken by women farmers for the purposes of improving on-farm and off-farm employment skills should be subject to an allowance.

2.4 Integration of rural training

The ESRI¹⁵ study identified the need for Teagasc to act in partnership with other education agencies such as:

- FÁS
- CERT
- Vocational Education Committees
- National University of Ireland
- Institutes of Technology
- Tipperary Rural Business and Development Institute
- Educational projects funded under NOW, LEADER, ADM Ltd.

It was highlighted to the Committee that the current lack of an independent integration structure operating in the rural education and training area means that:

¹⁵ A Study of the Likely Demand for Training in Agriculture up to 2010, Kieran A Kennedy and James Williams, ESRI, April 1999.

- user-friendly easily accessed information on courses is not readily available
- duplication of courses exists which is neither cost, resource nor time effective for the training agency and the student
- accreditation of courses in general, and the cross-referencing of courses for continuity and credit purposes is minimal and in certain sectors of education provision non-existent.

The Department of Agriculture Food and Forestry 1993 report on a “Strategy for Rural Development Training” recommended the establishment of a Rural Training Advisory Committee (RUTAC) “to achieve effective co-ordination of training provision”.

While some of the recommendations were implemented, especially with regard to the course development to degree level (e.g. the provision of the Diploma in Rural Development jointly by UCD, UCC, UCG and Maynooth) the Committee notes that the concept of effective integration of rural education and training provision was not fully developed. There is some evidence of the existence of integrated action such as:

- Teagasc Kildalton and Waterford Institute of Technology
- Teagasc Mountbellew and Galway Mayo Institute of Technology
- Gurteen Agricultural College and Athlone Institute of Technology
- Mountbellew Agricultural College and FÁS West Region.

The White Paper on Rural Development states that the RUTAC will be reactivated at national level. The Committee fully endorses that recommendation and emphasises the need for the RUTAC to be gender proofed in its membership and actions. The Committee further recommends the appointment of facilitators to integrate rural education and training at local level. The Committee envisages that these facilitators would bring together all the education and training providers in each county to produce a comprehensive, integrated user friendly education service without restricting existing successful community based initiatives.

The White Paper on Rural Development outlines the Government’s overall “commitment to ensuring support for the maximum number of farm families”. There must be a planned approach to education and training for farm families. The new Teagasc Rural Viability Service, the Smallholders Initiative, and the farm organisations have a role in advising farm families on the appropriate education and training needs required to maintain the economic viability of family farms.

2.5 Accreditation/Certification

A wide range of state and voluntary courses exists for women but some of these courses lack accreditation and quality control. The Committee welcomes the position outlined in the “White Paper on Adult Education” on improving

accreditation and certification for learning in the community and the role of the Community Education Facilitator in liaising on accreditation and certification issues.

The Committee recognises the efforts made by Teagasc to mainstream agricultural education with certification by the National Council for Educational Awards and the National Council for Vocational Awards. The Committee believes it is important for

Teagasc to:

- achieve external certification of all its courses
- increase the progression value of Teagasc certificate and diploma courses for access to other courses, including agricultural science, veterinary science and food science degree courses.

2.6 Problems of Access to Education and Training

The Committee identified the following issues regarding access to education and training for farm and rural women:

- Encouragement
- Information
- Care Issues
- Transport.

2.6.1 Encouragement

In the course of its consultative process the Committee met with a wide range of interest groups that highlighted the need for farm and rural women to be encouraged to take the first step towards education and training in a relaxed and local setting. Under the NOW programme many groups operating in a rural setting have recognised the need for a phased approach to education and training for farm and rural women and that the education and training needs of women differ greatly dependent on factors such as age, previous educational experiences, and expectations.

These groups instanced the reasons why farm and rural women should undertake courses, e.g.:

- confidence building and self esteem
- social contact and increased access to their wider community
- increased awareness of current local and farming issues
- increased earning potential.

The Committee is aware that there are agricultural discussions groups involving women farmers, including those operated by Teagasc and the farm organisations, providing information and encouragement for their members. These groups should be expanded upon, networked and have access to a co-ordinator as outlined in Chapter 4. There are also many local community organisations such as Irish Country Women’s Association (ICA), Muintir na Tire, Area Partnerships and Community Groups funded by ADM Ltd, and LEADER groups providing women with encouragement, information, education and training. The Committee recommends that funding of these organisations continue and that women be encouraged to use these organisations to gain the confidence to participate in education and training. The Committee also recommends that mainstream education and training providers ensure that courses aimed at women farmers include confidence building modules such as those developed by the Eurexter School in the University of Limerick for Ballyhoura Development Ltd and those included in FÁS training programmes.

The Committee notes the degree to which the LEADER, the EU rural development initiative, operated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, based on the bottom up concept has incorporated women into the decision making in rural communities. The Committee notes that the EU guidelines for LEADER + “concerned about equal opportunities and convinced that women and young people represent a key to the development of rural areas, would like support to be given as a priority to strategies which seek to enhance the job opportunities and/or activities for these target groups.” Given these guidelines the Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development ensure that women’s groups operating in rural communities are fully informed of the opportunities available to them under LEADER +.

2.6.2 Information

The Committee recommends that every channel possible be used to inform farm and rural women of the education and training opportunities available to them. The Committee recommends that:

- given the commitment in the White Paper on Rural Development¹⁶ to the provision of a comprehensive directory of state services, this directory should include detailed information on the state educational and training opportunities available
- the newly established County Development Boards should examine the feasibility of producing a county catalogue of the wide variety of courses

¹⁶ White Paper on Rural Development: Published by Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development 17th August 1999.

available and this catalogue should be made freely available from local libraries, post offices, etc.

2.6.3 Care Issues

The availability of rural childcare and eldercare are essential for access by women to education and training. The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness¹⁷ gives a commitment to “the development of accessible affordable quality childcare” and government spending on childcare is outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP)¹⁸. This issue is dealt with in more detail in Chapter (4).

2.6.4 Transport

The Committee has serious concerns over the lack of progress in resolving the issue of local rural transport provision and expands on this in Chapter 4. The Committee feels that, given the lack of rural transport, the local delivery of training is imperative to improving female uptake. The Committee urges that all local facilities such as schools, community, and recreational facilities should be utilised for the provision of local appropriately timed education and training. Teagasc are developing their IT resources with a view to having computer facilities attached to the various Teagasc offices and the Committee recommends that Teagasc investigate the feasibility of a mobile computer training facility.

2.7 Information Technology

The Information Society Commission, established under the aegis of the Department of the Taoiseach to oversee the strategy for the creation of an Information Society in Ireland, states:

“late adopters (to information technology) are concentrated among females, older people, manual workers, housewives and the farming community” and

this group is “least likely to have access to new technologies” and

“ access along with essential support and training must be provided for these groups to prevent the development of a two tier Information Society and a further marginalisation of the already disadvantaged groups.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Programme for Prosperity and Fairness published by Department of an Taoiseach November 1997.

¹⁸ National Development Plan published by the Department of Finance November 1999.

¹⁹ Early and Late Adoptors of New Technology – 1999 Research into General Public Attitudes towards Information and Communications Technology. Published by the Information Society Commission February 2000.

The finding of the Information Society Commission is a major concern for the Committee and confirms its view that women farmers are in danger of being excluded from the Information Society.

The Committee believes that information technology for women farmers is vital as a method of:

- progressing social inclusion
- providing information
- accessing education, training and life long learning
- developing the family farm business
- creating on-farm and off-farm employment for women farmers.

The Committee has seen a number of specific employment opportunities for farm and rural women with information technology skills such as:

- multi-national IT firms (e.g. Dell and Intel).
- teleworking in and outside home
- rural administration e.g. local veterinary practitioners office
- the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development have tendered out IT services e.g.
 - cattle tagging to Mullinahone Co Op.
 - cattle identification and farm to farm movement notification system to South Western Co Op.

In this connection the Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development should gender and rural proof all service tenders.

The Committee fully endorses all the Information Society Commission's recommendations on "Building a Capacity for Change²⁰ – Life-long Learning in the Information Society" and its recommendation that Government should give consideration to financial and other incentives for enabling marginalised sections of society to afford new technology. The Committee recommends that specific IT grant aid be given to farm families. This grant aid should support the cost of:

- guidance on the most cost effective and appropriate IT packages for their farming needs
- capital investment
- ongoing IT education and training for users
- continuing support services for users.

²⁰ "Building a Capacity for Change – Life-long Learning in the Information Society. July 1999. Available on the Information Society Web. at www.infosocomm.ie.

Among the conditions that would apply to the grant aid would be the completion of an appropriate training course and subsequent follow up training course for members of the farm family unit. The Committee notes that the report on Equal Opportunities in the OPARDF also recommended IT grant aid for farms as an equality initiative. The Committee recommends that a pilot project of this nature be undertaken by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Teagasc and an agency such as the National Farm IT Centre.

The Committee recommends that the 4000 primary and post primary schools be used as accessible sites for the delivery of localised IT training.

The Committee also endorses the Information Society's recommendations on the use of Government offices as IT facilities centres for the local community. The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development use its local office network for this purpose.

The Committee further recommends that, in developing its information technology facilities, Teagasc should:

- take account of, and use, any local available suitable facilities
- make available its IT facilities to the farming community
- investigate the feasibility of providing mobile IT facilities for ease of access for women farmers to IT education and training.

Chapter 3

Representation

3.1 Introduction

Rural development is an increasingly important element in Irish social policy. Rural development incorporates an all-encompassing view of rural society and its pivotal role in the social and economic well-being of the country as a whole. It has particular relevance in the light of the increasing urbanisation of Irish society and the tendency for economic development to be concentrated in cities, towns and major transport hubs. The Committee believes that gender balance in the decision making processes in rural Ireland is imperative not only for the women involved but also to ensure that the broader social perspective of rural development is fully realised.

The Committee looked at the role and representation levels of women in the state, voluntary, commercial and corporate sectors of Irish life. Its aim was to investigate the level of participation of women in decision making in agriculture, barriers to that participation and ways to improve their participation in the decision making process.

3.2 Participation levels of women in organisations

The following is the current position as regards the representation of women at various levels in various organisations.

Type	Total	No of Females	%
DAFRD ²¹			
Admin grades	31	4	13
Vet grades	80	3	3.75
Inspectoriate	76	4	5
TDs	166	22	13.25
MEPs	15	5	33
COUNCILLORS	1627	266	16
COUNTY/CITY DEV BOARDS ²²	805	159	18.7
IFA COUNCIL	72	3	4
ICMSA COUNCIL	63	3	5
MACRA COUNCIL	36	13	36
LEADER BOARD	700	174	25

as of 16 August 2000.

²¹ Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Principal Officer grade +.

²² On the basis of 29 of the 34 Boards it should be noted that Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, Galway City, Limerick City, Limerick County, Longford, Roscommon and South Dublin have over 25% female representation. However Boards such as Mayo, Waterford City, Waterford County and Westmeath, fall below 105 female representation.

The Committee notes the current Government commitment to achieving a 40%/60% gender balance on State boards in respect of their nominees. Currently 29% of nominees to State boards from the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development are women and women chair 13% of these boards. The Committee believes that the development of a Network for Women in Agriculture, as outlined in Chapter 4, will further assist in achieving gender balance on State boards.

The Committee felt that the process of local government reform, which is currently under way, offers a number of opportunities for women at local level to become involved in decision making. The Committee noted that the process of renewal is based on including community and other sectors in policy formulation, through Strategic Policy Committees, established to advise elected Councils, on issues such as childcare, housing, transportation, environment and economic development. County Development Boards have now been established to draw up a social, economic and cultural strategy for their areas. The setting up of community fora at local level is currently underway to feed into this renewal process. Other possibilities at local level for the participation of rural women include Tidy Towns and local Development Associations, etc. While the Committee recognised that many women are involved at local level in such initiatives, it believes that women involved in agriculture in particular were constrained by time, child and elder care responsibilities and physical isolation from participating in these initiatives.

3.3 **Barriers to female participation in the decision making process**

The second report of the Commission on the Status of Women (1993) and subsequent monitoring reports (1994, 1996, 1999) and the Department of Agriculture Food and Rural Development evaluation of the OPARDF²³ both refer to the lack of female participation in the political processes that surround decision making in national and rural politics.

None of the organisations at which the Committee looked operates institutional barriers to the participation of women. However, during the consultative process, women outlined the main barriers that act against female participation in the decision making processes as the 4Cs referred to by Sr. Maureen Lally²⁴ - Culture, Confidence, Children and Cash.

3.4 **The voluntary sector**

A wide range of voluntary groups active in rural Ireland are helping to develop the participation of women in the decision making process. The activities of Macra na Feirme, the ICA, the National Ploughing Association, IFA Farm Family Committees and a variety of other locally based organisations play a

²³ 'OPARDF' - Operational Programme for Agriculture, Rural Development and Forestry.

²⁴ Rural Women's Participation in Decision Making in Ireland – presented by Sr M Lally at 1996 FAO conference in Armenia.

vital role in allowing women to develop the skills and confidence to participate in decision making processes. It is imperative that these organisations are supported and funded to provide leadership skills to rural women to enable them to shape the future of rural Ireland.

The Committee was impressed with the gender proofing initiative of Macra na Feirme undertaken with NOW funding. Macra na Feirme recognised the gender bias in Irish agriculture and the need for farm organisations to look at the culture that underlies its organisations. The Macra project involved:

- appointing a gender equality officer
- examining the process of gender proofing the systems and underlying culture of the organisation
- implementing management courses for women in the organisation
- the organisation of a network for women in farming.

The age structure of Macra na Feirme membership makes the process of gender balancing easier. The Committee believes that the Macra na Feirme project will have long term benefits for its organisations and hopes that Macra na Feirme, and the farm organisations such as IFA, ICMSA and ICOS would encourage these women members to continue in an active role in farm organisations.

The Committee feels it is imperative for the farm organisations to give serious consideration to the attitude they take to women farmers. The farm organisations should produce a policy statement on women and the gender proofing of the structures in their organisations. The Committee recommends that the IFA, ICMSA and ICOS, use the Macra na Feirme NOW project model in their own organisations to increase the participation of women.

The Committee notes that many women feel that the discussion group setting, as opposed to the “top table” type meeting, is the most conducive to their participation. However some women farmers have stated that the discussions groups operated by Teagasc and the farm organisations are male only. The Committee recommends that the use of the discussion group type setting as a way of increasing female participation and provide the encouragement they need to take a more active role in the farm organisations.

The Committee recommends that farm organisations:

- ensure that documentation is addressed to all members of the family farm unit
- improve their membership databases to increase information on the number of women who live and or work on farms
- schedule meetings at times suitable for women farmers

- produce policy documents on the promotion of the role of women in their organisations
- implement management training programmes for women in their organisations
- initiate education programmes on gender balance in their organisations.

3.5 Political Organisations

Time did not allow for a proper analysis of the role of women in the political organisations. The Committee feels that the Houses of the Oireachtas, Local Authorities, and other Public Bodies should be at the forefront in providing models of best practice for gender equality in the decision making process.

The Committee's attention was drawn to actions taken in other countries to increase the numbers of females in government such as:

- "Emily's List" used in the USA as a method of co-ordinating funding to support Democratic party women candidates in elections
- UK Labour Party's 1997 actions in using women only shortlists in certain seats

Both of these positive actions were effective in increasing the number of women elected and deserve consideration by the political parties especially as funding of political parties is topical.

Women politicians told the Committee that the low esteem in which they are currently held discourages both males and females running for public office. They felt that the antipathy shown towards politicians means that any initiative to make access to the political arena easier is seen by the public as a cost issue. They mentioned opposition to the development of crèche facilities in Leinster House as such an example.

Women politicians highlighted the cost factor involved in running for public office particularly for a mother who works in the home with no independent income. The political organisations must recognise that childcare costs act against women taking part in electoral politics and should provide for childcare costs in election expenses. On the issue of post natal childcare, the Committee recommends that every effort possible be made to ensure that women in public office can take uninterrupted maternity leave. While accepting that the nature of political life makes this difficult the Committee feel that some efforts should be made by the party organisations to develop a protocol in this regard.

The women politicians also cited the degree to which constituents believe that politicians should be available 24 hours a day as a major difficulty for a politician and his or her family. The Committee, while recognising the difficulties involved, considers it important that politicians themselves develop a workable consensus on the issue.

Women politicians also highlighted the need for State services to continue to improve ways of providing information on and access to public services. The politicians felt that increased information provision could assist in refocusing the nature of their role. The Committee makes specific recommendations on information services in Chapter 4 of this Report.

Chapter 4

Social Inclusion

4.1 Introduction

The Committee notes the definition of social inclusion in the White Paper on Rural Development:

“Social inclusion... embraces not only economic factors such as unemployment, poverty and inadequate incomes but also wider social issues of isolation, powerlessness, and lack of influence and inequalities in terms of access to decision making processes”.

It also states:

“The problems of poverty and social exclusion have a distinct impact on rural women. Economic dependency, isolation, unequal opportunity and participation are compounded by the distance from services and amenities.”

During its consultative process the Committee found that it is not a matter of “distance from services” but that to a large degree such services do not exist for women in rural Ireland. The Committee believes that, unless positive action is taken to afford rural women access to core services, the social exclusion of rural women will not be redressed.

The Committee’s attention has been drawn to the dilemma of different groups of rural women whose circumstances cause and reinforce social exclusion such as:

- Mothers of newborn children who may lack social support at a time when they feel lonely and vulnerable
- Mothers of pre-school children who find themselves tied to the home
- Carers
- Older women who, having handed over the family farm due to spousal retirement, are isolated and unoccupied.

The Committee believes that essential services, which some urban dwellers take for granted, and which are needed to progress the social inclusion of farm and rural women are:

- Childcare
- Eldercare
- Transport
- Information.

During the course of its consultative process the Committee was impressed by the degree to which groups in the voluntary sector have been actively dealing with the difficulties of social exclusion that face women in rural Ireland.

4.2 **Childcare**

The Committee's consultative process showed that the major concern of farm and rural mothers was the lack of childcare facilities in rural Ireland. The Committee is pleased that the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in April 2000 advertised through national, local and provincial newspapers the availability of £250m childcare grants under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme providing for:

- capital and staffing grants to community based, non-profit childcare facilities
- capital grants only to self employed facilities catering for not more than 20 children at any one time.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

- published an information booklet "Childcare Funding in Ireland"²⁵
- is providing briefing sessions on childcare funding and developments throughout the country in response to these inquiries.

The Committee's attention has been drawn to the fact that to date only one application has been received from the agriculture sector. The Government is currently undertaking a review of the grant aid measures available to childcare providers through Government Departments and State Agencies to:

- identify areas in the childcare sector which are not currently supported by grant aid
- develop mechanisms whereby identified gaps in funding can be addressed.

The Committee urges that Community and non-profit making groups in rural communities avail of these opportunities.

The Committee welcomes the requirement for rural proofing of all initiatives under the NDP and considers that the criteria outlined in the Equal Opportunities Childcare programme in relation to disadvantaged areas is welcome.

²⁵ "Childcare Funding in Ireland" published by Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform July 2000.

The County Childcare Committees will develop a county childcare strategy that will be included in the ten years social, cultural and economic strategy to be developed by the County Development Boards. The social partners, including the farming pillar, will be represented on the County Childcare Committees. These Committees must ensure that the models of childcare developed are appropriate to the needs of the farming community. The Committee has in mind models such as:

- farm relief type childcare for farm families
- mother and baby groups aimed at farm women
- the provision of support, such as training and networking, to home-based childcare providers, many of who are operating in rural Ireland.

The Committee recommends that:

- the farm organisations liaise to ensure that the needs of farm families are effectively represented on the County Childcare Committees
- these representatives devise and promote a method of co-ordinating the development of farm-friendly childcare models

4.3 **Elder care**

The lack of day care facilities and respite care for elders in rural Ireland places restrictions on farm families and women farmers in particular. The Committee's attention was also drawn to the needs of elderly farmers, both male and female, as regards security and social inclusion generally. The Committees notes the general commitment of farm families for home care of elders where possible and recognises the contributions being made by:

- the Carers Association
- the Health Boards
- religious communities
- Muintir na Tire

in highlighting and addressing the care and security needs of elderly.

The Committee notes that women farmers have concerns about the means testing of the Carers Allowance. The Department of Social Community and Family Affairs Programme of Expenditure Reviews includes proposals for:

- a new social insurance benefit which would provide benefits out of which care recipients could meet some or all of the costs of their own care
- the introduction of non-means tested "continual care payment" which would involve the introduction of a system for assessing the needs of both carer and the care recipient.

The Committee recommends that these proposals are implemented and that every effort should be made to support home carers.

4.4 Transport

The White Paper on Rural Development states that the “absence of an adequate public transport service in all areas means that transport is a major contributing factor in marginalisation”. The White Paper on Rural Development and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness note the role of ADM Ltd in the development of innovative approaches to rural transport supported by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The Committee notes the recommendations of the report on rural transport commissioned by ADM Ltd.²⁶ The Committee believes that the recommendations in this report provide a basis for tackling the problem of rural transport.

The National Development Plan allocated £3.5m for “capital support for the development of pilot public transport initiatives ... to provide bus services in rural areas” under the lead of the Department of Public Enterprise. The Committee’s opinion is that:

- allocating these funds to “capital support” for “bus services” prohibits the funding of innovative projects and a degree of flexibility must be allowed for funding local rural transport initiatives where bus services are inappropriate.
- while this initial funding is welcomed it is inadequate to support non-profit making community based rural transport initiatives.

The Committee is aware that many agencies have funded community based rural transport initiatives including

- the departments of :
Social, Community and Family Affairs,
Agriculture, Food and Rural Development through LEADER,
Tourism, Sport and Recreation through the Partnerships and ADM Ltd,
Public Enterprise
Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- Health Boards.
- CIE.

²⁶ “Rural Transport – A National Study from a Community Perspective” commissioned by ADM Ltd published July 2000.

The Committee recommends that the various agencies funding rural transport initiatives co-operate fully, under the lead of the Department of Public Enterprise, to ensure that an effective policy on rural transport is developed.

The Committee notes that the White Paper on Rural Development states that “the County Development Boards will carry out an audit of local transport needs and services as a priority”. The Committee believes that:

- the production of these audits is vitally important for the effective use of the funds available under the National Development Plan.
- the County Development Boards must work in tandem with the Department of Public Enterprise and
- the audit process must take on board the needs of rural women for accessible transport.

4.5 Information

The Committee believes that the lack of access to information on the existence and availability of state, community and voluntary services is a major issue for women farmers. The Committee considers the following methods should be utilised in providing information for women farmers:

- Media Channels
- Information Technology
- Information Booklets
- Network for Women Farmers
- Other Channels.

4.5.1 Media Channels

The Committee recognises the importance of newspapers including the farming press, national and local radio and television in providing information for the farming community. The Committee considers that “Ear to the Ground” and the Farmers Journal are good examples of the way the farm media can heighten interest in farming and rural life. The Committee recommends the traditional channels of communication for the farming community ensure that their coverage continues to include more topics aimed specifically at women in agriculture.

4.5.2 Information Technology

The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development’s website be a reference point for women farmers and provide information of farm family interest. The web-site should:

- be accessible locally e.g. library, post office, Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development local offices
- provide information on issues of health, welfare, farm finance, education and other topics impacting on rural life
- provide links to other government/public service web sites of interest to women farmers such as the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Department of Health etc.
- regularly updated in line with the commitment given in the White Paper on Rural Development.

4.5.3 **Information Booklets**

There are already in existence at least two information publications for farmers:

- Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Schemes and Services (free)
- Irish Farmers Handbook.

The Committee notes the commitment given in the White Paper on Rural Development to “publish... every two years a comprehensive directory of state services available to rural communities, particularly disadvantaged target groups”.

The Committee welcomes this commitment and recommends that its usefulness be maximised.

4.5.4 **Network for Women Farmers**

The Committee is aware of examples of women farmers discussion groups throughout the country meeting independently or organised by Teagasc and/or the farm organisations. During its NOW programme, Macra na Feirme organised a series of workshops for women farmers that drew large attendance. The Committee believes that there are many advantages to women farmers discussion groups such as providing:

- confidence building and self esteem
- self-recognition of women as farmers
- social contact and increased access to their wider community
- increased awareness and information on local and farming issues
- experience to participate in decision making in rural Ireland.

The Committee recommends that these discussions groups should be identified and networked so that they can receive the support and funding to enhance the socio, economic and political development of women farmers.

The Committee also believes that a Network of Women Farmers could:

- provide support and information for women farmers discussion groups.
- facilitate the setting up of more women farmers discussion groups.
- act as a consultative body for women farmers with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.
- assist in providing a pool of women farmers who could take an active role in the agricultural decision making process and provide personnel for state boards.
- provide a structure to “monitor progress” on policy initiatives to support women in agriculture as referred to in the Action Programme for the Millennium²⁷.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development are supportive of the Network concept. The Committee notes the success of Macra na Feirme initiatives for women farmers and recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development enter into discussions with Macra na Feirme to broaden this initiative in consultation with other relevant organisations. The Committee considers that the success of a Network for Women Farmers, and the continuation of the consultative process that this Report has begun, can only be effective if the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development designate a co-ordinating function for this process within its own offices. The Committee notes the success of the Rural Women’s Unit in Australia as a model of best practice.

4.5.6. **Other Channels**

The Committee is aware that there are many points of information for women such as notice boards in supermarkets, local shops, schools, churches, post offices. These points of information are important for rural women and should be fully utilised.

²⁷ Action Programme for the Millennium published by Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats July 1997.

Chapter 5

Personal Finance, Economic and other Legal Issues

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 reference is made to the input of farm spouses to the economic viability and day to day running of many family farms. Recognition of that input by way of income, land ownership, herd number details or other methods is limited. During the consultative process this lack of recognition was constantly referred to by women farmers requiring a focus on:

- methods of encouraging farm families to take options that recognise the economic input of all involved in the viability of the holding
- the financial and other benefits of recognising the role of women in the family farm
- methods of developing structures that give recognition to the input of women farmers
- areas of discrimination against women farmers in personal finance, economic and legal matters and
- women farmers' gaining direct access to education and training opportunities with allowances.

The Committee examined:

- Taxation and PRSI
- Joint Ownership of Farms
- Herd Numbers
- Premia, Headage and other Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development schemes.
- Other issues.

5.2 Taxation and PRSI

The Committee carried out an examination of the current tax and PRSI provisions to assess their implications for women farmers. It investigated whether women farmers can use current financial structures to both maximise farm income and reflect their input as women farmers. This is particularly important given that future viability of some farms may be dependent on alternative financial structures or off-farm income.

5.2.1 Current Position

The Committee notes that, while the statistical data is scant, all the indications are that women farmers are usually not separately recognised from their

husbands under the tax and PRSI system. Many women farmers would not normally make tax returns or have accumulated a PRSI record that would establish eligibility for certain social welfare benefits.

The Committee considers that the key financial reasons for recognition of women farmers under the tax and social welfare code are:

- potential tax savings from access to an increased individualised tax free allowance and wider tax bands available to married couples with both spouses recognised in the tax and PRSI system
- the opportunity to establish a PRSI record as a self employed contributor in their own right which would give an entitlement to such social insurance benefits as maternity benefit, old age (contributory) pension and widows and orphans (contributory) pensions.
- direct access to education and training opportunities with allowances.

The general situation is that most male farmers:

- are self employed
- are recognised under both the tax and social welfare codes
- have an RSI number that is used to reference all dealings with both the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

The PRSI record accumulates in the male spouse's name and entitles him to claim the various contributory Class S social insurance benefits as follows:

- Widows or Widower's (Contributory) Pension
- Orphan's (Contributory) Allowance
- Old Age (Contributory) Pension
- Adoptive Benefit
- Bereavement Benefit.

In addition to claiming a benefit in his own right, the male spouse may, subject to the relevant conditions, also claim a Qualifying Adult allowance in respect of his wife or partner and allowances in respect of Dependent Children.

Class S PRSI contributions also gives cover since 1997 for maternity benefit. However the traditional farm business structures outlined above act against women farmers developing a PRSI record and have the effect of excluding women farmers access to social insurance benefits such as maternity benefit, old Age (contributory) pension and the widows and orphans (contributory) pensions.

The Committee believes that the traditional tax and PRSI structures of Irish farms discriminates against women farmers as they cannot access social insurance benefits such as:

- direct access to education and training opportunities with allowances
- maternity benefit
- contributory old age pension.

The Committee recognises that the 2000 Budget created concerns among women farmers in that they are not recognised under the tax and PRSI system and that current income levels on some farms may limit the benefits for many farm families of increased tax bands and allowances.

Under the current taxation system:

- women farmers do not have access to the band of income that a married couple with both spouses working may earn without reaching the top tax rate.
- a strong incentive has been created to bring women, not currently working outside the home, back in to the work force.
- there will be a very significant drop in the percentage of taxpayers that pay tax on their earnings at the top rate of tax.

Women farmers are in the same situation as urban women in the home who are unable to access the individualised tax regime. However the Committee believes that it is more difficult for women farmers to work outside the farm due to:

- lack of access to services such as childcare and rural transport
- the level of work input they have in their family farm
- relative limited access to education, training and employment opportunities.

The Agri Food 2010 report states that

- “farm household viability must be seen in terms of total income available from all sources, rather than simply income from farming activities”
- “consideration must be given to innovative approaches to supporting farm income”.

The Committee recommends that the ADM Ltd Smallholders Initiative and Teagasc’s Rural Viability Advisory Service be adequately funded to provide farm families with comprehensive advice on:

- all the options available to them to protect the viability of the farm and

- how direct income can be maximised through farm management practices and optimum utilisation of all EU and national schemes such as area aid and livestock premia.

The Committee recommends immediate action to ensure that **both** spouses have the option of gaining:

- on-farm income in order to access individualised tax allowances and PRSI entitlements

or

- off-farm employment.

The barriers to women farmers working off-farm, such as rural transport and childcare, are dealt with in Chapter 4 of this report.

5.2.2 Farm Finance Models

The Committee has evaluated the following ways in which women farmers can gain on farm income:

- Partner in the Farming Business
- Employing the Farming Spouse
- Director of an Incorporated Farming Business.

5.2.2.1 Partner in the Farming Business

Through a legal partnership with her husband, a women farmer can establish:

- a right to a share in the profits of the farm
- a PRSI record as a self employed contributor
- access to individualised tax allowances and the increased standard income tax rate band.

Many effective partnerships are operating unrecognised on farms as the legal requirements of a formal partnership, as set out in the Partnership Act of 1890, are not in place. Recently the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development also looked at a partnership approach in Irish farming as a method of dealing with current labour difficulties in the farming sector. The Department of Social, Community, and Family Affairs advised this Committee that the partnership model is currently the most appropriate for allowing women farmers access to the PRSI system as self contributors (see appendix 3). The Committee believes that, while the Partnership model may be the most appropriate for family farms, current legislation is over complex and requires amendment to facilitate farm families.

5.2.2.2 Employing of a Farming Spouse

This is not an option for farm spouses. Firstly, because under the Social Welfare Acts, employment in the service of a husband or wife of the employed person is exempted from PRSI and therefore an independent PRSI record cannot be established.

Secondly, the administrative procedures on:

- payment of a regular wage and
- entering the PAYE system and
- producing documented evidence of regular work

are costly, time consuming and inoperable given the seasonality of farm income.

5.2.2.3 Director of an Incorporated Farming Business

Under current regulations, where the farming trade is incorporated, or transferred to and conducted through a company, both spouses can become proprietary directors of the company. Wages or salaries are drawn from the company with PAYE tax deducted and PRSI contributions made at Class S. The Committee considers that this is not a feasible option for all but the most profitable farming businesses as it is an over complex system.

5.2.2.4 Conclusions

The Committee examined the above models and others (e.g. alternative enterprise initiatives on farm, spouse as a contractor) but considers none of them, in their current form, suitable to the Irish family farm. The Committee feels that the complexity and bureaucracy of the models could be seen as discriminating against women farmers seeking recognition and an income from the farm.

Given the complexity of the issue, the Committee recommends that a Working Group, with legal, financial and technical expertise be established to develop a model that affords women farmers financial recognition for their input into farming and is appropriate to the current farm structures. The Committee recommends that women farmers be actively involved in this Working Group. The Working Group should also include representatives of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, other relevant Departments (such as the Departments of Finance and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs) and the farming social partners.

The Committee recommends that this Working Group also examine the current regulatory provisions on:

- land transfer
- the operation of “herd numbers” and
- agricultural scheme criteria.

to ensure that any bureaucratic anomalies that inhibit joint ownership, or women farmers retaining land ownership, are removed.

5.3 Joint Ownership of Farms

The Central Statistics Office data referred to at the beginning of this report, points to the fact that while some 68% of family farm operators are married only 3% of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development client database is in joint names. The CSO statistics are based on the operator also being the owner of the farm. The traditional structure of farm ownership in Ireland, that of land being passed from father to son, affords no recognition of:

- the wife of the farmer passing on the farm
- the daughters in that family
- the wife (or future spouse) of the incoming farmer.

The Committee considers that the patrilineal system of inheritance in Irish farming and the resultant lack of ownership by women farmers of property, is a strong force that acts against women farmers receiving recognition for their input on farms. In her book “Partnerships in Production”, Patricia O’Hara highlights what is for the Committee a pertinent point when she says, *“only in the event of death of the landowner is the farm wife legally protected in terms of rights to her husbands estate. The arrangement is indeed ironic – not until after his death is a husband required by law to share his property with his wife regardless of her input into the family enterprise”*.

The Committee notes the:

- statutory provisions on the transfer of land e.g. the stamp duty provisions on transfer to married couples and
- land and income based eligibility criteria of Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Schemes

that serve to reinforce the patrilineal transfer of land in Ireland and the non-recognition of women farmers.

The Committee is aware that land mobility and transfer within the family is a sensitive issue. However, women farmers have emphasised that payment for their on-farm labour and shared ownership of the farm business and/or the land are central to the recognition of their role. When the Committee met with the:

- banking sector, they highlighted the difficulties that they are faced with when, due to lack of legal joint ownership, what is in practice the family farm is used to facilitate loans without spousal approval and

- legal sector, they emphasised the benefits of joint ownership of farmland particularly regarding inheritance where in some cases women farmers have no say in who takes over the farm they have worked on all their lives.

5.3.1 Encouraging and Enabling Joint Ownership

The Committee notes that, to date, the issue of restructuring of ownership of land in Ireland has focused on efforts to allow younger well-trained farmers access land e.g. the Scheme of Installation Aid. The Committee recommends that incentives should also be given to encourage the joint ownership of the family farm.

The Committee notes:

- the recommendation of the Agri Food 2010 report on the abolition of stamp duty for young trained farmers and
- the commitment given in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness for 100% stamp duty exemption on the transfer of land and buildings to young trained farmers.

The Committee notes that under current legislation, where the farm is transferred to a blood relative and spouse, stamp duty is payable. The Committee recommends that the Finance Act should be amended so that married couples taking ownership of a family farm should both be exempt of full stamp duty at the point of transfer.

The Committee recommends that, for couples currently farming together without joint ownership, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development should consider providing a grant towards legal costs to family farms that address the issue of joint ownership of the farm.

The Committee notes the recommendations of the Agri Food 2010 report on improving land mobility and transfer especially its proposals on replacing disadvantaged area payments to farmers over 65 with a national retirement scheme. That report advises a Working Group be established to produce a detailed implementation plan for such a scheme which should include, among others, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and the Combat Poverty Agency. The Committee believes that to protect the interests of:

- widows
- spouses of retiring farmers
- spouses of the beneficiaries of the land mobility

women farmers should be represented on this Working Group and recommends that the land mobilised by any such scheme should be transferred into joint spousal ownership where applicable.

5.4 Herd Numbers

The Central Statistics Office data already referred to, shows that while some 68% of family farm operators are married yet only 3% of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development client database is held in joint names.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development operates the eradication Schemes for TB and Brucellosis. The “Herd Number ” is the administrative number, which has no legal or statutory basis, used for the operation of the testing regime. Joint herd numbers are permitted, but as the above figures indicate, are not common. The Committee notes that this number is the basis on which the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development administers programmes including:

- payment of premia and headage, and other Schemes
- movement of animals to mart, farm to farm, slaughter plant and export facility
- delivery of farm gate produce to processing plant.

In practice the Herd Number is central to the financial operation of farms. The Committee believes that the operation of the herd testing and premia payments regimes on the basis of the same numbers causes difficulties for all farmers. The Committee is aware of instances where women farmers believe, rightly or wrongly, that the reasons they have not been permitted by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to maintain a herd number in their own right are related either to their sex or marital status. The Committee is aware of the premia regulatory implications of this issue and that a Protocol exists for split herds. The Committee believes that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development must be pro- active in advising farm families of the option of putting herd numbers in joint names. The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development should:

- actively support and promote joint herd numbers on family farms
- ensure that scheme eligibility criteria for joint herd numbers are applied equally to married couples and siblings
- to ensure that access to herd numbers is not the subject of any unintended discriminatory practices.

5.5 **Premia, Headage, and other Agricultural Schemes**

The Committee's recommendations on premia and headage are based on:

- the need to develop recognition of the women farmers
- the commitment given in the White Paper on Rural Development to “tackle poverty and social exclusion in rural areas”
- the assertion of the Agri Food 2010 report on the need to maintain the family farm unit.

The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development investigate amending the premia and headage regimes so as to refocus them in favour of protecting the viability of the family farm unit. The Committee further recommends that:

- headage payments should be increased for jointly owned family farms subject to off farm income eligibility criteria
- higher rate of grant support for farms in joint ownership (in the same way as young farmers received a higher rate of payment in the Farm Improvement Programme)
- higher cut off thresholds for jointly owned farms where off farm income is an eligibility criterion in schemes.

The Committee noted that

- the achievement of equal opportunities between women and men,
- poverty proofing and
- rural proofing

are objectives of the National Development Plan and apply to spending and policy developments on agriculture and rural development. As an aid to the implementation of the equal opportunities objective, the Government approved Guidelines for Gender Impact Assessment which are to accompany the policy making process. The Committee emphasises the need for gender proofing, rural proofing, and poverty proofing policy proposals and recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development develop the relevant expertise to support officials in complying with these requirements.

5.6 **Other Issues**

The Committee also discussed:

- Financial Sector
- Co-operative Societies.

5.6.1 **Banking Sector**

The ability of the banking sector to finance projects by women farmers is limited by women farmers lack of individual income or collateral confirming the benefits of:

- women farmers to derive an income from the farm
- joint ownership
- joint bank accounts.

The Committee has also noted the degree to which the banking sector supports initiatives such as Bank of Ireland's Farm Woman of the Year and AIB's Family Farm of the Year. The Committee recognises the benefit of these initiatives and urges the banking sector to continue and expand them. The wider agri business sector should consider similar initiatives.

The Committee recognises the degree to which Credit Unions act as lenders for many rural women due to the Credit Unions lending policy, which is particularly appropriate for women farmers who do not have a direct income source.

5.6.2 **Co-operatives**

The Committee notes that 3 types of share ownership are operated by co-operative societies in Ireland:

1. One share in a single name – usually the male spouse
2. Joint shares between spouses – first named shareholder has voting rights – usually the male spouse
3. Share for each member active in the enterprise.

The Committee recommends that the co-operative societies take positive action to implement a share ownership policy that recognises each family member active in the enterprise.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Summary of Recommendations

6.1 Statistical Evaluation of Women Farmers

1. The Committee notes the inadequacy of the statistical information on women farmers. It recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development should initiate statistical research, not only into the role and position of women on Irish farms, but also into the structure of the family farm generally.

6.2 Education, Training and Information Technology

2. The Committee recommends that the educational requirements of women farmers be properly represented on the National Adult Learning Council and the Local Adult Education Boards and are recognised by the Community Education facilitators proposed in the White Paper on Rural Development.
3. The Committee believes that efforts should be made to develop agricultural awareness among school children and improve the image of farming as a career and way of life. The Committee recommends funding of a variety of initiatives such as:
 - Agri Aware Mobile Farm
 - Agri Aware Schools Education Pack
 - Agri Detectives
 - Urban-Rural Day
 - Teagasc should examine the possibility of producing an agricultural interactive computer package, website and video for primary and post primary schools
 - the development of agri awareness modules for after-school clubs funded under the childcare programmes of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The Committee recommends that the Departments of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Education and Science, and Justice, Equality and Law Reform should provide funding for these programmes.

4. The Committee recommends that efforts should be made to increase the numbers of females, and pupils in general, taking agricultural science in the Leaving Certificate. With this in mind the Committee believes there are a number of issues for the entry of female school leavers into agricultural training that require addressing including:

- both Teagasc and the career guidance structure should develop the agricultural awareness package already distributed to second level schools by expanding upon it to include a gender-proofed interactive computer package, website and video
 - the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development should investigate, with the Civil Service Commission, methods of broadening the employment value of Teagasc certificate and diploma courses
 - the Committee considers it imperative that Teagasc continue to address gender balance within its organisation with a view to making Teagasc education and training initiatives more attractive to female school leavers and women farmers in general.
5. The Committee recommends that the following steps should be taken to afford women farmers access to education and training:
- immediate funding for piloting farm friendly childcare models
 - increased funding to provide for mainstreaming of rural transport programmes
 - examination of ways in which women farmers can access state subsidised education and training opportunities
 - resources must be made available to identify the education and training needs of women farmers as part of an integrated approach to develop and sustain the family farm unit through the new Teagasc Rural Viability Service and the Smallholders Initiative
 - education and training must be available to women farmers locally
 - scheduling/timing of courses to fit in with the many roles of women farmers.
6. The Committee endorses the approach of the Partnership 2000 Working Group on Women's Access to the Labour Market. The Committee urges that, when the government departments concerned are implementing these recommendations, recognition must be given to women farmers who require education and training to further enhance their on farm role as well as directing them towards off farm employment.
7. The Committee recommends that information providers to the farming community, such as the new Teagasc Rural Viability Service and the Smallholders Initiative, should access any information on education and training for women produced by the Department of Enterprise and Employment.
8. Given the current difficulties encountered by women farmers in accessing education and training courses with allowances the Committee recommends that Teagasc courses undertaken by women farmers for the purposes of

improving on-farm and off-farm employment skills should be subject to an allowance.

9. The Committee recommends the appointment of facilitators to integrate rural education and training at local level. The Committee envisages that these facilitators would bring together all the education and training providers in each county to produce a comprehensive, integrated user friendly education service without restricting existing successful community based initiatives.
10. The Committee recommends that funding of the many local community organisations providing women with encouragement, information and training continue and that women be encouraged to use these organisations to gain the confidence to participate in education and training.
11. The Committee recommends that mainstream education and training providers ensure that courses aimed at women farmers include confidence-building modules.
12. The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development ensure that women's groups operating in rural communities are fully informed of the opportunities available to them under LEADER +.
13. The Committee recommends that every channel possible be used to inform farm and rural women of the education and training opportunities available to them. The Committee recommends that:
 - given the commitment to the provision of a comprehensive directory of state services in the White Paper on Rural Development, this directory should include detailed information on the state educational and training opportunities available
 - the newly established County Development Boards should examine the feasibility of producing a county catalogue of the wide variety of courses available and this catalogue should be made freely available from local libraries, post offices, etc.
14. The Committee recommends that specific IT grant aid be given to farm families. This grant aid should support the cost of:
 - guidance on the most cost effective and appropriate IT packages for their farming needs
 - capital investment
 - ongoing IT education and training for users
 - continuing support services for users.

The Committee recommends that a pilot project of this nature be undertaken by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Teagasc and an agency such as the National Farm IT Centre.

15. The Committee recommends that the 4000 primary and post primary schools be used as accessible sites for the delivery of localised IT training for women farmers.
16. The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development use its local office network as IT facilities centres for the local community.
17. The Committee recommends that, in developing its information technology facilities, Teagasc should:
 - take account of, and use, any local available suitable facilities
 - make available its IT facilities to the farming community
 - investigate the feasibility of providing mobile IT facilities for ease of access for women farmers to IT education and training.

6.3 Representation

18. The Committee believes the farm organisations should produce a policy statement on women and the gender proofing of the structures in their organisations. The Committee recommends that the IFA, ICMSA and ICOS, use the Macra na Feirme Now project model to increase the participation of women in their organisations
19. The Committee recommends that the farm organisations:
 - use the discussion group type setting as a way of increasing female participation and provide the encouragement they need to take a more active role in the farm organisations
 - ensure that documentation is addressed to all members of the family farm unit
 - improve their membership databases to increase information on the number of women who live and or work on farms
 - schedule meetings at times suitable for women farmers
 - produce policy documents on the promotion of the role of women in their organisations
 - implement management training programmes for women in their organisations
 - initiate education programmes on gender balance in their organisations.

6.4 Social Inclusion

20. The Committee recommends that:
- the farm organisations liaise to ensure that the needs of farm families are effectively represented on the County Childcare Committees
 - these representatives devise and promote a method of co-ordinating the development of farm-friendly childcare models.
21. The Committee notes that women farmers have concerns about the means testing of the Carers Allowance. The Department of Social Community and Family Affairs Programme of Expenditure Reviews includes proposals for:
- a new social insurance benefit which would provide benefits out of which care recipients could meet some or all of the costs of their own care
 - the introduction of a non-means tested “continual care payment” which would involve the introduction of a system for assessing the needs of both carer and the care recipient.

The Committee recommends that these proposals are implemented and that every effort should be made to support home carers.

22. The Committee recommends that the various agencies funding rural transport initiatives co-operate fully, under the lead of the Department of Public Enterprise, to ensure that an effective policy on rural transport is developed.

The Committee believes that:

- the production of audits of local transport needs by the County Development Boards is vitally important for the effective use of the funds available under the National Development Plan
 - the County Development Boards must work in tandem with the Department of Public Enterprise and
 - the audit process must take on board the needs of rural women for accessible transport.
23. The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development’s website be a reference point for women farmers and provide information on farm family interest. The web-site should be:
- be accessible locally e.g. library, post office, Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development local offices
 - provide information on issues of health, welfare, farm finance, education and other topics impacting on rural life
 - provide links to other government/public service web sites of interest to women farmers such as the Department of Social Community and

Family Affairs, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Department of Health etc.

- regularly updated in line with the commitment given in the White Paper on Rural Development.

24. The Committee recommends that women farmers discussion groups already operating be identified and networked so that they can receive the support and funding to enhance the socio, economic and political development of women farmers.

The Committee believes that a Network of Women Farmers could:

- provide support and information for women farmers discussion groups
- facilitate the setting up of more women farmers discussion groups
- act as a consultative body for women farmers with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
- assist in providing a pool of women farmers who could take an active role in the agriculture decision making process and provide personnel for state boards
- provide a structure to “monitor progress” on policy initiatives to support women in agriculture as referred to in the Action programme for Government.

The Committee notes that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development are supportive of the Network model and recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development enter into discussions with Macra na Feirme to broaden this initiative in consultation with other relevant organisations.

The Committee considers that the success of a Network for Women Farmers, and the continuation of the consultative process that this Report has begun, can only be effective if the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development designate a co-ordinating function for this process within its own offices.

6.5 Personal Finance, Economic And Other Legal Issues

25. The Committee recommends that the ADM Ltd Smallholders Initiative and Teagasc’s Rural Viability Service be adequately funded to provide farm families with comprehensive advice on:

- all the options available to them to protect the viability of the farm and

- how direct income can be maximised through farm management practices and optimum utilisation of all EU and national schemes such as area aid and livestock premia.
26. The Committee urges immediate action to ensure that *both* spouses have the option of gaining:
- on-farm income in order to access individualised tax allowances and PRSI entitlements
- or
- off-farm employment.
27. The Committee examined various farm business models but considers none of them, in their current form, suitable to the Irish family farm. Given the complexity of the issue, the Committee recommends that a Working Group, with legal, financial and technical expertise be established to develop a model that affords women farmers financial recognition for their input into farming and is appropriate to the current farm structures.
28. The Committee recommends that this Working Group also examine the current regulatory provisions on:
- land transfer
 - the operation of “herd numbers” and
 - agricultural scheme criteria.
- to ensure that any bureaucratic anomalies that inhibit joint ownership or women farmers retaining land ownership, are removed.
29. The Committee recommends that incentives should be given to encourage the joint ownership of the family farm and recommends that the Finance Act should be amended so that married couples taking ownership of a family farm should both be exempt of full stamp duty at the point of transfer.
30. The Committee recommends that, for couples currently farming together without joint ownership, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development should consider providing a grant towards legal costs to family farms that address the issue of joint ownership of the farm.
31. The Committee believes that to protect the interests of:
- widows
 - spouses of retiring farmers
 - spouses of the beneficiaries of the land mobility

women farmers should be represented on the Working Group, whose establishment is recommended in the report of Agri Food 2000 to produce a detailed implementation plan for items such as replacing disadvantaged area payments to farmers over 65 with a national retirement scheme. The Committee recommends that the land mobilised by any such scheme should be transferred into joint spousal ownership where applicable.

32. The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development investigate amending the premia and headage regimes so as to refocus them in favour of protecting the viability of the family farm unit.
33. The Committee recommends that:
 - headage payments should be increased for jointly owned family farms subject to off farm income eligibility criteria
 - higher rate of grant support for farms in joint ownership (in the same way as young farmers received a higher rate of payment in the Farm Improvement Programme)
 - higher cut off thresholds for jointly owned farms where off farm income is an eligibility criterion in schemes.
34. The Committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development should:
 - actively support and promote joint herd numbers on family farms
 - to ensure that access to herd numbers is not the subject of any unintended discriminatory practices.
35. The Committee emphasises the need for gender proofing, rural proofing, and poverty proofing policy proposals and recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development develop the relevant expertise to support officials in complying with these requirements.
36. The Committee recommends that the co-operative societies take positive action to implement a share ownership policy that recognises each family member active in the enterprise.

APPENDIX 1
Membership of the Advisory Committee on the Role of Women in
Agriculture

ANN MC GUINNESS	Chairperson. County Manager, Westmeath County Council
FR HARRY BOHAN*	Rural Resource Development Ltd.
MARION COLLINS	Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
KATHLEEN CONNOLLY	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
EVA COYLE	Irish Country Women's Association
NOREEN CUNNINGHAM	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
BRIAN FLYNN	Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs
MARY GORMAN**	Irish Farm Family Award Winner 1999
ANNE MC GOVERN	FÁS
MARIA MOYNIHAN	Macra na Feirme
GERALDINE MC CARTER	National Women's Council of Ireland
ANNA MAY MC HUGH	National Ploughing Association
BETTY MURPHY	Irish Farmer Association
FRANK O'DONNELL	Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Dublin
LORETTO O'DRISCOLL	TEAGASC
JIM QUIGLEY	Muintir na Tire
DR NIAMH ROCHE	Consumer Association of Ireland.
COLLETTE FLYNN SCANLON	Dairy Farmer

* Fr. Harry Bohan resigned from the Committee 7/2/2000

** Mary O'Gorman resigned from the Committee 26/4/2000

Secretariat

ANNE MARIE KILKENNY	Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development – Secretary to the Committee
GERALDINE MC GOVERN	Department of Agriculture , Food and Rural Development – Secretariat
LARRY O’LOUGHLIN	TEAGASC – Committee’s Technical Advisor

The Advisory Committee on the Role of Women in Agriculture was divided into the following sub-committees:

Education, Training and Information Technology

Ann McGuinness
Anne McGovern
Loretto O’Driscoll
Maria Moynihan

Representation

Geraldine McCarter
Colette Flynn Scanlon
Eva Coyle
Jim Quigley
Noreen Cunningham

Social Inclusion

Betty Murphy
Frank O’Donnell
Brian Flynn

Both Mary Gorman and Harry Bohan were on this sub-Committee prior to their resignation.

Personal Finance, Economic and Other Legal Issues

Anna May McHugh
Dr Niamh Roche
Betty Murphy
Kathleen Connolly
Marion Collins

* The secretariat wish to acknowledge the assistance received from a large number of individuals and in particular Jim Devlin of IFA.

APPENDIX 2
Submissions Received By Advisory Committee on The Role Of
Women In Agriculture

Bank Of Ireland - Angela Leigh Doyle, Sector Manager, Business Banking

Bantry Integrated Development Group, Bantry, Co. Cork

Carlow Farm Families - Ina Doyle

Community Women's Education Initiatives, North Mall, Cork

Cork Central IFA Farm Family Committee – Noirin Kelleher

Cork West IFA Farm Family – Sheila O'Donovan

ECEAT European Centre for Agro Tourism c/o Triskel Flower Farm Cloonagh Co Sligo
- Margaret Hedge

Focus Group '97 Nth Tipperary – Catherine Mullally, Susan Kennedy

North Tipperary IFA Farm Family – Angela Mc Donnell Berta Armitage

South Tipperary IFA Farm Family – Josie Ryall

Kerry IFA Farm Family Committee

Longford ICA Now Project - Tess Murphy, Elsie Moxham

National Farm Family, Bluebell, Dublin 12. – Betty Murphy

North Tipperary Farming Group - Bridget Hanly

Roscommon Partnership Company Ltd – Patricia Murphy Byrne, Monica O'Malley

Rural Women's Participation in Decision Making in Ireland - Sr. Maureen Lally Teagasc

South Kerry Partnership. – Margaret Casey

South Longford Family Farm Group - Gertie Egan

The National Farm IT Centre / East Clare Telecottage – Mary Ward and Martina Minogue

Tipperary South Riding County Council, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

Wexford IFA Farm Family Committee - Ornagh D'Arcy

APPENDIX 3
“The position of farm women and Social Welfare/PRSI entitlements”

Prepared for the
Advisory Committee on the Role of women in Agriculture
by the
Department of Social Community and Family Affairs

PRSI POSITION OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

(Important: Although the following note focuses on the PRSI position of women in agriculture it is important to note that there are no special provisions under the PRSI system in relation to (a) women or (b) agricultural employment. The rules described below equally apply to other categories of self-employed traders who's spouses / family members work or assist in the business)

1. FARMERS

Most farmers are self-employed sole traders and, as such are insurable as self-employed contributors at the PRSI Class S rate of contribution [provided that they have a "reckonable income" of at least £2,500 per annum]

2. FAMILY EMPLOYMENT ON THE FARM

2.1 Under Paragraph 1 of Part II of the First Schedule to the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act 1993, employment in the service of husband or wife of the employed person is an excepted employment. Therefore, if a farmer's wife is employed by her husband on the farm the employment is not insurable.

2.2 Similar exclusions apply in relation to the employment by a farmer of a "prescribed relative" [i.e. daughter / son, parent, grandparent, step-parent, grandchild, stepchild, brother, sister, half-brother or half-sister] but only if the employment takes place in the common home or on a farm which both the employed person and the employer reside. (Paragraph 3 of PART II of the First Schedule to the SW (Consolidation) Act 1993).

Thus, a farmer's son/brother, daughter or sister who works as an employee on the family farm is excluded from social insurance cover if she resides on the farm - but may be insurable as an employed contributor if she lives elsewhere.

2.3 The spouse or prescribed relative of a self-employed farmer, who assists in the running of the farm (but not as an employee), is also excluded from social insurance cover ifs/he is not a business partner (he/she is an excepted self-employed contributor under Paragraph 1 of PART III of the First Schedule to the SW (Consolidation) Act 1993).

This is the most common situation in which a family member (e.g. spouse, son/daughter or brother/sister etc.) helps out on the farm. Such participation is not insurable unless there is a formal business partnership involved.

2.4 Partnerships: Two or more family members who operate the farm on a formal partnership basis may all be insurable at the PRSI Class S rate of contribution -

provided that each partner has a “reckonable income” of at least £2,500 per annum. A business partnership arrangement may exist between married couples; parent and child(ren); brother(s) and sister(s) etc.

In summary, a farmer’s spouse, son/daughter or brother/sister who also works or assists on the farm is generally not insurable under the PRSI unless the farm enterprise is run on a (formal) business partnership basis.

3. PARTNERSHIPS

A partnership is defined in the Partnership Act of 1980 as “the relationship subsisting between persons carrying on business in common with a view to profit”.

The following are some of the points which would help to indicate whether or not a partnership exists. Documentary evidence is obtained by the Department’s Deciding Officers, where possible:-

- Is there is a written Partnership Agreement. [Note: There is **no** legal **obligation**/requirement to have a written agreement].
- Is the business being carried out in common/jointly and with a view to making a profit?
- Does the business stationary reflect the existence of partnership?
- Does each partner write cheques on the business accounts in his/her own right? Is it a joint account?
- Is it apparent to those doing business with the partnership that one exists, e.g.
- are business accounts/activities in joint names? (Mart; Creamery; Cash & Carry; Brewery; Herd Number etc.)
- Who applies/signs for Agricultural Grants (if relevant)?
- Is the Partnership registered with the Revenue Commissioners
- Is each partner’s share of the profits is treated separately for tax purposes. Is this reflected/shown in business accounts?
- Each partner is liable for the income tax on his/her share of the profits. Have (separate) income tax returns been made each year showing each partner’s share of the profit. [In the case of married couples on joint

income tax assessments only one return may be filled but **both** spouses income must be shown separately].

- Is VAT Registration (where applicable) in joint names?

5. EMPLOYMENT/SELF-EMPLOYMENT OFF FARM

People who are employed or self-employed in activities off the farm pay PRSI Class A or S as appropriate. Class A contributors are covered for all social welfare benefits and pensions. Class S contributors are covered for :

- * Widow's or Widowers (Contributory) Pension
- * Orphan's (Contributory) Allowance
- * Old Age (Contributory) Pension
- * Maternity Benefit
- * Adoptive Benefit

6. VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

A person who is no longer covered by compulsory PRSI and is under age 66 can opt to pay Voluntary PRSI Contributions. Voluntary Contributions give cover only for certain pensions. In general they give cover only for the pensions which you were covered for when you were last working and paying compulsory PRSI Contributions as an employee or a self-employed person.

To become a voluntary contributor you must:

- * have worked and paid PRSI for at least 156 weeks (260 weeks PRSI paid will be required from 6 April 2002, and
- * apply within 12 months after the end of the tax year during which you last paid PRSI or had a PRSI "credit"

The amount of your Voluntary Contribution in any tax year is a percentage of your income up to a fixed limit. If you have no income or your income is low, your Voluntary Contribution is a fixed amount (£215 per annum). The vast majority of Voluntary Contributors pay at the fixed amount.

Social Welfare Entitlement/Women in Agriculture

1. Introduction

There are no special arrangements applicable to women involved in the agricultural area. The Farm Assist scheme which was introduced in 1999 is available, subject to a means test, to all self employed farmers regardless of gender.

2. Pension arrangements for the Self Employed

2.1. Overview:

Irish Social welfare pension payments are of two types:

- (i) contributory (social insurance) pensions which are made on the basis of a PRSI record with entitlement being conditional on satisfying a number of qualifying contribution conditions; or
- (ii) where a person does not qualify for a contributory-based pension they may qualify for a non-contributory (social assistance) pension, subject to satisfying a means test.

3. Old Age (Contributory) Pension

3.1 Who is covered?

This pension is payable from age 66 onwards to an insured person who satisfies the PRSI contribution conditions. Those liable to pay PRSI are employees who earn £30 or more per week and self-employed people with an annual income of £2,500 or over. persons may, subject to certain conditions pay Voluntary PRSI Contributions.

3.2 What about the spouse/partner of a self-employed person/farmer?

The spouse of a farmer who works on the family farm is not insurable as an employee under the Social Welfare Act. Furthermore, the spouse of a farmer who is not a **partner** in the business is excepted for self-employment he/she would have set up a partnership, advise the Revenue Commissioners of the partnership arrangement and request that each partner is assessed for PRSI on their share of the profits from the farm.

It should be noted that where the profits from the farm are divided between the partners, each partner's share would have to be at least £2,500 in order for Class S PRSI to be assessed and recorded.

3.3 What are the Qualifying Conditions?

To qualify for a standard rate Old Age (Contributory) Pension, a person must satisfy three qualifying conditions. These are as follows:

- (i) entry into social insurance before reaching age 56
- (ii) have a minimum of 156 contributions paid, or, if the yearly average (see (iii) below) is between 10 and 19, at least 260 contributions paid.

Note: This requirement will increase to 260 paid contributions from April 2002 and 520 paid contributions from April 2012

- (iii) have a yearly average of at least 10 contributions paid and/or credited from 1953 (when the unified system of social insurance came into effect) or from the date of entry into social insurance, if later.

A reduction in the yearly average requirement from 20 to 10 was introduced in November 1997. Where a person has a yearly average of between 10 and 14 contributions, he/she is entitled to a pension rate at 50% of the standard maximum rate while those with averages of between 15 to 19 receive a pension rate equivalent to 75% of the standard maximum rate.

Note: a person who started paying PRSI as a self-employed person in April 1988 (when PRSI was introduced for the self-employed) may have the yearly average calculated from April 1988 if it is more favourable to him/her.

Note: a person who takes time out of paid employment or self-employment to care for a child up to 12 years of age, or an incapacitated person can have up to 20 years of such activity disregarded in calculating the yearly average of PRSI contributions paid.

3.4 What are the Rates of Payment?

At present, to receive a maximum rate pension (currently £89.00 and increasing to £96.00 from May 2000) a yearly average of 48 contributions paid and/or credited is required.

A reduced rate pension is payable where a person has a yearly average of between 10 and 47 contributions.

3.5 Are there increases for a Qualified Spouse/Partner and/or Children?

Yes. An additional allowance is payable in respect of a dependent spouse/cohabiting partner where his/her income is less than £60 per week (£70 a week from April 2000). The current weekly rate of this Qualified Adult

Allowance is £55.50 (under 66 years of age) and £59.90 (66 and over). From May 2000, these will increase to £60.20 and £64.60 respectively. With effect from April 2000, a reduced Qualified Adult Allowance is payable where the Qualified Adult Allowance has weekly earnings between £60 and £105.

The Government have indicated, at Budget time, that the rate of payment in respect of a Qualified Adult will be increased to 70% of the personal rate over a three year period. This process was commenced in Budget 2000.

A Dependant Child Allowance of £15.29 per week is also payable in respect of each dependant child up to the age of 18 (22 where he/she is in full-time education). This allowance is payable at half rate where the income of the qualified adult or the spouse/partner is in excess of £60 a week (£135 per week from April 2000).

3.6 Review of the Old Age (Contributory) Pension:

During 1999, the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs began a wide-ranging review of the qualifying conditions for this pension. The first phase of this Review is almost completed and the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Mr Dermot Ahern, TD, announced in his Budget speech that he will outline proposals in the forthcoming debate on the Social Welfare Bill 2000.

3.7 Special Pension Arrangements for certain Self-Employed People:

A special Old Age (Contributory) Pension was introduced from April 1999 for self-employed people who were 56 years of age or over on the 6 April 1988, when social insurance was extended to the self-employed. These people failed to qualify for pension under the previous qualifying arrangements.

To qualify for this pension, a person must have been aged 56 or over on or after 6 April 1988 (that is, born on or before 6 April 1932),

and

have a minimum of 260 weeks (5 years) PRSI contributions paid on a compulsory basis since 6 April 1988

3.8 What are the Rates of payment

Payment is made on a weekly basis at 50% of the maximum standard Old Age (Contributory) Pension rate. The personal rate of payment is as follows:

£41.50 from 9 April 1999

£44.50 from 4 June 1999

£48.00 from May 2000

3.9 Are there increases for a Dependant Spouse/Partner and/or Children?

Yes. A Qualified Adult Allowance may be payable in respect of a dependant spouse/partner. This allowance is also payable at 50% of the standard rate as the Dependant Child Allowance.

3.10 If you don't qualify for this pension, will you receive a refund of your PRSI contribution?

A person who was 56 years of age or over when s/he first started paying PRSI as a self-employed person and does not qualify for either an Old Age (Contributory) or (Non-Contributory) Pension, can receive a refund of the pension element (53%) of his/her paid PRSI contributions (with interest). This facility remains in place for anyone who does not qualify under the new pension arrangements.

4. Old Age (Non-Contributory) Pensions:

An Old Age (Non-Contributory) Pension is available to any person, who fails to qualify for a contributory pension due to insufficient contributions, in the same way as it is available to every other citizen, resident in the State and subject to a means-test.

4.1 What are the Items counted as Means?

Any income which a person or their spouse/partner may have or property (excluding the family home) or other assets which could provide an income constitute means - for example: cash income (earnings from employment or self-employment including farming); the value of any property other than the family home or the value of any investments and capital.

4.2 How are means calculated?

At present, by the following formula:

If a person is single or widowed, the first £2,000 is ignored; the next £20,000 is calculated at 7.5% and the balance over £22,000 is calculated at 15%. These limits are doubled in the case of a couple.

Note: Budget 2000 provided for major improvements in the way the capital will now be assessed for all means-tested pensions. From October 2000, the first £10,000 will be disregarded completely, the next £10,000 will be assessed at £1 per £1,000, the subsequent 10,000 at £2 per £1,000 and the balance at £4 per £1,000 thereafter. Again, these limits will be doubled in the case of a couple.

5. Additional Benefits

Free Travel is available to any person, resident in the State who is 66 years of age or over. In addition title to these pensions may also give access to other additional allowances, e.g. Free Electricity/Gas, Free Telephone Rental, Fuel and Living Alone Allowance. From October 2000, the Free Schemes will be available to all people resident in the State who are aged 75 and over, regardless of their income or household circumstances.

6. More information

The Pension Services Office in College Road, Sligo, are happy to assist with any enquiries in relation to a person's entitlement.

The contact numbers for this office are

Old Age Contributory Pension: 071-48351 or 01-7043351

Old Age Non-Contributory Pension: 071-48331 or 01-7043331

7. FARM ASSIST

The Farm Assist Scheme which was introduced in April 1999 is designed to benefit farmers on low income and replaces the Smallholders Assistance Scheme. The scheme is means-tested taking into account both farm income and off-farm income of farmer and spouse. Only 80% of self-employment income (including income from off-farm self employed activities) is taken into account as means. In addition, the first £100 of annual income and £200 of annual income in respect of a third and subsequent child is disregarded from the assessment of means. Farmers are not required to "sign on" to avail of the new scheme.

7.1 Budget/Social Welfare Bill 2000 Provisions

- The annual disregards in respect of children will be increased to £200 in respect of each of the first two children and £300 in respect of a third and subsequent children. 70% of annual income will come into effect from October 2000.
- From October 2000, a new capital assessment method is being extended to the Farm Assist scheme. The new method differs from the previous capital assessment method in that it does not attempt to relate the assessment method to the levels of interest available. Rather it attributes a value rising from the possession of capital.

The maximum levels of capital permitted under the existing and new assessment arrangements which allow for qualification for a maximum and minimum payment are as follows:

	Current Assessment	New Assessment	Increase
Maximum Payment	£2,000	£10,000	£8,000
Minimum Payment (Single)	£37,480	£40,000	£2,520
(Married)	£52,456	£51,000	£-1,456