Farming Connect
Advisory Service

...supporting sustainable business development
...improving economic and environmental performance

[Image of a signpost with arrows pointing to HELP, SUPPORT, SERVICE, ASSISTANCE, GUIDANCE, ADVICE]

www.gov.wales/farmingconnect
## Introducing the Advisory Service

### ...supporting sustainable business development, improving economic and environmental performance

The **Farming Connect Advisory Service** provides subsidised, independent, confidential and bespoke advice to:

- farm businesses
- forestry businesses
- small or medium enterprises (SMEs) in the food sector

**Our aim is to ensure you:**

- benefit from business support and/or technical advice, tailored to your business needs
- reduce costs by increasing efficiency across all areas of your business
- benchmark your performance and work towards progress and growth
- identify areas for improvement and find solutions to problems

The Advisory Service is available on a one-to-one basis. The ‘individual’ advice element is up to 80% funded to a maximum of €1500 (euros) per instance of advice for registered businesses. It is also available to ‘groups’ of individuals wanting to collaborate and address the same or similar topics.

The ‘group’ advice element is 100% funded up to a maximum of €1,500 (euros) per group member. Each member of the group must be registered with Farming Connect.
…with you every step of the way – on the phone, in person, online

This information booklet provides an overview of the Farming Connect Advisory Service and how it could benefit the business, technical, financial and environmental aspects of your business.

It also contains information on eligibility criteria and guidance on the steps you need to take before you can apply.

There are five application routes for the Advisory Service. This booklet will help you select the one most appropriate to your business. You will find a simple step-by-step process for each route on pages 15 to 19.

We hope you will find this guidance helpful but if you need additional information or support with your application, help is available.

• Call our Service Centre on 08456 000 813
• Contact your local Development Officer
• Contact one of the approved Farming Connect advisers
• Visit www.gov.wales/farmingconnect where you will find contacts for the above, more detailed information about the Advisory Service and downloadable guidance which will help you with your application.

How to register

Registration for eligible individuals is a quick and simple process.

➤ Online – visit www.gov.wales/farmingconnect
➤ Over the phone – call our Service Centre on 08456 000 813

You will need to provide:

• Your Customer Reference Number (CRN) and your County Parish Holding (CPH) if applicable.
• An individual email contact for each person involved in the business wanting to access services.

If you need any additional support or advice, contact your local Development Officer – their contact details are on our website.

All those registered under the previous Farming Connect programme i.e. before October 2015, will need to re-register.
Advisory Service eligibility criteria
…reaching more individuals, supporting more businesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of business (confirmed at registration)</th>
<th>Advisory Service – level of support available</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm business</td>
<td>Four instances of advisory support over the duration of the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forestry business</td>
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<td>New entrant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Niche farming/forestry system over 550 standard labour hours per annum</td>
<td>One instance of business planning advice over the duration of the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Niche farming/forestry systems under 550 standard labour hours per annum</td>
<td>Two instances of business planning advice and one instance of technical advice over the duration of the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food business</td>
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Terms and conditions (apply to all the above categories of business)

Under the terms of the Farming Connect Advisory Service each technical category of advice can only be accessed once throughout the programme.

Business Planning (BP) advice (and BP advice for Young Entrants) can be accessed twice with the second instance using figures from a different financial year to the data used in the first business plan.

The group element of the Advisory Service is available to groups of two people in the case of a joint venture and between three and eight people for technical group advice.

All group members will need to name all other individuals within their group when completing their individual Advisory Service application forms.

Business planning and technical categories
…helping you meet your business aims and technical objectives

The following list sets out the categories of business and technical support/advice available through the Advisory Service.

We hope that the brief descriptions enable you to make informed decisions on which category(ies) would most benefit your business, but if you need any further information or guidance, contact your local Development Officer.

BUSINESS CATEGORIES

Farming Connect provides a package of support tailored to your requirements, which will help you make informed decisions on…

- short and longer term business aims
- financial planning
- operational planning
- innovative or more efficient ways of working
- your sales and marketing strategy

You could consider downloading our business plan template to get started or you may want to attend one of our business planning workshops. Visit www.gov.wales/farmingconnect for further information on the support available and for your local Development Officer contact details.
BUSINESS PLANNING (BP)
(also available as group advice for joint ventures)

This category provides comprehensive business planning advice which encompasses the whole business. This category will provide a clear picture of your current business profile, benchmarking where you are now. You will understand your strengths and weaknesses and know what you should realistically aim for in order to remain sustainable, efficient and profitable in the years ahead.

BUSINESS PLANNING FOR NEW ENTRANTS
(BP for New Entrants)

Similar to the advice available under the business planning (BP) category, this category provides comprehensive business planning advice which encompasses the whole enterprise. This category will provide a clear picture of your current business profile, benchmarking where you are now. You will understand your strengths and weaknesses and know what you should realistically aim for in order to remain sustainable, efficient and profitable in the years ahead. This category will also focus on the particular needs and requirements of new entrants to the industry.

TECHNICAL CATEGORIES

LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

To get the best out of your livestock, you need to address a whole range of issues including animal health and welfare. Measuring and recording performances are key to this.

This category will provide you with advice on a range of recognised tools and techniques to help you achieve optimum results from your livestock (incorporating Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs), stocking rates, wintering options, feed planning, housing and many other relevant issues).

GRASSLAND AND CROP MANAGEMENT

Considering your grassland and crop regimes; addressing soil and nutrient management and managing farmyard manure is essential if you are aiming to run a business with top performing results. This category will help you make best use of your resources and address all the above issues, as well as providing you with Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) advice and identifying any potential environmental risks.
WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

The woodland planning and management category will consider all the financial aspects of managing profitable woodlands, and include advice on various available grants, mechanisms for payments for Ecosystem services and a number of issues connected with Woodland Carbon Code schemes.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN COMPLIANCE WITH UK FORESTRY STANDARD

Advice available through this category will ensure that your plans and agreements meet the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard and where appropriate, your appointed adviser will liaise with Natural Resources Wales on your behalf.

HORTICULTURE

If you are considering or already involved with either conventional or organic horticulture, advice within this category will enable you to apply the principles of sustainability and to assess and minimise environmental impacts of crop production including diffused pollution, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, adaptation to climatic changes and biodiversity. Advice will cover crop rotations; pest and disease control; harvesting; varietal issues, matching crops to your soil type and supply/marketing issues.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

To get the most out of organic production you need to be up to speed on all organic standards and Organic Farming Scheme agreements. Advice within this category will ensure you understand the land/cropping/livestock management that you need.

Those new to the sector can receive advice on developing an organic conversion strategy. Both established and new businesses can receive advice on financial implications as well as practical advice on developing a marketing strategy.
AGRI-ENVIRONMENT, ECOSYSTEMS SERVICES AND BIODIVERSITY

The natural resource management category will help you identify, protect and manage habitats including flora and fauna.

You will receive advice on how to protect and enhance both existing and new species on land, in water and in farm buildings.

You will also be able to identify and manage any sites of historical, archaeological or architectural interest, with the focus on the value of biodiversity and protecting the agri-environment.

DIVERSIFICATION AND ADDED VALUE

A diversification enterprise could lead to improved ways of working or an additional income stream.

This category will help assess the feasibility of your proposal, and you will receive advice on aspects including business and financial planning; grant aid options; regulations; legislative processes; marketing research and other elements of the supply and marketing mix.

TIMBER PROCESSING AND ADDED VALUE

This category will provide business support to forestry/farming businesses wanting to process timber either as an additional enterprise or through diversification into processing; contracting; growing and marketing.

It will cover both business and financial planning.

The following categories of advice will also be available shortly:

- Technical - Animal health planning
- Technical - Specialist veterinary advice
- Technical - Energy and water efficiency
- Technical - Renewable energy generation

Food manufacturing Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) meeting the required eligibility criteria can access:

- Business Planning for Food SMEs
- Technical - Renewable energy and processing efficiency (available shortly)
Are you ready to apply?

Before applying for business planning or technical advice available through the Farming Connect Advisory Service, you will need to:

• register with Farming Connect - each individual applying for the Advisory Service will need to have received an email or letter from Farming Connect confirming their registration.

• check your eligibility for the Advisory Service (see Page 6).

• select the application route which applies to you or your group (see Pages 15 to 19).

Selecting your Advisory Service application route

There are five routes to applying for the Advisory Service. Consider all five options, then select the one most relevant to you and follow the simple step-by-step process which applies.

Route 1

I have a Business Plan completed through the previous Farming Connect Programme (2007 – 2013)


2. Your completed Action Plan should be emailed to: farmingconnect@menterabusnes.co.uk

3. You will be notified by us when your Action Plan has been verified.

4. Find out what categories of advice you can apply for through the Advisory Service to help you meet the business objectives set out in your Action Plan. See Pages 7 to 13.

5. Consider which of our approved Advisory Service consultancy companies is best able to provide the expertise and service you require. You will find a list with contact details and specialist areas of work at www.gov.wales/farmingconnect. We would advise you to contact more than one company before you decide. Next to this list you will find a helpful ‘Selecting an Adviser’ guide to help you make the right decision.

6. Complete and submit your online Advisory Service application form.

7. Your local Development Officer can provide ongoing support and guidance as required. They can also help you identify any additional business requirements and signpost you to other Farming Connect services.

8. You must receive your Advisory Service approval email or letter from Farming Connect before you commission your consultant.
Route 2
I have a Business Plan which I arranged privately (i.e. not through Farming Connect) or drafted myself

1. Book a place at one of our fully funded Business Review Surgeries in order to have your Business Plan verified and an Action Plan completed. Contact your local Development Officer for dates and locations near you.

2. Your completed Action Plan should be emailed to: farmingconnect@menterabusnes.co.uk

3. You will be notified by us when your Action Plan has been verified.

4. Find out what categories of advice you can apply for through the Advisory Service to help you meet the business objectives set out in your Action Plan. See Pages 7 to 13.

5. Consider which of our approved Advisory Service consultancy companies is best able to provide the expertise and service you require. You will find a list with contact details and specialist areas of work at www.gov.wales/farmingconnect. We would advise you to contact more than one company before you decide. Next to this list you will find a helpful ‘Selecting an Adviser’ guide to help you make the right decision.

6. Complete and submit your online Advisory Service application form.

7. Your local Development Officer can provide ongoing support and guidance as required. They can also help you identify any additional business requirements and signpost you to other Farming Connect services.

8. You must receive your Advisory Service approval email or letter from Farming Connect before you commission your consultant.

Route 3
I want to produce my own business plan


2. Book a place at one of our fully funded Business Review Surgeries in order to have your Business Plan verified and an Action Plan completed. Contact your local Development Officer for dates and locations near you.

3. Your completed Action Plan should be emailed to: farmingconnect@menterabusnes.co.uk

4. You will be notified by us when your Action Plan has been verified.

5. Find out what categories of advice you can apply for through the Advisory Service to help you meet the business objectives set out in your Action Plan. See Pages 7 to 13.

6. Consider which of our approved Advisory Service consultancy companies is best able to provide the expertise and service you require. You will find a list with contact details and specialist areas of work at www.gov.wales/farmingconnect. We would advise you to contact more than one company before you decide. Next to this list you will find a helpful ‘Selecting an Adviser’ guide to help you make the right decision.

7. Complete and submit your online Advisory Service application form.

8. Your local Development Officer can provide ongoing support and guidance as required. They can also help you identify any additional business requirements and signpost you to other Farming Connect services.

9. You must receive your Advisory Service approval email or letter from Farming Connect before you commission your consultant.
**Route 4**

I need Advisory Service support to produce a business plan

1. Check which category of business planning advice applies to you. See Pages 7 to 13.

2. Consider which of our approved Advisory Service consultancy companies is best able to provide the expertise and service you require. You will find a list with contact details and specialist areas of work at www.gov.wales/farmingconnect. We would advise you to contact more than one company before you decide. Next to this list you will find a helpful ‘Selecting an Adviser’ guide to help you make the right decision.

3. Complete and submit your online Advisory Service application form.

4. Your local Development Officer can provide ongoing support and guidance as required. They can also help you identify any additional business requirements and signpost you to other Farming Connect services.

5. You must receive your Advisory Service approval email or letter from Farming Connect before you commission your consultant.

**Route 5**

A group of individuals want Advisory Service support on the same or similar issues

1. You will need to agree whether your group is applying for business planning advice or technical advice:

   • **Business planning advice** – if applying for business planning advice (only available for joint ventures), once your group has selected the adviser you all wish to work with, each member of your group will be ready to submit an application.

   • **Technical advice** – Having selected the category(ies) of technical advice your group requires (see Pages 7 to 13), each member of your group will need to produce an up to date Action Plan which sets out each individual’s key objectives and proposed actions. They may already have one which will suit the purpose. If not, you can download our Action Plan template from our website.

2. Completed Action Plans should be emailed to: farmingconnect@menterabusnes.co.uk

3. Each group member will be notified by us when their Action Plan has been verified.

4. Consider which of our approved Advisory Service consultancy companies is best able to provide the expertise and service you require. You will find a list with contact details and specialist areas of work at www.gov.wales/farmingconnect. We would advise you to contact more than one company before you decide. Next to this list you will find a helpful ‘Selecting an Adviser’ guide to help you make the right decision.

5. Group members will then each need to complete and submit their respective online Advisory Service application forms.

6. Group members can contact their local Development Officer who will provide ongoing support and guidance as required; help identify any other business requirements and signpost them to other Farming Connect services.

7. Each group member must receive an Advisory Service approval email or letter from Farming Connect before a consultant is commissioned.
How to contact us

Our team of local development officers will be pleased to provide you with advice and guidance on how Farming Connect can benefit you and your business.

They will also provide support on how to access and benefit from the enhanced range of services. The contact details for all development officers are available on our website.

➡️ Web: www.gov.wales/farmingconnect

➡️ Phone: Service Centre - 08456 000 813

➡️ E-mail: farmingconnect@menterabusnes.co.uk

You can also follow us on Twitter/Facebook
Facebook.com/FarmingConnect
@FarmingConnect

The Farming Connect Service Centre is open between the hours of 9am and 5pm from Monday to Friday, excluding all public holidays.

Information hub

You will find detailed information about the complete range of Farming Connect services and can keep up to date with the wide range of events and knowledge transfer opportunities taking place throughout the year at www.gov.wales/farmingconnect