

# Fforwm Merched Mewn Amaeth 2016

Ysbrydoli, ysgogi, galluogi...

## Women in Agriculture Forum 2016

Inspiring, motivating, empowering...



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**Women in Agriculture Forum**  
**29 September 2016**  
**Members' Centre, Royal Welsh Showground**



## Evaluation Report

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## **Background**

This year's Women in Agriculture forum took place in the iconic Members' Centre at the Royal Welsh Showground in Llanelwedd and attracted a capacity audience. It builds on the success and popularity of this annual event, which Farming Connect first arranged in Aberystwyth in 2009, and which last year was arranged in both north and south Wales, at the National Botanic Garden of Wales in Llandeilo and at Portmeirion.

The programme for this year's forum was geared towards supporting the role of women working in farm and forestry businesses and to encourage them to get actively involved in helping modernise the industry by being catalysts for change and progress. This reflects the goals of the Welsh Government's 'Wellbeing for future generations' Act, which is based on working together for a healthier Wales, a resilient Wales and a more equal Wales.

The key aims and objectives of this year's forum were to:

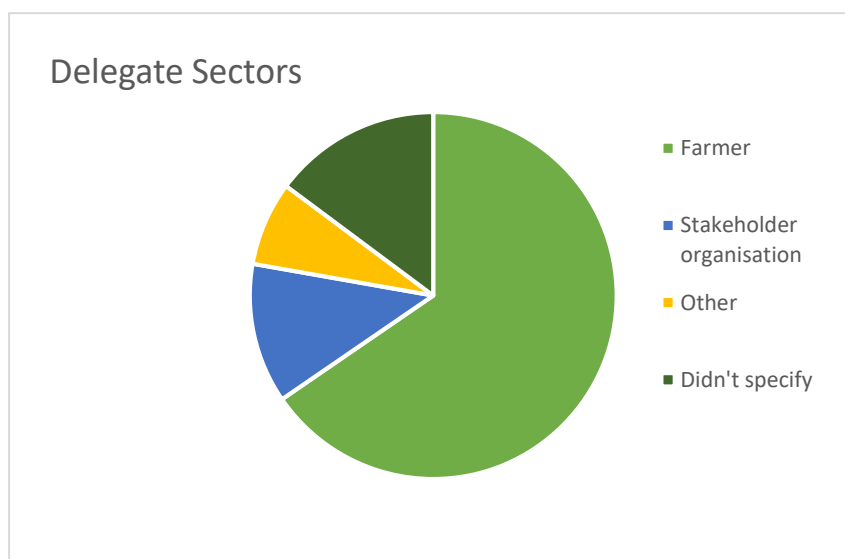
- establish new regional Farming Connect Women in Agriculture Forums
- provide feedback to help influence the development of the Welsh Government's new agricultural policy for Wales post Brexit.
- inform the development of a programme of activity tailored to support women in agriculture and to enable them to fulfil their roles within the industry.
- provide networking opportunities and ongoing support for women in agriculture in order to facilitate change and innovation within the industry and encourage entrepreneurship.

## Attendance

Over 160 registrations represented a capacity audience for the Members' Centre.

All delegates were invited to consider joining the new regional Women in Agriculture Forums which will help influence the Welsh Government's new post-Brexit agricultural policy. A total of 64 delegates completed flyers expressing interest in this, representing a strong start for the recruitment campaign now underway. (See Appendix 2 for detail of their locations)

Delegates at the event represented many different areas and sectors of farming. Evaluation forms showed that 66% of delegates were farmers with a further 12% representing most of the key agricultural stakeholder organisations in Wales. (see chart below).



## **Programme**

### **Welcome**

Rhian Duggan, a past president of the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society (RWAS), welcomed delegates to the event, and gave an interesting talk about her life as a farmer, wife, mother and her various roles over the years with the RWAS.

She also referred to the 'invaluable' one-to-one support that her family had received from Farming Connect when they decided to diversify into poultry production about six years ago and to the important links between the RWAS, Welsh Government and Farming Connect and in particular the Agri Academy Rural Leadership Programme.

Rhian referred also to the importance of business planning within her own family business, linking this to the support provided to Welsh farm and forestry businesses by Farming Connect, and reflected within the RWAS, which as she explained, has a business plan and strategy that ensures the Society identifies and capitalises on any and every opportunity to maximise the return on investment, utilising its many outstanding resources throughout the year.

### **Keynote address - Lesley Griffiths, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs**

Lesley Griffiths, Cabinet Secretary for Environment & Rural Affairs gave the keynote address early in the afternoon, when she applauded 'women in farming' for the very important contribution they make to the family farm and agriculture industry in Wales, referring to them as the often 'unsung heroes'.

The Minister referred to her vision for a modern, professional and profitable agriculture industry, embedding a culture of continuous professional development and improved business focus, saying that the role of women in farming is critical to the realisation of that vision and that they are often the driving force behind business planning and financial aspects of the farm.

The Minister said one of the key outcomes she hoped for following the forum, was that delegates at the event, and indeed women working in the industry throughout Wales, would join the new Women in Agriculture Forums , feedback from which will help influence the Welsh Government's new post-Brexit agricultural policy.

The Minister's aim for the future was that women continue to be catalysts for change, innovation and modernisation and the Minister intends to provide the necessary support to facilitate this. She said that initiatives such as Farming Connect focus heavily on knowledge transfer and skills development and this is essential in order to build greater capacity in Wales. The Minister referred also, to the value of recent stakeholder engagement workshops and other opportunities where she had been able to hear at first hand the issues affecting farmers throughout Wales.

## **Keynote speaker - Alwen Williams, BT Director Wales - 'My leadership story'**

A skilful communicator, Alwen Williams described her personal journey from the time she grew up in North Wales, the only daughter of a family farm and one where her brothers' voices were usually heard above hers, to the time she joined BT in a very junior capacity, and to her role today in the company's top job in Wales.

Sheer determination and hard work, trusting her instincts and the confidence to learn from experience made her stronger and enabled her to get where she is today. Overcoming barriers or obstacles and the need to sometimes change perceptions was a story that resonated with all the delegates.

Some of Alwen's top tips for success for women in agriculture included:

- Make your reasons for change clear and compelling, stay focused and stay on course.
- If you want something, work hard for it
- Create the right mechanisms to facilitate change i.e. the support systems and processes
- Invest in skills and training
- Know what 'good' looks like and surround yourself with role models/early adopters/innovators/mentors
- Patience is a virtue – organisational and culture changes can take years
- Females face more challenges than men, be tenacious – you need to demonstrate strength and conviction
- Women can and should do more. We must be seen as 'leaders' and lose the label of 'women leaders' which is still used too often.

The Q&A which followed included discussions on time management; ensuring that schools do not steer girls away from 'male' jobs; the pitfalls of being a 'pleaser' and undertaking too much; selling 'rural' Wales as a positive place to live and work and the importance of support networks.

## **Interactive networking session**

Led by Pembrokeshire business woman Olwen Thomas, well known for her work with the Farming Connect Agri Academy and a former Agrisgôp leader, this group networking session involved all the delegates and was called '*Inspired, motivated, empowered – finding our voices*'.

They were all asked to consider two questions: "What would make a difference to you – business-wise, personally or professionally?" and "What can you do/contribute to make it happen?"

### Key outcomes/issues discussed

- The importance of support networks / communicating with others
- Succession planning and the value of an intermediary
- Time management
- Staffing issues and sourcing quality, reliable staff
- Finance, sourcing money and long term viability
- Encouraging more females into the industry/to apply to colleges and for training

## **Workshop topics and leads/key outcomes**

### **1. Nerys Llewelyn Jones** – rural solicitor and farmer

*'Developing an agricultural policy for Wales post-Brexit – a woman's perspective'*

#### Key outcomes/issues discussed

- Better information needed on the options available post Brexit
- Need to create a strong Welsh brand
- Need to help young farmers/new entrants into the industry

### **2. Manon Edwards Ahir** – Director of bilingual communications and marketing company

*'Connecting with others'*

#### Key outcomes/issues discussed

- Help your business grow
- Increase your support network
- Raise the profile of the sector
- Segment your audience

### **3. Elaine Rees Jones** – Farming Connect Agrisgôp leader, agricultural adviser, diversification specialist

*'Starting difficult conversations'*

#### Key outcomes/issues discussed

- Succession planning
- Be prepared - have all the facts before you start the conversation/discussion
- Be prepared to keep trying
- An independent mentor can often facilitate open family discussions

## **Conclusion - Next steps**

Chair for the event, television personality and author Bethan Gwanas, invited Eirwen Williams, director of rural programmes with Menter a Busnes, which delivers Farming Connect on behalf of Welsh Government, to bring the event to a close and inform delegates of the 'next steps', to ensure that engagement levels and momentum from the day are maintained.

Farming Connect has now launched a pan-Wales recruitment campaign to set up new regional Women in Agriculture Forums, one for North Wales, one for South West Wales and one for South East Wales. These forums will focus on the role women play in farming businesses, their way of life and the 'Wellbeing for future generations goals' -

1. Healthier Wales
2. Resilient Wales
3. A more equal Wales

The groups will discuss the development of an Agricultural Policy for Wales post Brexit from the woman's perspective and for this purpose they will be encouraged to appoint officials or spokespeople who can represent the groups as necessary. Three meetings, one in each region, have been arranged for November, and Dr Nerys Llewelyn Jones has accepted the invitation to speak at all three events as a follow on from the workshops she led at the Women in Agriculture Forum.

It is anticipated that approximately 15 women will attend each event. Topics for discussion and frequency of meetings will be discussed at the first meeting which will be facilitated by Farming Connect.



## Appendix 1 – Extended notes of workshop discussions / outcomes

<b>Developing an agricultural policy for Wales post Brexit – women’s perspective – Nerys Llewelyn Jones</b>		
<b>Key issues / themes</b>		<b>Summary of main points discussed by the group</b>
1.	Possible route for UK post Brexit: what these mean for agriculture in Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to know what the options are in their entirety before the decision is made</li> <li>• Those present were more concerned about what is going to happen at a Welsh level in terms of replacing direct payments, rather than the trade deal that the UK government negotiates</li> </ul>
2.	Funds available in Wales for Rural Areas – Where would you spend the money? Prioritisation of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business start-up support – keeping people in rural Wales</li> <li>• Support for small businesses and new entrants to ensure employment in rural Wales</li> <li>• Need to make sure that the public realise the connection between and effects direct payments have on the environment, food and communities</li> <li>• Broadband – better connectivity</li> <li>• Renewables</li> <li>• Creating a quality ‘Welsh’ brand for food and tourism</li> </ul>
3.	Support specifically available for agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active farmers – ensure that food producers and land occupants receive the payments</li> <li>• Sustainable intensification</li> <li>• Support for processing and adding value to produce; ensuring a shorter supply chain and creating more local jobs</li> <li>• Advertising internationally – using Australia’s lamb promotion example</li> <li>• Create a strong Welsh brand and produce</li> <li>• Marketing the quality of Welsh produce, not on price</li> <li>• Help for young farmers/new entrants to start farming</li> <li>• Education of the general public</li> <li>• Ensuring less money is spent on administrating rural projects, streamlining the process to allow more money to be spend on delivering impacts</li> </ul>
4.	Possible options to secure a sustainable future for farming in Wales without support from Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generating electricity by using renewable energy sources</li> <li>• Community enterprises</li> <li>• Developing alternative enterprises</li> <li>• Tourism – develop a Wales brand that is recognisable and respected</li> <li>• Eco tourism</li> <li>• Carbon Offsetting – working with RSPB, National Trust, private companies who want to meet their Social and Corporate responsibilities</li> <li>• Carbon storage and woodland creation</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fairer agreements with supermarkets – ensuring that they source and sell local produce</li><li>• Processing and direct selling from the farm</li><li>• Creating a new brand for Welsh lamb and Beef post PGI status</li><li>• Enforce high taxes on imported foodstuff</li><li>• Public sector procurement of local food</li><li>• Council tax exemptions for farmers</li><li>• Controlled movement of people</li><li>• Flood management - Holding water back from flooding</li><li>• Farmers produce and care for three things that are essential for life – food, water and oxygen</li></ul> |
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## Starting difficult conversations - Elaine Rees Jones

Key issues / themes	Summary of main points discussed
<p>1.</p> <p>Why the question is difficult?</p> <p>What issues could there be?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The topic is difficult – succession is one of the most common and most difficult</li> <li>• Cross-generational communication barriers – hard to get dad to talk to son and vice versa</li> <li>• Fear, the need to be brave, anxiety</li> <li>• Making assumptions - assuming the answer is going to be a negative one</li> <li>• Worried about hurting someone’s feelings</li> <li>• Hard to admit to someone that you need help</li> <li>• Financial discussions are difficult</li> <li>• Hearing what others think</li> <li>• Technology / social media – people not used to having conversations anymore</li> <li>• Worried about the other person’s reaction</li> <li>• The business is being run from the family home which makes it more difficult to have business meetings</li> <li>• In-laws are seen as trouble makers “we don’t do things that way in our house”</li> <li>• Personality clashes</li> <li>• Emotions</li> <li>• Timing is an issue – car time can help</li> <li>• Ostrich syndrome – head in the sand</li> </ul>
<p>2.</p> <p>How can we prepare for the conversation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can make time to discuss and create the right setting</li> <li>• Make them aware that you need to have a conversation</li> <li>• Make sure you have all the facts before you begin the conversation – get a plan formulated in your head</li> <li>• Have a chat with yourself in the car</li> <li>• Set an agenda</li> <li>• Think about your desired outcome</li> <li>• Writing down pros and cons, looking at them together and have a conversation</li> <li>• Get a wooden spoon – only whoever holds the spoon can talk</li> <li>• Speak from the heart</li> <li>• Think positive – If you think it’s going to end up a mess, it will.</li> <li>• Be prepared not to find the answers the first time you have a conversation.</li> <li>• Stay sober!</li> <li>• Make sure you’re not going to be interrupted i.e phone ringing</li> <li>• Keep calm and think positive</li> <li>• Be mindful of the other person’s emotions – often it is <b>his</b> home, <b>his</b> parents you’re discussing</li> <li>• Do your best to hear their point of view</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate that they are busy, have different priorities to us - men often suffer from tunnel vision</li> </ul>
3.	What do we need to try and avoid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict</li> <li>• Confrontation</li> <li>• Arguments</li> <li>• Shouting</li> <li>• Negativity</li> <li>• Blame</li> <li>• Going off on a tangent</li> <li>• Not listening</li> </ul>
4.	The alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can bury your head in the sand</li> <li>• Do nothing – which will eventually lead to an explosion!</li> <li>• When? If possible, you can let it blow over, get used to it, accept it and move on</li> <li>• Get someone in – get them to ask the difficult questions.</li> <li>• You will often find that hearing something from someone outside the business can have more impact</li> <li>• Mediator / mentor / referee</li> </ul>

## Connecting with others - Manon Edwards Ahir

Key issues / themes	Summary of main points discussed by the group
1. Wales Media and social media landscape –quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those in attendance were all surprised that the South West Evening Post had a higher circulation than the Western Mail.</li> <li>• Is the quality / strength of broadband available in rural areas suitable to effectively run social media campaigns?</li> <li>• Facebook is a powerful tool, especially amongst women</li> <li>• Creating online communities is an essential marketing tool</li> </ul>
2. Why connect?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping your business grow</li> <li>• Creating new networks and communities can lead to more customers – sharing information is key</li> <li>• Online communities are effective in gaining feedback and product selling</li> <li>• Increase your support network</li> <li>• Raising profile of sector</li> </ul>
3. Who are you connecting with? Who are your audiences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers, Peers, Farmers, Policy Makers, Future Employees, Market Audiences, Media, Young people / Students, Policy makers, Livery people, Visitors, Your community, Family, colleagues, clubs &amp; societies</li> <li>• Segmenting your audience - Behavioural; Demographic; Geographical; Attitudinal</li> <li>• Breaking down to smaller groups is integral in understanding your target market</li> <li>• Community spirit - establishing participation; inspiring new ideas; capitalising on partnerships</li> </ul>
4. How to interact with your audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Websites and blogs effective for shop windows and keeping things up to date / live</li> <li>• Social media channels increasing in popularity – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are the main channels</li> <li>• Other methods include, PR, Events, Newsletters, Publications</li> <li>• Asking clients how they heard about you is an effective indicator to check whether current methods are effective.</li> </ul>
5. Connecting digitally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping your audience - Discovery; Usefulness; Re living experiences</li> <li>• Social Media - Creating content</li> <li>• Importance of images and videos</li> <li>• Finding facts and figures</li> <li>• Opening up networks and new communities</li> <li>• Best way to connect with people who don't have PC/ internet access – face-to-face events, networks, presence at events, publications, local papers</li> <li>• Young people or online guidance website effective in providing a 'how to' on practicalities of Facebook for this who need basic training</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2 – Response to ‘Post Brexit Groups’

The following map shows the geographical spread of the 64 expressions of interest received:



## **Appendix 3 – Feedback**

### **Quotes taken during the events**

#### **Sarah Lewis**

##### **Farmer and former bank manager from Llanrhaedr y Mochnant**

“Today has been very informative and helps put what we do as women working in agriculture into perspective etc.

“It is very pleasing to know that women are being recognised as a core part of the agricultural sector. We have an important role, and should not be seen as merely working on the periphery.

“We don’t always appreciate that we all face the same constraints and challenges. Today has been a wonderful opportunity to network, and help us overcome difficulties together.

“Women are very often the innovators behind diversification schemes. For 23 years I managed a bank. Today, I’ve left the world of finance and I manage a laying hen poultry unit!”

#### **Charlotte Evans**

##### **Farmer’s wife from Devils Bridge**

“Elaine was brilliant, we could all relate to everything she said about starting difficult conversations, especially about succession planning.

“Wives, mothers, sisters, daughters – we are often the best people to tackle this type of awkward issue sensitively.”

#### **Buddug Jones**

##### **Farmer, sales representative and Agrisgôp member from Bala**

“I am a starter farmer with my husband, so I feel that we are the future of our industry. Women don’t get heard enough, and what I’ve learned today is that although we are often seen as key influencers within the family, it is important that we are visible and vocal outside too.

“I feel the new Women’s Forum for Wales will give me a chance to make sure that the voice of the younger generation is heard as the Welsh Government plans its new agriculture strategy post Brexit. I hope this means that I can help ensure all starter businesses are a step nearer where they need to be.”

#### **Helen Howells**

##### **Farmer and entrepreneur from Llanwenog, Ceredigion**

“It’s very important to take time out. Networking with women who all face the same challenges and uncertainties is very important, especially as we head towards a new era post-Brexit.

“I’ve heard so many women today downplay their own achievements and roles. Events like this, specifically for women, help change that attitude of ‘I’m just an ordinary farmer’s wife’. No, we are not ordinary at all! We all have a huge amount to contribute, we just need the opportunities and support to help us.”

**Anwen Hughes**  
**Sheep farmer from Llanarth, Ceredigion**

“Today has encouraged me and given me a more positive outlook. I am pleased to have the opportunity to make sure women’s voices are heard, before the Welsh Government sets out its plans for our industry post-Brexit.”

**Ends**