

Preparing for Brexit top issue for 4000 farmers at roadshow events

Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, said the positive feedback from the 4,000 plus farmers who attended one of Farming Connect's 'Farming for the future' roadshow events showed how important it was to speak to farmers on the ground about the future of their industry.

Lesley Griffiths said:

"There is a lot of uncertainty for agriculture as we transition from the EU and I am keen to support farmers to become as resilient as they can to any changes that are to come. These events have been an excellent way of communicating with the industry and to highlight the support I have made available through Farming Connect and the Farm Business Grant."

Eirwen Williams, director of rural programmes with Menter a Busnes, which delivers Farming Connect on behalf of the Welsh Government, said the regional campaign had a fantastic response, with capacity audiences at each event already resulting in an increased number of enquiries and applications for services.

"The support mechanisms provided by Farming Connect provide the appropriate support which can improve both technical and business performance to help ensure long term financial viability at this critical time."

Attendance at a 'Farming for the Future' event allows farmers access to the technical advice now available through the Advisory Service without the need for a business plan. It also enables Welsh farmers to apply for a Farm Business Grant (FBG) which provides one-off grants of between £3,000 and £12,000. The first window will close on 30 June with another due to open in August. Additional events arranged by Farming Connect will be scheduled this summer to enable more farmers to attend.

Platform speakers at each event included representatives from Welsh Government as well as leading agricultural business and financial experts. The line-up also included a number of farmers who had driven forward their businesses with support from Farming Connect.

Wendy Jenkins, director of rural consultancy CARA, was a speaker at a number of the events.

"These events made it clear that alongside any financial

incentives, every business must take matters into their own hands now to ensure they achieve optimum levels of technical and business performance and make best use of resources in all those areas they can and must control.

“Making small improvements in a number of key performance indicator areas can reap significant rewards longer term, and the whole raft of services provided by Farming Connect can contribute greatly towards this,”

said Ms Jenkins.

The Cabinet Secretary said in the coming months she would continue to urge all farmers in Wales to consider their long term business objectives, to access the services of Farming Connect and to consider applying for a Farming Business Grant to help them achieve these.

“It is essential to ensure your business is prepared and in the best possible position for the future. There has never been a more important time to find out what is available to you and to make best use of all support and guidance.”

Following his attendance at the Farming Connect roadshow event at the Royal Welsh Showground, Lloyd Powell, a young farmer who farms with his family at Glanmiheli, Newtown, said:

“I left the meeting with a greater understanding of what my family can do to prepare our farm business for Brexit. We are already tapping into a number of Farming Connect services which have helped us make better use of our soil and crops. Nutrient management planning proved hugely beneficial and has resulted in considerable financial savings by reducing fertiliser costs and improving the quality of our grassland.”