



IFA

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YOUR VOICE.

IFA Diversity Strategy Towards 2025

OCTOBER 2019



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Foreword

In 2017 when there was only one woman on National Council, IFA's governing body, we established the IFA Diversity Committee with one clear mission - to look at increasing women's involvement in the Association.

While female representation on National Council has increased significantly with eight members who are women, if this level of representation is to be maintained and increased there must be a chain of female leaders who are present at all levels within the structure of the organisation.

This diversity strategy, the first for the Association, provides an opportunity to reaffirm the Association's vision and commitment to represent all farmers, in all sectors of farming. Its aim is to build a platform for change, creating momentum and challenging the status quo to support a more diverse and inclusive Association.

A resilient Association depends on every person in it having the opportunity to contribute fully. Everyone within the farming community has a role to play in making this a reality. We must encourage diversity at every level, every day.

We have learnt through this journey that diversity is broader than the labels of gender, age, background, disability, sexual orientation and religious beliefs; it is a way of thinking and an approach to deliver the best results.

Through diversity we gain the varied perspectives needed to tackle the complex problems facing farm families and come up with innovative solutions to improve the profitability of all enterprises and the livelihoods of farmers.

Through our individual and collective actions, we will build a strong positive culture and deliver a more inclusive Association for all farmers, and an organisation that will inspire and motivate people to get involved and shape the future of farming in Ireland.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Healy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Joe Healy
President



In conversations on equality, diversity and inclusion the 'why is diversity important' question can sometimes be lost. Understanding the 'why' is vital for an organisation to embrace the change necessary to make it a reality.

Research shows that groups with more diverse compositions tend to be more innovative and make better decisions, and that gender diversity helps to encourage information sharing and collaboration.

A continued pipeline of voluntary officers, which are the strength of the Irish Farmers' Association, coming through the organisation to drive its work cannot be underestimated.

Consumers are diverse, their concerns and worries are diverse and they are not relating to the farming community as much as they did in the past. Essentially, we need to attract a face and voice that consumers will relate to.

Statistics say that only 12% of farmers are women, but with approximately 140,000 family farms in this country I argue that this misrepresents the contribution women play in our farming community. The organisation needs to find a way to attract this diverse talent and utilise it.

This is an organisation of its members and I hope that the recommendations that we have put forward can add value, through people, to the organisation into the future.

I want to thank the President, Joe Healy for asking me to Chair this committee. It was a great honour to be asked and I want to thank the committee and everyone who has contributed to this report.

This is just the first step on this journey and I challenge the project team, which will be formed under the new President, to be even bolder.

Amii McKeever
Chair IFA Diversity Committee



**Equality is being invited into the room.
Diversity is getting a seat at the table.
Inclusion is sharing your views and being heard.** ”



Introduction

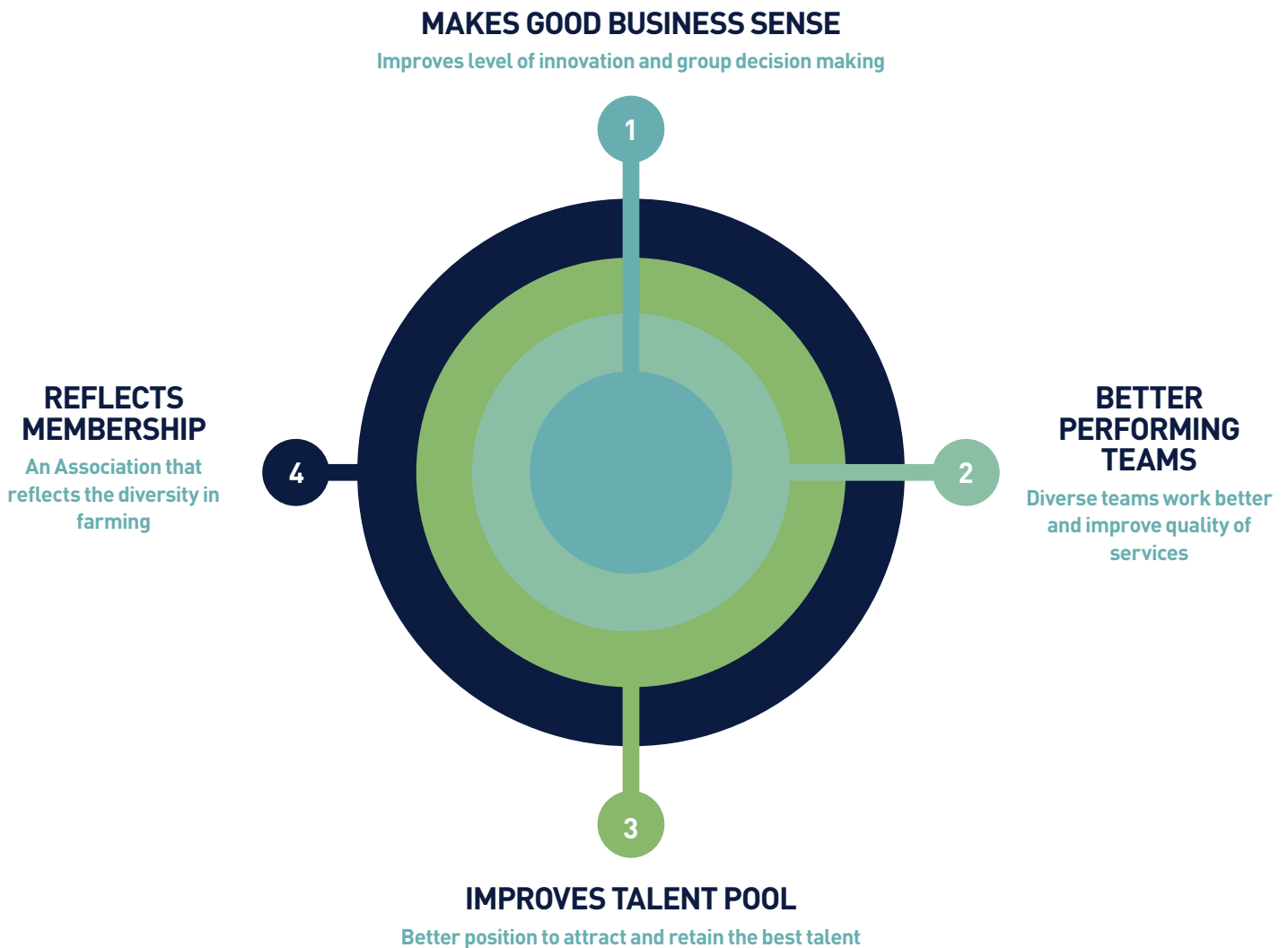
Why diversity matters

The vision of Juan Greene, the first IFA President, was to build a truly independent farming organisation that would bring farmers from all sectors and from all parts of the country together for the first time. This diversity, uniting and attracting all interests and all talents, has been key to the success of the Association and has helped support farmers for almost 70 years.

This vision remains one of the core values of the Association today.

Diversity is not a feel-good move; it makes good business sense. Study after study has shown that diversity leads to more creative and better performing teams delivering more for organisations. As a membership-based organisation it is so important that everyone's voice is heard as this can have a powerful effect on retention of membership by increasing engagement.

This strategy sets out a systematic approach to identify, recruit, better communicate and celebrate diversity, enabling the Association to harness this diverse thinking and better represent the views of all farmers, as well as unlocking better decision-making to drive the future of farming in Ireland.



“ Diversity isn't just about gender,
it's also about diversity of mindset. ”



Terms of Reference

In 2017, IFA National Council approved a proposal to establish a committee to look at measures to enhance the involvement of women in the Association. Members were asked to:

- Examine the current measures designed to increase the involvement of women in the Association.
- Seek submissions from members and the wider community.
- Develop proposals to improve the involvement of women in the Association.

In 2018, IFA President, Joe Healy appointed Amii McKeever, Editor of Irish Country Living, Farmers Journal to Chair the Diversity Committee. The committee was comprised of:

- Anne Baker, North Cork Chair
- Anne Mitchell, Galway Chair
- Caroline Farrell, Farm Family & Social Affairs Chair
- Elizabeth Ormiston, Cavan Chair
- Erica O'Keefe, Tipperary South Chair
- Imelda Walsh, Tipperary North Chair
- Jer Bergin, former IFA Treasurer/Returning Officer
- John Hanley, former Roscommon Chair



“ Diversity: the art of thinking independently together. ”

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Women in farming

Total number of farms 137,500

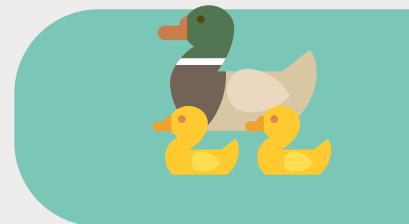
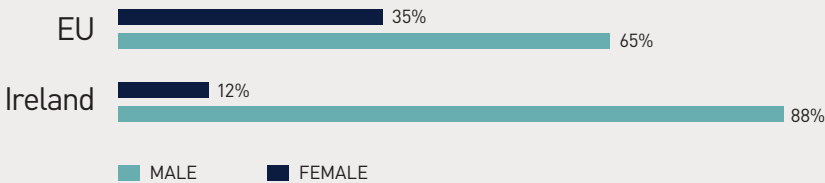
Average farm Size
32.4 hectares

Farm ownership In Ireland

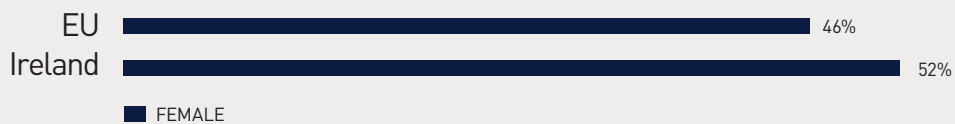


Farm labour

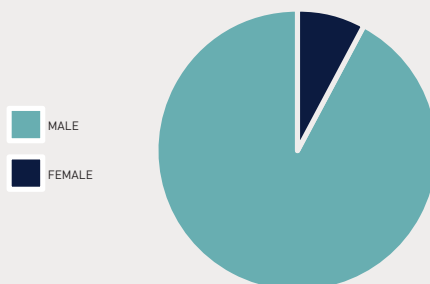
Ireland's farm workforce stands at 269,500 people of which 74,100 are women



Proportion of women working in general workforce



Basic payment



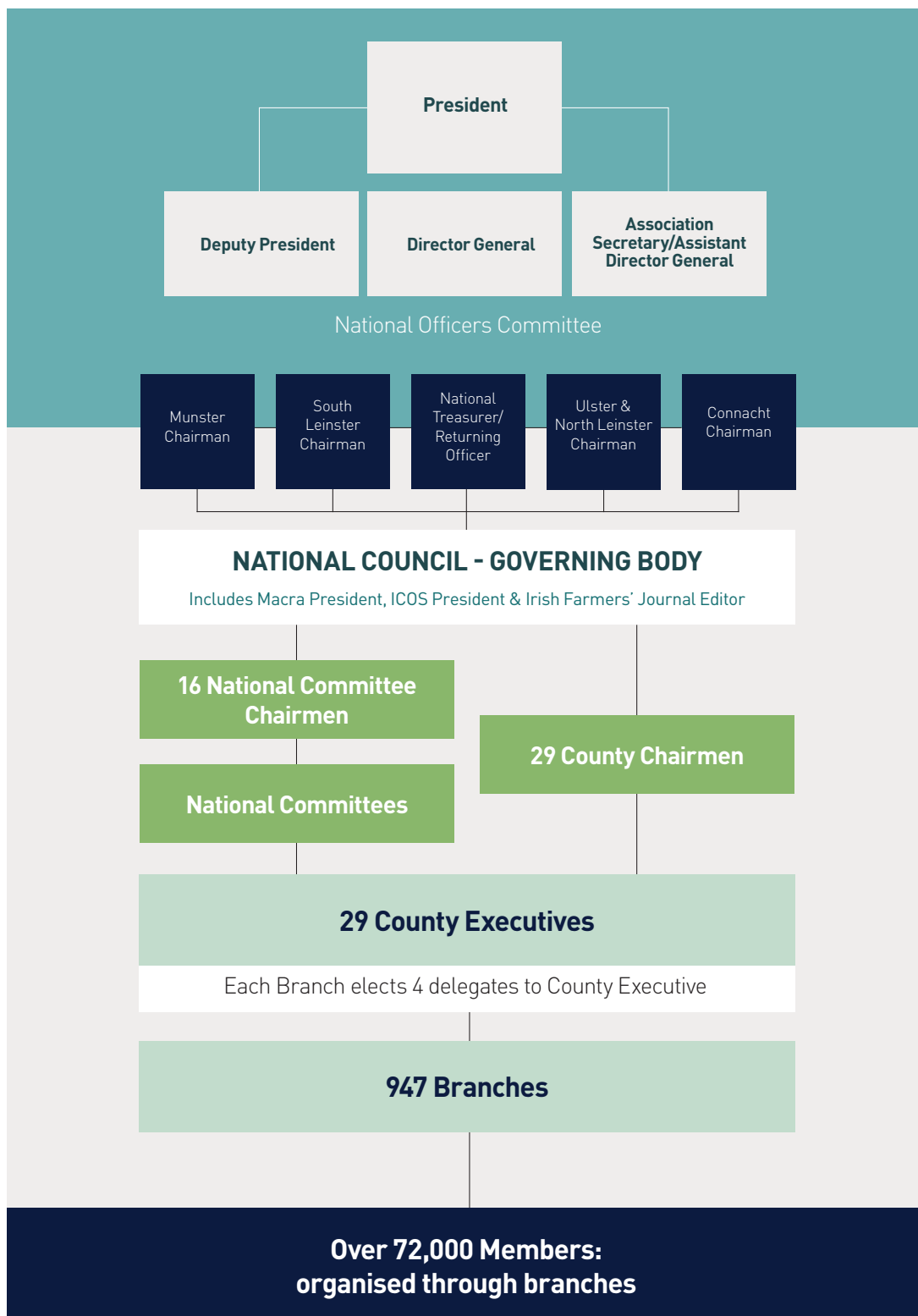
According to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's client database, only 10% of the land in female ownership is eligible land for basic payments or 8% of payments.

“ A diverse mix of voices leads to better discussions, decisions, and outcomes for everyone ”



Women in IFA

IFA is a democratic organisation that is organised into branches, County Executives and National Committees. The 29 County Executives play a central role in the organisation, providing a link between branch members in each county and the National Council.



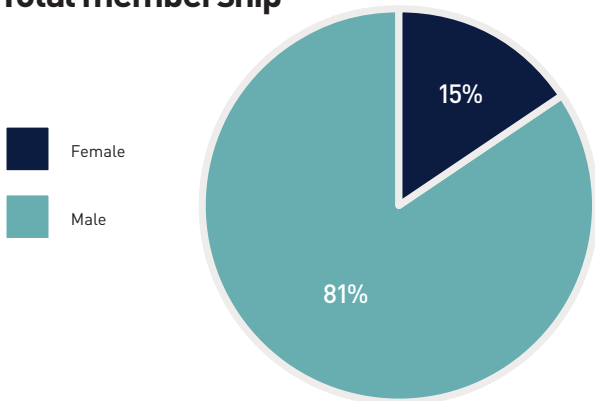
Total membership

The Association offers two types of membership: ordinary and family.

Ordinary: Individuals, companies or partnerships owning, using or managing land or buildings in Ireland for the purposes of deriving an income from agriculture.

Family: Spouses, sons, daughters, nieces or nephews of ordinary members under a) hereof, who derive an income from farming and who do not fully satisfy the criteria for ordinary membership.

Total membership



Approx. 72,000 members

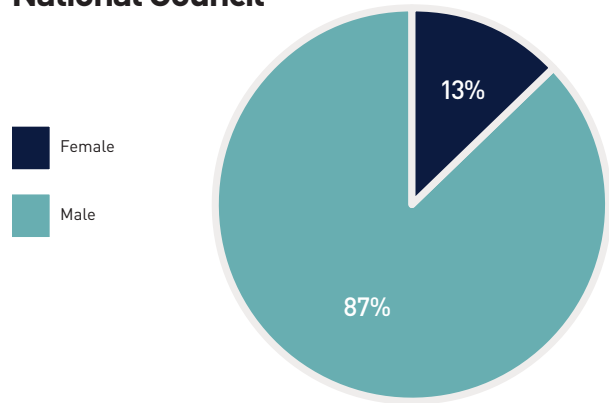
* 4% of members did not define their gender in their membership application.

National Council

The National Council is the national governing body of the IFA, bringing together the County Chairmen, National Committee Chairs and National Officers. The Council has a hands-on involvement in devising IFA strategy and providing the engine for policy and delivery.

National Council is comprised of 56 members: the IFA President, 6 other National Officers, 29 County Chairs plus 2 additional representatives from Kerry and Galway, 16 National Committee Chairmen plus 1 additional Livestock representative, Macra na Feirme President and the IFA Director General. The Editor of the Irish Farmers Journal and the President of ICOS are non-voting observer members.

National Council



National Officers Committee

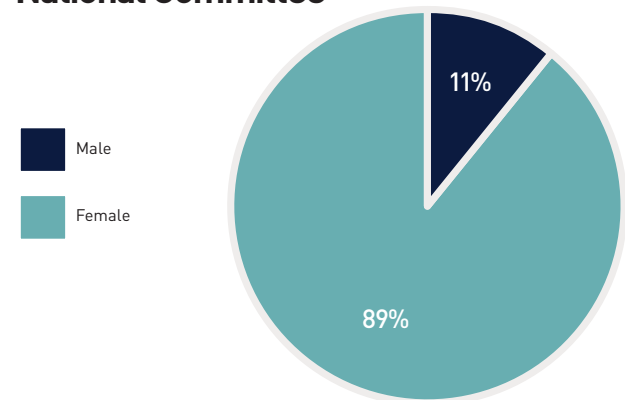
The Regional Chairs sit on the National Officers committee together with the President, Deputy President and National Treasurer/Returning Officer. They are responsible for communicating with County Executives between Council meetings and co-ordinating campaigns at regional level.

There is currently no female representation on the National Officers Committee.

National Committee

There are 16 National Commodity Committees that have the crucial job of formulating policy and strategy to deal with the challenges facing farmers. Each County Executive elects representatives to IFA's National Committees. The National Committee elects a Chairman who represents the Committee at National Council.

National Committee



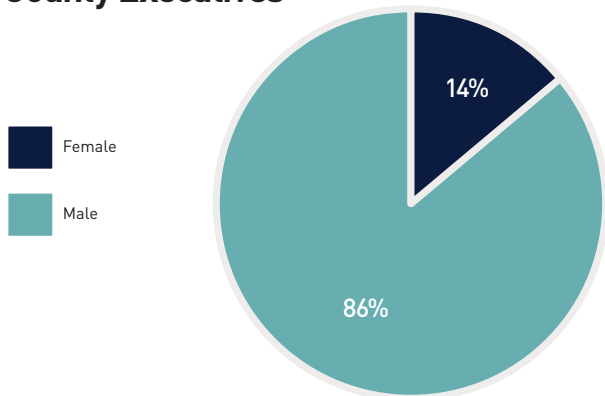
38% or 6 of National Committees have 0% female representation.

If you exclude the Farm Family & Social Affairs committee, which has 100% female representation, then female representation on National Committees drops to 4%.

County Executives

The County Executives play a central role in the organisation, providing a link between national level and branch members on the ground in each county. The function of the County Executive is to canvass the views of members and branches on policy and other issues, and to represent those views within the Association through the various National Committees and at National Council. County representatives at national level also have the important task of reporting back to their counties on IFA activities, national policy decisions and other developments.

County Executives



There are 166 County Officers in the organisation of which:

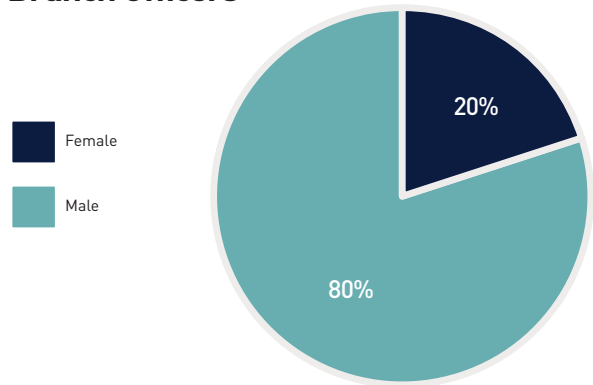
The breakdown of gender representation at county level is as follows:

Position		
	Female	Male
County Chairs	24%	76%
Treasurer	11%	89%
Secretary	29%	71%

Branch Officers

There are 947 branches within the Association, each branch elects 4 delegates who represent the branch at the County Executive. There are approx. 3,500 branch officers, of which:

Branch Officers



The breakdown of gender representation at branch level is as follows:

Position		
	Female	Male
Branch Chairs	4%	96%
Treasurer	8%	91%
Secretary	13%	87%
4th Delegate *	61%	39%

* As a result of the Dowling Report in 2005, new opportunities for women within IFA arose in the creation of the 4th delegate. Each branch delegate was entitled to a 4th delegate, where the 4 delegates included both male or female members. This allowed for a potential for a minimum of 25% of the branch officers to be female.

Your Voice.



“Differences challenge assumptions”



5.

Survey findings

In 2018 IFA undertook a survey to get feedback from people who live and work on farms across Ireland, to build a picture of the possible barriers to involvement and to provide recommendations on how best to support women to get involved in the Association.

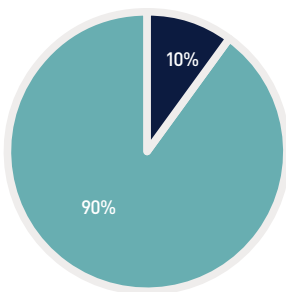
Over **1,000** people responded to the survey

Female **52%**
Male **48%**



57%

of the female respondents were farming full or part-time



Over 90% of all those taking part agreed that more women should be involved in the leadership of farming organisations



53%

of female feedbacks stated there were not enough opportunities for women to get involved.



Barriers to more women getting involved

Lack of time



It was agreed by the committee to disregard time as a barrier as a similar percentage of all respondents highlighted time as a barrier.

Other main barriers



15%

of women said that not being welcomed by existing leaders was a barrier.

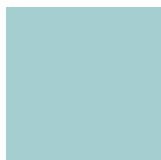
This compared to **6%** of men.



95%

of respondents believe that women play an important role on farms.

“ Diversity of people and thinking paves the way for a brighter future ”



Strategy to deliver diversity

In July 2019 the National Council approved the following recommendations to deliver a more diverse and inclusive organisation that represents all farmers.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Embed diversity into culture of the Association

The IFA leaders must become champions of change so that diversity, including gender diversity, is driven from the top of the Association and permeates all levels of the organisation. To drive this change, it is proposed that:

- A mission, vision and value statement are developed for the organisation as a whole, which reflect the core mission to advance agriculture and improve the living standards of farm families.
- IFA joins the 30% Club, an initiative that commits to better gender balance at all levels and provides a forum for shared learning among business leaders.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Establish a Diversity project team

The project team will work to eliminate the identified barriers that hinder involvement of women and men to the IFA in terms of recruitment, succession, retention and development to deliver a more diverse organisation. They will be responsible for increasing awareness of IFA's diversity strategy and the importance of diversity to the long-term sustainability of the Association.

- The project team will be chaired by a member of the National Officers Committee and will be supported by a staff member.
- A clear Terms of Reference for the Diversity project team will be developed based on the recommendations.
- The project team will work with County Chairs, Regional Executives and all elected officers to identify and develop future voluntary officers and nurture their progression.
- The Chair will be required to report on a quarterly basis to National Council on (i) actions (ii) progress and (iii) targets.

Key delivery objectives of the project team will be:

(i) Develop a "Talent Bank"

In cooperation with the project team, the County Executive is responsible for establishing a "talent bank" of women who are interested in holding positions within the Association and/or who are willing to put themselves forward as candidates for election, when positions become available, as part of a succession programme at the County Executive.

These women should be offered mentoring, shadowing opportunities to attend National Committee meetings and Future Leaders' training so they are equipped with the skills and confidence to take on a role. They will be included in strategy conversations to help them acquire planning and leadership skills, as well as a broad vision of the organisation and its objectives.

- The target is that at least 20% of candidates for election for all officer positions within the Association are women.

(ii) Expansion of the Future Leaders' programme

The Future Leaders' programme has a critical role to play to increase the leadership diversity within the Association. In addition to current activities, it is proposed that the programme:

- Seeks out and identifies women with leadership potential.
- Introduces a minimum target of 20% of women participants.
- Offers initiatives that will foster diversity, these will include:
 - i. A diversity and inclusion module to address unconscious bias.
 - ii. All participants will be assigned a mentor.
 - iii. All participants will be invited to attend National Committee meetings that are relevant to their farming enterprise while on the programme.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Increase diversity on National Council

To create an environment that supports and encourages greater diversity within the leadership of the Association, the following rule changes will be introduced:

- No person can serve more than eight years consecutively, or twelve years in total on National Council as County Chair, National Committee Chair or any combination of both without moving forward within the Association.
- Once elected to a position on the National Officers Committee, the only position the officer is eligible for election are other positions on the National Officers Committee (Regional Chair, National Treasurer/RO, Deputy President and President).

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Increase diversity on National Committees

To address the under-representation of women at National Committee level and support the creation of a more diverse Association, the following changes will be introduced:

- The County Executives will work towards a targeted 80:20 gender split on all National Committees in the lifetime of this strategy. To achieve the target, from the 1st January 2020, the term all newly elected officers can serve is a maximum of six two-year terms of office before being required to move forward in the Association.
- Macra will be offered a non-voting seat on National Committees for a two-year term. Macra must adhere to an 80:20 gender split on the seats they hold on the National Committees.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Cultivate and support diversity

To build a more welcoming environment and encourage greater gender diversity, it is proposed to introduce a number of training, mentoring and peer to peer support programmes. The programmes include:

- A diversity training module in the training course for newly elected officers to help tackle conscious and unconscious bias.
- Expansion of the courses offered by Farm Business Skillnets to include confidence building, improve self-



esteem, public speaking, as well as presenting and leading meetings effectively etc. These courses should be open to both women and men.

- Encouraging elected officers to sponsor potential female candidates, take a vested interest in them and advocate on their behalf. Sponsorship can be critical to building gender balance.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Restructuring of County Executive meetings

The format of the County Executive meetings is to be restructured to attract a more diverse attendance and focus on more enterprise specific meetings to increase value to farmers. Some of this restructuring is already taking place at County Executives, but other suggestions include:

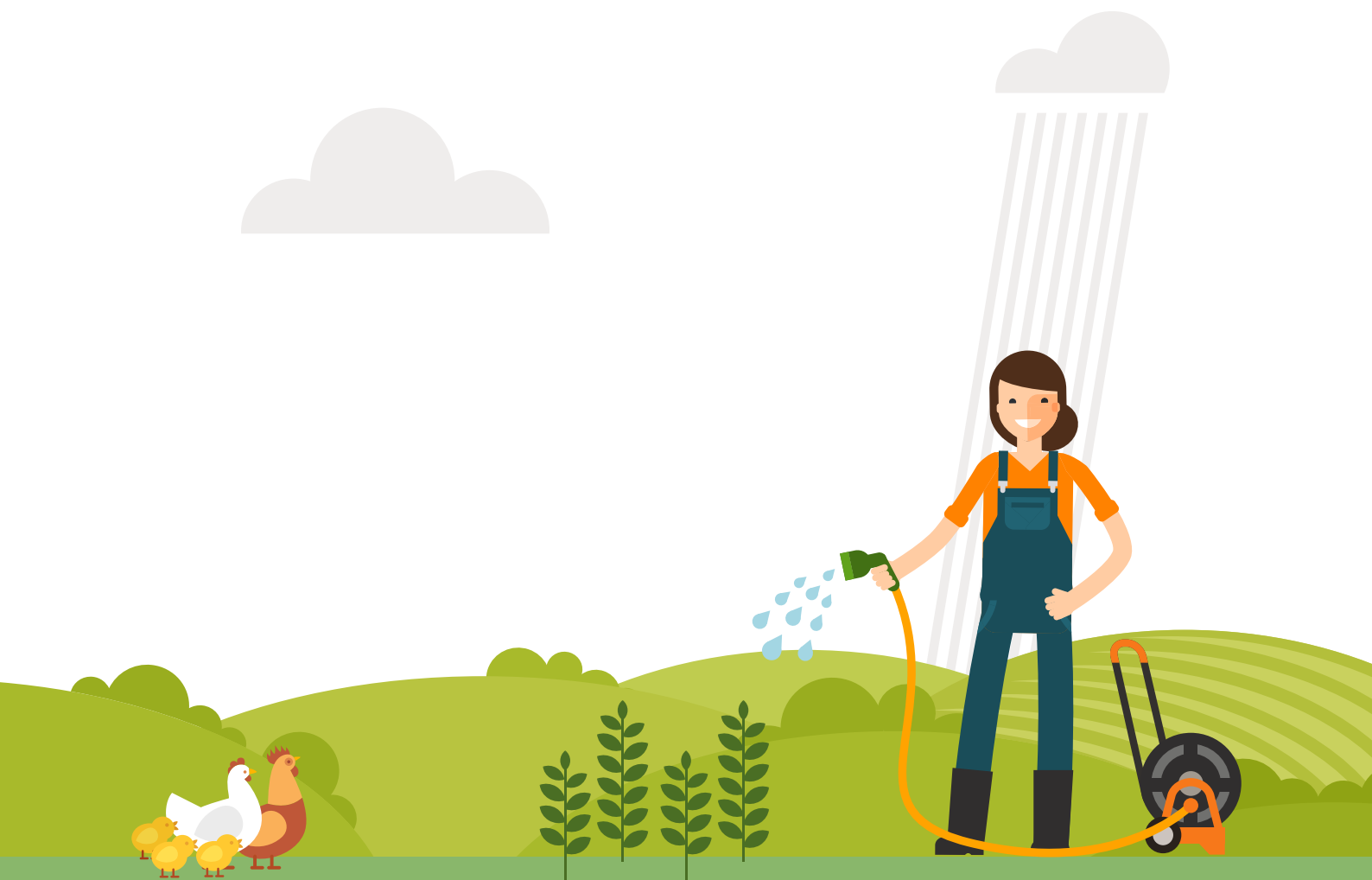
- Divide the meeting into three sections: reports, speakers and clinics with commodity representatives.
- Every second meeting should be an "open" meeting on specific topics.
- Change the time and location of meetings to attract new and diverse participants.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Show diversity and tell the good stories

To develop a campaign to communicate the Association's vision, mission and values, which are based on principles of diversity and inclusion. The campaign will use images, descriptions and language that reflect the diversity of the members, officers and staff. The campaign aims to:

- Shine a light on women ambassadors already actively working for farmers to promote women's involvement in the Association.
- Increase awareness of the strong role women already play within the Association and promote the opportunities available to women.
- Host an annual networking event for women involved in the Association or interested in getting involved, to encourage greater dialogue and support more female farmers to get involved.



“ We need diversity of thought to face new challenges ”



An inclusive culture....

The recommendations set out a clear statement of IFA's commitment to improving diversity and creating a culture of inclusion.

The leadership has a key role to play to live this commitment and actively engage with all members, deliberately seeking out and including new voices with different perspectives. To build an organisation that embraces and capitalises on differences, all leaders in Association will need to be champions of diversity.

The Diversity project team will be responsible for progressing the recommendations in each of the focus areas and advancing diversity in the Association. The plan sets out an ambitious agenda for the coming years.

But everyone within the Association has a role to play. Without effort, we are all susceptible to unconscious bias. Everyone has their own biases, but being aware of the Association's female leader statistics and being actively interested in bettering them is a first step.

This strategy is the start of IFA's journey to empower and encourage more women to get involved. To create a more diverse leadership that better reflects our membership and the wider farming community.

We hope that the strategy will inspire more farmers to get involved at County Executive meetings, to take up an officer's role or take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Future Leaders' programme and give their voice to the Association.



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