



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Women-only training has its place says Crofting Federation**

Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) is clear that women-only agricultural training is necessary and responds to specific requests from women seeking to develop their agricultural experience; the evidence is there to support this.

"There clearly is the need and demand for women-only training courses in skills for farming and crofting", Patrick Krause, Chief Executive of the SCF, said. "The ground-breaking research commissioned by Scottish Government, 'Women in Farming and the Agriculture Sector', presents unequivocal evidence that this is so.

"I know that it is a debateable issue," Krause went on. "I have heard a first reaction that this is divisive or people question 'why the focus on women; why have women-only events?' Sadly, there are objections to the focus we are bringing on women in agriculture coming from successful women in agriculture; a bit of 'pulling up the ladder'.

"SCF recently ran a fencing course for women as this was what had been asked for by potential participants. It was oversubscribed by a long-shot. Women are asking for women-only training events; typical feedback we got was from a crofter from Torridon who enrolled for the course 'because I wouldn't be one woman edged to the side as a hobbyist. This strongly appeals to me as it is specifically for women'. The Farm Advisory Service is also answering demand in piloting a series of women-only events, and there are community-based initiatives doing the same. So I guess the question 'why?' is a good one to ask".

Professor Sally Shortall, lead author of the study looking at women in agriculture in Scotland said, "The evidence is there that women are not taking up training opportunities for various reasons, including feeling that they are out of place, that they will be in the minority, that courses are not planned to be gender-appropriate, and others. Both men and women recognised the particular implications for women of not receiving practical training."

Professor Shortall continued, "Of course there are differing views on how to make agricultural training more inclusive of women. The taskforce will produce some guidance on this for training providers, including things like timing courses to fit in with other tasks; providing childcare, holding courses in suitable locations to reduce travel time and facilitating training to

be more inclusive of women. However, something that is widely asked for is women-only training courses so we recommend that training providers consider this. It is very encouraging that the Farm Advisory Service and Scottish Crofting Federation are making this provision in their training programmes.”

Following the publication of the research, Scotland’s First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, set up a taskforce, jointly chaired by Sutherland hill farmer Joyce Campbell and Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity Fergus Ewing, to look at how to implement recommendations. Launching the report and the taskforce at the Royal Highland Show last year, Ms Sturgeon said, “Women are currently significantly underrepresented at all levels of agriculture.

“The findings of this report show a strong need to change some of the cultures that prevail in farming and agriculture. Now, when I say that about cultures, I’m quite conscious that there’ll be women in farming that disagree with that. Often when women are already in a particular area they don’t necessarily perceive the cultural barriers that others from outside might perceive.

The First Minister concluded, “This report is a welcome insight into Scotland’s agricultural sector. While the report recognises the hugely valuable role that women play in our farming sector, it also highlights some significant challenges that are holding women back from playing an equal and equitable role in agriculture. And these need to be addressed.”

END

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**Notes to editors**

- The report ‘Women in Farming and the Agriculture Sector’ can be found at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/06/2742>