

Understanding the behaviour and motivations of Scottish beef and sheep farmers



The Challenge

By understanding the drivers, goals and actions of farmers, along with the analysis of their impact upon farm physical and financial performance, policy may be tailored to individual farmer groups allowing more efficient outcomes. This work examines if Scottish beef and sheep farmers can be classified into specific groups and identifies underlying drivers shaping these different groups.

Policy Implication

The objectives and attributes of farmers in these groups are significantly different which is also impacted by the location and physical constraints of the farms. Understanding these differences is important for recognising diversity in terms of farmers' objectives, attitudes, and likely behaviours as well as future implementation and uptake of policy reforms and innovations.

Research

This study used farm data of 213 beef and sheep farms taken from the Farm Business Survey (FBS, 2016) which included physical as well as financial information of each sampled farm. A questionnaire was constructed to capture two explanatory variables; farmers' objectives (maintaining way of life, enhance the environment, increase size of business and maximize profits) and attitude to achieve those objectives.

Results

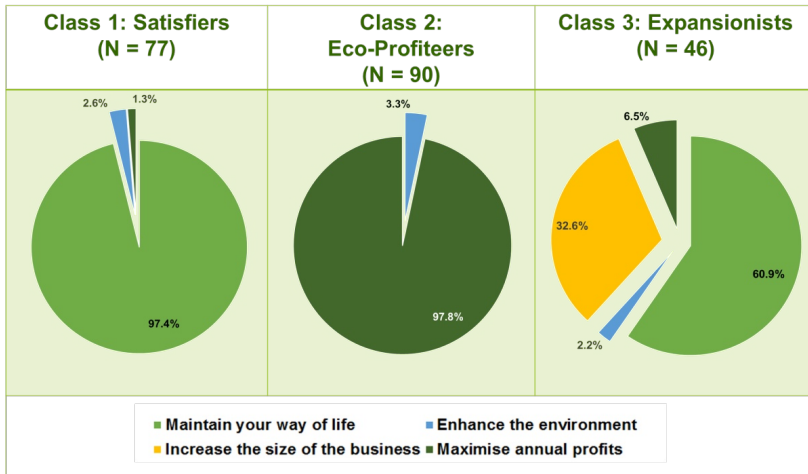
The farmers fell into three groups:

Satisfiers (36%) strongly agree with maintaining the way of life and moderately agree with maximising farm annual profits. Farmers in this class are the most likely to disagree with enhancing the environment and increasing the size of the business. Most of the farms in this class are medium sized farms located in the Highlands and Islands and South Western Scotland.

Eco-profiteers (42%) strongly agree with maintaining their way of life and maximising farm annual profits and moderately agree with enhancing the environment. Furthermore, these farmers tend to disagree to increasing the size of their businesses. Farms in this group are mostly large farms (62%) in South Western and North Eastern Scotland.

Expansionists (22%) want to maintain their way of life and increase the size of their businesses. Farms in this group are mostly the specialist beef farms which are located in South Western and Eastern Scotland. These farms are the smallest in farm size, make the lowest farm profits but also have the smallest long and short term debts compared to farms in the other two groups.

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Contact

Contact: Shailesh Shrestha

Email: shailesh.shrestha@sruc.ac.uk

Research group: Land Economy, Environment and Society

Address: SRUC, Peter Wilson Building, Edinburgh, EH9 3JG.

About

The Land Economy, Environment and Society (LEES) Research Group is one of the largest groupings of economists and social scientists working in the rural, agricultural and land based sectors in the UK. Our vision is to be recognised as one of the leading centres for agricultural and wider rural economic and social research globally, benefiting the land use sector, the environment and rural communities.

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