

Call for recognition for women doing a quarter of the workload on Irish farms

IRISH women are carrying out a quarter of the work on Irish farms without it being acknowledged, a conference on diversification run by WWFI, West Women in Farming Ireland, has heard.

Dr Maura Farrell (*below*) of NUI, Galway, said women are often keeping farms sustainable but are not making their voices heard. She said it is often women taking in an off-farm wage, which is pumped directly into the farm, and without this many Irish farms could not survive.

"As far as agriculture is concerned, there is a huge lack of recognition of women in the sector. Even though they contribute a huge amount of the work units to agriculture, there is still a lack of recognition," she said.

A study carried out in 2013 by the National Rural Network found that the 70,000 female farmers were responsible for in the region of 35,000 work units.

"This equates to about 22pc of the work on Irish farms being carried out by women but that is not being fully acknowledged. In some ways, women have a lot to blame themselves for as well.

"They really need to come forward and suggest they are doing that work. You know, 'helping out' on the farm is not

helping out — it's contributing a huge amount of the work to that farm and they need to put themselves forward and suggest that they are doing that," she added.

She said a study of off-farm employment found women, in particular, were sustaining farms with such income.

"A lot of that money was pumped straight back into the farm. So really the off-farm employment was sustaining the farm income, the farm household and the farm

family, and without it that farm was in trouble and a lot of farms in this country are in trouble without that additional income from females in particular," she said.

She added it is also women who drive forward with the diversification and innovation of farms while facing significant challenges on everything from finance and education to childcare.

"If women are given those kind of additional

supports, we have an unbelievable innovative women's group in Ireland at the moment. It's a movement within itself — it's not just great for agriculture, it's good for rural areas, and the spin-off industries from every one of those enterprises and innovative diversifications is fantastic for rural Ireland," she added.



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