

RBS puts female farming in focus

Royal Bank of Scotland puts female farming in focus as it celebrates its 38th year supporting the Royal Highland Show

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Scottish TV presenter Storm Huntley takes to Edinburgh's Calton Hill on the eve of this year's Royal Highland Show

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Show partners Royal Bank of Scotland and the Scottish Association of Young Farmers are this year using the key industry event to highlight the impact women make to the industry and the unique challenges they face

The Royal Highland Show returns to Edinburgh on Thursday and Scottish TV presenter and farming ambassador Storm Huntley scaled the Capital's Calton Hill to flag the impact women make to the industry.



The annual event, which has been supported by Royal Bank of Scotland since 1981, is one of the focal points of the Scottish farming industry calendar, showcasing the best the sector has to offer. On the eve of this year's show, Storm offered her support to the bank's aim of making entry to agriculture easier for new entrants and to tackle gender stereotypes surrounding farming in Scotland.

Figures published by Scottish Government commissioned research to establish a baseline on women in farming and the agricultural sector demonstrate that women are vastly under-represented and face significant barriers to entry and progression within the farming and agriculture sector in Scotland.

Key findings from the research include:

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1 in 3 Scottish farm operators are women
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2 in 5 (41%) of women feel their skills are underutilised on farms
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More than a third (35%) of women in agriculture feel that their career is progressing slower than they would like

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Almost half (46%) of women in agriculture feel a perceived lack of skills is the major barrier to career progression

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The cultural practice of passing on large farms intact to one son is the single biggest barrier to women's entry into agriculture

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More than half (53%) of women would like a bigger role in decision-making on their farms

The research also highlights that 'lack of time' (71.8%) is a major barrier to women obtaining more senior roles within farming alongside a lack of access to training and the need to prioritise children (53.9%). The research also suggests that women in family businesses outside of agriculture face far fewer barriers to business involvement and leadership.

This weekend's Royal Highland Show represents the final show before the Women in Agriculture Taskforce is set to publish its final report in Autumn 2019.

As a reminder of women's impact to the sector, Storm took banners flagging some of the original findings to one of Edinburgh's most iconic locations.

Ahead of this year's Royal Highland Show, Royal Bank of Scotland has launched #ThisIsFarming, a campaign to raise awareness of the challenges faced by women in agriculture and the support available from the Royal Bank.

Commenting, Storm Huntley, TV presenter and women in agriculture ambassador said: "Improving the opportunities for women in all industries is really important to

me. Through presenting 'Down on the Farm' for the BBC I met many fantastic female farmers but it was clear that overall this industry was still very male dominated. It would be great to break down the stereotypes that still exist in agriculture and encourage the next generation of farmers to grow, develop and flourish."

Royal Bank of Scotland is a key supporter of Scottish farming. The partner of the SAYFC's Young Farmer of the Year programme, the bank is also involved in the Women in Agriculture Scotland Group, offering mentors and specialist support to help equip women with the tools they need to build a successful career. The Royal Bank Women in Business programme has 400 accredited Women in Business specialists providing support for women working across all industries with an understanding of the unique issues and pressures female-led firms often face.

Joyce Campbell, co-chair of the Women in Agriculture Taskforce said: "It is vital that women in agriculture are given access to the same development opportunities as men in order to create a more highly skilled workforce and unlock talent which drives the industry forward.

"Increasing the number of women in senior roles in the industry is another core area we must focus on as we look to create positive role models in the industry for future generations to aspire towards".

Backing the campaign for equality in agriculture, Penny Montgomerie, CEO at SAYFC said: "Modern farming has moved on to a point where the traditional stereotypes are no longer applicable to the industry. It is important that we continue to strive for equality in the agricultural industry and create an environment in which the next generation of farmers can flourish.

“Agriculture is a key component of the Scottish economy and it is important to attract the best talent possible into the sector. Increasing access to training, finance, support networks and business advice is key to achieving this”.

Roddy McLean, Head of Agriculture at Royal Bank of Scotland said: “We’re proud of our longstanding commitment to agriculture in Scotland. Over the course of our near 40-year sponsorship of the Royal Highland Show we have tackled a range of issues faced by the agricultural community and our latest campaign continues this tradition.

“Women are vastly under-represented in agricultural sector, but we hope that by utilising our dedicated women in business and agriculture resources, we can contribute towards encouraging more women into farming as well as helping those already within the industry to advance their roles.”

Support for the agricultural industry offered by the bank includes:

Women in Business programme:

The Women in Business programme was launched in 2003, and now has 400 members of staff as accredited Women in Business specialists. In March 2019, Royal Bank launched a Crowd/Grant Funding programme aimed to support 150,000 more women to start a business in the UK by 2025.

Agriculture Relationship Managers: Royal Bank has 27 qualified advisers working as agricultural relationship managers able to understand the unique needs of land-based businesses. One third of these are women.

Women in Agriculture: Since 2017, Royal Bank of Scotland has been heavily involved in the Women in Agriculture group, providing mentors and specialist support to help equip women with the tools they need to counter the barriers they face in

their careers.

Boost and Business Growth Enablers: Boost is Royal Bank's commitment to help customers beyond just finance. Delivered through our locally based Business Growth Enablers (BGE's) who offer one-on-one support and guidance, run business-related events on topics like social media, recruitment, cashflow management and help small businesses to create connections and partnerships in their local area. RBS is the only bank to offer BGE's.

Business Hub: The Royal Bank Business Hub launched in February 2019 – offering customers and non-customers self-serve access to unique 'actionable insight' and support to help them achieve their business goals.

Chartered Banker Institute: All RBS agri-relationship managers are independently accredited by the Chartered Banker Institute (supported by NFU Scotland).