

**Family Farming in Ireland: Continuity and Change**

Airfield Farm, Dundrum, Dublin 14

June 5th 2014

09.30 - 10.10 Registration and Coffee

10.10-10.20 Welcome

Dr Noel Cawley

Chairperson,  
Teagasc

10.20 - 10.30 An Introduction to Airfield

Grainne Kelliher

CEO, Airfield

**Session 1: The present past.****Chair: Prof Willie Nolan**

10.30 - 11.00 Family Farms and the State

Prof Mary E. Daly

UCD

11.00 - 11.30 Nephews, Dowries, Sons and Mothers:  
Farm and Marital Transactions in Clogheen-  
Burncourt 1830-1974.

Prof Willie Smyth

UCC

11.30 - 12.00 Plus ça change... Markets, policy and family  
farms, Borris-Ileigh, Co. Tipperary 1981 -  
2011Prof Gerry Boyle,  
Dr David Meredith  
& Dr Caroline  
CrowleyTeagasc /  
ISS2112.00 - 12.30 Regulating farm households in the early  
twentieth centuryDr Arlene  
Crampsie

UCD

12.30 - 14.00 Lunch - Opportunity to see Airfield house and farm

**Session 2: The future present.****Chair: TBC**

14.00 - 14.30 Small-farm landscapes in transition

Prof Patrick Duffy

NUI,  
Maynooth

14.30 - 15.00 Changing Roles in Farm Households

Prof Sally Shortall

QUB

15.00 - 15.30 Strategies of Resilience: Cooperation in  
Irish Family FarmingDr Aine Macken-  
Walsh & Dr Anne  
ByrneTeagasc &  
NUI, Galway15.30 - 16.00 It's a pothole on the road but the road goes  
on': narratives of succession and  
attachment to the land among migrated  
farm youth

Dr Anne Cassidy

NUI, Galway



## Presentations

### Family Farms and the State

Prof Mary E Daly

School of History and Archives, University College Dublin

Within twenty minutes or so, I want to look at the demographic, political and economic evolution of Irish farming from the aftermath of the famine until the present. This shows the emergence of the family farm – where ownership, succession and economic activity rests in the hands of a family (nuclear or more extended), and the consolidation of the power of the family farm in the century or more after the great famine. Proposals that might have threatened this dominance, such as measures to redistribute land to farm labourers, or take land from non-productive farmers did not secure support from any Irish government. The 1960s/70s, with the expansion of educational opportunity, and the new emphasis on industrial investment might at first sight appear to threaten the family farm (as did the EEC commissioner Mansholt proposals for structural reform), but the family farm proved to be adaptive and resilient. The paper ends by asking whether the family farm can continue to display this resilience in the face of changes, such as the return of land tenancy, smaller families and a growing emphasis on cities as the locus for economic development.

### Nephews, Dowries, Sons and Mothers: Farm and Marital Transactions in Clogheen- Burncourt 1830-1974.

Prof Willie Smyth

Geography Department, University College Cork

Using a detailed case-study of farm and marital transactions between c.1820 and c. 1970 in the parish of Clogheen-Burncourt in Co. Tipperary, I will suggest a conceptual strategy for analysing family farming and continuity and change over the period. Firstly, the distribution of farm-units and their farm families is seen and described as as a changing territorial or 'game-board' matrix .Secondly, I examine the kinship network and the 'grid of inheritance' which constitute the 'habitus' or 'rules of the game' within which families and individuals operate. Thirdly, I explore the practices and strategies of medium-sized farm holders(50-



100acre/20 40ha) in matching farms with farmers and sons with brides and daughters with farmer-husbands. We can call these behaviours the 'match-making' process or 'playing the game'. The conclusion will locate the study findings in the context of the wider Irish literature and further afield including that of Arensberg, Hannan, Bourdieu, Siddle et al. ( At the end, I will try and find time to briefly summarise changes between 1974 and 2014.)

Plus ça change... Markets, policy and family farms, Borris-lleigh, Co.  
Tipperary 1981 - 2011

Prof Gerry Boyle & Dr David Meredith, Teagasc

Dr Caroline Crowley, Institute for Social Science in the 21st Century, UCC

Farming has and continues to be shaped by the long term decline in the real price of food. This, in turn, is driving a number of high-level processes including consolidation, intensification and specialisation that are evident across Ireland, Europe and other industrialised countries. Farm enterprises have to continually navigate changes to the technology of farming, the policy environment that governs how food is produced and the increasing role of the global market in determining food prices. Those farming the land mediate these developments within the context of varying degrees of structural, environmental, human and capital constraints which, in turn, are filtered through and conditioned by social and cultural institutional structures, e.g. the family, community and the wider industry. With reference to these drivers and processes, in this presentation I want to focus on the relatively recent past and chart changes to the structure of farming in Borris-lleigh, Co. Tipperary between 1981 and 2011. We argue that farming in the parish is characterised by change but that continuity is maintained through familial ties that reflect social and behavioural norms. These facilitate certain types of change, e.g. renting out land, switching from dairy to beef production or engaging in off-farm employment, but are resistant to others, e.g. selling farmland or planting forestry.

## Regulating Farm Households in the Early Twentieth Century

Dr Arlene Crampsie

School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy

For farm households across Ireland the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were nothing short of a revolutionary period. While the increase in state control and supervision of aspects of Irish life had been expanding throughout the 1800s it was only in the later part of the century that this attention began to focus on the previously sacred private space of the family home. The Victorian preoccupation with improvement particularly in relation to standards of hygiene and sanitation would result in a raft of legislation that targeted farms and farm households across the country. Public health and sanitation legislation ordered the eviction of animals from inside cottages, the removal of manure heaps from outside doors and introduced regulations for the sale or even provision of dairy produce. This paper will examine these and other changes introduced by the state in the period leading up to World War One, investigating the role of local government in their implementation and using local authority records to reveal the reactions of farm owners to this incursion of agents of the state onto their private property.

## Small-farm landscapes in transition

Prof Patrick Duffy

Geography Department, NUI Maynooth

Though each farm is relatively small in size, collectively small farms represent an extensive part of the Irish landscape. And what happens in and to them in terms of changing demographic, economic and environmental structures will have a proportionate impact on the Irish landscape. This paper will examine the changing experience of three small farm districts at farm and household level in Monaghan, Mayo and Meath over the past three or four decades, focussing mainly on aspects of the natural, built and cultural landscape.

## Changing Roles in Farm Households

Prof Sally Shortall

School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast

Early studies of labour market segregation in the 1900s noted the peculiarities of agriculture as an occupation. Unlike other jobs, training does not guarantee entry, rather owning or having access to land is the crucial variable. In most of the western world, there are entrenched gender differences in access to land. Men inherit, women do not. Typically men have occupied the 'public' world of farming; going to marts, dealing with agricultural advisers and attending agricultural training events.

This presentation considers the changing gender roles within the Irish farm family in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While the labour market segregation of entry to farming remains intact with men continuing to farm, women on family farms are now more likely to be active in the labour market outside the family farm. They are less likely to provide 'hidden' or 'private' labour on the farm. Women's off-farm work is in many cases crucial to the family farm. The implications of women occupying a public labour market position for on-farm family relations are examined. The resilience of the farm family as an economic and social structure is also considered; while gender relations have changed, they continue to work in unison to ensure the survival of the family farm.

## Strategies of Resilience: Cooperation in Family Farming

Dr Áine Macken-Walsh, Sociologist, REDP, Teagasc

Dr Anne Byrne, Senior Lecturer, School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway

Drawing from both historical ethnographic sociology and recent Teagasc narrative research on adaptive processes of family farms, we focus specifically on family farm resilience strategies that are dependent not only on resources within families but, crucially, on customary reciprocity within communities of family farms. Tracing the sociological underpinnings of collaboration from 1930s Ireland, as explored by US anthropologists Arensberg and Kimball, through to the contemporary institutional setting of contemporary Irish agriculture, we highlight changing strategies for collaboration that are employed not only to enhance family farm resilience but, increasingly, to respond to interdependencies between on and off farm social, economic and cultural life. Identifying scenarios of adversity as catalysts for collaboration, we discuss how the establishment of formal joint farming ventures, such as dairy production partnerships, is expedited and crucially relies on adaptations of pre-existing customs of social cooperation. Drawing from recent empirical research, we highlight how contemporary resilience strategies reflect social change illustrating the 'room to manoeuvre' that has long been associated with family farms. In this light, joint farming ventures arguably represent a modernisation of social arrangements and a resilience strategy that furthers the contemporary sustainability of active family farming, which traditionally has been compromised by the marginalisation of groups such as youth and women.

‘It’s a pothole on the road but the road goes on’: narratives of succession and attachment to the land among migrated farm youth

Dr Anne Cassidy

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, School of Political Science & Sociology,  
Research & Innovation Centre, National University of Ireland Galway

Within rural sociology little attention is paid to those who grow up on family farms who do not intend to enter the farming profession. This paper partially rectifies this by focusing on a cohort of university students from farming families who will not or are highly unlikely to become full-time farmers. The findings are based on a series of semi-structured narrative interviews with 30 male and female participants between the ages of 18-33. Attitudes towards succession norms and attachment to the land are explored among this group. The research highlights the continuation of traditional gendered norms of succession and a strong desire to see the landholding retained within the family even while participants build their lives away from farming. This complex and sometimes troubling blend of continuity and change is underpinned by a deep rootedness in intergenerational familial continuums and engagement with multiple discourses on and off the farm. Through these processes, retention of the farm within the family is facilitated whilst space is simultaneously created for young people to adapt to the demands of modern society.