

On the snail trail? Helping newcomers to the agricultural sector

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Credit: Quang Nguyen Vinh from Pexels

Starting a new farm business from scratch or getting involved with an existing one as a successor could be challenging. Several barriers like access to land, capital, labor, information and markets could discourage aspiring farmers from establishing sustainable agricultural businesses.

To address these issues, the EU-funded NEWBIE project is facilitating the development and dissemination of new business models to complete

beginners and established farmers who want to diversify their agricultural ventures. NEWBIE aims to provide practical advice and support to those who are starting out in a new agricultural endeavor, including new entrants (anyone who starts a new farm business), successors and existing farmers. "The main goal of the NEWBIE network is to increase innovation, entrepreneurship, and resilience in the European farming sector," as noted on the project website.

The network runs the NEWBIE New Entrant of the Year Competition to reward the best new farming entrants or established farmers who have diversified in recent years. Steven Ryan from Tuam, County Galway in Ireland, won the 2019 competition. "Steven diversified the farm business in 2014, setting up a snail farm alongside the family's beef and sheep farm," according to a news release on the project website. "The farm is now producing 4,000kg of snails for the export market annually."

Quoted in the same news release, Ryan says: "We started out using Google and YouTube for information and through trial and error developed a system that suits the Irish climate." The snail enterprise has managed to overcome several challenges that are faced by new entrants, including "access to information, access to land, access to finance and access to markets," as explained in the news release. "Access to information was the biggest issue faced at the beginning and a huge amount of research was required to establish the enterprise, as all processing needs to take place outside Ireland identifying and building relationships with processors across Europe was necessary to achieve the best price." The project website notes that the NEWBIE project offers an award to new entrants in eight European countries.

Platform for all

The NEWBIE (New Entrant netWork: Business models for Innovation, entrepreneurship and resilience in European agriculture) project will run

until end-2021. It offers a platform where new entrants, successors, advisors, researchers, regional and national actors, and relevant stakeholders in national networks assemble, assess and exchange the state of the art of new entrant [business](#) and entry models in agriculture. The [project](#) website states: "New entry models are here defined as approaches, methods and/or instruments, which can help to overcome resource access barriers for new entrants in farming. These can be, for example, new forms of [farm](#) cooperation between landowners and new entrepreneurs like partnerships including junior-senior-partnerships, contract farming, share farming, or land access with support by an incubator institution."

More information: NEWBIE project website: www.newbie-academy.eu/

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