

Scottish Land Matching Service Progress Review (2023)

The Scottish Land Matching Service (SLMS) was established in 2019 in response to industry demand. It is managed by the Scottish Government's Farming Opportunity for New Entrants (FONE) Group. The SLMS mandate is to enable joint ventures in farming. This review was undertaken to assess the outcomes and orientation of the service, with a view to establishing the foundations for a formal evaluation in the future.

What is the Scottish Land Matching Service?

The Scottish Land Matching Service (SLMS) was established in October 2019 in response to industry concerns about the lack of opportunities to enter the industry.

The SLMS supports the development of joint ventures between **land holders** (who are **typically older** and aiming to reduce their direct agricultural activities) and **land seekers** (who are **typically younger** and seeking to become farmers in their own right).

The SLMS has **two part-time members of staff**. It has had over **530 requests for participation**, the majority of which have been individuals seeking (rather than offering) a joint venture. The staff divide their time between promoting the service, meeting with prospective participants in joint ventures, and negotiating the joint venture agreement, as well as supporting the Scottish Government's policy development for new entrants

How does Land Matching work?



Awareness Raising



Recruitment



Advertising



Matching



Advising

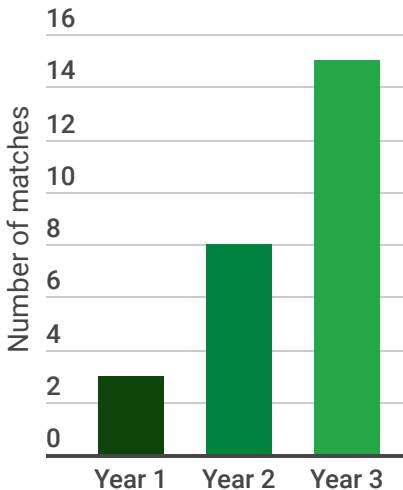


Negotiating



Monitoring

How does the SLMS compare to other land matching services?



26 matches in 3 years

In line with similarly staffed initiatives in Wales, England and Northern Ireland.



530 enquiries to date

Primarily from seekers of access to land. This is in line with experiences in Wales and England, although Northern Ireland has a more balanced portfolio of seekers and providers of land.

Is the SLMS successful?

The feedback on the SLMS is extremely positive, even amongst those for whom a successful match has yet to be developed. It is meeting a clear need and demonstrating a demand for land access which is much higher than the volume of land currently available. The costs per match are comparable to other land matching services. The service plays a key role in soliciting land offerings and bridging gaps between land holders and prospective farmers.

What improvements could be made?

- Undertake medium term strategic planning, including succession planning. This should include the funding model.
- Develop the online registration system to enable ease of evaluation by staff and reviewers, in line with GDPR requirements (e.g. more detailed consents for information sharing).
- Consider adding an element of fee-for-service, to reduce spurious contacts and increase perception of the value of the service.
- Implement a data logging and management system which tracks staff engagement with SLMS participants, new matches made and follow up-visits.
- Develop a clear service offering (e.g. initial consultation, matching, contract formation, follow-up).
- Focus promotional activities on target groups to increase the number of providers of joint venture opportunities, and increase the diversity of SLMS participants.

The full report can be viewed at: <https://sefari.scot/document/scottish-land-matching-service-review-report>