

Farm Advisory Service Enhanced Monitoring and Evaluation

Prepared for Scottish Government

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Abbreviations

FAS	Farm Advisory Service
SRDP	Scottish Rural Development Programme
EU	European Union
SAC	Scottish Agricultural College
ILMP	Integrated Land Management Plan
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
N=	Total Number of Participants
NPS	Net Promoter Score

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service (FAS) is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) which is co-funded by the EU and Scottish Government. The FAS launched in September 2016 and is effective through to 31 December 2020. Through the service, farms and crofters across Scotland are provided with information and resources aimed at increasing the profitability and sustainability of these businesses.

The FAS is currently delivered by SAC Consulting (part of Scotland's Rural College) and Ricardo Energy and Environment under contract arrangements. There are two components of the service:

- National one-to-many FAS function – delivered by SAC Consulting
- National one-to-one FAS function – delivered by Ricardo.

The one-to-many FAS function includes a website, advice line and a range of articles and publications.

There are four components of the one-to-one FAS function:

- Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) – whereby an advisor undertakes a confidential assessment of the business and helps develop plans for the future
- Specialist Advice – as part of the ILMP an advisor can help a business to develop a specialist advice plan on a range of topics
- Carbon Audits – whereby an experienced agricultural consultant will help the business to establish their carbon footprint, identify the sources of emissions and (through comparison to others) help identify areas for improved operational efficiency
- Mentoring for New Entrants – providing up to four days advice and support from a personal mentor.

1.2. Requirement for enhanced monitoring and evaluation

As part of programme delivery, both FAS contractors collect KPI data. These are mostly focused on input and output measures (e.g. number of attendees/participants; number of technical notes, articles etc).

However, there is a current gap with regards to understanding the outcomes of the FAS (e.g. what knowledge has been imparted and what changes have actually been made as a result) and therefore in understanding the potential impact of the support such as business and resource efficiency or meeting environmental objectives.

The Scottish Government has therefore commissioned Winning Moves to conduct a piece of research to explore the quality, focus and effectiveness of the FAS through:

- Identifying the outcomes of the support for beneficiary businesses
- Understanding the extent to which provision of advice has influenced outcomes
- Identifying gaps in the current provision of advice.

This work is intended to help to support the second enhanced annual report of the 2014-2020 programme by providing:

- An understanding of whether the current FAS offering delivers against initial aspirations identified at the contract design stage
- Ideas Scottish Government can consider for the scope, form and delivery mechanisms of advice that should be delivered in future.

The work has focused on the one to one FAS function delivered by Ricardo since this was felt to be likely to deliver the most significant changes in farmers' behaviour.

2. Methodology

2.1 Overview of approach

The requirement was delivered by a telephone survey with a sample of 116 beneficiaries of one-to-one support.

The survey focused upon:

- The extent to which actions recommended as part of the one-to-one advice have been taken
- The outcomes of the support
- Satisfaction with the support
- Any gaps in the support or suggested improvements.

The full questionnaire is provided in Appendix 1¹.

2.2 Sample

Four databases of contacts provided by Ricardo of businesses who have received support through the four components of the FAS were reviewed. These covered the period from September 2016 (the inception of the support) up to 31 March 2019. Those who had received specialist advice only were excluded from this research as these are farmers in crisis and/or who are exiting their business.

Analysis of the databases indicated a total population of 295 for the telephone survey (once duplicates and opt outs had been removed). 116 interviews were achieved, a response rate of 39%².

This response rate was achieved through:

- Arranging for Ricardo to send an initial email to beneficiaries informing them of the survey and encouraging participation
- Contacting beneficiaries multiple times
- A three week fieldwork period (14th to 31st May 2019)

¹ The questionnaire was reviewed after the first two days of fieldwork because the interviews were taking longer than expected. Question 10 was shortened so that this was asked for all benefits (rather than individually for each benefit). For the first responses where this was asked individually, the mean response has been used for this question.

² This is a good response rate. We would normally expect a response rate of 25-40% for this type of survey.

- Flexibility in arranging telephone appointments.

Some minimum quotas for the number of achieved interviews by support type were initially proposed to ensure adequate minimum coverage of each. A larger sample (proportionally) of mentoring applicants was initially proposed but this was not achieved from the relatively small population size. Appendix 2 provides tables showing the profile of the achieved sample against the profile of beneficiaries. This shows a broadly similar profile in respect of the key characteristics: type of support received, farm size and farm sector. There is accordingly no need to weight the data.

The beneficiary database did not include complete data for age or whether the business was a croft or not so these characteristics have not been compared but are included in Appendix 2 for interest.

Not all respondents answered all questions. This is mainly explained by the routing of the questionnaire, for example, respondents were only asked for additional sales figures if they indicated that they had achieved additional sales. In addition, a small number of respondents were unable to remember the actions they had taken but were able to recall having support and their overall satisfaction with the service. The number of respondents answering each question is given throughout the report.

2.3 Reference to reports

The FAS support provided and the advice and recommendations given are quite specific and tailored to individual businesses. The preferred approach would have therefore been to have access to individual reports to inform each interview. However, this was not possible due to the FAS confidentiality requirements. Respondents were instead asked if they could find and refer to their report during the interview. This request was also included in the email that Ricardo sent out to respondents prior to contact as part of fieldwork. When respondents were called to arrange and conduct the interview they were again asked if they could have their FAS report to hand.

Just under a third, 30 per cent, of respondents referred to their reports during the interview. The majority of respondents answered from memory. In a small number of cases, respondents could recall some of the support they had received (and answer about this) but not recall all of the support they received.

2.4 Analysis

The sample includes one respondent who went through the questionnaire twice as he had received a Carbon Audit for two separate businesses. This means the analysis should be understood as analysis by farm rather than by individual.

The 'actions'³ section of the questionnaire (reported in section 3.2 and 3.3 of this report) was asked individually for each report a respondent received. For example, if a respondent had received an Integrated Land Management Plan (ILMP) only, they would have been asked these questions once in respect of the ILMP. If a respondent had received an ILMP report and two specialist advice reports, they would have been asked these questions three times in respect of each individual report. The actions section of findings that follows therefore presents percentages according to the proportion of reports. These findings can also therefore be sub-divided into individual support type: ILMP, specialist advice or carbon audit.

Respondents answered the other sections of the questionnaire in relation to all the support they received. For example, they indicated which benefits had arisen for all the support received together. Findings are therefore reported as the proportion of respondents. Analysing these findings by support type is consequently done by the type of overall package of support they received: mentoring (with other support); carbon audit only; ILMP with or without specialist advice; ILMP, carbon audit with or without specialist advice.

Benefits achieved and satisfaction have been analysed by support type received, farm sector (cattle and sheep or not cattle and sheep) and farm size (under and over 100 hectares). There is some relationship between support received and farm size which is likely to explain some similar patterns in findings by these sub-groups. 88% of those who received mentoring were from farms with under 100 hectares. 90% of those who received a carbon audit were farms with over 100 hectares.

Significance testing of differences between sub-groups, for example, by support type has not been used due to the relatively small size of the sample. Differences identified between sub-samples (for example, by support type, farm size etcetera) should be understood as indicative rather than as definitive.

³ This included questions about the extent to which actions recommended in FAS reports had been taken, the reasons for taking or not taking these and how likely respondents were otherwise to have taken these actions.

3. Actions

3.1. Reason for seeking support

Table 1 shows the main reasons respondents gave for seeking support. The first three reasons listed from the top of Table 1 together with an ‘other – please specify’ option were given to respondents as options during their interview. The other reasons were proactively cited by farmers themselves. The most common reasons for seeking support were to improve the businesses’ financial performance (31%) and for environmental improvement (including improving the environmental aspects of the farm and reducing carbon emissions) (24%).

Table 1: Main reason for seeking support (n=116 | single response)

n	%
To improve the businesses’ financial performance	31%
To reduce the businesses’ carbon emissions	16%
For support to set up a new business	13%
To comply with the Beef Efficiency Scheme	10%
To grow the business	7%
Improve the enviromental aspects of the farm	6%
More than one reason	10%
Other	7%

3.2. Action taken

Table 2 shows the extent to which respondents had undertaken the actions or recommendations made in the reports they received through the FAS. The left hand column gives the different response options. The overall figure is calculated for all the reports received. So, for example, for 13% of the reports received for all types of support, all of the actions recommended in the report were said to have been taken. The extent of action taken is also reported individually for those who received a report for ILMP, specialist advice and carbon audits.

Table 2: Extent to which actions have been taken

(by number of reports received)	Overall	ILMP	Specialist advice	Carbon audit
n	191	55	65	71
I've taken all of the actions suggested.	13%	9%	17%	13%
I've taken some of the actions suggested or to an extent.	65%	73%	52%	70%
I've not taken any of the actions suggested but intend to take them all.	3%	4%	3%	1%
I've not taken any of the actions suggested but intend to take some of them or to an extent.	9%	7%	15%	4%
I've not taken any of the actions suggested and do not intend to do so.	10%	7%	12%	11%

This table shows that for only a small proportion of reports (10%), respondents had not and did not intend to take any of the actions suggested. For the majority of reports (74%), respondents either had or were intending to take some of the actions or to an extent. For an additional small proportion of reports (16%), respondents were very committed and had or intended to take all the suggested actions. The following sections explore some of the reasons for this.

Variation in the responses by support type (ILMP, specialist advice and carbon audit) was not large. For a slightly higher proportion of specialist advice reports, there was a future intention to take some actions or to an extent (rather than having already done so), compared to ILMP and carbon audit reports. This may reflect the timing of receipt of the specialist advice reports (since these will necessarily have been done later than ILMP reports). It could also be that the specialist nature of the advice requires more time to implement than recommendations from other types of support.

3.3 Reasons for taking or not taking actions

Figure 1 shows for all the reports issued, the proportion who agreed that particular reasons contributed to their decision to take actions. For about six in ten reports, respondents were planning on taking the actions anyway. For about eight in ten reports, respondents thought the action was easy to take. In very high proportions of reports, almost all, respondents thought that the actions would be beneficial to the business and would have a positive environmental impact. This data has been analysed by support type (ILMP, specialist advice, carbon audit) but there is little variation.

Figure 1: Reasons contributing to the decision to take actions, % of reports (n=171 reports | multiple response)

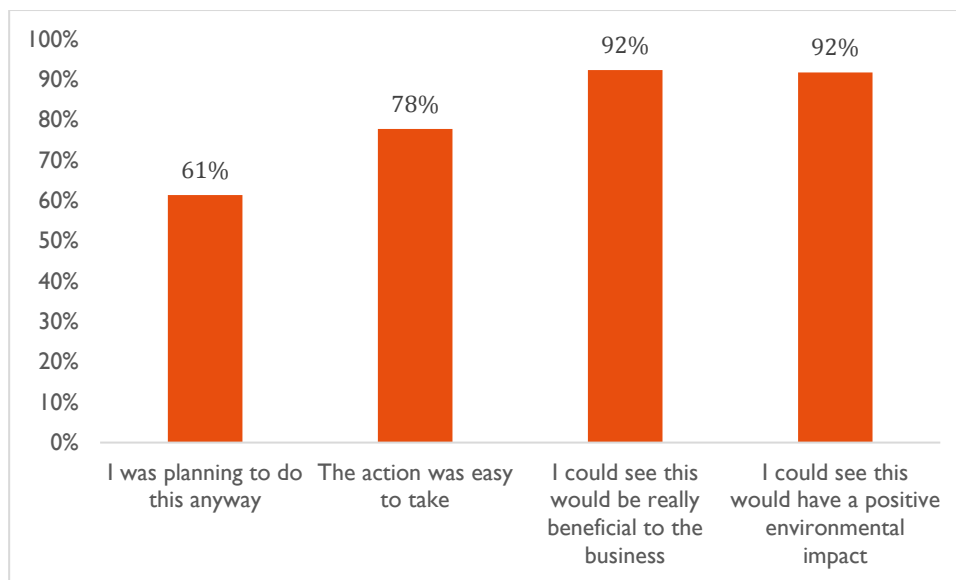


Table 3 below shows for all the reports issued, the proportion who agreed that particular reasons contributed to their decision not to take some actions. Almost two thirds (63%) said the actions would be too costly. About half (46%) said they had insufficient time to implement the actions. About a third (34%) thought the actions were not necessary for their business. A small proportion (14%) said they did not understand why the action had been recommended.

Table 3: Percentage who agreed with this reason for why they would not be taking some actions (multiple response)

	For all reports	ILMP	Specialist advice	Carbon audit
n	152	47	48	57
Too costly	63%	55%	65%	67%
Insufficient time to implement action	46%	43%	58%	39%
I do not understand why this action has been recommended	14%	11%	13%	18%
I do not think this is necessary for my business	34%	30%	27%	42%

There was limited variation by support type. A lack of time seemed to be a factor more frequently for specialist advice than ILMP and carbon audits. In relation to carbon audits, the proportion who said a lack of understanding of why the action had been recommended and/or who did not think the action was necessary was higher than for ILMP and specialist advice.

Some respondents made some other comments about why they would not be taking actions. These have been summarised below. These were all individual responses except where indicated.

- Action was not suitable for my business (2 responses)
- Action was too difficult to implement (2 responses)
- Action was impractical (2 responses)
- The risk was too high
- Business changed direction so it was not relevant
- The farmer had insufficient interest to do the further research necessary to implement the actions
- They are waiting to decide depending upon the future direction of the business
- They were not successful in applying for the grant they required
- Chose the easiest, cheapest options to satisfy the beef efficiency scheme requirements
- The sheep grant was no longer available
- The advisers had been given inaccurate information by the previous owners of the farm which meant it was not appropriate for the new farmers to implement all the actions.

3.4 Attribution of action taken

About a third of respondents for all reports (34%) said that they were very or somewhat unlikely to have taken the actions without the support of the FAS. This was similar across support types.

Respondents who said that they were very or somewhat unlikely to have taken the actions without the support of the FAS were then asked how the support helped them to take actions. The findings are given in Table 4. The support was shown to be helping in a range of ways. Similar proportions (around a third) indicated that the support helped in the ways outlined in the options given (shown in the left hand column of the table).

Table 4: % who agreed that the support helped in this way

	For all reports	ILMP	Specialist advice	Carbon audit
n	71	19	27	25
It gave me the idea for action	31%	37%	11%	48%
It gave me evidence about the likely benefits of the action	39%	37%	44%	36%
It helped me decide which action to take	32%	47%	26%	28%
It helped me to understand how to take an action	30%	42%	22%	28%

There was some variation by support type, although these are relatively small sub-samples and so the findings are only indicative. These suggest that:

- Specialist advice was less likely to provide the idea for action (compared to ILMP or carbon audits).
- ILMP may be particularly helpful in helping farmers to decide which action to take and how to take an action (relative to specialist advice and carbon audits).

4 Benefits

106 respondents (out of 112) reported some benefits in various combinations. Six respondents reported no benefits. Two of these had a carbon audit only, three had an ILMP with specialist advice and one had an ILMP, carbon audit and specialist advice.

4.1 Business performance benefits

Figure 2 shows the proportion of respondents who either have achieved or expect to achieve in the future a range of business performance benefits. This shows considerable impact. All of these benefits with the one exception of improved access to borrowing were reported by over half of respondents.

Figure 2: Business performance benefits achieved or expected to be achieved, (n=112)

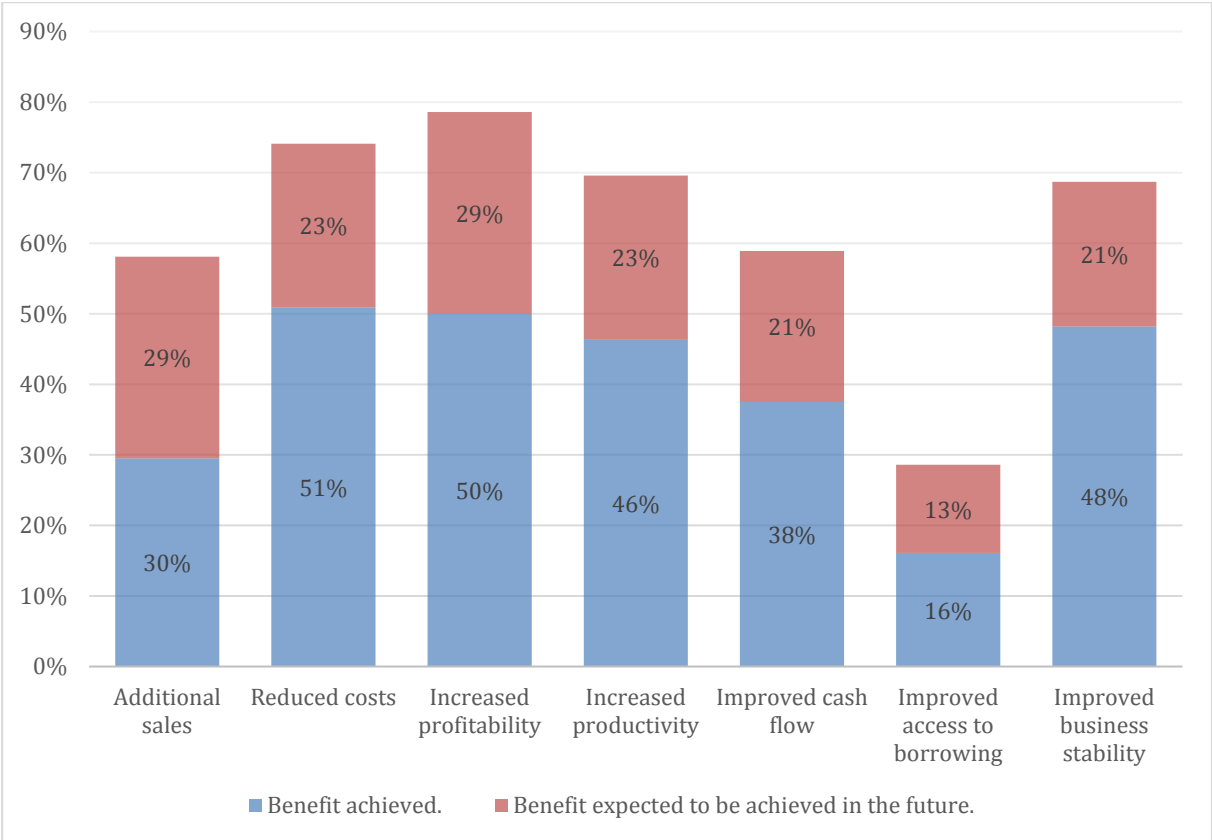
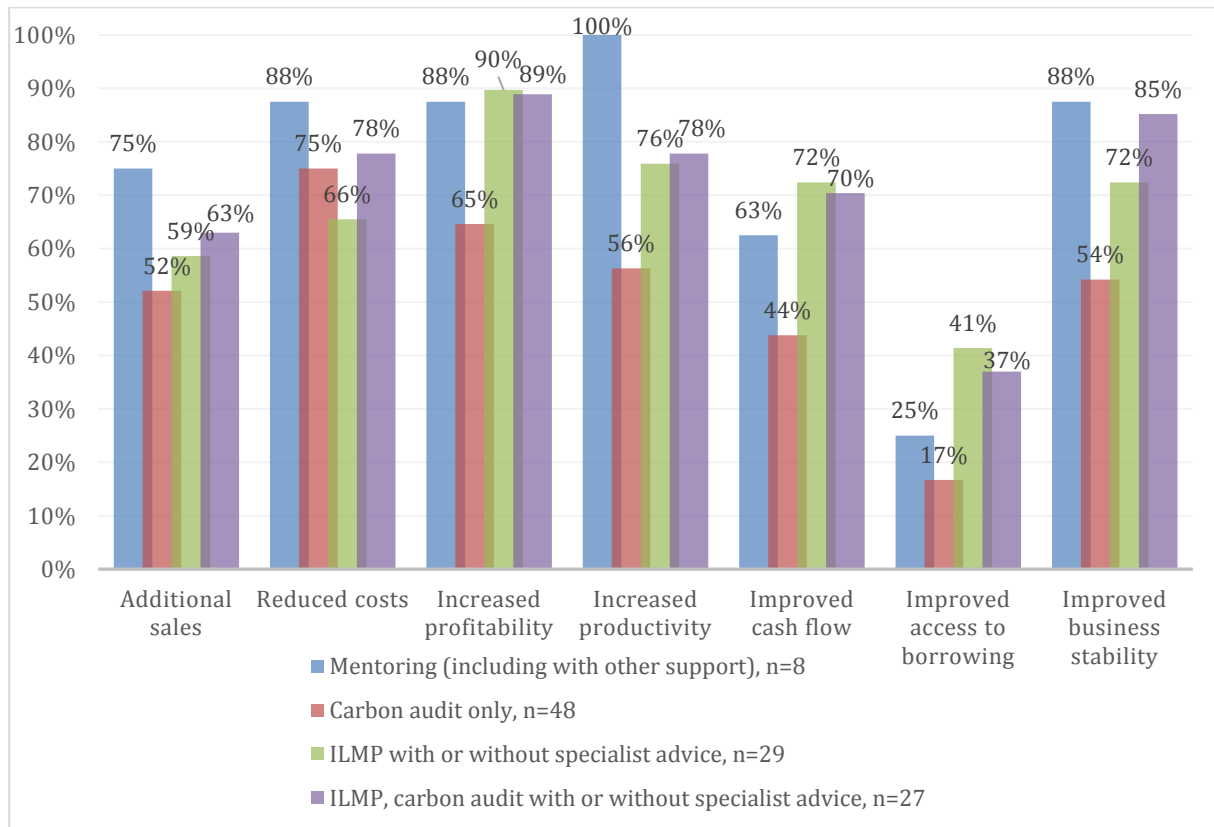


Figure 3 shows the proportion of respondents who either have achieved or expect to achieve in the future a range of business performance benefits by category of support received. This shows the highest levels of (actual or expected) achievement for the small group who received mentoring support. In most cases the lowest proportion who achieved or expected to achieve these benefits was for those who received only a carbon audit.

Figure 3: Business performance benefits achieved or expected to be achieved by support type received



Looking at the business performance benefits achieved or expected to be achieved by farm size, some differences were noted. Achieving or expecting to achieve improved cash flow, improved access to borrowing and improved business stability were more likely to be reported by farms with less than 100 hectares (77%, 34% and 74% respectively) compared to bigger farms (51%, 26% and 66%) .

Where respondents had reported that they had achieved additional sales, reduced costs and/or increased profitability, they were also asked if they could give a per annum figure for this. About a quarter of respondents who reported achieving these benefits were able to give a figure. The results are shown in Table 5. All except one of these figures were estimates. Respondents cited a range of figures. The median values are of a reasonable size: £3,000 for reduced costs, £5,000 for increased profit and £9,000 for additional sales.

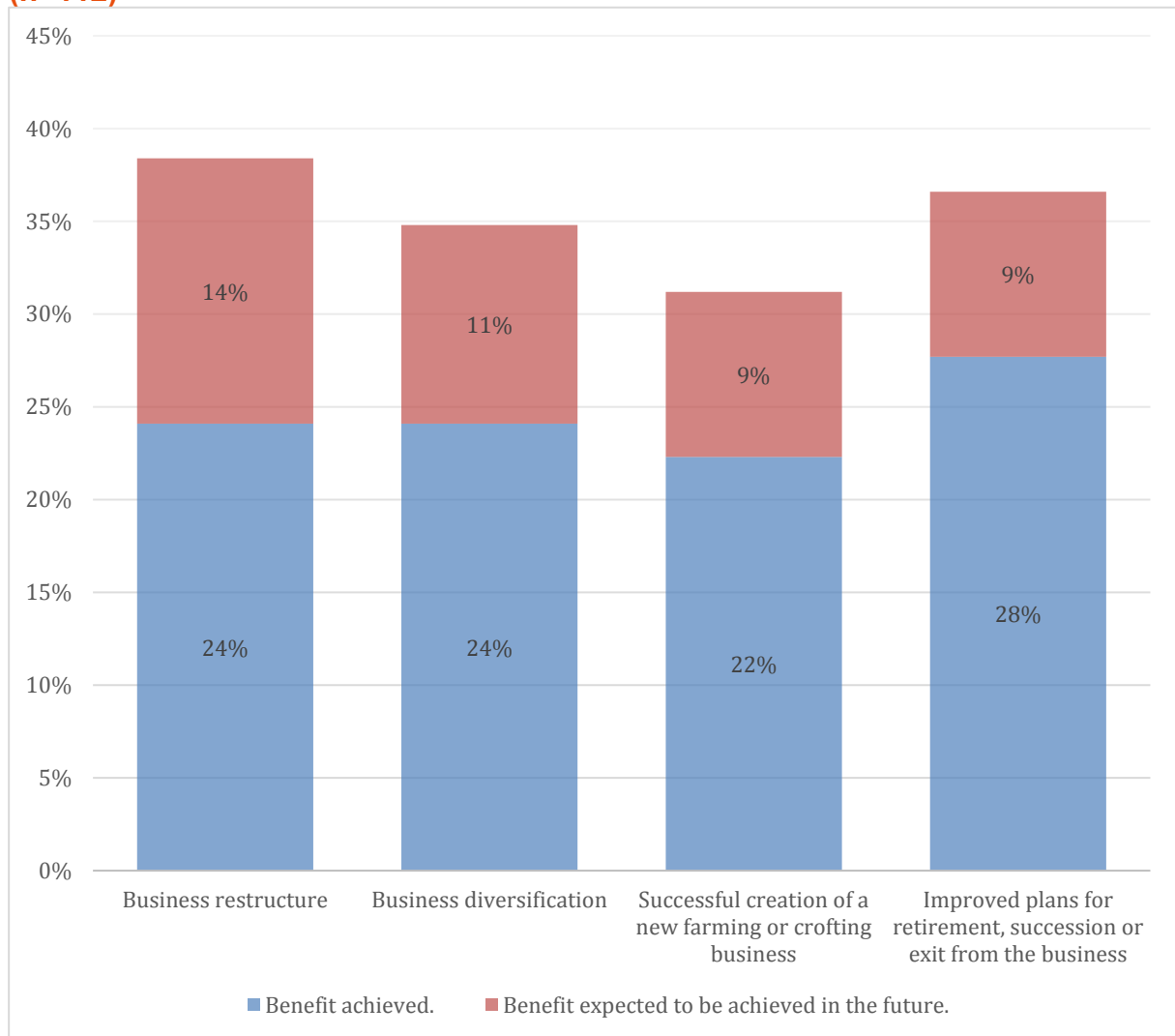
Table 5: Additional sales, reduced costs and increased profit figures given

Per annum	Number of estimates given	Number of exact figures given	Minimum and maximum values	Mean	Median
Additional sales, n=33	8	0	£4,500 - £40,000	£13,625	£9,000
Reduced costs, n=57	15	1	£1,000 - £10,000	£3,792	£3,000
Increased profit, n=56	14	0	£1,000-£40,000	£7,929	£5,000

4.2 Business structure and creation

Figure 4 shows the proportion of respondents who either have achieved or expect to achieve in the future a number of business structure benefits. This shows that approximately a third of respondents are reporting each of this type of benefit. Nearly all (88%) of those receiving mentoring had or expected to create a new farming or croft business successfully. This also probably explains, in part, why the creation of a new farming or croft business was also reported more frequently by those with a farm of less than 100 hectares (46%) compared to larger farms (25%). A slightly larger proportion of respondents from larger farms (over 100 hectares) (39%) reported achieving or expecting to achieve improved plans for retirement, succession or exit from the business than smaller farms (31%).

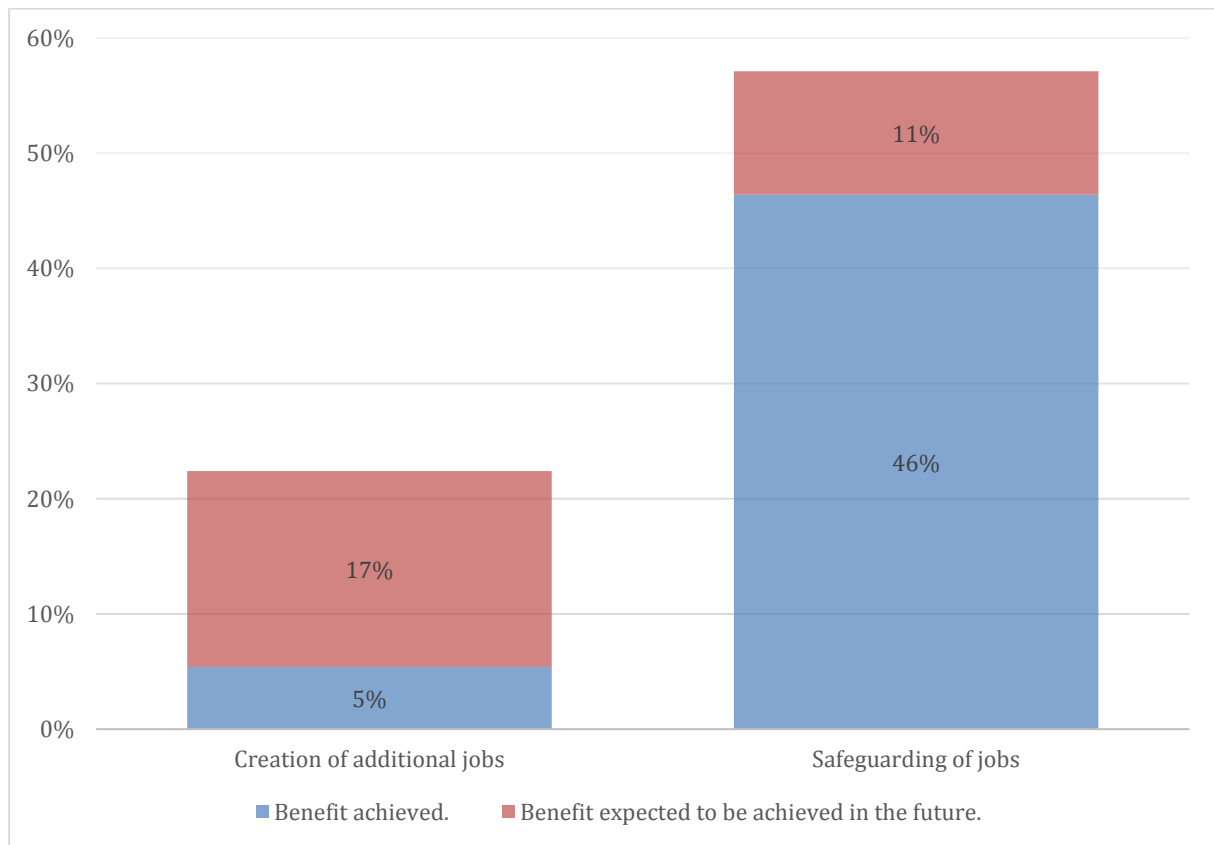
Figure 4 Business structure benefits achieved or expected to be achieved (n=112)



4.3 Employment benefits

Figure 5 shows the proportion of respondents who either have achieved or expect to achieve in the future employment benefits. This shows that just over a fifth (22%) reported that the support had enabled them to create additional jobs and over half (57%) said it had safeguarded jobs.

Figure 5 Employment benefits achieved or expected to be achieved (n=112)



Where employment benefits were reported, respondents were asked if they could provide figures for the number of jobs created or safeguarded. Only four respondents were able to answer this for the creation of jobs. Three said that exactly one additional job had been created and another one respondent estimated that 1 full time equivalent job had been created (but in the form of part-time employment).

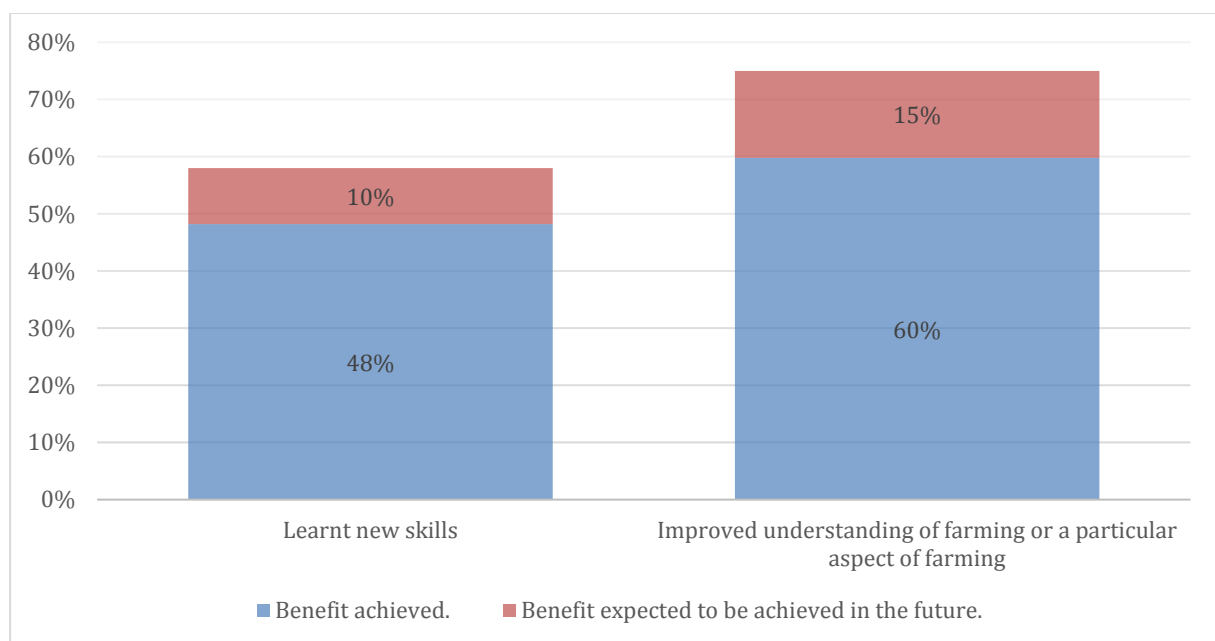
47 (of 52) respondents who had reported achieving job safeguarding gave what they said was an exact figure for the number of jobs that had been safeguarded. The mean and median of these figures was 2 jobs. The minimum figure given was 0.5 and the maximum was 3. Another four respondents gave estimates varying from 0.5 to 3 jobs. Thus, there is reasonable evidence that where job safeguarding is reported, this is at the level of 2 jobs on average.

The proportion reporting job safeguarding was quite similar across support types received. Job creation was particularly high amongst mentoring recipients (63%) and was lowest amongst those who received a carbon audit only (8%). This corresponds with the finding that a somewhat higher proportion of smaller farms (under 100 hectares) (31%) reported achieving or expecting to achieve creation of jobs compared to larger farms (18%). A somewhat higher proportion of larger farms (more than 100 hectares) (61%) reported achieving or expecting to achieve some safeguarding of employment compared to smaller farms (49%).

4.4 Skills and knowledge benefits

Figure 6 shows the proportion of respondents who either have achieved or expect to achieve in the future skills and knowledge benefits. This shows that more than half (58%) learnt or expected to learn new skills through the support and three quarters (75%) had or expected to have an improved understanding of farming or a particular aspect of farming. The proportions who reported achieving or expecting to achieve these benefits were particularly high amongst those who received mentoring (88% and 100% respectively). The proportion who reported that they had or expected to learn new skills was also higher amongst cattle and sheep farmers (64%) compared to other types of farmers (51%).

Figure 6 Skills and knowledge benefits achieved or expected to be achieved, n=112



4.5 Environmental benefits

Figure 7 shows the proportion of respondents who either have achieved or expect to achieve in the future a range of environmental benefits. This shows that a wide range of environmental benefits are being achieved or expect to be achieved. The proportions reporting these varies. Some apply in a smaller subset of respondents, for example, better managed archaeological and historical sites and increased organic production. These may be more niche interests or less widely applicable than other benefits. Better managed soil quality and nutrients was particularly widely reported by 83% of respondents.

Respondents were not able to provide figures on the amount by which they had reduced carbon emissions.

Figure 7 Environmental benefits achieved or expected to be achieved (n=112)

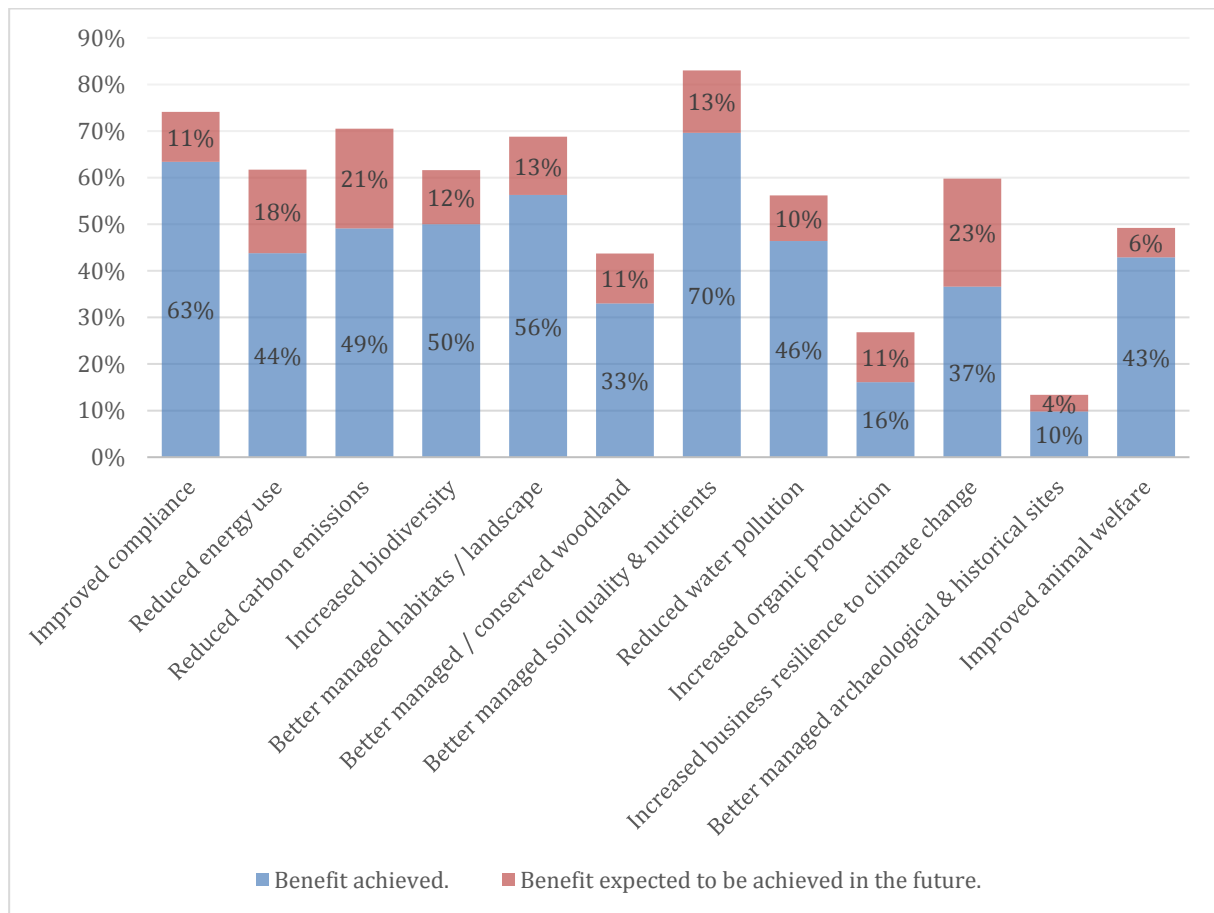


Figure 8 shows the proportion of respondents who either have achieved or expect to achieve in the future a range of environmental benefits by support type received.

Again mentoring respondents had a distinctive profile compared to those receiving other support packages. Somewhat higher proportions of this sub-sample reported achieving or expecting to achieve: increased biodiversity; better managed habitats; increased organic production; and improved animal welfare. Somewhat lower proportions of the mentoring sub-sample reported achieving or expecting to achieve: improved compliance with regulations; and reduced water pollution.

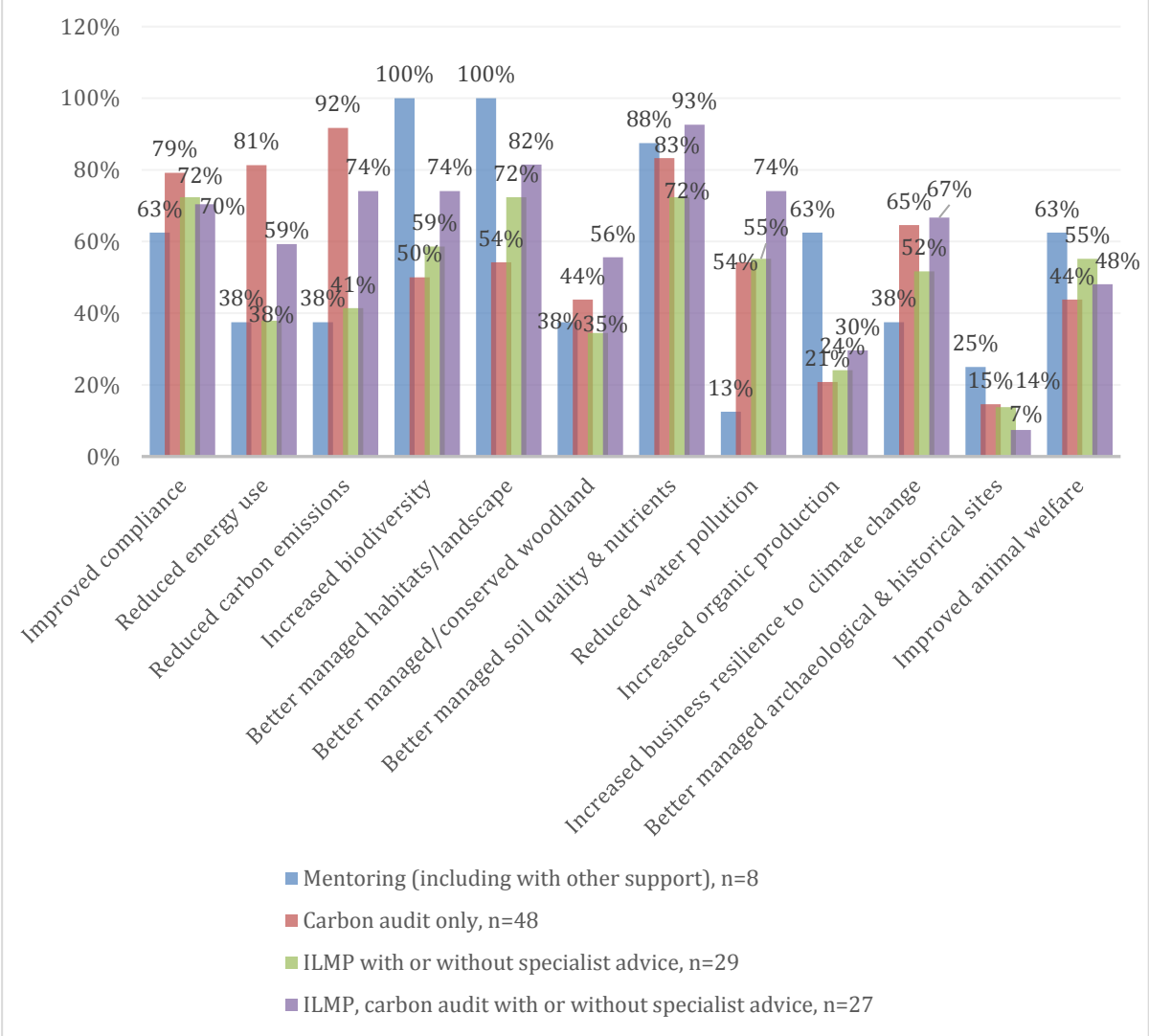
As would reasonably be expected, a higher proportion of those who received a carbon audit (either on its own or in combination with other support) compared to those who did not receive a carbon audit reported: reduced energy use; reduced carbon emissions; better managed soil quality and nutrients; and increased business resilience to the impact of climate change.

There were some differences by the size of farms (under and over 100 hectares) but these seem likely to be explained by the fact that those who received mentoring were mainly smaller farms and those who had a carbon audit only were mainly larger farms.

There were higher proportions of cattle and sheep farmers compared to respondents from other types of farm who reported achieving or expecting to achieve some

specific environmental benefits: better managed habitats (75% for cattle and sheep farmers, 62% for other); increased organic production (31% for cattle and sheep farmers, 23% for other); and increased business resilience to climate change (66% for cattle and sheep farmers, 53% for other).

Figure 8 Environmental benefits achieved or expected to be achieved by support type received



4.6 Attribution

All those who reported some benefits from the support provided through the FAS were asked how the support provided helped them to achieve this benefit. The responses are shown in Table 6. This shows primarily that the FAS has improved the benefits for most respondents. This divides roughly into halves in terms of whether the benefits are a lot or a little better due to the support of the FAS.

A small number of respondents (nine in total) said that the benefits would have arisen anyway. Five of these had received a carbon audit only and four had received an ILMP, carbon audit and specialist advice.

Table 6: Attribution of benefits to the Farm Advisory Service

n=99	%
The benefits would not have arisen in the absence of the Farm Advisory Service	8%
The benefits are a lot better thanks to the Farm Advisory Service	43%
The benefits are a little better thanks to the Farm Advisory Service	39%
The benefits would have arisen anyway.	9%

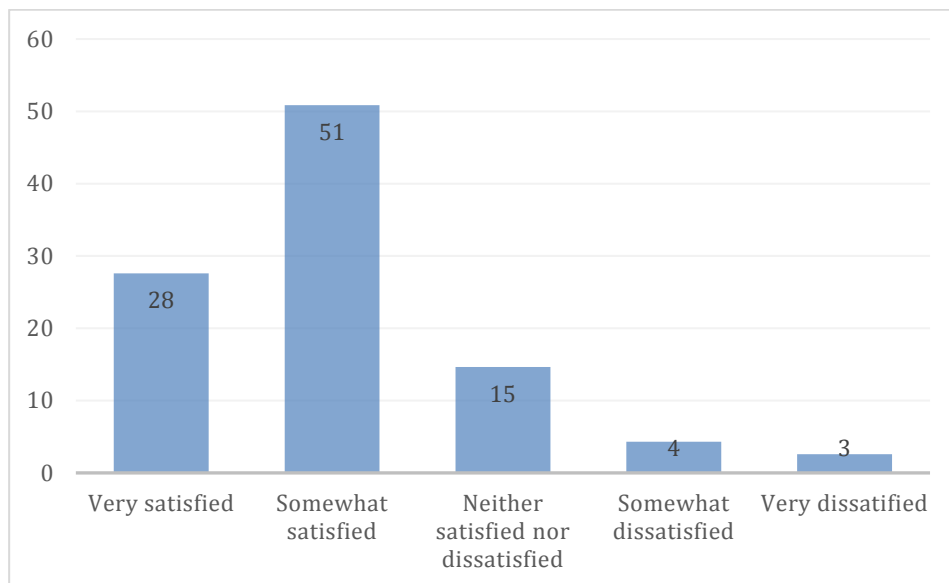
5 Satisfaction and areas for improvement

5.1 Satisfaction

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the support they had received on the following scale:

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Figure 9: Satisfaction scores, percentage of respondents (n=116)



Overall, 79% of respondents were satisfied (somewhat or very) with the support that they received from FAS.

Satisfaction ratings have been compared by age of respondent, farm size, farm sector and support received. Respondents with smaller farms are slightly more likely to be satisfied. 89% of those with farms less than 100 hectares were satisfied (somewhat or very), compared to 74% of those with farms of more than 100 hectares. Conversely, seven out of the eight respondents reporting dissatisfaction had farms of 100 hectares or more. Seven of those who expressed dissatisfaction gave their age and were all over 40 years old.

The following table shows satisfaction by support type.

Table 7 Satisfaction by support group, % within each support group

	Mentoring	Carbon audit only	ILMP with or without specialist advice	ILMP and carbon audit, with or without specialist advice
n	8	50	29	29
Very satisfied	38%	22%	34%	28%
Somewhat satisfied	50%	48%	52%	55%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12%	20%	14%	7%
Somewhat dissatisfied	-	6%	-	7%
Very dissatisfied	-	4%	-	3%

Those respondents receiving mentoring support were more likely to express satisfaction. All but one of these farms receiving mentoring were smaller farms, less than 100 hectares.

5.2 Reasons for satisfaction

All of those who expressed satisfaction or who said neither satisfied nor dissatisfied were asked about their reasons for this. 32% of those who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and a few who were somewhat satisfied stated simply that the service had been helpful or useful but had been unable to describe their satisfaction in more detail. The reasons for satisfaction are summarised in the table below.

Table 8: Summary of reasons for satisfaction (n=73 | multiple response)

	% of respondents able to give a reason for their satisfaction
The advisor was good – thorough, knowledgeable, practical, helpful and good communication and professional service	41%
The advice was easy to understand, practical and perceived to be good	36%
The service highlighted issues of which beneficiaries were previously unaware	23%
The advice was beneficial in some tangible way ⁴	12%
The service increased beneficiaries’ confidence to take action	12%
The service gave the beneficiary access to funding	4%

Respondents’ comments about the advisor and the advice included:

“The consultant was easy to understand and made good use of the resource and had a good understanding of the business”

“Very practical. The advice given was easy to implement. The consultant had excellent knowledge and ability to transfer his knowledge”

“The main thing would be the advisor herself she was very thorough and interested in the business and the workings of it. Very practical. I have gone back to her since”

“I found it all very useful. Most of the suggestions seem to be quite sensible, manageable, and achievable. Very satisfied with the support and services we received”

⁴ This is the % of those citing tangible benefit as a reason for satisfaction rather than the % of those citing actual tangible benefit.

“There was a personal touch and the advisor was very good and knowledgeable and if he didn't know the answer then he went and found this out straight away”

“It was a relatively simply service and what they carry out is easy and effective. For us, it was especially simple in terms of reducing our carbon”

“The service did exactly what it was supposed to do. It was very helpful, so much so that we followed it up this year and are having another audit done so we can see any further improvements or recommendations”

“The report itself was extremely comprehensive, it allowed me to evaluate my options and make informed choices as it gave me very good quantifiable evidence on what would happen if I didn't do things”

Respondents' comments about benefits as a reason for satisfaction included:

“Coming from a non agricultural crofting farming background, it's hard to make a transition without support. It is one of the best schemes I've been on and it helped having someone locally to mentor me and introduce me to this business”

“[I'm] satisfied with the service and with the advice that the advisor provided, we managed to achieve the results that we were looking for when we first approached the farm advisory service”

“Without the advice that was given I would not have taken action as I was not aware of it and I hope to see a major improvement financially by taking up the actions that were recommended”

With regard to highlighting of new issues and increasing beneficiaries' confidence to take action, comments included:

“Well, I think it was a very clear report and it made us think about things we wouldn't have otherwise thought of. Hopefully ... it has helped with some cost saving”

“The fact that they do the report in the first place is great. It highlights all the things that I am doing anyway well whilst also posing the question to do things that I didn't think were necessary before. It made me aware of more modern farming”

“It just makes you aware of some of the things you may not have thought of yourself. It flags up things, points you towards better options.”

“The advice that I received has been useful. I have taken action and it gave me the confidence on taking these actions as I was going to do them anyway”

“It was what I expected - from my own observations I had made some decisions and then the FAS confirming this gave me the confidence to take the decisions and not look back”

5.3 Reasons for dissatisfaction

Just eight respondents (7%) expressed dissatisfaction. Of these, five had received a carbon audit only and the other three had also had an ILMP.

With regard to both the carbon audit and ILMP the respondents felt that the report didn't give them any new or useful information and they had been expecting something more detailed. Their comments included:

“The report basically just highlighted things we already knew. I thought they would come up with some facts and figures to diversify a little but there was basically nothing in it, it was just a history report which we already knew”

“There are lots of issues and blanks in the final report for the carbon audit. There were far too many things not recognised in the report - there is so much more we need to learn about in terms of carbon and so there's lots of room for improvement”

“The carbon audit report has not helped change anything in my business as I have been trying to do these things anyway”

One respondent also commented,

“The procedure is too slow from getting the approval and the advisor to come and to get to the end process from start to finish”

5.4 Other support needs

Respondents were asked if there was any support that they would like that they had not been able to get through the FAS. 63% reported that the support they needed had been available through the FAS. 43 respondents (37%) felt that they needed other support that had not been available through FAS.

Of those who felt that they needed other support, two thirds (28 respondents) were looking for information or advice in a specialist skill or topic. These topics covered:

- Business management issues including profitability, Brexit, budget management succession planning and diversification (10 respondents)
- Farming issues including specific markets of farming, organic farming, animal welfare, pest control, soil testing, manure storage control and grazing management (10 respondents)
- Environmental issues including further ways to reduce carbon and renewable technology (eight respondents)

Comments included:

“There should be a service that relates to finances where we can discuss the business. It is about getting the best return for what you are doing so there should be more financial scrutiny. It would be good to have scenario planning”

“I would like more information on cow welfare and calve rearing and also how to improve the accommodation for the cows to prevent use of antibiotics”

“I would like to do more with regards to soil sampling but am not sure how to go about this. I would also like to learn more about the management of grass”

“We require further solutions to the problems that have been highlighted generally in relation to climate change”

The remaining third were interested in an alternative support type, mainly finance or grants (seven respondents). However, two respondents would have liked mentoring support and one mentioned peer or networking type support.

“More information should be available for farmers and crofters about what grants are available and what they would be eligible for especially with regards to buying equipment”

“There weren't any capital grants on farming to improve things such as personal safety or cattle management - grants or tax breaks to assist on specific projects. This would be a really helpful thing to have if they really want to see improvements”

“Mentoring should be available more and more courses which provide skills on the farm as well as having more crofting available in local areas rather than specific locations”

“Support to set up farmers groups so you can compare with each other as well as more support to younger farmers”

5.5 Improvements to the service

A third (35%) of respondents had suggestions for how they felt the service could be improved.⁵ Of these, almost a third (13 respondents) felt that FAS needed to be advertised better, either because it was a good service to be promoted or to make what was on offer clearer.

“I suppose my ignorance at what services they offer shows that they could advertise themselves much better”

“FAS could be advertised or highlighted better. You have to go looking for it and if you don't look then you don't get”

“The marketing could be better and the benefits from having contact with FAS could be more widely spread”

Other key improvements to the service, suggested by the remaining beneficiaries are listed in Table 9.

⁵ In the few cases (five) where respondents were clearly talking about the FAS one to many service or the Beef Efficiency Scheme rather than the FAS one to one service, these comments have been excluded. Otherwise all comments have been considered.

Table 9: Service improvements, number of respondents

	Number of respondents
Make specific information, detail and depth in the report relevant to the beneficiary	7
Reduction in paperwork	6
Making support more accessible – different locations, format of report	3
Reduce time taken for report to arrive	3
More follow up	3
More specialist advisors	3
Make support less time consuming for beneficiary	2

Their comments included:

“The service has to be less paper and more on the ground, more practical. Farmers are not the best paper people but we know how to learn things quickly. Get off paper into practicality’

“There is too much paperwork involved with the application as farmers already have lots of paperwork to look after with their business so having more with the application can be a bit difficult”

“The carbon audit should have more detailed feedback given to the farmers”

“Reports need to be giving in depth analysis rather than giving information anyone can get”

“There seems to be a lack of focus and no sense of urgency when calling through to FAS. A meeting would be great to obtain feedback although I understand how time consuming this may be”

“Maybe the bulletin could be slightly more accessible with regards to the format used. For example, it should be sent as a PDF document so it is easier to save and locate on my device”

“More consistency with follow up calls and updates whether it be just a call to find out how they have found a certain workshop or how they are getting on since having contact with an advisor”

5.6 Recommending the FAS

Respondents were asked, on a scale of 1-10 where 1 was not at all and 10 extremely, how likely they were to recommend the FAS to other farmers and crofters. The results have been analysed to generate a Net Promoter Score.

A Net Promoter Score (or NPS) is often used to gauge customer satisfaction with, and loyalty to, a particular service and is an index ranging from -100 to 100 that measures customers willingness to recommend a service to others. An NPS of greater than 0 is considered to be good.

Respondents are classified based on their response to the question on how likely they were to recommend the service as follows:

- Promoters – score 9 or 10
- Passives – Score 7 or 8
- Detractors – Score 6 or less.

Table 10: NPS classification, % of respondents (n=116)

	% of respondents
Promoters	39%
Passives	40%
Detractors	21%

To calculate NPS the proportion of detractors is deducted from the proportion of promoters (in this case 39 – 21) giving an NPS of 18.

Consistent with results on satisfaction, the majority of detractors (67%), received a carbon audit only. Whereas all those who received mentoring support were promoters.

There were four cases where respondents reported that they were very satisfied and yet came out as detractors. Three of these scored either 5 or 6 when asked how likely they were to recommend, so at the higher end or the detractor range. One stated that there were no others nearby to whom they could recommend the FAS service.

6 Conclusion

The Farm Advisory Service (FAS) is performing a range of functions in giving farmers ideas for action, a better understanding of which actions to take, their potential benefits and how to do so (with greater confidence).

About a third of the recommended actions would not have been taken without the input of the FAS.

In terms of the benefits achieved, the FAS is mainly acting to **improve** the benefits farmers and crofters achieve through taking recommended actions. These benefits are quite wide ranging including business performance benefits such as increased profitability, the creation and restructuring of businesses, creation and safeguarding of employment and various environmental benefits.

Whilst the mentoring sample was small (reflecting the small proportion of farmers who have been supported in this way), high proportions enjoyed a range of benefits from the support they received.

Satisfaction with the service is relatively high. It is perceived to offer high quality, practical advice.

The majority of respondents struggled to identify other support they would like or improvements to the FAS. Areas that were highlighted by some respondents that FAS could consider for improvement were:

- Improved marketing of the service
- Less paperwork in the provision of the service
- More specific, detailed, relevant advice
- Greater accessibility of the service in terms of locations and formats of support
- Speed of service
- More follow up
- More specialist advisors.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. My name is X and I am calling on behalf of the Scottish Government from a company called Winning Moves. You should recently have received an email to let you know that we would be calling you about the support you have received from the Farm Advisory Service. We are carrying out some work to find out about the impact of this service. Is now okay to speak about this?

If this is not a good time for the respondent to speak: When would be a good time to contact you to talk about this?

When agreeing appointment: (Except for mentoring only respondents) It would be really helpful if you could have a look for the reports you received through the Farm Advisory Service and have these to hand when I call back. This may help if you're struggling to remember exactly what advice you were given and what you have since done.

If needed:

- The Farm Advisory Service (FAS) is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) funded by the EU and Scottish Government.
- We are contacting people who have received support since the programme began in September 2016.
- Our discussion should last up to 15 minutes
- Responses will be anonymised and no personally identifiable details will be published or shared with the Scottish Government.

Screen

You are recorded as having received the following from the Farm Advisory Service (to be included as applicable to the individual):

- An Integrated Land Management Plan
- With Specialist Advice covering X and Y (from database).
- A Carbon Audit
- Mentoring. I will read out what your mentoring included to help remind you about what we're discussing today: from database.

This would have been around date from database. Do you recall receiving this support?

- a. Yes, I recall receiving the support
- b. No – Is there anyone else in the business I could speak to who might recall this?

(Except for mentoring only respondents) In gathering your feedback, it would be really useful if you could refer to the reports you received for this support. Do you have these to hand? (*If no*: Would you be able to have a look for these before I continue the call please? This may help if you're struggling to remember exactly what advice you were given and what you have since done.)

- a. Yes, I have the report(s).
- b. No, I do not have the report(s).

READ TO ALL

This call will be recorded for training and monitoring purposes and all data will be anonymised before reporting and will be stored securely in accordance with data protection regulations. Are you happy to continue?

- a. Yes – Continue
- b. No – End interview

Background

I understand your business is in the X sector (information from database).

1. Which of the following best describes your business:

1. An estate
2. A farm
3. A croft
4. Or a small holding

2. What was your main reason for seeking support?

1. To improve the businesses' financial performance
2. To reduce the businesses' carbon emissions
3. For support to set up a new business
4. Other – please specify

Actions

3.(Not to be asked to mentoring only respondents) For respondents who have a report to hand: Please can you refer to your report in answering the following question.

Have you taken or do you plan to take all, some or none of the actions recommended in your report?

(Where respondent has received more than one support type, go through for each support type: ILMP, specialist advice (1 and 2), carbon audit)

1. I've taken all of the actions suggested.
2. I've taken some of the actions suggested or to an extent.
3. I've not taken any of the actions suggested but intend to take them all.
4. I've not taken any of the actions suggested but intend to take some of them or to an extent.
5. I've not taken any of the actions suggested and do not intend to do so.
6. I do not remember.
7. Don't want to say

4.Please can you list for me the actions you have taken? (researcher to ensure they capture the nature of each action so that these can be categorised in analysis) Open.

5.(For respondents who answered 1-4 to q3) For the actions you have or intend to take, which of the following reasons has contributed to this decision?

1. I was planning to do this anyway. Yes/No
2. The action was easy to take. Yes/No
3. I could see this would be really beneficial to the business. Yes/No
4. I could see this would have a positive environmental impact. Yes/No
5. Other – please specify

6. (For respondents who answered 1-2 to q3) On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very unlikely and 5 very likely, in the absence of the support provided through the Farm Advisory Service, how likely are you to have undertaken these actions?

1. Very unlikely
2. Somewhat unlikely
3. Neither likely nor unlikely
4. Somewhat likely
5. Very likely

7. (For respondents who answered 1 or 2 to q6) How did the support help you to take these actions? (select all that apply)

- a. It gave me the idea for action
- b. It gave me evidence about the likely benefits of the action
- c. It helped me decide which action to take
- d. It helped me understand how to take an action
- e. Other – please specify

8. (For respondents who answered 2,4 and 5 to q3) For the actions you have not and will not be taking, which of the following reasons has contributed to this decision?

1. Too costly Yes/No
2. Insufficient time to implement action Yes/No
3. I do not understand why this action has been recommended. Yes/No
4. I do not think this is necessary for my business Yes/No
5. Other (please specify)

Benefits

9. I'm going to read through a list of benefits. Please can you indicate for each one whether you have achieved this benefit or expect to achieve this benefit in the future through the support you have received from the Farm Advisory Service?

Response options for each benefit:

1. Yes, benefit achieved.
2. Yes, benefit expected to be achieved in the future.
3. No, benefit not achieved nor expected to be achieved in the future but this benefit was sought from this support.
4. No, benefit not achieved nor expected to be achieved in the future but this benefit was not sought from this support.

The first benefits relate to business performance:

- Additional sales
- Reduced costs
- Increased profitability
- Increased productivity
- Improved cash flow
- Improved access to borrowing
- Improved business stability
- Business restructure
- Business diversification
- Successful creation of a new farming or crofting business
- Creation of additional jobs
- Safeguarding of jobs

The next set of benefits refer to farm management and environmental considerations.

- Learnt new skills
- Improved understanding of farming or a particular aspect of farming
- Improved compliance with regulations
- Reduced energy use
- Reduced carbon emissions
- Increased biodiversity of the farm/croft
- Better managed habitats and/or landscape on the farm/croft
- Better managed and/or conserved woodland on the farm/croft
- Better managed soil quality and nutrients on the farm/croft
- Reduced water pollution on the farm/croft
- Increased organic production on the farm/croft
- Increased business resilience to the impact of climate change
- Better managed archaeological and historical sites on the farm/croft
- Improved animal welfare on the farm/croft
- Improved plans for retirement, succession or exit from the business

10. To be asked overall for the benefits achieved⁶: Which of the following best describes how the support provided through the Farm Advisory Service helped you to achieve these benefits?

1. The benefits would not have arisen in the absence of the Farm Advisory Service
2. The benefits are a lot better thanks to the Farm Advisory Service
3. The benefits are a little better thanks to the Farm Advisory Service
4. The benefits would have arisen anyway.

11. To ask those who reported reduced costs: Are you able to provide a figure or an estimate of by how much your costs have reduced per annum?

Yes/no. Figure: (Note to researcher: please take as much detail as possible on this depending on what the respondent can tell you. This could include an amount per annum eg £1,500, a percentage decrease eg overheads have reduced from 25 to 20% per annum.)

12. To ask those who reported additional sales: Are you able to provide a figure or an estimate of your additional sales per annum?

Yes/no. Figure:

⁶ The questionnaire was reviewed after the first two days of fieldwork because the interviews were taking longer than expected. Question 10 was shortened so that this was asked for all benefits (rather than individually for each benefit). For the first responses where this was asked individually, the mean response has been used for this question.

13. To ask those who reported increased profitability: Are you able to provide a figure or an estimate of by how much your profit has increased per annum?

Yes/no. Figure: (Note to researcher: please take as much detail as possible on this depending on what the respondent can tell you. This could include an amount per annum eg £1,500, a percentage increase eg profit has risen from 4 to 5% per annum.)

14. To ask those who reported job creation: How many permanent full time equivalent jobs have been created?

Figure:

14. To ask those who reported job safeguarding: How many permanent full time equivalent jobs have been safeguarded?

Figure:

15. To ask those who reported a reduction in carbon emissions: Are you able to provide a figure or an estimate of how much you have saved?

Yes/no. Figure for carbon saving per annum:

Satisfaction

16. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 very satisfied, how satisfied are you with the results of the support you received from the Farm Advisory Service to date?

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Somewhat dissatisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Somewhat satisfied
5. Very satisfied

17. (For those who answered 1-2 to q16) Why not? Open.

18. (For those who answered 3-5 to q16) Why? Open.

19. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is very unlikely and 10 very likely, how likely are you to recommend the Farm Advisory Service to other farmers or crofters?

Gaps

20. Is there any support you would like that has not been available through the Farm Advisory Service? Open.

(If respondent is struggling to think of anything: Has there been anything you have struggled with where support might help? Or is there something you might be interested in doing but you don't know much about?)

21. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on how we could improve this service to farmers? Open.

(If respondent is struggling to think of anything: This could relate to the nature of the support available, how it is provided, the application process or anything else.)

Closing

Researcher to categorise: 1. Male 2. Female

Could I please ask which of the following age brackets do you fall into?

1. 16-30
2. 31-40
3. 41-50
4. 51-60
5. Over 60

22. As part of our quality procedures a research manager may be in contact with you to verify some of the answers you have provided, is this ok?

- a. Yes
- b. No

23. Finally, would you like to take Winning Moves' number or the Market Research Society Freephone number to check anything about the company or the work that we are doing?

- a. Winning Moves – 0121 285 3800
- b. MRS – 0800 975 9596
- c. None

Appendix 2: Sample profile

n=116 for all tables in Appendix 2.

	Proportion of FAS database	Achieved sample
ILMP only	7%	7%
ILMP and specialist advice only	18%	18%
Carbon audit only	40%	43%
Mentoring (including with other support)	6%	7%
ILMP, carbon audit and specialist support	25%	23%
ILMP and carbon audit only	4%	2%

Farm size	Proportion of FAS database	Achieved sample
Under 20 hectares	8%	9%
20-50	9%	9%
50-100	15%	13%
100-200	25%	27%
More than 200 hectares	43%	42%

Farm sector	Proportion of FAS database	Achieved sample
Mixed	20%	16%
Cattle and sheep (less favoured area)	48%	47%
Cattle and sheep (lowland)	7%	5%
Cereals	4%	8%
Dairy	9%	11%
General cropping	6%	8%
General cropping forage	1%	0%
Horticulture	3%	4%
Pigs	1%	0%
Poultry	1%	1%

Gender	Proportion of FAS database	Achieved sample - database	Respondent identified
Male	78%	85%	83%
Female	20%	14%	17%
Not known	2%	1%	

Business type	Achieved sample
An estate	6%
A farm	82%
A croft	3%
A small holding ⁷	9%

Age	Achieved sample
16-30	6%
31-40	17%
41-50	23%
51-60	32%
Over 60	16%
Prefer not to say	5%

⁷ An area of land under 50 acres that is sold or let to someone for cultivation.



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