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*"If you are a farmer, forester or crofter in Scotland today you are most likely facing a number of challenges. It could be that some of them could be solved by the right people putting their heads together."* – Scottish RISS

The Scottish Rural Innovation Support Service (RISS), part of the Scottish Rural Network and led by Soil Association Scotland, has recently been launched to help farmers, foresters and crofters in Scotland explore business ideas.

The RISS consists of 40 brokers from the partner organisations SAC Consulting, SAOS, Scotland Food and Drink and Innovative Farmers. Land managers can request support from the RISS – one of the brokers is assigned to help them form a partnership to develop their ideas. The broker brings in others from anywhere – such as supply chain business, tech, research, marketing – depending on the group's aim. The group will work towards a project plan which can be used to access funding from a range of sources, including the Rural Development Programme or just to get started.

David Michie from Soil Association Scotland: "Some of the best ideas in farming come from farmers themselves. RISS will enable farmers, foresters and crofters to figure out how to make their ideas work for their business. Our partnership will reach across Scotland and along the supply chain – getting the right people together to enable innovation."

Three grass-based dairy farmers in the South West have formed the first working group, with the aim of speeding up breeding. They want to combine their herd data with genetic testing to rank the cattle, then use affordable IVF and embryo transfer to breed from the best cows. Facilitator Hamish Walls of SAOS has brought in a dairy geneticist from SRUC, Professor Mike Coffey, who in turn has brought in an animal reproductive specialist. This group is exciting because it is combining sustainable agriculture with cutting edge technology, with implications across the dairy, and possibly beef, industry in the UK.

More information: [www.innovativefarmers.org/welcometoriss](http://www.innovativefarmers.org/welcometoriss) [1]

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#### **Links**

[1] <http://www.innovativefarmers.org/welcometoriss>