



In 2014, NFU Scotland launched a campaign to support farmers, crofters and people working in land-based industries with dyslexia.

Figures suggest that dyslexia could be much higher in farming communities than it is in the general population. As farming is an industry that typically involves lots of day-to-day paperwork and form-filling, it is important that help and support is there for those who need it.

We believe that nobody should feel disempowered to further their career in agriculture because of a lack of confidence in their capabilities due to dyslexia.

A short video on our campaign can be found here: <https://youtu.be/8VG86RdIKVY>

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a spectrum learning difficulty recognised under the Disability Scotland Act 2010. It is hereditary.

The dyslexic brain is wired differently to the non-dyslexic brain resulting in some big positives as well as some big challenges:

Advantages

Disadvantages

Highly intelligent and articulate	Difficulty in learning to read or interpret words, letters and other symbols
Excellent long term recall	Poor short term memory
Creative, 3D thinker: thinks in images	Confuses left and right
Thrives in careers where visual-spatial, hands-on skills can be realised: engineers, entrepreneurs, actors, musicians, athletes, police, army, sales and farming	Hides difficulties from co-workers, friends and even family; often employed in job that will hide difficulties
Excels at problem-solving	Becomes frustrated with long forms or sequential processes
Strong sense of justice	Symptoms increase dramatically with stress
Ability to think outside the box	Requires vastly more concentration to read and interpret words than non-dyslexics

What are the aims of the campaign?

A Farming with Dyslexia Working Group has been established with three main objectives:

- Raise awareness of dyslexia to reduce the stigma and promote the abilities of dyslexic individuals which are of great benefit to the agriculture industry
- Engage with the Scottish Government and other stakeholders to ensure measures to recognise dyslexia among the farming community are appropriate.

- Ensure systems of communication with regulatory bodies are more accessible for dyslexic farmers and crofters with a choice of delivery options

The members of the working group are:

- NFU Scotland
- Scottish Government
- Dyslexia Scotland
- The Crofting Commission
- SRUC
- SAYFC
- Forestry Commission Scotland
- RSABI
- Dyslexic farmers and crofters

What progress has been made?

- The campaign has received the backing of cross-party politicians and senior figures in the Scottish Government.
- NFUS continues to receive a phone calls to its specially dedicated Farming with Dyslexia helpline, which is manned by Union staff and provides a signposting service to anybody (not just NFUS members) seeking help or advice.
- Union staff attend quarterly meetings of the Dyslexia Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament, which is chaired by MSPs and attended by a range of organisations working in the education field, to feed back on the campaign and to promote the objectives as set out above.
- NFUS has overhauled its house style and system of communications, offering bespoke training for staff on how to make information more accessible for all members, and particularly those with dyslexia.
- NFUS has produced a 'best practice in communications guide', which all partnering groups have signed up to, to promote the principles of dyslexia-friendly and accessible communications.

- Kirstie Baird, a student from SRUC Ayr, has been appointed as Young Ambassador to the campaign, to speak to her peers about dyslexia and the help available.

Looking ahead, we will...

- Engage with government schemes such as Access to Work to find tools and mechanisms that can assist dyslexic individuals working in agriculture, and promote this to the membership.
- Lobby for funding for self-employed individuals to receive testing for dyslexia, so that they can access schemes such as Access to Work and share their diagnosis with Scottish Government in the case of inspections.
- Lobby wider regulatory bodies such as the Chemical Regulation Directorate and City and Guilds to ensure reasonable adjustments are instilled in labelling and spray testing for the benefit of those with dyslexia.
- Work with Scottish Government as it rolls out a training programme to all staff on de-bunking jargon, simpler communications, and making help easier to access for dyslexic individuals.
- Work with Scottish Government is to simplify the online applications process, making it easier for all to access.
- Appoint more campaign Ambassadors from different walks of life in the farming community to speak about their experiences and encourage others to seek help if they need it.

For more information, please call the Farming with Dyslexia helpline on 07775 804 717.