

Can you introduce yourself and share what drives your passion for agriculture?

My name is Rose O'Donovan & I come from a mixed farm on the Southwest coast of Ireland overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Incidentally, it was my grandmother Mary Coughlan, who purchased the 100 acre holding from her older brother Tim, following a stint working in New York. Her eldest son Frank – my father – inherited the land & farmed it until his passing in November 2007. So I grew up milking cows, driving tractors & tending to sheep & lambs, in a vibrant local community in West Cork. I would say it was my upbringing that sparked my interest in the sector.

What challenges have you faced in your career and how did you overcome them?

A major challenge was competing with well-funded media players entering the agri-food policy space. Once dominant in Brussels, Agra Facts faced a 'David vs. Goliath' battle but maintained credibility by staying true to our strengths & building trust among our readers. Plus business has never been better !



Rose O'Donovan
Editor-in-Chief, Agra Facts

What led you to your current role? Was there a defining moment?

I moved to Brussels exactly 21 years ago for an internship with the then EP President Pat Cox. After completing my 'stage,' I unexpectedly landed the role of Deputy Editor of Agra Facts in 2007. With no journalistic experience, Roger Waite, the then Editor, took a chance on me. When he left to become the spokesperson for ex-Commissioner Dacian Cioloş in 2010, overnight I became the boss.

That was a defining moment, as Agra Facts had been regarded as the 'Bible' of agricultural policy reporting since 1996. It was a challenge, but I like to think I rose to the occasion. My former colleague Ed Bray, who served as Deputy Editor from 2010-2017, & Chris Lyddon, Deputy Editor since then, have been instrumental in keeping the whole show on the road.

What advice would you give to women entering your field today?

“ Since I started working in this field in May 2007, I cannot get over the change that has occurred. Back in 2012, I established ‘Agri Ladies’ - a Brussels-based network for women in agri-food. What began as small gatherings in my apartment has grown to 400 members, with 50-60 attending monthly meetups. My advice is quite simple: go for it. ”

How does your work contribute to the future of agriculture?

My key responsibilities include reporting on evolving EU agricultural, trade & environmental policy and keeping Agra Facts subscribers up to date with the latest happenings when it comes to the CAP & the relevant legislative initiatives in the agri-food space.

As for how our work contributes to the future of agriculture, we would like to think that it provides an accurate & timely overview of happenings in Brussels.

Can you share a moment when you felt particularly supported or uplifted by other women in your field?

“ The beauty about being the Editor of Agra Facts is that I know most of the subscribers personally. I send out the bi-weekly newsletter, handle the administrative side of things & I have built up quite a good relationship with readers in Brussels & beyond. On February 12, Agra Facts ‘broke’ the story about the ‘Vision on Agriculture & Food’. Quite the coup for a small outfit. The positive feedback was immediate. So whether it’s small wins, or big wins, generally speaking, there is support from other women in my field. They’ve got my back. And I’ve got theirs. ”