

Michael Wallace is Senior Lecturer in Farm Business Management, based in the School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. He came to Newcastle from University College Dublin and gained his first degree and a PhD in agricultural economics from Queen's University Belfast. He describes the discipline of farm business management as "enabling farmers to make better business decisions, making best use of the resources of land, labour and capital available to them, while also protecting the environment".

Michael is from an agricultural background and grew up on a dairy and beef farm in Ireland. He enjoys the outdoors, both in his professional and private life, being a keen fisherman and walker. When he went to university to study agricultural economics it seemed like a natural step, but he wasn't intending to take up an academic career. "It was in the early 90s when there were a lot of policy-related issues that stimulated my interest. Then, when I was working on my final year dissertation I started to get really interested in the research side and decided to carry on and do a PhD. My topic was looking at the role of goals and objectives in farmer decision making and I was modelling the impact of different motivational factors and how farmers respond to particular policy changes," he explained.

He was attracted to Newcastle by the reputations of both the university's School of Agriculture Food and Rural Development, and of the city itself. "The reputation of the School is outstanding," he said, "and I was looking forward to the opportunity to work with new people and make new collaborations. Plus Newcastle has two farms which provide a unique resource in the university research sector – few departments are so well equipped. And the city itself is such a friendly place, with beautiful countryside and coastline within easy reach."

The possibilities for interdisciplinary working provided an added attraction. "My research is about finding solutions to technical and economic challenges and, increasingly, an environmental perspective as well" he said. "These are complex issues that cannot be solved by one discipline alone. In my research I will be working with other social and natural scientists, modelling agricultural production systems from an economic and environmental perspective. In my teaching, I hope I will also be giving the students the tools they need to make better management decisions in their own professional lives."

He is looking forward to the possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration at Newcastle, with both natural and social scientists, and welcomes the opportunities offered by having two university farms associated with the School.