

PAT JESS

Art McGrath is the Agricultural Advisor in this area.

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Yes Pat, these farms are small. Only 10 to 15% of them are greater than 30 acres. And as a result of that the flock size and the herd size tend to be very small. A typical farm would consist of about five animals, five bovine animals, and 48 sheep.

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Small farms with elderly and conservative owner-occupiers are not really viable in a modern Western economy. One way to improve incomes and living standards would be to consolidate and enlarge holdings. This has been tried, but attachment to land is so strong that ownership is not easily given up. An alternative would be cooperatives. Schemes have been tried, but now they're mainly limited to purchasing and marketing. The most active association here is the Glencolmcille Sheep Farmers Cooperative.

ART MCGRATH

In the mid-60s the Government, the Department of Agriculture, had this as a pilot area, and we pumped in a lot of resources, human resources and money, and we developed the farms. Now a lot of work went on, hill land development and pig production was started. So what the result, there was a lot of farm produce that had to be marketed. And the system before that had been, men came to farm gates and bought the produce from the farmers, but with this new extra produce they thought that maybe with the laws of supply and demand the price would go down. So the farmers combined themselves and they thought that they would call more of the shots in what price the produce would get. So a committee was formed here in about 1970 with the view to organising sales, and they've been going since then.

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