

## Constitution and Rules

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## Constitution and Rules of The Ulster Farmers' Union

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### CONSTITUTION AND RULES OF THE ULSTER FARMERS' UNION

#### Title

1. The organisation shall be called the Ulster Farmers' Union (the Union).

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#### Objects

##### 2. Mission Statement.

2.1. To serve its members by promoting and supporting a vibrant and sustainable rural economy where agriculture is secure and pivotal to its future.

##### 3. Objectives

3.1. To defend the rights and promote the interests of its members.

3.2. To seek to secure the economic sustainability and quality of life for farm families.

3.3. To encourage environmentally sustainable welfare friendly market orientated farming practices.

3.4. To improve the wider social infrastructures within the rural economy.

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#### Membership

4. Membership shall be designated in five categories, **Full Farming and Growing, Student, Honorary Life, Rural Dweller and Corporate.**

4.1. **Full Farming and Growing** shall be open to:

4.1.1. Persons who are actively engaged in farming and have capital employed in a farm business.

4.1.2. Each Full Farming and Growing family membership engaged in farming, may nominate up to two representatives for voting purposes.

4.1.3. Persons formerly qualified under Rule 4.1.1 who are now retired.

4.2. **Student** membership shall be open to:

4.2.1. Any individual who is currently studying an agricultural related course at a recognised academic institution. Student members will have no voting rights.

4.3. **Honorary Life** membership shall be conferred by Council at an Annual General Meeting on any full member for distinguished service to the Union, on the recommendation of a County Committee endorsed by the Executive.

4.4. **Rural Dweller** membership shall be open to:

4.4.1. Any person not engaged in active farming but has a vested interest in the work of the UFU. Rural Dweller members will have no voting rights.

4.5 **Corporate** membership shall be open to:

4.5.1. Any organisation/business that has a vested interest in the work of the UFU. Corporate members will have no voting rights.

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### Membership subscriptions

5. The annual subscription shall be due on 1 January each year, at such a rate as is determined by the Executive Committee.
6. Members whose subscriptions are not paid by 31 December in the year due shall be considered to have cancelled their membership.

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### Conditions of Membership

7. Voting rights and membership of Union Council or Committees shall be restricted to full members paid up in the current or preceding calendar year.
8. A member who transgresses the rules of the Union shall be liable to suspension or expulsion by the organisation, as determined by the Ethics and Standards Committee. The member shall have the right of appeal to the Executive. Such suspended or expelled member shall have no claim on the funds of the Union.
  - 8.1. The Union shall operate in accordance with its Code of Conduct, which sets out the expected standards of behaviour for members, and its Standing Orders, which prescribe the procedures for conducting meetings.
  - 8.2. The Ethics and Standards Committee shall be responsible for overseeing compliance with the Union's Code of Conduct and Standing Orders. All members are expected to adhere to these requirements, and failure to do so may result in sanctions as determined by the Committee.

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### Constitution

9. The Union shall be organised into **Groups, County Committees, Policy Committees, an Executive Committee and a Council.** A Management **Board** shall oversee the day-to-day work of the Union.
10. Union members shall be allocated to a Group (and may be allocated to a **Branch** within a Group where Branches exist).
11. Representatives appointed by Groups within a County shall constitute a County Committee.
12. The policy-making and administration body shall be the Executive Committee.

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### UFU Groups

13. A UFU Group shall consist of the fully paid Union members, Student members and Honorary Life members affiliated to it.
14. The UFU Group shall be administered by a Group Committee serviced by one or more Group Managers, one of whom shall be Group Publicity Officer.
15. The UFU Group Committee shall be appointed at an Annual or Biennial General Meeting, held in February, and shall consist of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Sectoral, Central and Specialist Policy Committee representatives and up to five additional members.
16. The Group Committee shall have responsibility for supervising the work and the performance of its Group Managers, and shall, through its representatives on the Executive, report on any matters pertaining thereto.
17. The UFU Group Committee shall have the power to enquire into, advise on, or resolve any matters affecting the interests of members of the Group, subject only to confirmation with Union policy.
18. The Group shall appoint at an Annual or Biennial General meeting one representative to each Sectoral, Central and Specialist Policy Committee referred to in Rule 31 where there is sufficient local interest in the work

of that Committee. Four additional members shall be appointed to serve with each Sectoral, Central and Specialist Policy Committee representative as a local Committee with the exception of the Animal Health, Environmental and Legislation Policy Groups. The Group shall appoint additional members to the Executive as set out in rule 38.2.4.

19. Each Group shall appoint delegates to Council on the basis of one per 50 (or part thereof) in addition to its Chairman, Vice-Chairman and its Sectoral, Central and Specialist Policy Committee Representatives.
20. Each Group shall organise six events each year for members, a minimum of three of which must be open business meetings for members.
21. The Group shall maintain accurate accounts of income and expenditure in such form as determined by the Executive from time to time. Proper accounts shall be presented annually to the Group.
22. Branches can be constituted within Groups.
  - 22.1. Any Group of members qualified under Rule 4.1. may seek to form a Branch within a Group, so long as the number of members of such a Branch does not fall below 25.
  - 22.2. Any proposal to form a new Branch must be ratified by the Executive, and fulfilment of Rule 4.1. will not confer an implied right to establishment of a Branch.
  - 22.3. All subscription income raised from Branch members shall be held in the Group account. Any other funds raised by Branches shall be credited to those Branches.
  - 22.4. Each Branch shall hold an Annual General Meeting in January at which it shall elect a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary.

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## County Committees

23. The Role of the County Committees is outlined in the Schedule of Delegated Authority.
24. The County Committee shall consist of the following:
  - 24.1. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each Group within the County.
  - 24.2. Members appointed to Council from each Group within the County.
  - 24.3. Sectoral, Central and Specialist Policy Committee representatives from within the County.
  - 24.4. One member appointed from each Senior Young Farmers' Club in the County.
  - 24.5. All past Presidents from within the County.
  - 24.6. Group Managers from the related County Groups. Group Managers will have no voting rights.
25. Each County Committee shall hold an Annual General Meeting in March and shall meet at least four times per year.
26. Each County Committee shall elect amongst its members a Chairman and Vice-Chairman.
27. The Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the County Committee shall not hold such office for more than two successive years.
28. The County Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be ex-officio members of the Executive.
29. The operating costs of County Committees shall be borne by the Union on the basis of agreed expenditure estimates.
30. Each County Committee should nominate one candidate for each of the Office Bearer positions. (refer to Schedule of Delegated Authority)

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## Policy Committees - designation

31. Policy Committees shall be designated as standing sub-committees of the Executive and shall consist of **Sectoral Policy Committees, Central Policy Committees, and Specialist Policy Committees.**

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## Sectoral Policy Committees

**31.1.** Sectoral Policy Committees shall be, **Beef and Lamb, Dairy, Hill Farming, Pork and Bacon, Potatoes, Poultry, Seeds and Cereals.**

**31.2.** One person may be elected by each UFU Group at its Annual or Biennial General Meeting to each Sectoral Policy Committee.

**31.2.1.** The person appointed shall be a paid-up member of the Group.

**31.2.2.** Only persons who are currently and actively producing livestock or crops directly relevant to the Sectoral Policy Committee shall be eligible for appointment to the respective Sectoral Policy Committee.

**31.2.3.** Only persons farming land within the original LFA (as determined by Council European Directive 75/268) shall be eligible for appointment to the Hill Farming Committee.

**31.2.4.** Should Groups not have members who satisfy rule 31.2.2., they can propose members to be considered for co-option by the respective Sectoral Policy Committee.

**31.3.** Sectoral Policy Committees can co-opt sufficient members, from proposals made by Groups under Rule 31.2.4., or from proposals from Sectoral Policy Committee members, to bring membership numbers up to 30, of which a maximum of five will be co-options. Committees should ensure that the majority of co-opted members are under 40 years of age.

**31.4.** Co-options to Central Committees should be selected to ensure that a balance of the interests within the committee is covered and that the balance of County representation is maintained.

**31.5.** Each Sectoral Policy Committee shall hold an Annual General Meeting in March/April, and shall elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman, who shall take up office immediately after the UFU AGM and who shall be eligible to serve a maximum term of three consecutive years.

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## Central Policy Committees

**31.6.** Central Policy Committees shall be **Animal Health and Welfare, Environmental, Legislation, Rural Affairs, Rural Development, and Rural Enterprise.**

**31.6.1.** The **Animal Health and Welfare** Policy Committee shall deal with all Animal Health issues that may affect farming.

**31.6.1.1.** The Beef and Lamb, Dairy, Hill Farming, Pork and Bacon, Poultry, committees shall, at their Annual General meeting, appoint two members to represent their committee on the Animal Health Policy Committee.

**31.6.1.2.** The Animal Health Policy Committee may co-opt additional members to ensure that it has a representative from each County in the Province.

**31.6.1.3.** Voting, where required, will be on the basis of one vote per commodity interest.

**31.6.1.4.** The Animal Health and Welfare Policy Committee shall hold an Annual General Meeting as soon as practical and shall elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman who shall have been nominated by different sectors and who shall take up office after the UFU AGM. The maximum term shall be three consecutive years.

**31.6.2.** The **Environmental Policy Committee** shall deal with all environmental issues that may affect farming.

**31.6.2.1.** Each Sectoral, Central and Specialist Policy Committee shall at the Annual General Meeting appoint one member to represent their Committee on the Environmental Policy Committee.

**31.6.2.2.** The Environmental Policy Committee may co-opt additional members to ensure that it has a representative from each County in the Province.

**31.6.2.3.** Voting, where required, will be on the basis of one vote per commodity interest.

**31.6.2.4.** The Environmental Policy Committee shall hold an Annual General meeting as soon as practical and shall elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman who shall have been nominated by different Sectoral, Central and Specialist Policy Committees and who shall take up office immediately after the UFU AGM and who shall be eligible to serve a maximum term of three consecutive years.

**31.6.3. The Legislation, Rural Affairs, Rural Development and Rural Enterprise, Policy Committees.**

**31.6.3.1.** One person may be elected by each Group at its Annual or Biennial General Meeting to each of the Central Policy Committees in Rule 31.6.3.

**31.6.3.2.** The Central Policy Committees in 31.6.3. shall have the option to co-opt an additional five members to the Committee. Committees should ensure that the majority of co-opted members are under 40 years of age.

**31.6.3.3.** Each of the Central Policy Committees, in rule 31.6.3., shall hold an Annual General Meeting in March/ April and shall elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman who shall take up office immediately after the UFU AGM and who shall be eligible to serve a maximum term of three consecutive years.

**32.** In the event of a Sectoral or Central Policy Committee at its Annual General Meeting being unable to find elected Policy Committee member/s willing to serve as Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman the election of Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting when co-opted members will be eligible for election.

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**Specialist Policy Committees**

**33.** Specialist Policy Committees shall be established to deal with sectoral interests not covered by Sectoral Policy Committees, as approved by the Executive from time to time.

**33.1.** At the time of approval of these rules, the following Specialist Policy Committees are approved: **Fruit and Horticulture.**

**33.1.1.** Specialist Committees shall have a maximum membership of 12, and shall meet as required up to a maximum of four times per year.

**33.1.2.** One person may be elected by each Group at its Annual or Biennial General Meeting to each of the Specialist Policy Committees, from members who are currently and actively producing crops or livestock relevant to those committees.

**33.1.3.** Each Specialist Policy Committee shall have the option to co-opt an additional three members to the committee, who should be selected to ensure that a balance of the interests within the committee is covered.

**33.2.** Each of the Specialist Policy Committees, in rule 33.1., shall hold an Annual General Meeting in March, and shall elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman who shall take up office immediately after the UFU AGM and who shall be eligible to serve a maximum term of three consecutive years.

**33.3.** In considering a proposal to establish a Specialist Policy Committee for a new interest not already covered by an existing Sectoral or Specialist Policy Committee, the Executive shall have a regard to the number of members involved and the contribution that such a Policy Committee could make to the overall running of the Union.

**33.4.** The Executive may approve that a Sectoral Policy Committee be re-defined as a Specialist Policy Committee or vice versa, at the request of the Committee or where the Executive considers that a change of status would result in more appropriate representation of the interest concerned. The size and method of appointment of Specialist Policy Committees shall be determined by the Executive on an individual basis.

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### Policy Committees - operation

34. Sectoral, Central and Specialist Policy Committees shall report to the Executive committee and written reports of their work shall be provided periodically to the Executive.
35. In cases where recommendations of such Policy Committees would have an adverse effect on the interest of such other Policy Committees or Policy areas the Executive shall have the power to vary the recommendations.
36. It is recommended that the maximum period of continuous membership of any Sectoral, Central or Specialist Policy Committee should be 10 years unless the member holds office within the Policy Committee.

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### UFU Board

37. The Board shall meet as often as required for the efficient conduct of its function and not less than nine times in any Committee year.
  - 37.1. The role of the UFU Board is outlined in the Schedule of Delegated Authority.
  - 37.2. The Board shall consist of:
    - 37.2.1. UFU Office Bearers.
    - 37.2.2. Immediate Past President.
    - 37.2.3. A member appointed by each County Committee.
    - 37.2.4. Three co-opted members.
    - 37.2.5. The Chief Executive and the Internal Services Manager of the Union, both of whom shall have no voting rights.
  - 37.3. Appointed members will serve a three-year term with two retiring each year in rotation.
    - 37.3.1. Appointed members can serve a maximum of two consecutive three-year terms.
    - 37.3.2. Past Presidents of the Union are not eligible to serve as appointed members.
  - 37.4. The maximum term for co-opted members shall be two consecutive two-year terms.
  - 37.5. External appointments should be made by the Board against defined criteria with input from the relevant Commodity Committee(s). The reasons for selection will be shared with the Commodity Committee and appointments should be subject to the approval of the Executive.

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### Executive

38. The Executive Committee shall meet as often as required for the efficient conduct of its function and not less than nine times in any Committee year.
  - 38.1. The Role of the Executive is outlined in the Schedule of Delegated Authority.
  - 38.2. The Executive shall consist of:
    - 38.2.1. The Office Bearers
    - 38.2.2. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each Group
    - 38.2.3. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each County Committee
    - 38.2.4. One member appointed by each Group in Counties Antrim and Down. Two members appointed by each Group in Counties Fermanagh, Armagh, Londonderry and Tyrone
    - 38.2.5. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each Sectoral, Central and Specialist Policy Committee
    - 38.2.6. Two YFCU representatives elected by the Executive Committee of the YFCU
    - 38.2.7. One Member appointed by each County Committee of the YFCU
    - 38.2.8. Up to three additional members co-opted at the first meeting
    - 38.2.9. All past Presidents with at least three attendance or apologies during the preceding year
    - 38.2.10. All members of the Board
    - 38.2.11. The NFU Mutual Insurance Society NI Group Manager and Office holders of NAGS shall be invited to meetings of the Executive, but shall not be entitled to vote
    - 38.2.12. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee
39. 20 members of the Executive shall form a quorum.
40. The Chairman of the Executive shall be a current Office bearer. In the absence of current Office Bearers, the Executive is empowered to appoint one of its members for that meeting.

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## Council

41. The Council shall meet once a year in the form of an Annual General Meeting, normally in April of each year, or as such other meetings as may, from time to time, appear necessary, and shall be a forum for discussion of issues affecting Union policy and/or matters affecting those engaged in the agricultural industry.
- 41.1. The Role of the Council is outlined in the Schedule of Delegated Authority.
- 41.2. The Council shall exercise its powers in accordance with the Schedule of Delegated Authority, ensuring the appropriate delegation of responsibilities within the Union.
42. The Council shall consist of the members of the Six County Committees plus any additional members of the UFU Executive or Board who are not already members of a County Committee.
43. Meetings of the Council other than its Annual General Meeting shall be decided by the Office Bearers, at the request of the Executive, or by written request of not less than 50 Council members.
44. The Office Bearers of the Union shall be elected by Council at its Annual General Meeting from amongst the membership of the Council, from nominations made by County Committees.
45. The term of Office for President shall be two years and the maximum term for Deputy Presidents shall be two consecutive, two year terms. Other than in exceptional circumstances candidates for President shall have served as Deputy President before becoming eligible for election.
46. An audited report of the Union's finances shall be prepared and presented at the Annual General Meeting of Council.
47. At least seven working days notice shall normally be given of the place, date and time of the Council meetings.
48. 50 members of Council shall form a quorum.
49. All questions shall be resolved by a simple majority of those present, eligible and voting.

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## Collective Responsibility

50. All present members of Committees will be bound by decisions of those Committees. Their dissent can however be recorded in the Minutes. Where a Committee member transgresses this rule, the Committee shall in the first instance ask the member to resign from that Committee but in the event that the member does not resign, the Committee can decide to suspend or remove this member from that Committee. The member shall have the right of appeal to the Executive.

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## Elections

51. Rules governing the election of members will apply to all elected positions within the organisation.
- 51.1. All voting shall be on the basis of one vote per member and shall be conducted by secret ballot.
- 51.2. No voting by proxy is permitted.
- 51.3. All questions shall be resolved by a simple majority of those present, eligible and voting.
- 51.4. The consent of a nominee should be obtained prior to their nomination. Where this is not the case any appointment can only be ratified by the appointee's subsequent confirmation of consent.
- 51.5. Nominations shall be made secretly unless it is the unanimous decision of those present at the meeting to have open nominations
- 51.6. The attendance records of the following members must be made public at the time of the subsequent elections: Members of the Executive Committee, Members of Sectoral, Central and Specialist Policy Committees, Members of the Board.
- 51.7. For the election of Deputy Presidents, a system of elimination of the lowest candidate shall operate when necessary. Council members will be asked to vote for two candidates in round one of voting. To be deemed elected a candidate must obtain over 50 % of the registered voters. If no candidate achieves over 50%, in the first round, the lowest candidate is eliminated and the second voting round still has two votes. If one candidate achieves over 50% they are deemed elected and the lowest candidate is eliminated, before moving to a second round with only one vote for the remaining candidates. This would be repeated until a second candidate achieves over 50% of registered voters.

**51.8.** In the event of a tie, re-voting shall be carried out for the tied candidates all other candidates having been either deemed elected or eliminated. Should a tie remain a re-vote shall be carried out following whatsoever additional input from the candidates the Chairman shall deem appropriate. Should a tie still remain a determination shall be made by using the Chairman's casting vote or drawing lots.

**51.8.1.** In the event of a tie in the election of the Union's Office Bearers re-voting shall be carried out for the tied candidates all other candidates having been either deemed elected or eliminated. Should a tie remain a re-vote shall be carried out following whatsoever additional input from the candidates the Chairman shall deem appropriate. Should a tie still remain the decision shall be deferred to an EGM for the sole purpose of resolving the tied election. Subsequent to a vote at the EGM should a tie still remain a determination shall be made by using the Chairman's casting vote or drawing lots.

**51.9.** It is recommended that each UFU Group Committee and County Committee should meet prior to their Annual General Meeting to prepare a list of nominations to be submitted at their Annual General Meeting. Further names may be added to any list of nominations before voting takes place.

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## Accounts

- 52.** Proper audited accounts for the Union's Headquarters organisation shall be prepared annually for the year ending on 31st December. The report and accounts shall be presented at the next following Annual General Meeting.
- 53.** Surplus funds of the Union may be invested by the Board having considered the advice available to it.
- 54.** The Funds and Property of the Union shall be held in Trust for the Union by either, a sole Trustee which is a Banking Company, or two individual trustees who shall be Partners in a firm of Solicitors practising in Northern Ireland, and in either case Trustee or Trustees shall be selected by the UFU Executive Committee.

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## Notices Convening Meetings

- 55.** The service of notice for meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Union's Standing Orders.

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## Alteration Of Constitution and Rules

- 56.** Any proposal to alter, repeal or add to the existing Constitution and Rules shall be made in the form of a special resolution at the Annual General Meeting of Council, or at an Extraordinary Meeting of Council specially convened for discussion of the resolution. A two-thirds majority shall be required to approve a special resolution.

**56.1.** The Board shall initiate a comprehensive review of the Constitution and Rules at least once every five years. This review shall be submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration and must be completed in advance of the Annual General Meeting of Council. The review process shall take into account any changes in the organisational structure of the Union to ensure continued relevance and effective governance.

- 57.** Notice of motion of a special resolution shall be given in writing to the Chief Executive not less than 21 days prior to the date of the meeting at which the resolution is to be discussed, and must be signed by at least 15 members of the Executive Committee.

*Approved by Council on 30 April 2026*