Name: Mairéad Slater

Degree Title: MSc in Management of Information Systems

Dissertation Title: Information Systems and Technology in Agriculture: Improving Work-Life Balance for Irish Farmers?

Supervisor: Diana Wilson

Year: 2014

Abstract

Information Systems have been designed to improve the connectedness, way of life and standard of living of users. Information Systems also impact the work-life balance of workers as they enable workers to be "always on". Work-life balance itself is now morphing into work life integration as both elements are now so interconnected there are no discernible boundaries. This research aims to identify if and how Information Systems and technology improve the work-life balance of workers, with a particular focus on Irish farmers. This dissertation is using Irish agriculture as its main focus; however, it can be applied to other disciplines as an examination as to how IS/IT improves the quality of life for users as part of their work-life balance or integration. It also demonstrates how workers adapt to new technology as part of positive change management.

Available literature and secondary data sources were used in conjunction with qualitative data from interviews to review this research question and to draw the conclusions in this dissertation. This study shows that the modern farmer is making a conscious decision to spend more time off-farm with family or pursuing additional income than working on the farm. This study also shows that Information Systems do enable a positive work-life balance for farmers so that they can spend more time off farm. Information Systems and technology also remove the need for additional labour on the farm which means that the farmer must be more independent and work on their own. This independence can make the farmyard a lonelier place for the farmer. Without additional outside pursuits, the farmer may become insular and separated from the rest of society.