



Denis Naughten, TD, Cathaoirleach
Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development, and the Islands
Leinster House
Dublin 2
E-mail: spcrd@oireachtas.ie

15 February 2024

Ref: JSPCRDI-i-347 Small Farmers and Jobseeker's Benefit Qualifications

Dear Denis,

I am writing to the Committee in response to the query regarding Parliamentary Question 279 of 25th January 2024 (Ref: 3546/24).

A person may qualify for Jobseeker's Benefit where they have sustained a substantial loss in their employment. A day is not normally treated as a day of unemployment if the person is engaged in an occupation from which they derive any remuneration or profit, which would include farming.

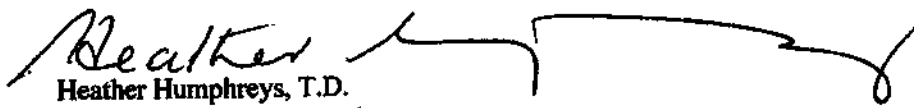
The evidence presented by the official to the Committee, to which you refer, was in relation to subsidiary employment. This is a specific circumstance in which it is possible for a person to be engaged in employment on a given day and still satisfy the unemployment condition for that day. I understand that the official has provided the detail of this provision to the Committee.

Regulations provide that a person may be eligible for Jobseeker's Benefit if they are in an occupation which could ordinarily have been followed by the person in addition to their usual employment and outside the ordinary working hours of that employment and the total remuneration or profit from any days of such occupation does not exceed €7,500 on an annual basis, or, €144 on a weekly basis. Alternatively, where they have at least 117 employment contributions paid from employment at class A or H, in respect of the period of 3 years immediately preceding that day, or in respect of the last 3 complete contribution years immediately preceding that day, then no earnings limit is applicable. This could include occupations such as part-time farming where these conditions are met.

If a person is engaged in farming and where they may not have an entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit, or if they exhaust their benefit entitlement, they may qualify for the means-tested Farm Assist scheme subject to satisfying the normal conditions for the payment.

The Parliamentary Question to which you refer was vague with the only details provided by the Deputy were such that it related to small farmers in the west. The general position is that a person who is actively engaged in an occupation is not entitled to Jobseekers. I am informed that the Deputy has since provided details of a particular case which is being re-examined by the Department in view of the amended information provided by the applicant.

Yours sincerely,


Heather Humphreys, T.D.
Minister for Social Protection