

LIVING LAB SCOTLAND



Scotland provides a unique example of a country where the Government has committed almost two million Euro to advance gender equality in agriculture. This effort is in response to documented gaps in rural earnings for women. According to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2022, women in remote rural areas had the lowest annual median pay across Scotland and the largest gap between men and women in annual median wages. Following the publication of the Women in Agriculture Taskforce: final report in November 2019, Scottish Government committed funding to deliver solutions to implement change for women in agriculture with programmes to address gender blindness in mainstream organisations and training for women on how to recognise their skills. The Scottish Government's Women in Agriculture Development Programme currently supports a range of programmes, including personal development courses, app and web platforms for land-based skills training, funding for practical training and leadership and business skills courses. These programmes both fund and are further supported by a range of enterprise, business and crofting support services.

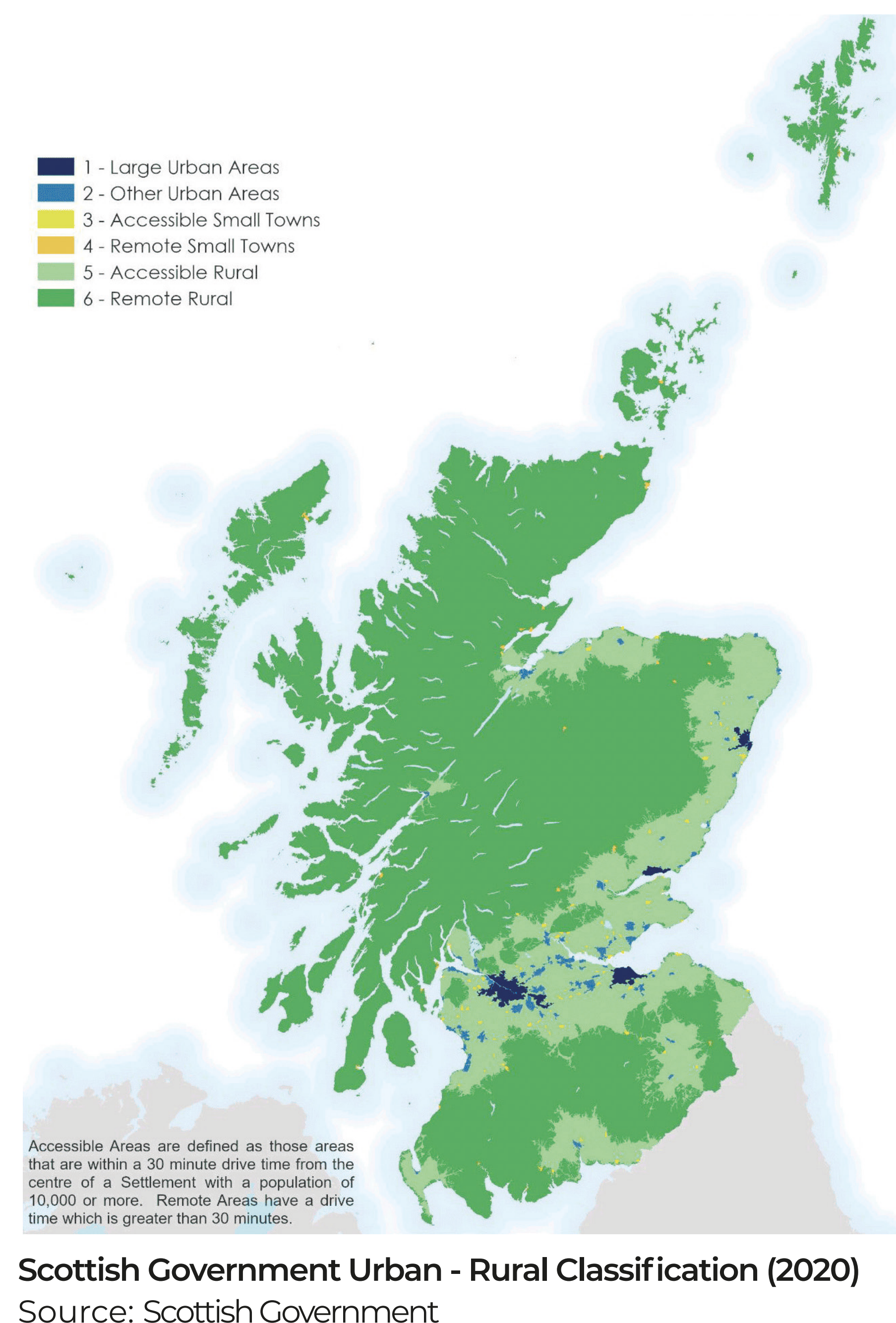
The Living Lab (LL) of Scotland will explore how effectively the Women in Agriculture measures enacted by the Scottish Government have reached the remote region of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland by focusing on women crofters. The Scotland Living Lab is co-lead by the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF), an association dedicated to preserving and developing crofting through rural policy engagement, land-based cultural heritage advocacy and training provision.

The Scottish Living Lab is based in the crofting areas of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Crofting is a land tenure system of small-scale food producers unique to this geographical area. It was developed in the 19th Century and has a track record of maintaining populations and economic activity in remote rural areas. Crofting supports local food production while also protecting cultural heritage and the natural environment.

The women in the Lab are spread across the Highlands area including the Islands, each area providing its own unique challenges when it comes to innovation and growing a business. The Lab is augmented by a diverse range of stakeholders, all contributing to supporting the women on their entrepreneurial journey.

Through working with rural women, the goals of the Lab are to:

- Understand the innovation requirements of rural women crofters, and use this to shape future delivery of innovation support.
- Enhance rural women's innovation capability and visibility in their community.
- Support development of the innovation ecosystem in crofting areas.
- Develop tools, resources and inspirational case studies to support rural women's innovation journey.



Crofting is the golden thread that joins the women, but their ideas are as diverse as they are; water sports and outdoor recreation delivery, felting, raising livestock and growing vegetables, vegetable seeds, community childcare, tree nursery and wildflower seeds. Many are also involved in some element of community development, which will also benefit from the tools they learn within the Lab, amplifying the impact.

Activity: Felting

Innovation: Use of local sheep fleece which is currently of little financial value and often otherwise wasted.

Activity: Goat Cooperative

Innovation: Set up a cooperative or similar business structure to build on local community interest in care of goats, leading to wider use of the herd by-products and potential tourism development.

Activity: Working Croft

Innovation: Creating an ecological croft, growing native trees and food plus providing affordable tourist accommodation and developing a place of learning and respite.

Activity: Childcare Cooperative/Database

Innovation: Creating somewhere to source childcare provision for those working in rural crofting areas, where suitable and affordable provision is currently lacking.

Activity: Rug weaving

Innovation: Utilising the coarse wool fleeces from own and local flocks, to produce hand-woven floor rugs.

Activity: Working Croft

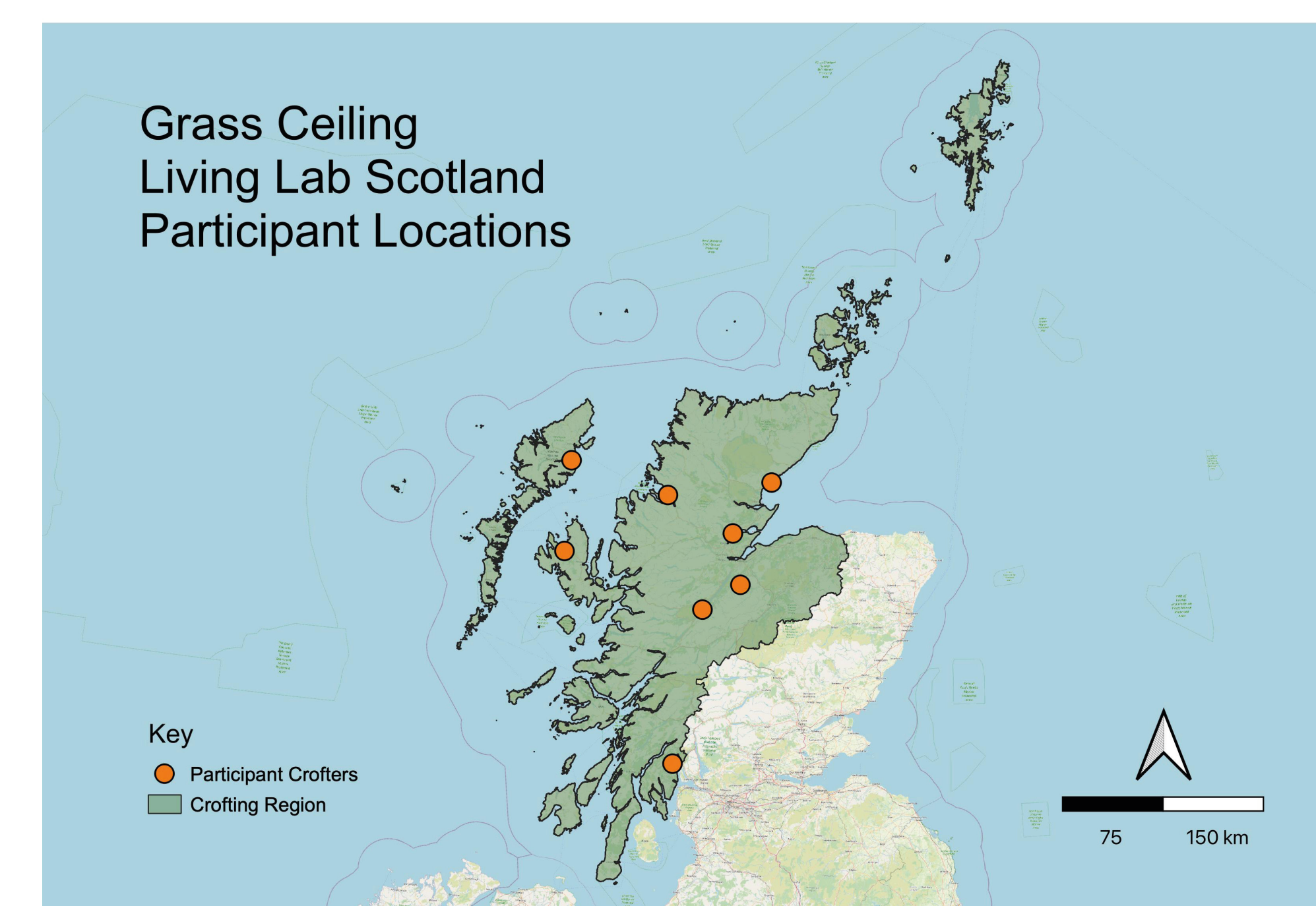
Innovation: Working with local community to share and enhance crofting practice, community food production and local infrastructure.

Activity: Outdoor Adventure Company

Innovation: Expand an existing water-based business to cover more activities (water and land-based), serving the local and tourist base.

Activity: Seed Production

Innovation: First vegetable seed producer in Scotland.



The **eight Living Lab participants** come from crofting areas of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Some have a clear view of an innovative business idea they wish to build on and others are at the beginning stage of their journey.

Stakeholders include business support organisations and the Scottish Government. Stakeholders currently involved are the Soil Association, Farm Advisory Service, Wester-Ross Biosphere, NatureScot, Crofting Commission and Northern Innovation Hub and the Impact Hub, Inverness.