

# EU Agriculture Commissioner Hogan addresses opening of Teagasc Innovation Centre

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Commissioner Moedas, Minister, Deputies, Board of Teagasc in particular Chairman Cawley, Ladies and Gentlemen,

## (Introduction – Paddy O’Keeffe)

It is an honour to be here today on the occasion of the opening of the Teagasc Paddy O’Keeffe Innovation Centre.

- I am honoured to welcome my good colleague and friend, the EU Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos Moedas, on his first official visit to Ireland. It is great to see such a great turnout here at Moorepark to welcome him, as his portfolio is crucial to the future sustainability of the Irish agricultural model.
- Of course, today is a special occasion as we mark the official opening of the Paddy O’Keeffe Innovation Centre and we are thus honoured to have Commissioner Moedas here for the occasion.
- The late Paddy O’Keeffe really is one of the legends of Irish agriculture. As we stand only 10 miles away from Paddy’s home further up the Blackwater Valley, we can only but grasp at the vision which the great man showed in his lifetime. His passion for innovation, for change, for development, for productivity and ultimately for the sustainability of Irish agriculture and the rural way of life are values more important today than ever before, as we enter a new era of Irish, and indeed European, agriculture.
- Paddy O’Keeffe had a hand in many of the modern institutions of Irish agriculture. He was involved in making the Irish Farmers’ Journal the paper of record for rural Ireland, editing the newspaper for 37 years. He also was involved in the foundation of the forerunner to Teagasc, An Foras Talúntais. He was behind the setting up of FBD, which is such a driving force in the Irish rural economy. Indeed, we are honoured to have present today the Chairman of FBD Holdings, Michael Berkery, who has had a huge role in making this research centre a reality, through the FBD’s generous co-financing of the project.
- Paddy O’Keeffe was a visionary, who did not hold back on outlining his vision for the future of agriculture, in Ireland and indeed globally – those who did not share such a vision of course of where often quick to feel the sharpness of his pen in the weekly columns in the Journal!

## (The Grass-based agricultural model)

- His vision was for a sustainable and productive grass-based agricultural model. At a time when agriculture across Europe and the world was moving towards an industrial, intensive model, with few identified environmental constraints, a lower world population and cheap energy - this was a counterintuitive idea.
- Why focus on following the natural peak and trough of the milk cycle, when you could produce intensively all year round?
- However, science and indeed global best practice is now telling us that the grass-based model of dairy and beef production is **the** model to follow, from an environmental and economic perspective. This is especially the case in an era of

structurally higher energy costs; despite the recent fall in oil prices – and indeed where the prices of inputs such as feed and fertiliser are remaining steadfastly high.

- Indeed, with the end of milk quotas and with the increased demand of a growing middle class population for beef and dairy products, the Irish grass-based model is ideally positioned in a global "race to the top" for quality food products. The role of the EU regulatory framework from food to fork, and the finance provided from EU research budgets in making this a reality, are not to be underestimated.
- In relation to climate friendly agriculture, the work on genomics done by Teagasc is an example in how to develop a carbon optimal agricultural model for Ireland and indeed the EU as a whole, which will contribute to agriculture playing its part in the road to Paris and beyond.

#### **(Knowledge Transfer – Farm Advisory)**

- To make innovation a reality, agriculture needs visionaries like the late Paddy O'Keeffe, who put in place structures to make the vision a reality. That is the success of Teagasc, and that is why it is held up as a model at EU level in agri-research, innovation and knowledge transfer.
- In my first six months as EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, I have visited 11 different EU member states to engage with and listen to agri-food sector as a whole, from farmers to processors to stakeholder groups to government ministries and parliaments. There has been a recurring theme across many of the visits – the need to transfer the innovations drawn up in the research lab to the farm. This is a role Teagasc has played successfully in Ireland and will continue to play, above all with this state of the art new facility here in Moorepark.

#### **(EIP Agriculture)**

- However, it is not a one way process – the real experts, the real innovators, are more often than not the farmers themselves. It is for this reason that the European Union has developed a new form of collaboration between the farm and research sectors, known as the European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture.
- This model is about putting the farmer, the researcher, the data analyst... and even the space sector expert around the one table, to see how they can make the whole system work more efficiently. Whereas this idea is not (entirely!) rocket science, it does involve the deployment of sophisticated technology, from the aforementioned satellites, down to the molecular level, to make farming more efficient, more sustainable and more productive for the farmer and for society as a whole.
- There is €4bn available at EU level between now and 2020 to fund this partnership, and my colleague and friend, Carlos Moedas, will explain to you how this synergy between Agriculture policy on the one hand, and research, science and innovation policy on the other, **works**.

#### **(Conclusion)**

- The late Paddy O'Keeffe outlined a vision for Irish agriculture. That vision is now a reality. Irish agriculture stands on the threshold of further, sustained growth. With the end of milk quotas and the opening of new markets for Irish beef in China, the US, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam, it is right to be bullish about the potential for jobs and growth in this sector into the future. We must not rest

on our laurels however, we must continue to improve, change and try to things differently and more effectively, whilst all the while focusing on our strengths.

This applies to Irish agriculture and indeed to EU agriculture as a whole.

- As you all know 2015 marks the UN International Year of Soils. Policy makers, scientists, farmers and citizens are acknowledging the importance of soils for our daily lives. The Teagasc project LANDMARK was selected for funding following the first call of proposals under Horizon 2020 funding. It touches upon the most relevant aspects of soil management and was identified by experts as the best proposal submitted in the Soil Function category. I have no doubt that Paddy would be immensely proud of that achievement'
- I will conclude by paying tribute to all who were involved in making the Paddy O'Keeffe Innovation Centre a reality. It is a vision of the future of EU agriculture and I am sure that many good ideas will become reality as a result of the work done within these walls.
- With that, I hand over the floor to my good friend and colleague Commissioner Carlos Moedas – it is an honour to have him here today with us, the embodiment of agriculture and research working together for the benefit of all.
- Commissioner Moedas was born in Beja, in the Alentejo region of the Southeast of Portugal – some might call it the Kilkenny of Portugal! He is a graduate of Civil Engineering from the Higher Technical Institute of Portugal and completed his studies in Paris. He worked in engineering for the Suez-Lyonnaise des Eaux group in France until 1998.
- He obtained an MBA from Harvard Business School in 2000, after which he returned to Europe to work in mergers and acquisitions at investment bank Goldman Sachs in London.
- He returned to Portugal in 2004 as Managing Director of Aguirre Newman. In 2008, he founded his own investment company, Crimson Investment management.
- In 2011, he was elected for the National Parliament and was called for the government to Secretary of State to the Prime Minister of Portugal in charge of the Portuguese Adjustment Programme.
- In 2014, he became a Member of the European Commission, as Commissioner in charge of Research, Science and Innovation.
- With that, I welcome you, Commissioner Moedas, to take the floor.

Thank you.