

MAgrSc Innovation Support Programme 2017-2019



Study title: Engaging the Middle Third of Dairy Farmers – Teagasc Glanbia Joint programme

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Study Objectives

- To identify the Middle Third of dairy farmers needs and expectations from advisory services.
- To Identify factors effecting the engagement between the middle third of dairy farmers and advisory services.
- To establish methods of engaging the Middle Third of Dairy farmers.

Study Methodology

- An **Action Research Approach** will be applied to this study
- Middle Third of dairy farmers stratified by advisors using agreed criteria
- **Workshop x2: (1)** to gain an understanding of the topics farmers would like to focus on **(2)** Grassland workshop.

Study Methodology

- **Survey:** A baseline data will be gathered at the beginning and end of the one-year interaction to measure the effectiveness of the advisory intervention
- **Focus groups** – With farmers, Glanbia and Teagasc personnel to help develop and improve advisory services

Progress to date (Since Jan 2018)

Sample population identified using the following criteria (n= 67)

1. Must be Teagasc and Glanbia clients
2. Must not be participating in discussion groups.
3. Availing of minimum services and attend events occasionally
4. Have had some form of development on their farm over the last two years (commercially minded farmers)
5. Clients that the advisors believe are likely to engage in piloting in 2018

Progress to date (Since Jan 2018)

Workshop (Jan)

- Written invitation sent to 67 farms in North Kilkenny, followed by a phone call and text message.
- 17 farmers confirmed – 20 attended.
- Action research principles were applied.
- **Aim:** To identify a one year advisory service to farmers help improve their engagement with advisory services.
- **Outcome:** Focus on grassland management through one to one farm visits.

Progress to date (Since Jan 2018)

- Each client has received 2 one to one farm visits.

Visit 1:

- Spring rotation planner
- Baseline data gathered (survey)
- Farm map created
- Grazing planner to be filled out
- Soil analysis carried out on all farms
- Fertiliser plan completed (based on fertility, stocking rate, monthly advice).

Progress to date (Since Jan 2018)

Visit 2:

- Mid – Season grassland management
- Grass walk to identify covers, e.g. pre grazing yields 1 400 kg DM.
- Demand vs Growth
- Rotation length
- Grazing infrastructure (roadways, paddock size, water.)

Progress to date (Since Jan 2018)

- Phone call during fodder crisis to help maintain cow health and conserve silage stocks
- Attempt to organise a grassland workshop at Pat Dillions (Teagasc Glanbia monitor farmer)
- 2 farmers put in new roadways & 1 resurfaced
- 1 farmer changed paddock sizes
- 1 farmer completing profit monitor
- 4 farmers using Pasturebase

Findings to Date

- One to one farm visits are an effective method of increasing engagement between the middle third of dairy farmers and advisory services.
- Text messages with key information has been an effective method of reinforcing advice previously given.
- The Middle third of dairy farmers do not want to attend discussion groups.
- Middle third is a tiered category varying in different levels of engagement.

Findings to Date

- **No farmers in the group knew what the ideal pre grazing yields were.**

“ I don't understand what 1400Kg DM is. I see it in the journal and Teagasc news letters but I don't know what it is. Its hard for me to follow these guidelines when I don't understand them.”

- **Don't use Spring or Autumn rotation planners.**

“ I don't use them, I'm not in a group either so no one has shown me one”

Issues/Problems arising

- Difficult Spring to implement Spring grassland management.

Advisory/Education work (Jan – June 2018)

- ◉ Assisting advisors on farm walks and discussion group meetings.
- ◉ Assisting advisors on Pasturebase information nights
- ◉ BPS
- ◉ KT
- ◉ Grass testing

Schedule of Activities (Work Plan)

- Quarterly schedule of research activities:
 - June to Sept 2018: Analyse surveys, 3rd farm visit, grass workshop, KT, Teagasc Glanbia Monitor farm Walks, literature review.
 - October to Dec 2018: Finish literature review, Autumn rotation planners. Focus group Glanbia representatives, advisory work.
 - Jan to March 2019: Survey, analyse data, thesis write up, advisory work.
 - April to June 2019: Thesis write up and submission.