

The Future for Rural Ireland

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Outline

- The needs of rural dwellers
- Development routes for rural areas
- A positive view of the future
- Realizing the potential of rural areas
- Teagasc's support role as partner
- Innovation at the core of rural development
- Concluding comments

What do rural dwellers want?

- A decent standard of living
- A decent environment
- A decent quality of life

Development routes

- “On farm”
- “On-farm-off farm”
- “Off farm”
- New Horizons’ Programme website

A view of the future - Teagasc Foresight 2030

- Focus will increasingly be on the agri-food and the wider bio-economy ...
- This sector embraces traditional agri-food and animal feed, 'new' foods, bio-energy, bio-fuels, bio-fibres, "Green" recreational goods and services, etc.
- Grounds for optimism in the medium term ... both in traditional role and in new "bio" role
- Competitiveness in the bio-sector will require the exploitation of 'useable' knowledge or innovation

The nature of profound change – a unique historic opportunity

- “Agriculture and food now stand front and centre in the development of the modern economy and in the survival of our planet” ...
- Challenges and opportunities ...
 - An end to the era of cheap food – a growing consensus that we are facing *trend* real food price *increases* but also much greater *volatility*
 - Opportunities presented by the onset of ‘*peak oil*’
 - Opportunities presented by structural shifts in consumer food preferences, *e.g. food for health, local and regional foods, etc.*
 - Opportunities presented by the Green Economy

A key requirement

- Recognition that rural areas need investment in knowledge capital and innovation to realise enormous potential for development
- That recognition is as yet largely absent
- OECD – substantial mismatch between development potential and actual investment
- A major policy shift is needed to place the development needs of rural areas at the centre of the “knowledge/smart” economy agenda

Key issues for rural areas

- What are the capital deficits that are unique to rural areas?
- What tools or interventions can be deployed to alleviate these deficits ... at the individual and community levels?

Addressing key capital deficits

- Focus on addressing the confidence & 'mindset change' that's needed to contemplate change ...
- At the community level organization capital is needed to create an innovation culture across rural communities ...
- The alleviation of these deficits are necessary conditions for development but ...
- not sufficient ... infrastructural (broadband, transport, etc) deficits are of course also critical as are technical supports ...

Teagasc's role

“To support science-based innovation in the agri-food sector and wider bio-economy so as to underpin profitability, competitiveness and sustainability”

Overall Teagasc goal

“To help build sustainable rural communities”

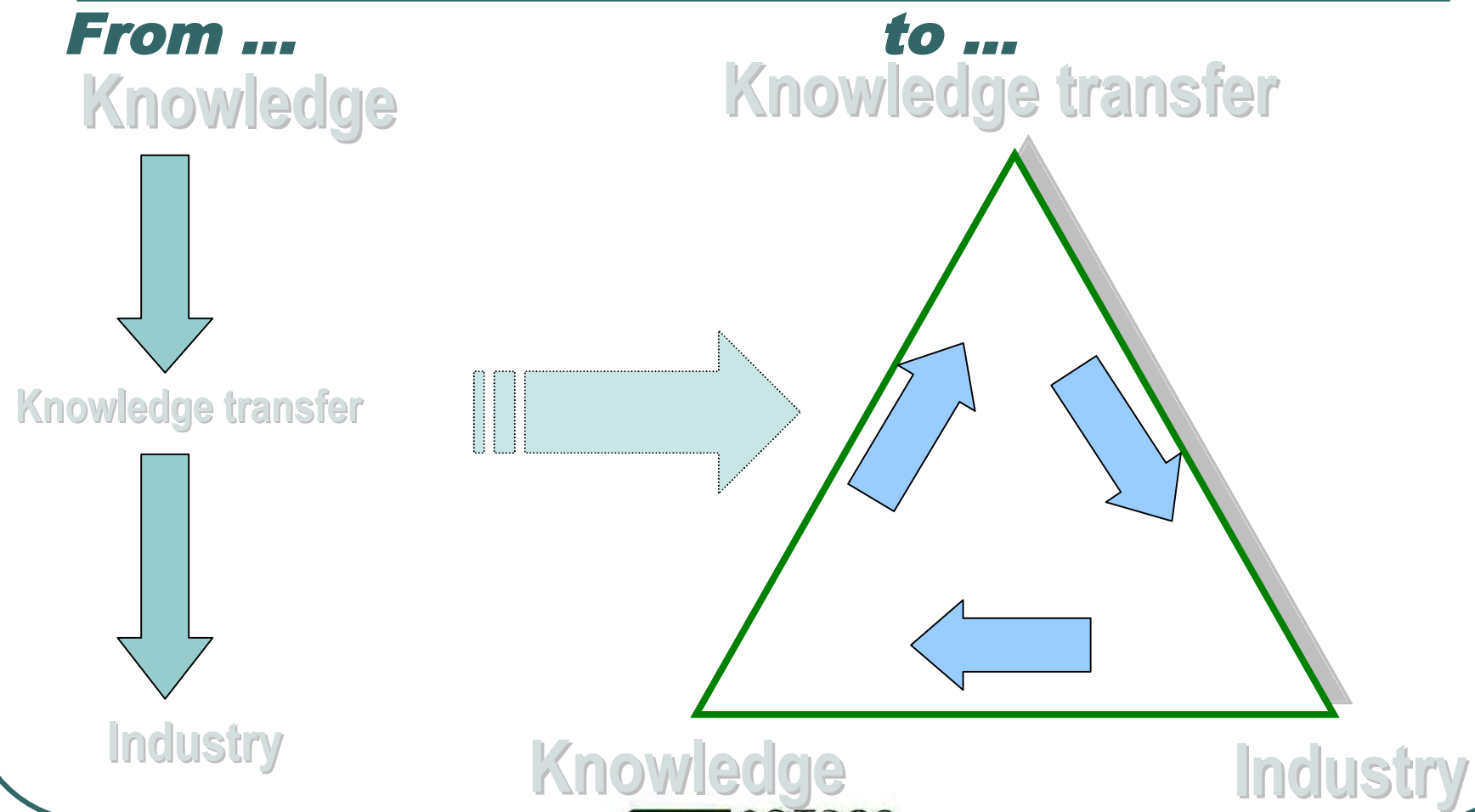
Specific Teagasc goals

- Improve the competitiveness of agriculture, food and the wider bio-economy
- Support sustainable farming and the environment
- Encourage diversification of the rural economy and enhance the quality of life in rural areas

Achievement of these goals

- A deep-rooted commitment to a dynamic process of innovation
- A commitment to work in a true spirit of partnership with key rural development support agencies ...
Leader groups, CEBs, EI, WDC, IRL, etc.
- An emphasis on high-quality education, research and extension
- Upgrading of mentoring support role – the appointment of a new team of Rural Innovation Officers located at 11 new regional education centres

An innovation process that works



Concluding comments

- 10 years on from the White Paper on Rural Development and 13 years from the Cork Declaration ...
- How far have we advanced in realizing the development potential of rural areas?
- Have we the ambition/courage to realize the development potential that beckons?