

**Remarks by Professor Gerry Boyle, Director Teagasc at Launch of IDB
Innovation Centre at Teagasc Moorepark, 8th July, 2011**

Minister, Chairman, Colleagues and Guests.

This is an important occasion for Teagasc and the Food Research Programme in particular. Food harvest 2020 has provided us with challenging targets for farmers, processor and the state agencies. New markets and new products will have to be found for the additional milk that Irish farmers will produce after 2015. Innovation will be key in the processing sector to utilise this additional milk profitably.

Public research, unless it's used to generate economic activity is not going to deliver value for public money. In the current extraordinary national fiscal circumstances we recognize that we have a responsibility to utilize to the full the fruits of the investment of scarce taxpayer resources for the benefit of food companies located in Ireland.

We have striven to ensure this outcome in several ways.

Our working model is to leverage taxpayer resources to the maximum extent that is possible in order to generate additional external income for our research activities. Over the last three years, our annual average research expenditure has been about €16 million. About half of this amount has been funded from non-grant-in-aid sources. For every € we get from the state through our grant in aid we aim to generate about another € from external sources.

Another way of looking at our strategy is that with a basic complement of around 40 permanent research staff in the food programme we have been able to recruit about an additional 90 research staff, comprising contract and Ph.D. students.

Last year we interacted in a significant manner (that is, a service provision in return for a financial consideration) with about 300 Irish companies.

A key part of our model is also to ensure that we collaborate fully with other knowledge providers that complement our expertise. In the last year or so we've copper fastened our long standing association with UCC through the establishment of a formal research alliance. This alliance will provide a unique single portal for Irish based food companies seeking research expertise.

The key message of today's launch that we want to send to food companies located in Ireland is that, to borrow a comment of the Taoiseach's that he uses regularly, "we're open for business". We believe that we've got an expertise that's immensely valuable which can be put to the benefit of Irish industry. But we also recognise that we need to work with industry to determine what's the best way that we can work together for our mutual benefit.

I firmly believe that the working arrangement between IDB and Teagasc that's being initiated today is a major step forward in leveraging what we, as a public body, has to offer for the benefit of private industry. IDB provide the key market intelligence and customer linkages and we provide the R&D intellectual capability and access to 'state of the art' equipment and pilot-plant facilities.

As Paul Ross, Head of the Food Research Programme in Teagasc, has often put it, it enables us to work with companies rather than for companies. We will of course continue to work for companies through the normal client-contract arrangements but this public-private partnership with the IDB will enable us to be more innovative and, I believe, more effective, in responding to customer needs. I also strongly believe that this unique public-private partnership between ourselves and the Dairy Board provides a template for how we can work even more effectively than we have in the past with other food companies.

Before I conclude, I want to thank my colleagues in the Food Programme and the executives in the Dairy Board for bringing about today's launch. I want to thank Kevin Lane, in particular, for having the insight to appreciate that this type of collaborative arrangement which we are announcing today was what was needed to drive a process of innovation in the Irish food sector. We continue to receive strong support from our parent department, Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia and we are very appreciative for this support.

I would like to conclude by making a final remark. We're at a point where we can bring new cheeses to market within a commercial timeframe. This would not have been possible without the research that has gone on here at Moorepark over several years. The speed with which colleagues re-engineered several complex cheeses was, to my mind at any rate, astonishing and, I'm reliably told, could not have been done even 5 years ago. The message is clear. Research will pay but it requires a long-term commitment and in the early days that commitment is especially needed from government. But if we persist, there will be huge benefits, not only for private companies but for society as a whole.

THANK YOU

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