

## Teagasc – Driving Change in the Public Sector

A major process of change commenced in Teagasc in mid 2008, when following a reduction in the budget, Teagasc management and the Authority took a view that the organisation would be facing a period of 3-5 years during which staff and financial resources would face significant reductions.

A foresight exercise, *Teagasc 2030*, was completed and published in May 2008 which identified the priority areas for the Irish Agriculture and Food sectors. This report set an overall top level strategic direction for the organisation, and formed the basis on which a comprehensive Change Programme for Teagasc was prepared. The first phase of the plan - SUPPORTING THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR IN CHALLENGING TIMES, THE TEAGASC CHANGE PROGRAMME 2009-2013, was agreed by the Authority in February 2009 (2<sup>nd</sup> phase in December 2009).

This Change Programme when fully implemented will leave Teagasc as a smaller, leaner and fitter organization, supporting science-based innovation in the agri-food sector and wider bio-economy to underpin profitability, competitiveness and sustainability.

The main points of the plan include;

- Budgetary savings
- A streamlining of administration
- Prioritization of programme areas
- Greater emphasis on knowledge transfer to clients
- Unified research directorate
- A 30 per cent reduction in the land area under research.
- A reconfiguration of the education network
- Rationalization of advisory offices down from 91 to 51

### Reduction in Staff Numbers

2008	1,574
2010	<u>1,296</u>
Less	278 staff

Further Reduction Projected under Employment Control Framework

2014          1,056 ( a 33% staff reduction in the period 2008 to 2014)

Staff reductions to date have been due to normal retirements, early retirements and non renewal of contract staff. Despite this considerable reduction in staff numbers the productivity of the organisation has been maintained and indeed increased as set out below.

Teagasc is seeking an adjustment to its ECF number or a mechanism to be found to bring the level of proposed staff reduction into line with the organisation's Staffing Plan. The Teagasc Staffing Plan envisages a reduction of 117 staff in the period to 2014 while maintaining essential frontline services. It will also allow Teagasc to continue the implementation of its Change Programme and to maintain services at an acceptable level at a time of unprecedented demand. The achievement of the level of reduction envisaged in the Staffing Plan will require suitable external redeployment opportunities to become available for interested non frontline staff and for the introduction of a VER/VR scheme for staff in support roles.

## **Is Croke Park being Implemented in Teagasc?**

A considerable amount of speculation in the media and legitimate public concern has focussed on the perceived lack of 'delivery on Croke Park'. This criticism may be justified in some areas of the civil and public service. However, the experience in Teagasc and, we would suggest in many other public organisations, is that staff who have suffered significant pay reductions are fully engaged with their leadership teams on delivering on the Croke Park commitments. The Teagasc experience has stretched the capabilities of the organisation to cope with continuous and significant change while maintaining critical services. We would fully acknowledge the enormous contribution of all our staff and their representatives to securing the future of the organisation and the continued delivery of highly valued services to clients. We have surprised ourselves in what we have been able to achieve in a relatively short period of time!

## **Internal Redeployment**

The office closures and other changes implemented have had a major impact on staff with over 100 staff discommoded. In addition, 58 staff have been internally re-deployed into new roles in the organisation. To facilitate this change, Teagasc has developed and implemented an internal redeployment policy. A strategic staff retraining fund has been established to prioritise training for staff members affected.

## **Increased productivity**

Some examples of the increased productivity within the organisation are set out below. It is suggested that these examples and many more in the organisation demonstrate the commitment to service delivery of our staff. In some areas the level of productivity outlined below may be unsustainable in the longer term and will have to be reviewed.

- 1) Teagasc staff have responded to change by being flexible and taking on additional responsibilities. For example, as staff numbers have declined, Teagasc advisers have had to take on additional clients. From 2008 to 2011, the average number of clients per adviser has increased from 110 per adviser to 160 per adviser, with more than 200 clients per adviser in some cases.
- 2) Demand for educational courses have increased by 80% over the past three years as more young people opt for agriculture and horticulture education courses. To facilitate this rise in student numbers the average student/teacher ratio has increased by 50% since 4 years ago. Teagasc is seeking approval to have the same exceptional terms under the ECF Framework in the Education Sector applied to teachers in its Agricultural and Horticultural Colleges.
- 3) The performance of Teagasc Research was best demonstrated in a Forfas published bibliometric study of the public research base in Ireland. Of all the public research organisations measured over the 10-year period from 1998 to 2007, Teagasc had the highest number of scientific papers published. The vast majority of the 1,367 Teagasc papers are in agriculture and food science, demonstrating Teagasc's core strength. The report noted a rising annual volume of papers in Teagasc (annual average of 175 for the period 2005-2007 versus 117 for the period 1998-2000).

- 4) Some administration work has been moved from head office to other centres. Administration staff have taken on programme support roles. For example, admin staff are now delivering extra support in REPS and e-Profit Monitor data for clients.

### **A Working Together Ethos**

The strong Partnership process in Teagasc has led to a Stable Industrial relations environment and this has facilitated the implementation of the Change Programme. Joint management and union rationalisation groups are in place to consult on the Change Programme. An arbitration process is also in place in respect of internal redeployment.

### **Reducing the Cost of Teagasc – More for Less Agenda**

In the period 2008-2010 the State Funding has reduced by €14.8m while operational income has dropped by €5.59m. See table below.

<b>Teagasc Income</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>
State funding	134.14m	145.99m	148.94m
Operational income	26.59m	29.85m	32.18m

Teagasc business units have responded by achieving savings right across the organisation. A major Business Process Review exercise commenced in the organisation last year and business processes are now being continuously reviewed with changes implemented which are delivering greater efficiencies in how we deliver our services to clients. Significant other reductions in costs have been achieved in recent years including, for example, reducing overtime by 30%. A new procurement strategy is being implemented which will deliver savings into the longer term.

### **Structural Change**

The number of Directorates within the Teagasc organisational structure has reduced from 6 to 3 with a corresponding reduction in the number of senior managers. The three Directorates are: Research, Knowledge Transfer and Operations.

### **Office Closures and Land Rationalisation**

The network of Teagasc offices across the country is being rationalised down from 91 to 51. Twenty three offices have closed to date with a further 13 due to close by the year end. The number of advisory area units is being rationalised down from 18 to 12 (currently 13). The possibilities to share facilities with other government departments are also being pursued.

As part of the Change Programme it was agreed to reduce the land area being used for Research by 604 hectares. The research programme on the farm in Kilmaley in county Clare has been completed and the 49 hectare farm was sold in 2010. The lease on a 270 hectare hill sheep farm in Leanne in county Mayo will not be renewed when it expires in 2011. Other leases are due to expire in 2011 and 2012.

The first group of staff based at the Kinsealy campus in Dublin, which is to close, have moved across to the Ashtown campus in Dublin this week. Some other staff groups will move mid 2011. The staff transferring to Ashtown from Kinsealy work in a number of business units including education, rural economy research, HQ functions, horticulture research, forestry research, and advisory.

The two food centres at Moorepark and Ashtown have been combined into a single business unit under the one management and the number of food research departments has reduced from 7 to 4.

### **Programme Prioritization and Rationalisation**

Programmes have been prioritized, so that the reduced human, physical and financial resources are best deployed to deliver a first class service to farmers, and the food and agricultural industries. Teagasc is unique in that it combines research, knowledge transfer and education and training functions within one organisation.

Teagasc has implemented a programme structure around four priority programmes, delivered by the Research and Knowledge Transfer directorates;

- Food programme
- Animal Production and Grassland programme
- Crops, Environment and Land Use programme
- Rural Economy and Development programme.

In addition there are now two support programmes:

- Education
- Advisory

### **Conclusion**

Clearly, the above demonstrates Teagasc's commitment to the implementation of the Croke Park Agreement and public sector reform. The dedication of Teagasc staff to their clients and their industry is the driving force behind the continued high level service delivery in the organisation despite the challenges presented by the current economic difficulties. How our people grow, are nurtured, are inspired, will influence how they perform and ultimately their contribution to the agri-food industry. The People, Leadership & Change Strategy launched today was developed by staff in response to these challenges and we are confident it will deliver higher level performance into the future. Teagasc has a clear strategy and an engaged and resilient staff that are more than capable of delivering a very significant return on taxpayer investment in the organisation and value for money for client fees.