

Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) Action Plan

Teagasc

1. Summary of Main Progress Achieved in the Six Month Period April 2011 to September 2011

- **TEAGASC STAFFING AND EFFICIENCY PLAN**

A dedicated Staffing and Efficiency Plan has been developed by Teagasc in order to implement staffing reductions in a planned manner and to minimise to the greatest extent possible their detrimental impact on the frontline services that Teagasc provides to its clients and stakeholders. The Plan was agreed by the Teagasc Authority in October 2011 and Teagasc is currently consulting with trade unions and staff representatives in relation to the operation of external redeployment schemes as well as the implementation of staffing reductions.

- **VOLUNTARY EARLY RETIREMENT / VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY SCHEMES**

Teagasc has received sanction for a focussed Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) and a Voluntary Redundancy Scheme (VRS) to assist the organisation to achieve the permanent reduction in staff numbers employed in Teagasc from 2011 onwards as committed to by the Government as part of the national programme for economic recovery. The VER and VRS schemes are available to both permanent and temporary grant-in-aid funded staff employed in administrative, technical and general (i.e. farm, maintenance, domestic) grades. Staff in frontline grades (i.e. advisory/training, research and technologists) are not eligible to apply for either scheme. Applications for either scheme can be made until 1 November 2011 and are irrevocable after 30 November 2011. Staff availing of either of the two schemes must depart the organisation by 30 December 2011.

- **RESTRUCTURING AND RATIONALISATION**

The implementation of the Teagasc Change Programme 2009 – 2013 continued throughout 2011. In recent months, the number of Area Units within the Teagasc Advisory Service has been reduced from eighteen area units to twelve regional units. In addition, the duties of Post of Responsibility holders have been reviewed and revised job descriptions have been agreed with trade unions and staff representatives. The rationalisation of advisory offices around the country has also continued and a total of ten offices have closed in 2011 to date. A further five offices are due to close in December 2011. The rationalisation of research lands at Ballydague, Leenane and Athenry has continued during the course of the year and the lands located at Leenane are no longer in Teagasc's control.

- **PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCIES**

The commitment to the maintenance of core activities and frontline services set out in Teagasc's Staffing and Efficiency Plan as well as the commitment to continuous performance improvement is demonstrated through a number of the efficiencies outlined in this plan. The introduction of a Core Time and Attendance System for the organisation is progressing and is anticipated to be rolled out at the end of 2012. A service level agreement has been drawn up between Teagasc and the Public Appointments Service in order to maximise efficiencies in the recruitment and redeployment processes. Joint tendering arrangements between Teagasc and the Universities have been established that will generate savings of €100,000 per annum. Business Process Review Groups that examine and recommend efficiencies in key areas of the organisation have been established and are currently reporting their findings to Teagasc Senior Management. Peer Reviews have taken place in relation to the Teagasc Food Programme and the Teagasc Animal and Grassland Research Programme and workshops in relation to the development of key performance indicators for each programme will be held before the end of 2011.

In mid-2011, the People, Leadership and Change Strategy (PLC) 2011 – 2013 was launched. Speaking at the launch of the Strategy, the Chairman of the Croke Park Agreement Joint Implementation Body, Mr. P.J. Fitzpatrick said, "The Teagasc PLC Strategy is a model for other organisations to follow". The PLC Strategy aims to create a work environment, management capability and people systems that enable the culture and practice of high performance. The establishment of five strategic objectives (Higher Performing Work Environment, Strategic Learning and Development, Grow our Management and Leadership Capabilities, Reward Staff Performance, Staff Engagement) governing twenty-two dedicated work programmes which are currently in process will drive the achievement of the Strategy over the coming years.

- **ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF CLIENTS**

Teagasc is using the discussion group process to improve its capacity to engage clients, its effectiveness in technology transfer and innovation support. Clients have benefited from the increased profitability of their farms. Increased profit of 2c/l from participation in dairy discussion groups (Hennessy 2010). Teagasc in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine, have developed the Dairy Efficiency Programme (DEP) which encourages farmers to join a dairy discussion group. Teagasc Advisors assist groups in the planning and preparation of meetings (8 times a year) in a skilled fashion to ensure each group member gets the maximum benefit from each session. The overall goals of the process are to increase the competitiveness and sustainability of Irish farmers through the adoption of new technology and best practice. This is achieved through the development of innovation support programmes that encourage farm development through the medium of discussion groups.

- **EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION**

Teagasc has seen a hugely significant increase in the number of students seeking to enrol in the educational course provided by the organisation. Sanction was received in mid-2011 to recruit six teachers in order to cater for the emerging demand for college places and six additional internal resources were redeployed from the Advisory Service into Teagasc Colleges to assist with this demand. Twelve Education centres have been established around the country and are aligned with the organisation's Advisory Regional Units. A new Level 8 Honours Degree Programme

has commenced this year and is being run jointly by Dublin City University and the College of Amenity Horticulture at the Botanic Gardens. The UCD Dairy Degree Programme is now in its third year and the first group completed five weeks of pre-placement induction training at Kildalton College in June / July 2011. The students are now on placement, mostly in New Zealand, and will spend the second semester at Teagasc Moorepark commencing in January 2012.

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2. Detailed Progress Update for the 6-months – April to September 2011

1. Better human resource management: <i>Actions under this heading include reductions in numbers, redeployment, reconfiguration of service delivery, revisions in attendance arrangements, better attendance and absence management, etc.</i>			
Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014	Action	Target Date as per Current Action Plan	Current Position
4.3 - 4.12	Development of Programme and Staffing Plan to address imbalances in staffing resources arising from retirements, office closures, disposal of land assets	March 2011 and Ongoing	Complete – Final Version of Staffing and Efficiency Plan was agreed by Teagasc Authority in October.
1.6, 1.7, 4.3	Develop Internal Redeployment Policy in order to fill vacant priority posts in the context of the Moratorium and closure of office	End 2010	Complete – ongoing discussions in relation to specific individual arrangements taking place.
	Progress the implementation of a targeted Voluntary Redundancy Scheme (VRS) and identify posts for External Redeployment	2010 and Ongoing	Ongoing – sanction for Voluntary Early Retirement / Voluntary Redundancy Scheme received. Applications for both schemes currently being sought in advance of deadline on 1 November 2011.
1.6	Implement a Strategic Training Fund to enable staff to move into key priority posts and ensure adequate training opportunities are available	End 2010	Complete.
1.4, 1.8, 4.9	Review all work-sharing arrangements in line with the terms of Circular 11/2010, issued in August 2010.	Q1 2011	Complete.

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1.4, 1.8, 4.9	Introduce CORE Time and Attendance system *subject to Departmental approval	End 2012	Ongoing. Upgrade to existing software modules and implementation of new software modules (i.e. Phase 1) will go live in October 2011. In Phase 2, priority will be given to Single Sign On and CorePortal (online payslip, P60, income levy certs, PRD certs) as deliverables by end of January 2012. Implementation, configuration and user acceptance testing of Manager Toolbox, Core Time and Attendance and Core Illness will follow immediately afterwards in advance of target date for roll out in Quarter 4 2012.
1.7	Avail of services of Public Appointments Service to maximise efficiencies in open recruitment and external re-deployment.	From Q4 2010	Complete. Service Level Agreement in place.
1.13, 4.12	Review and implement Croke Park recommendations on utilising PMDS process to recognise and improve staff performance	2010 / 2011	Complete. New performance management course developed. Thirty managers have attended to date.
4.10	Review and implement Croke Park arrangements for managing and reporting sick leave	Ongoing	Complete and Ongoing.
4.3 - 4.16	Develop People, Leadership and Change Strategy 2010- 2013 to align Teagasc's human resource requirements with the vision and goals set out in Teagasc's Statement of Strategy and Teagasc 2030	2010 - 2013	Complete – implementation of work programmes set out in the Strategy is ongoing.
1.5	Achievement of targets set out in Teagasc's Employment Control Framework	2010 - 2014	The Voluntary Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy Schemes and the External

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			Redeployment Schemes are being fully utilised to achieve the required ECF number.
1.9 - 1.11	Reduction in number of research departments across the Teagasc Food Programme from seven to four in order to reflect the main priority areas of the Programme	2010	Complete – Food Biosciences Department, Food Safety Department, Food Technology and Quality Department and Food Industry Development Department.
1.10, 4.3 - 4.12	Restructuring of Advisory Area Unit structure - agree revised structure - appoint managers to new regions - review duties of Posts of responsibility to reflect new structure - re-configure ICT and Financial systems (ie: CIMS, Integra) to reflect new structure	End 2012	Advisory Units within the Knowledge Transfer and Education directorate have been reduced from eighteen area units to twelve regional units. The duties of Post of Responsibility holders have been reviewed and revised job descriptions have been agreed with trade unions. The relevant changes have been made to Teagasc's ICT systems to reflect the new structure.
1.7. 1.10, 1.12, 4.2, 4.8, 4.15	Rationalisation of Advisory Office numbers from 91 to 51	Q2 2012	On track. A total of thirty offices have closed to date.
1.12, 4.4	Implementation of reduced and integrated senior management structure consisting of three directorates (down from six) – Research, Knowledge Transfer and Operations	2010 and Ongoing	Complete.

2. Better Business Processes: *Actions under this heading would include efficiency measures and improvements to the processes by which your Department/Body delivers its services to the public, including changes to the technology used, better data management, including around identity, and so on.*

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4.2, 4.13, 4.14, 4.15, 4.16	Establish a Business Process Review Group to comprehensively map out the business processes within Teagasc and recommend improvements	2011 - 2012	Complete and Ongoing – each BPR group is currently reporting back to Teagasc Senior Management.
1.4 - 4.2	Optimising the organisation's procurement practices	2010 - 2012	Ongoing. All available NPS centralised contracts are being used. Joint tendering arrangements between Teagasc and the Universities have been entered into for the purchase of laboratory supplies. This initiative is expected to yield savings of €100,000 in a full year.
	Management of the organisation's property portfolio by realigning our property assets more closely with our business strategy	2009 - 2012	The disposal of offices and the rationalisation of research lands as part of the overall Change Programme for the organisation is ongoing.
4.2	Rationalisation of Research Lands at Ballydague, Leenane and Athenry	2010 - 2012	Research lands located at Leenane are no longer in Teagasc's control. The rationalisation at other sites is ongoing.
4.2	Dispose of Kinsealy site and relocate the current activities to other Teagasc locations	2013	Ongoing. Since the beginning of 2011, twenty staff have relocated to Ashtown Food Research Centre. Offices in Ashtown have been refurbished to accommodate transferring staff. Further development works at Ashtown are planned for 2012.

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4.2, 4.13 – 4.16	Strengthening the organisation's capability for financial planning and management	2010 - 2011	Complete.
4.2 – 4.12	Enhancing the organisations ability to manage its own performance and demonstrate delivery of high performance through improved management reporting systems and programme evaluation.	2011 - 2013	Complete and Ongoing. A Peer Review of the Teagasc Food Programme was carried out in October 2011. A Peer Review of the Teagasc Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Programme will be carried out in November 2011. Four workshops to develop suitable key performance indicators for each programme will be held by the end of 2011.
4.2, 4.3 – 4.12	Establishment of a programme-driven structure across Food, Animal and Grassland, Crops, Environment and Land Use and Rural Economy and Development.	2010 and Ongoing	Complete.
1.4, 1.6, 1.10, 4.2 – 4.12	Establishment of Programme Support Roles through the expansion of Administrative duties in order to enhance the support available to Advisory staff	End 2010	Complete.

3. Delivering for the Citizen: <i>Actions under this heading would include efficiency measures and improvements to the processes by which your Department/Body delivers its services to the public, including changes to the technology used, better data management, including around identity, and so on.</i>			
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4.2 - 4.12	Developing supports to meet the environmental needs of farmers	End of 2010	Ongoing. Closer integration between the Research and Knowledge Transfer Directorate in Teagasc has enabled Teagasc to disseminate information to farmers more effectively. An active stakeholder group has been established in order to enable clients to inform Teagasc of farmer requirements. The Mini-Catchments Programme has been developed to ensure that the importance of the maintenance of high water standards is transferred to a wide group of farmers and clients.
4.2 - 4.12	Appointment of Rural Innovation Advisors to drive the implementation of the Options Programme and to help farmers diversify	2011	The appointment of Rural Innovation Advisors has been deferred due to the restrictions associated with the Moratorium.
	Redesign Advisory Service Fee Structure	2010 and Ongoing	Complete.
4.2, 4.3 – 4.12	New training facility at College of Amenity Horticulture, National Botanic Gardens	2012	Ongoing. The Project Team are currently finalising the necessary specifications and will go to tender in the near future. It is anticipated that construction works will commence in early 2012 and will be completed by the end of 2012.
1.4, 1.10, 1.12, 4.2	Refocus the Advisory Service in order to address emerging trends and deliver the required services for	2010 and Ongoing	A strategic review of the Advisory Service was completed in May 2011 and presented to the

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	clients		Teagasc Authority and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Review focussed on the Food Harvest 2020 Report and staffing restrictions in order to prioritise programmes and resources.
1.10, 4.3 – 4.12	Restructuring of Education services incorporating three Lead Colleges and ten Regional Education Centres in order to cater for increased demand for courses	2010 - 2011	Ongoing. Due to the overwhelming increase in enrolments in Teagasc Colleges, plans to establish three lead colleges are temporarily on hold. Twelve Education Centres have been established and are aligned to the twelve Advisory Regional Units.
1.11, 4.2, 4.13, 4.15	Establishment of a new Food SME Technology Transfer service	2010	Complete. The activity associated with this initiative is an integral part of the Food Industry Development Department's work programme.
4.2	Seek to treble EU research funding over the coming years and to pursue all national potential funding sources	2010 - 2014	Ongoing. Progress measured on an annual basis.
4.2 – 4.12	Provision of an integrated, applied research and advisory service for the Irish horticulture and forestry sectors	2010 - 2013	Horticulture research and advisory services have been integrated and work is currently ongoing in order to provide improved research facilities.
4.15	Launch food research and innovation strategic alliance with University College Cork	2010	Complete.
4.2, 4.4	Refocus the delivery of Advisory Services through discussion group activity	2010	Complete.

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1.10, 4.3 – 4.12	Review arrangements with Higher Education Partners – further innovation in the provision of joint higher level programmes and progression opportunities	2010 - 2011	Ongoing. Five of Teagasc's six partner Institutes of Technology have agreed to pay Teagasc at a rate of €91 per hour for our input as service providers to the joint programmes. A new Level 8 Honours Degree programme has commenced this year and is being run jointly by Dublin City University and the College of Amenity Horticulture at the Botanic Gardens. The UCD Dairy Degree programme is now in its third year and the first group completed five weeks of pre-placement induction training at Kildalton College in June / July 2011. The students are now on placement, mostly in New Zealand, and will spend the second semester which will commence in January 2012 at Teagasc, Moorepark.