

Cork West Advisory Region

Strategic Plan

2015 - 2020





Teagasc Mission Statement

To support science-based innovation in the agri-food sector and wider bioeconomy so as to underpin profitability, competitiveness and sustainability.

Teagasc Goals

1. Improve the competitiveness of agriculture, food and the wider bioeconomy.
2. Support sustainable farming and the environment.
3. Encourage diversification of the rural economy and enhance the quality of life in rural areas.
4. Enhance organisational capability and deliver value for money.

Teagasc Office Locations in the Cork West Region



Cork West Advisory Region

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Teagasc, Coronea, Skibbereen, Co. Cork

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I am pleased to present the Teagasc Cork West Advisory Region Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020 which sets out the priorities and strategic actions for Teagasc Advisory Services in the region over the next five years.

The plan has been prepared in consultation with a range of stakeholders and staff and represents Teagasc's response to the opportunities and challenges facing farming in the region over this period.

The 2015 – 2020 period will see major changes in farming, in terms of the development of the dairy and dry stock industries in response to the Food Harvest 2020 targets and opportunities created by EU policy changes.

These changes will happen side by side with major quality assurance and environmental initiatives to support the Origin Green branding of our food products. Teagasc Advisory services will be refocusing programmes and activities to fully support farmers to sustainably implement these changes on Cork West Farms. However these developments will happen at the same time as major reform of the EU supports and direct payments to Irish farmers. Our service, as presently configured cannot efficiently continue to handle both tasks. We anticipate an increase of 35 - 40% in milk supplies in the Region. Extra calves from the expanding dairy herd will lead to an increased number of farms developing calf to beef enterprises. These developments, along with access to the new Agri-environmental schemes will help maintain the rural economy of the Region.

The work of Teagasc Advisors in the region is key to ensuring FH2020 targets are achieved. Teagasc supports our 2,500 clients through farm visits, discussion groups, consultations, farm walks, seminars and open days. Training of young and adult farmers is an important part of our work and we will need to be expanded as up skilling is constantly required on developing farms.

This strategic plan outlines the targets and critically states the minimum resources required by Teagasc in the Region to deliver on objectives set out in the plan.

Billy Kelleher

Teagasc, Regional Manager, Cork West

Cork West Regional Strategic Plan – Summary Actions

- Implement dairy development programmes to help deliver a 50% increase in milk solids output on dairy farms.
- Maximise grass DM use across all enterprises by promoting grass budgeting practices.
- Promote systems that deliver 85%+ six week calving rates on dairy & suckler farms.
- Promote rapid genetic improvement on suckler and sheep farms in conjunction with our two 'Better Farms' in the Region.
- Provide part-time Education courses leading to the Green Cert for young farmers.
- Increase numbers participating in discussion groups in all enterprises. (Knowledge Transfer)
- Implement financial planning and cash flow planning services for farmers in all enterprises.
- Work closely with the Health and Safety Authority in educating farm families on farm safety.
- Work with Carbery & Dairygold and other industry partners to provide vital technical and financial information and support to the farming public.
- Help implement collaborative farming and land mobility options on farms.
- Set up a calf to beef monitor farm and promote this system.
- Establish a hill sheep Better Farm and promote expansion in sheep as a profitable enterprise
- Promote lower carbon farming and completion of the Carbon Navigator on 50% of farms.
- Facilitate the maximum number of clients to apply for GLAS through working with our strategic partner.
- Organise regulatory planning services for farmers to ensure direct payments are protected.

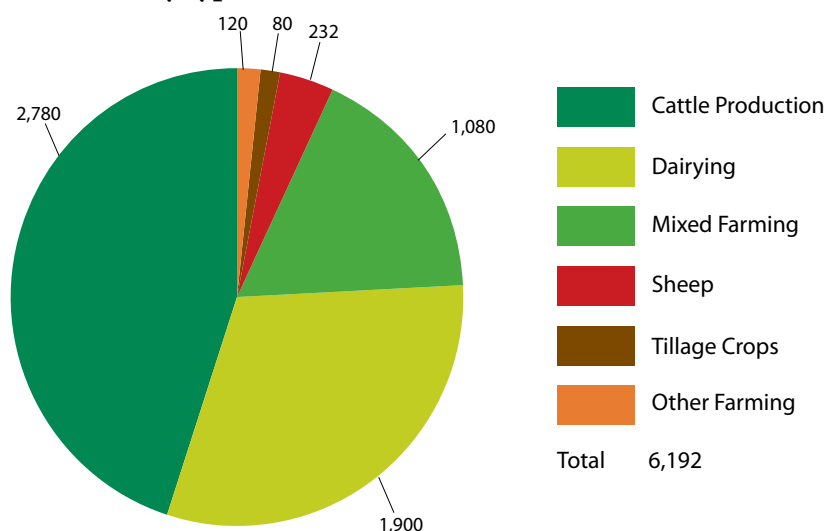
The Importance of Farming in the Cork West Region

The Cork West Region covers a diverse geographic area with lowlands to the east, river valleys, uplands, peninsulas and islands to the west. Farming is a major generator of economic activity in the rural areas, providing raw materials for the food processing industries. The combination of consumption of goods and services and the generation of output from land and raw materials creates a major stimulus to the rural economy. The gross land area is nearly 400,000 Ha of which 243,000Ha are farmed by 6912 farmers. The total population is 102,000 and 6.84% are classified as farmers by the CSO census of 2011. Of the adult population 19% are engaged in farming.

Farming Systems

The distribution of farming systems in the Region is illustrated in Figure 1 below and reflects the diverse nature of the land type and traditions in the Region. The system of farming most common in the Region is cattle production with 45% of farms in that category. Specialised dairy farms account for 31% of farms while sheep only account for 4% of farms. Specialised tillage is carried on in 2% of farms, but cereals, forage maize and fodder beet crops are grown on many livestock farms, contributing to a considerable tillage base within the Region. Pigs, Horticulture, organics, horses etc. make up a small portion of farming in the region. Part time farming is common in parts of Cork West, drawing in off-farm income from employments in towns and Cork city.

Figure 1 - Farm classification by type of farm for Cork West 2010



Source: CSO Census of Agriculture 2010

Table 1 - Farm classification by type of farm for Cork West 2010

Type of Farming	Cork West		National Data	
	No	%	No	%
Cattle Production	2,780	45	77,738	56
Dairying	1,900	31	15,654	11
Mixed Farming	1,080	17	26,775	22
Sheep	232	4	13,555	10
Tillage Crops	80	1	4,795	3
Other Farming	120	2	1,343	1
All	6,912	100	139,860	100

Land Type and Soil Fertility

Soil types are many across Cork West; varying from fertile brown earths in the Lee and Bandon valleys, through podzols in the central region to gleys and peats in western areas. Drainage difficulties occur in many locations, exacerbated by a combination of topography, high rainfall and soil types. Rock outcrops, frequent hills and mountain slopes contribute to restricting land use to grazing livestock in many locations. The predominant underlying rock in most of Cork West is sandstone shale, limestone only occurs in a small area in the Lee valley. Consequently much of the land has a low pH and Calcium status. Soil fertility needs to be improved on most farms, with 87% of soils tested being low in either an essential nutrient or being too acidic. These results are similar to national trends and underscore the need for regular soil sampling and testing. Teagasc has identified soil fertility as a key efficiency factor for Irish farms. In the Cork West Region we will continue to work with farmers, co-ops and fertiliser suppliers to achieve optimum soil fertility status on farms.

Farm Size

Average farm size in Cork West is 35.2 Ha, which is the same as the National average of 32.7 Ha. About 48% of farms are above 30 Ha compared to 40% for the country as a whole. There are more farms in the categories 30 – 100 Ha than nationally. Table 2 give a breakdown of farm size in Cork west compared to the National data.

Table 2 - Farm size in Cork West

Size Ha	Cork West		State	
	No	%	No	%
<2	205	3.0	2,341	2
2 - 10	765	11.1	23,133	16
10 - 20	1,367	19.8	33,581	24
20 - 30	1,270	18.4	24,687	18
30 - 50	1,830	26.5	30,668	22
50 - 100	1,251	18.1	20,755	15
> 100	224	3.2	4,695	3
Total	6,912	100	139,860	100

Source: CSO Census of Agriculture 2010



Facilities

The Teagasc Cork West Advisory Region has three offices located in Clonakilty, Macroom and Skibbereen. In addition clinics are provided each week in Bandon, Adrigole and Kenmare.

The Macroom office is an owned premise with a good sized classroom, accommodation for up to 9 staff and good car parking facilities. It is in need of refurbishment. A Green Cert course is currently being provided there. The Skibbereen office is also owned with a classroom, accommodation for up to 7 staff and ample parking. Some refurbishment is required. The Clonakilty headquarters office is located out of town, in premises shared with Clonakilty Agricultural College and is in a good modern condition. There is accommodation for up to 13 staff, a meeting room and parking facilities. Classrooms and training facilities of the Agricultural College are available to the regional Education Officer and all Advisory staff as required.

Staff Resource

The trends and prediction of staff numbers from 2008 to 2020 and the staff required to achieve the target as set out in this Strategic Plan are outlined in Table 3 and figures 2 and 3 below. Between 2008 and 2014 Teagasc Advisory staff numbers fell by 37% in this region. This reduction is a consequence of retirements, termination of contracts and the embargo on recruitment in the public service. Figure 3 shows the resultant growth in clients per Advisor and this ratio is now at an unsustainable level.

Figure 2: Adviser Numbers in Cork West Advisory Region

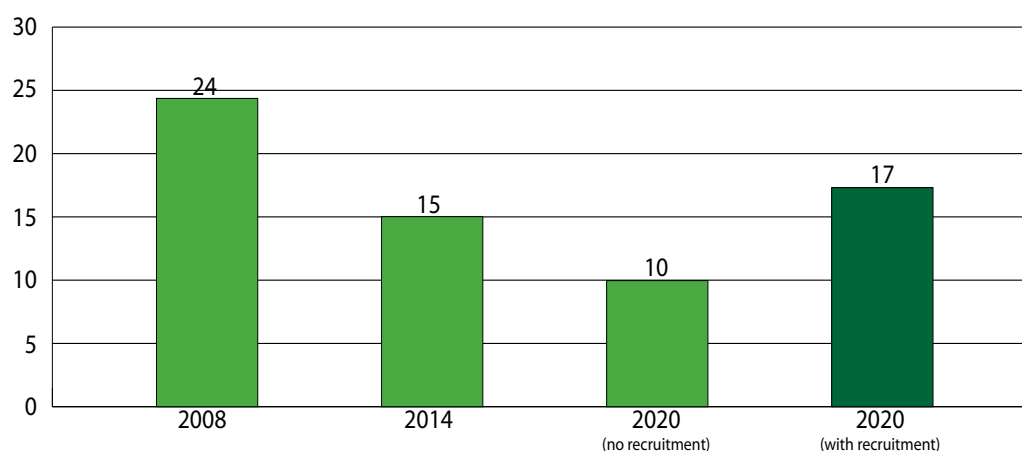
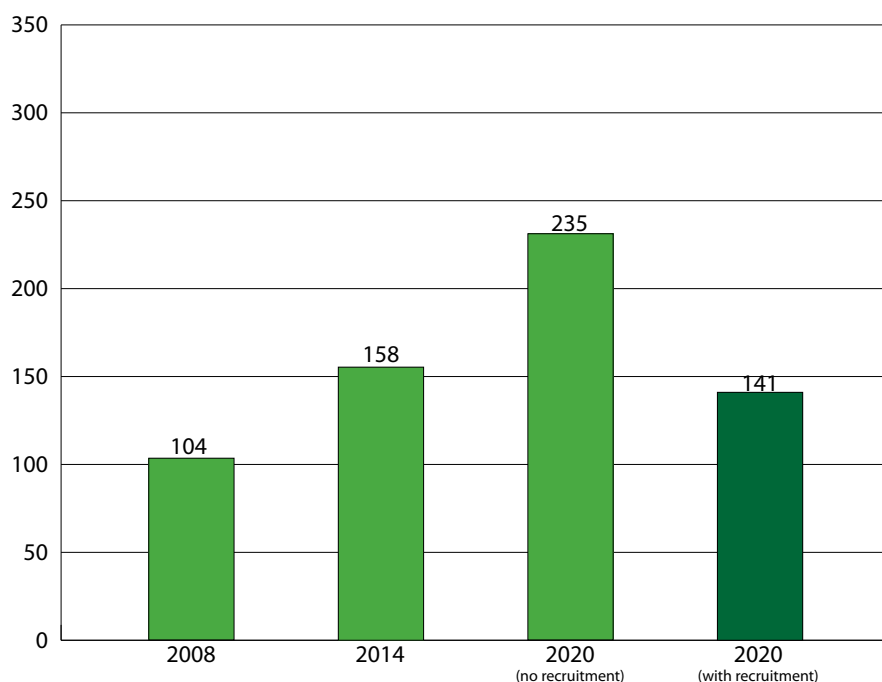


Table 3 - Trends and predictions Cork West staff 2008-2020

Staff Type	2008	2014	2020	Staff required to achieve 2020 targets
Advisor	24	15.2	10.3	17
Education	1	1	0	2
Administration	8	5	3.5	5
Staff Total	33	21.2	13.8	24

Figure 3: Ratio of Clients per Adviser in Cork West Advisory Region



Teagasc Cork West Clients

The distribution of Teagasc Cork West clients by farmer type and advisor is outlined in Table 4, 50% of the dairy producers, 38% of the cattle and sheep producers, 32 % of the sheep only producers and 50% of tillage farmers are Teagasc clients.

Table 4 - Distribution of Cork West Clients by Farm Type 2014

Type of Farming	Client No	Total No of Farmers	No of Advisors
Dairy	1,200	1,900	9
Cattle	1,200	3,820	5.0
Sheep	150	400	1.0
Tillage	40	60	0.4 (CE)
Total	2,500	6,200	15.4

Education

The numbers of young farmers who have completed the Green Cert course in the region or at agricultural college from 2010 -2013 is outlined in Table 5.

Table 5 - Young farmers from Cork West completing Green Cert Courses - 2010 to 2020

Training Location	2010	2014	2020
No of young farmers trained in the region	25	33	50
No of young farmers trained in colleges	20	30	40
Total	45	63	90

- **Carbery Food Ingredients:** A joint technology transfer programme is in place with Carbery since 1998, the purposes of which is to ensure that suppliers to the four constituent co-ops are efficient and viable and prepared to take advantage of the emerging growth opportunities for dairying. Realizing the benefits from quota removal led to the setting up of the Shinagh dairy demonstration farm in 2011. One Advisory staff member has responsibility for data and also operates the Carbery Monitor farm programme. The Carbery Greener Diaries programme is also in operation on 10 farms in conjunction with Teagasc Moorepark.
- **Bandon, Barryroe, Lisivaird and Drinagh Co-ops:** The four West Cork co-ops support our joint programme with Carbery and individual elements are built into the Monitor Farm programme that deal with specific situations in each Co-op area.
- **Dairygold Co-op:** Dairygold has about 700 hundred suppliers in the Cork West area. The Teagasc/Dairygold Joint Programme operates in our region, with two monitor farmers and numerous work shop elements delivered annually. A major element of the joint programme is the discussion group support, whereby a dedicated facilitator assists Advisors with groups. Eleven such groups are jointly facilitated in the region and other Dairygold suppliers are members of a further 7 groups.
- **Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF):** ICBF headquarters is located in our Region and we have strong linkages with ICBF in relation to the dairy, beef and sheep technology transfer programmes and the staging of events and seminars. They provide vital information and farmer data analysis to assist our goal of genetic improvement of livestock.
- **Agricultural Consultants:** Teagasc works in partnership with consultants and we have outsourced Nitrates and Green Cert course modules.
- **Accountants and Solicitors:** These rural professionals provide vital services to our clients and co-operate with us in relation to Accounts analysis and land transfers. Increased interest in collaborative farming will require closer links between Teagasc and these professionals.
- **Local Radio** is used extensively to communicate with farmers. Every Saturday and Wednesday Teagasc has a slot on the C103 farming program. We co-operate with Cork East in sharing a rota. It continues to prove a highly successful method of communication across all enterprises in Co. Cork
- **LEADER:** West Cork Development Partnership. We have a good working relationship with the local Leader company, with dual input into campaigns and Options courses. The Regional manager is a member of the WCDP board.
- **Collaborations & Joint Events:** Seminars, demonstrations, workshops and farm walks are organised on an on-going basis, with help and collaboration with a wide number of organisations. Among the organizations collaborated with are: Moorepark Researchers, Co-ops, Cork Marts, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Bord Bia, AI Breeding Companies, Meat Processing Companies, Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Grassland Association, Animal Health Ireland and Local Veterinarians.



Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Dairy for 2020

Expansion by existing dairy Farmers with sustainable plans, together with drystock farmers converting to dairying must deliver 7 – 10% more milk per year for the next five years, if the Regional target of 35 – 40% is to be achieved. More dairy stock, better herd fertility performance and longer lactations will be required. A concentration on milk solids per Ha from grass will help deliver the target increases in milk production for Carbery and Dairygold. Access to land and land mobility and dealing with fragmentation obstacles will be critical for dairy expansion in the Region. Also important will be farmers' strategies to maximise the benefits of the long grass growing season that exists in Cork West. Dairy farmers cannot afford to underutilise this fantastic resource on their doorstep. Milk price volatility and weather extremes are risk factors that will need to be planned for. Compliance with environmental regulations will be a requirement for all dairy farms.

Anticipated trends: Based on consultation with dairy farmers, milk processors and the local Teagasc dairy advisers and, it is anticipated that an increase of 35% - 40% in milk supplies in the region can be achieved.

Main Strategic Actions to be Implemented

- Teagasc will work jointly with Carbery and Dairygold to promote sustainable dairy expansion in the region and target an expansion of milk production of 35% - 40%.
- Increase Teagasc dairy client numbers and contact time with dairy farmers in the region by 10%.
- Teagasc will implement activities to support new entrants/significant expanders.
- Prioritise time for one-to-one support and regular farm farm visits for new entrants/significant expanders.
- Provide training for up to 80 new entrants over the next 5 years.
- Develop labour management skills and support setting up a skilled persons database.
- Collaborate with Drystock Advisers in the identification of potential new entrants.
- Expand outsourcing of environmental work – Derogations, Nitrates Records & Cross Compliance.
- Teagasc will promote collaborative farming opportunities and land mobility in partnership with key Stakeholders – Co-ops and Macra Na Feirme.
- A pilot project in conjunction with the Dairygold Joint Programme will be implemented on an expanding dairy farm and demonstration of the developments will be held.
- The Shinagh dairy farm will be used extensively along with the Carbery Monitor farmers to demonstrate best management practices for expanders and new entrants.
- A campaign to increase numbers participating in dairy discussion groups will be undertaken and we expect Discussion group numbers to grow from 34 groups to 40. Focus areas will include grass DM utilisation, fertility performance, financial management and managing price volatility.
- Teagasc will work with local dairy equipment and service providers in the design of new buildings and installations for expanding dairy farmers.
- Teagasc will continue to work with local Co-ops in training clients to ensure that they meet Bord Bia Quality Assurance standards.
- Teagasc will continue to work jointly with co-ops through our milk quality Advisor and Animal Health Ireland to improve milk quality and disease status of dairy stock in the region.
- Teagasc will offer clients opportunities to undertake practice and efficiency audits along with financial assessment, to develop whole farm plans to secure their futures.

Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Beef for 2020

Lack of profitability, a high dependency on EU payments, increased production costs and the age profile of operators are some of the major challenges facing the region's beef farmers. Scale of enterprise and land fragmentation, also pose significant challenges.

Anticipated trends: It is anticipated that suckler cow numbers will fall in Cork West by about 5 – 10%. There will be an increase of about 5% in the number of farmers with a dairy calf to beef enterprise and a number of drystock clients will enter contract rearing of dairy heifers as a consistent generator of income.

Main Strategic Actions to be Implemented

- Teagasc will use discussion groups as the main vehicle for knowledge transfer to beef farmers in the region. Teagasc will aim to run 15 - 20 beef discussion groups in the Region.
These groups will focus on:
 - Increasing grass DM utilisation and improving soil fertility.
 - Developing more efficient, genetically superior suckler herds through A.I. use.
 - Assessment of profitability through Profit Monitor analysis, thereby increasing output and profit per Ha.
 - Animal health and welfare
 - Breeding management
- Stage additional public events and workshops for non-discussion group members to improve technology uptake.
- These events will focus on reseeding, cross compliance, drainage and soil fertility.
- Increase collaboration with the local District Veterinary Office and factories to feedback relevant information to clients and discussion groups.
- Teagasc will focus on financial management and breeding during farm visits to assist suckler farmers become more efficient.
- Teagasc will continue to publicise data and results from the BETTER Beef Farm Programme based on a farm near Macroom, to ensure that Cork West clients can see best practice in operation locally.
- Teagasc will provide training for clients to ensure that they meet Bord Bia Quality Assurance standards.



Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Sheep for 2020

The challenges facing the Region's sheep farmers are similar to those of beef farmers with low profitability and a high dependence on environmental schemes and direct payments.

Anticipated trends: Ewe numbers in the region are anticipated to remain static on lowlands and may increase on the hills by 1-2%.

Main Strategic Actions to be Implemented

- Teagasc will promote sheep as a profitable enterprise for clients and will target a 2% growth in ewe numbers.
- Increase numbers of lambs weaned per ewe by 2% pa.
- Discussion groups will be used as the main vehicle for knowledge transfer to sheep farmers in the region with emphasis on better integration between hill and lowland flocks with regard to:
 - Breeding Replacements
 - Improving genetics and ram selection criteria.
 - Finishing lambs
- Stage additional public events and workshops for non-discussion group members, to improve technology uptake
- A new hill sheep BETTER Farm will be set up in the Kealkill area in 2015 and data and results will flow from late 2015 onwards.
- Support efforts to establish producer groups for the marketing of lambs.
- Teagasc will provide training for clients to ensure that they meet Bord Bia Quality Assurance standards.



Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Tillage for 2020

High land rental costs, land availability, low profitability, a high dependency on EU payments and lack of crop diversification options are some of the major challenges facing the Regions tillage farmers.

Anticipated trends: It is expected that cereal acreage may fall in light of continuing high conacre prices and the unprecedented demand for rented land. New land leasing rules will suit tillage farmers and provide security of tenure. However tillage farmers may not be able to compete on price with dairy farmers.

The introduction of the Basic Payment Scheme is likely to reduce direct payments on tillage farms (as historic payments/Ha were high following compensation for the loss of the sugar beet crop). New environmental regulations like Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and the implementation of the Sustainable Use Directive (SUD) will increase costs on many tillage farms. The continuing high price of inputs also puts cereal growing under financial pressure.

Main Strategic Actions to be Implemented

- Promote profitable tillage systems and crops which are environmentally sustainable.
- Promote collaborative arrangements with livestock farmers for produce sales and slurry imports.
- Establish benchmark costs on tillage farms in the region with particular emphases on machinery costs and assist farmers in reducing these costs.
- Ensure tillage farmers in the region comply with all the regulations of the new basic payment scheme particularly crop diversification and ecological focus areas (EFAs) to ensure they receive the maximum available payment from the scheme.
- Continue to monitor the evolution of disease resistance in the region particularly septoria and implement best practice protocol from research on farms.
- Continue to have a high level of contact with tillage farmers through farm visits, consultations, discussion groups, seminars and crop walks
- Promote the trialling and testing of protein crops for livestock feed.



Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Education and Training for 2020

Teagasc provides a dedicated education and training service to farming in the region. We have one full time Education Officer, based in Macroom. We particularly cater for young farmers in the 23+ age bracket who want part-time courses. In recent years, up to 30 students bi-annually have graduated from the Macroom Teagasc centre with Level 5 and Level 6 FETAC awards in Agriculture. In addition short courses on farm safety are provided annually.

Anticipated trend: The new young farmer Scheme will lead to increased strong demand for education and training especially for the Green Cert courses. Demand for more farm safety training and technology related training. Sustainable use directive(sprayer) training courses are also in demand.

Main Strategic Actions to be Implemented

- A new Green Cert course for 30 part-time students commenced in Macroom in Sept 2014 and will run until Spring 2016.
- Provide short courses on: Farm Safety, Cross Compliance, Farm Management and Forestry
- Provide Options Workshops and follow on initiatives where participants will have the opportunity to network with local development and training agencies.
- Provide specific advice to farm families on farm transfers and land mobility options.



Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Environment for 2020

It is anticipated that 500 -600 Teagasc clients in Cork West will be planned into GLAS over the period of this plan by our strategic partner. Derogation planning will move onto a common regulated platform hosted by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, involving stricter deadlines and compliance monitoring. Low carbon farming will also move centre stage and the implementation of the Sustainable Use Directive for pesticide users will be implemented during this period.

Main Strategic Actions to be Implemented:

- Acquire 4 contract staff through a sub-contracting arrangement to undertake our Nitrates derogation planning for 600 clients. These staff would also ensure that clients records and soil samples were adequate and updated as required.
- Assistance will be made available to all clients by our 6 drystock Advisors to help clients apply for GLAS.
- Educate and inform clients of the requirements on eligibility for:
 - Basic Payment Scheme, Greening, Ecological Focus Areas and Crop Diversification.
 - Nitrates Regulations Requirements and Nitrates Derogation Planning.
 - Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions. (GAEC)
 - Green, Low Carbon Agri Environmental Scheme. (GLAS)
- Facilitate the maximum number of clients applying for GLAS through working with our strategic partner
- Educate clients on cross compliance through a series of public events and promotional campaigns.
- Help farm enterprises move towards low carbon farming with a target Teagasc completing a Carbon Navigator for 50% of clients.
- Provide training courses in the Sustainable Use Directive (Pesticides Regulations.), biodiversity and water quality protection.



Main Research Requirements Specific to this Region

Dairying

Continue the work at the Clonakilty College Demonstration farm on stocking rate and cow fertility. Further clover performance evaluation trials required. Use the Shinagh Demonstration farm to establish the ideal stocking rate for cross bred cows in Cork West. Continue to develop data streams and results from The Carbery Greener Dairies project. Establish a trial to assess the impact in a high rainfall area, of sulphur on grass yields and preservation quality and protein % of grass silage. The Teagasc Cork West Advisory Region will continue to work closely with our dairy research colleagues in identifying areas for further research.

Beef

Develop grass management systems for reduced inputs on cattle farms on both marginal land and lowland areas. Evaluate suckler cow traits and genetic parameters for rapid genetic improvement in suckler herds. Evaluate suckler cow breeds on marginal land farms in relation to their economic suitability. Set up a dairy calf to beef monitor farm in Cork West to evaluate profitability and performance. Work with and inform clients of the research outcomes from newly established suckler herd in Teagasc Athenry.

Sheep

Develop grass management systems for reduced inputs on sheep farms on both marginal land and lowland areas. Evaluate ewe traits and genetic parameters for rapid genetic improvement of sheep flocks. Evaluate alternative sheep breeds on marginal land farms in relation to their economic suitability. Work with and inform clients of the research outcomes from Teagasc Sheep Research farm in Athenry.

Water Quality

The Timoleague Agricultural Catchment Programme, run by Teagasc, is evaluating the effects of farm management practices on the transfer of nutrients from source to water and their impact on water quality in the Argideen River catchment near its entry to the sea at Timoleague. The findings from the programme are being used on an on-going basis to underpin profitable, sustainable farming through a series of local advisory and technology transfer initiatives. Results from this and other catchment research projects are being used to underpin our access to a nitrates derogation from the EU. This work needs to continue.

Drainage

Poorly drained and impeded soils are a major concern to dairying and drystock producers in the region. High annual rainfall of typically 1500mm, add to problems associated with impermeable soil types and topographic difficulties.

In 2013 a Teagasc Heavy Soils Demonstration Farm, as part of the *Teagasc Heavy Soils Programme*, was established in the Region, just north of Macroom. This farm has also joined the Teagasc/Dairygold joint programme as a Monitor Farm and will be used to demonstrate best practice in drainage from 2015 onwards. Two Advisors within the Region have received extra training on Soils and Environment; they are available with our other Advisors to do drainage assessment and planning.

Artisan and Small Food Industries

West Cork is home to many small food industries, some of which have become established national household and gourmet names. Research and specialised food training is required in the Region to keep these business's at the forefront of their niche markets. New entrants to small food will also need this backup.

Engagement with Stakeholders

To review progress and performance the following meetings and consultations with stakeholders will take place:

- Meeting once per year with members of Dairy, Beef and Sheep discussion groups and industry and Agricultural College staff to obtain feedback on our programmes.
- More joint events collaborations with stakeholders.
- Closer links with Discussion Groups, and other Rural Professionals holding public events.
- Regular liaison with farming organisations on farm safety information campaigns.

Cork West Advisory Staff Details

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