

Advisory
Programme

Kerry/Limerick 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

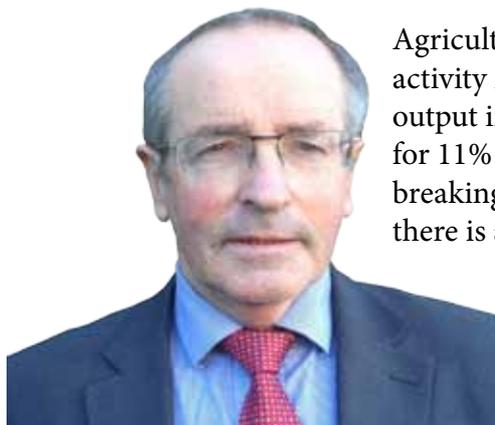
1. Improve the competitiveness of agriculture, food and the wider bioeconomy.
2. Support sustainable farming and the environment.
3. Encourage diversification of the rural economy and enhance the quality of life in rural areas.
4. Enhance organisational capability and deliver value for money.

Teagasc Office Locations in the Kerry/Limerick Region



Kerry/Limerick Advisory Region

Teagasc, Gortboy, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick	063 98039
Teagasc, Gortboy, Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick	069 61444
Teagasc, Cleeney, Killarney, Co. Kerry	064 6632344
Teagasc, Clieveragh, Listowel, Co. Kerry	068 21266
Teagasc, The Pavillion, Austin Stack Park, Tralee, Co. Kerry	066 7125077



Agriculture is a major indigenous industry in the region and agricultural activity makes a major contribution to the economy. The value of agricultural output in counties Kerry and Limerick in 2013 was €791.2.m. This accounts for 11% of the national figure. With the abolition of dairy quotas and the breaking of the link between basic farm payments and production levels, there is a major opportunity to further increase agricultural output.

Teagasc advisors are ideally placed to instigate, lead, drive and guide development during the period to 2020. We will work closely with our stakeholders to ensure that the agricultural economy of the region makes maximum gains from these opportunities.

Erosion of staff resources in the region has been identified as a major risk and will seriously impair our ability to deliver on this plan and limit the exploitation of the opportunities by the agricultural economy of the region.

Training in technical, financial, environmental and administration, is an essential foundation for sustainable agricultural development into the future. This will underpin our economic recovery.

This strategic plan outlines the steps and resources that are necessary for agriculture in Kerry and Limerick to achieve its potential.

John Donworth,
Regional Manager, Teagasc, Kerry/Limerick

Kerry/Limerick Regional Strategic Plan – Summary Actions

- Target 30%+ increase in milk output
- Increase numbers participating in discussion groups in all enterprises
- Work with Kerry Agribusiness, Dairygold and other processors in the Region to support dairy expansion
- Promote expansion in sheep as a profitable enterprise
- Targeted actions to stabilise suckler cow numbers
- Work closely with the Health and Safety Authority in educating farm families on farm safety.
- Provide a one to one service for new entrants and expanding dairy clients
- More public events and workshops in lieu of reduced one to one visits
- Educate clients to achieve Bord Bia Quality Assurance Scheme standards
- Teagasc will work jointly with Animal Health Ireland to improve milk quality and disease status of livestock in the region.
- Target 50% clients to move to lower carbon farming and completing Carbon Navigator
- Facilitate the maximum number clients apply for GLAS through working with our strategic partner.
- Implement the BETTER Farm Programme

Farming in the Region

In the rural areas, farming is the major generator of economic activity providing raw materials for processing and marketing and a corresponding inflow of money to stimulate other business through the purchases of goods and services. According to the 2011 Census of Population the population of the Region is 336,354. It is estimated that 14,403 of these are active farmers – 4.3% of the total population.

Three major enterprises dominate farming in the Region. Dairy farming is the dominant enterprise and the Region is a major producer of milk. At the end of 2013, the Region had a dairy cow population of 190,603 cows, supplying 1.028 billion litres of milk. The Region accounts for 17% of the national dairy herd. Dairy farming is a major contributor to family farm income.

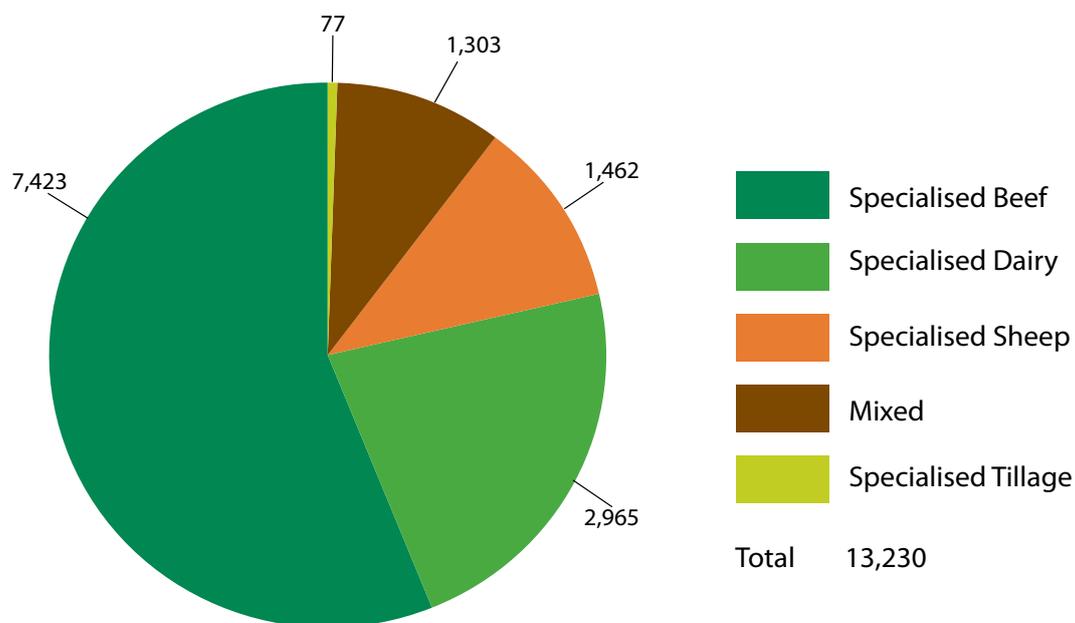
Beef cow farming is also a major farming activity. The total number of beef cows is 93,138. This accounts for 8% of our national beef herd.

Sheep farming is also a significant enterprise. The Region has 251,308 breeding ewes. This accounts for 13% of the national flock. Hill sheep farming is a major enterprise in the Dingle and Iveragh peninsulas of South Kerry.

Farming Systems

The following pie chart illustrates the size of the different enterprises in the Region. The system of farming most common is specialised cattle production (beef finishing/rearing and sheep) with 53% of farms in this category. Specialised dairying accounts for 24% of all farms while specialised sheep farming accounts for 12% of all farms. Specialised tillage farming accounts for only 0.53% of all farms in the Region.

Figure 1 - Farm classification by type of farm for Kerry/Limerick 2010



Source: CSO Census of Agriculture 2010

Land Type and Soil Fertility

Large variation in soil types exist within the Region. In mid Limerick, free draining limestone soils give way to gley soils and areas of blanket peat as one approaches the border with Kerry. Gley soils again predominate in North and mid- Kerry. Further south, mountain ranges predominate in areas where hill sheep production is the predominant enterprise.

A total of 4675 soil samples were taken in the Region in 2014 across all enterprises. The analysis showed that 25% of soils are at Soil Index 3 for Phosphorus, 26% are at Soil Index 3 for Potash and 18% of soils have a pH reading of 6.2-6.5. Raising soil fertility levels to the optimum required for commercial farming will remain a goal for the advisory services in the Region. The target is to have 50% of dairy farmer clients' soil sampled by 2018.

Farm Size

The average farm size in Kerry/Limerick is 34ha as against 32.7ha nationally. Farm size in Kerry/Limerick compares favourably with the national average figures.

Table 1 - Farm size in Kerry/Limerick and State 2010

Size Ha	Kerry/Limerick		State	
	No	%	No	%
<2	311	2	2,341	2
2 - <10	2,141	15	23,133	16
10 - <20	3,087	21	33,581	24
20 - <30	2,666	19	24,687	18
30 - <50	3,417	24	30,668	22
50 - <100	2,265	16	20,755	15
> = 100	526	4	4,695	3
Total	14,403	100	139,860	100



Facilities

The Limerick/Kerry Advisory Region has a network of 5 offices located in Kilmallock, Newcastle West, Listowel, Tralee and Killarney, providing a high quality advisory and education programme. The Tralee office is rented and Clinics are provided Mondays and Fridays in Cahirsiveen and Wednesdays in Kenmare.

Kilmallock, Newcastle West, Listowel and Killarney each have a good sized classroom where farmers and their families attend a wide range of training courses, and seek expert professional advice for the future development of their farms. The Kilmallock office has accommodation for up to 10 staff and good car parking facilities. Newcastle West has accommodation for up to 10 staff. Listowel has accommodation for 8 staff. Tralee has accommodation for 10 staff while Killarney has accommodation for 8 staff. All have good car parking facilities.

Staff Resources

The trend and prediction of staff numbers 2008 -2014 are outlined in Figure 2 and Table 2. The reduction of 52% in Teagasc advisory staff over the last 7 years is due to retirements, redeployment, termination of contracts and the embargo on recruitment in the public service. Any further erosion of staff resources in the region will seriously impair our ability to deliver on this plan and limit the exploitation of the opportunities by the agricultural economy of the region.

Figure 2 - Adviser Numbers in Kerry/Limerick Advisory Region

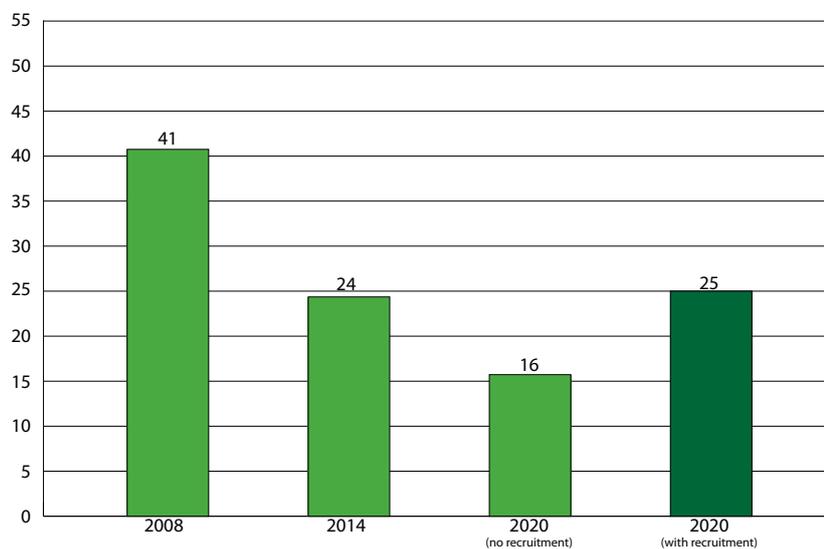


Table 2 - Trends and predictions Kerry/Limerick staff 2008-2020

Staff Type	2008	2014	2020	Staff required to achieve 2020 targets
Advisor	40.5	24	16	25
Education	4	3	2	2
Administration	12	7.5	6.5	7.5
Staff Total	56.5	34.5	24.5	34.5

Education

Adult education and training Programmes range from the on-line Advanced Certificate in Agriculture (ACA) courses to Part-Time courses to short focussed courses, such as Health and Safety, Internet courses etc. Currently, two on-line Advanced Certificate in Agriculture Course are hosted from the Kilmallock office, while the 3 Part-time Certificate in Agriculture courses are hosted from the Killarney office. The number of young farmers participating in agricultural courses in the Region is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 - Young farmers from Kerry/Limerick completing Green Cert Courses - 2010 to 2020

Course Description	2008	2014	2020
On-Line Distance Learning (ACA)	26	60	60
Certificate in Agriculture (part-time)	32	41	35
Total	58	101	95



Teagasc Kerry/Limerick Clients

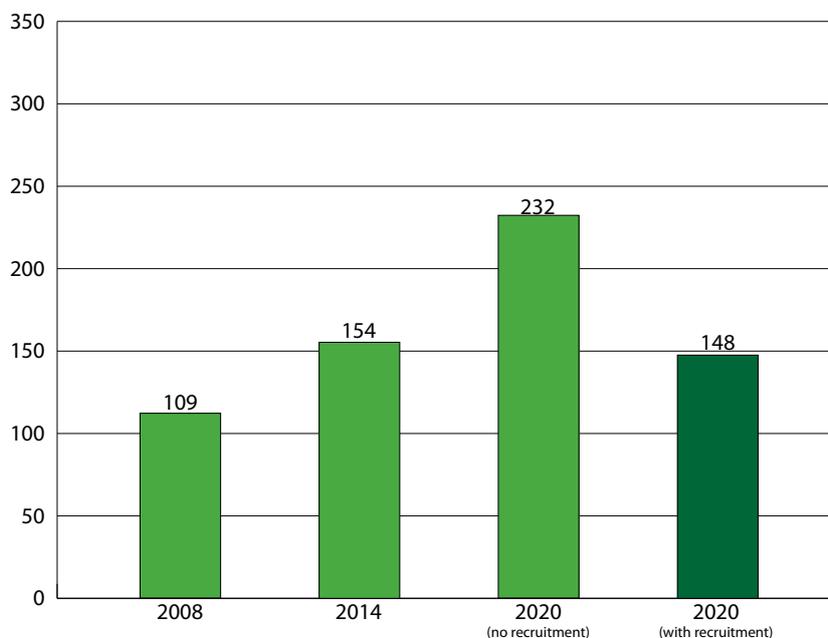
Over 4,000 farm families are current clients and they have enjoyed a long and fruitful association with Teagasc over a long number of years. The main advisory methods used by Teagasc in the Region include farm visits, office consultations, farm walks, discussion groups, seminars, conferences, newsletters, open days and workshops.

The distribution of Teagasc clients is outlined in Table 4. The table shows that half the dairy farmers in the Region are clients, while 30% of drystock farmers are clients.

Table 4 - Teagasc Kerry/Limerick Clients

	Clients	Total Farmers in Region	% of farmers as clients
Dairy	1,702	3,480	49%
Drystock	2,345	7,885	30%
Total	4,047	11,365	

Figure 3 - Ratio of Clients per Adviser in Kerry/Limerick Advisory Region



Number of farmers in Discussion Groups

Discussion groups have long been regarded as a very effective method of technology transfer. Farmers come together in a friendly environment to share their ideas and experiences.

The number of discussion groups in the Region is shown by enterprise in Table 5.

Table 5 - Number of discussion groups in Kerry/Limerick region

Enterprise	No of Groups	No of Farmers
Dairy	44	528
Beef	37	555
Sheep	15	180
Total	96	1,263

Partners in the Region

- **Joint Programmes:** Two major joint technology transfer programmes are in place with Kerry Agri-business and Dairygold Co-op. The goal of the programmes is to ensure that suppliers to Kerry Agri-business and Dairygold Co-op receive the most up-to-date technical advice, promote profitable and environmentally sustainable dairy farming and enhance the quality of life for all participants.
- **ICBF:** Teagasc Advisory Services in the Region collaborate regularly with the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF). There are strong linkages with ICBF in relation to dairy, beef and sheep technology transfer programmes and the staging of events and seminars.
- **Animal Health Ireland:** Teagasc collaborates with Animal Health Ireland (AHI) and milk processors in facilitating Cell Check workshops and Calf Care events.
- **FRS:** Collaborate with Farm Relief Services (FRS) in delivering milking skills courses. FRS will also carry out GLAS planning on our behalf.
- **Marts:** Collaborate with the major marts in the region, Kilmallock, Castleisland and Milltown to put on technology transfer events for dairy, beef and sheep farmers.
- **Agricultural Consultants:** Collaborate with members of the ACA and private consultants, outsourcing scheme administration.
- **Agricultural Colleges:** Collaborate with Pallaskenry Agricultural College – for skills training and assessments.
- **Local Radio:** Collaborate with local radio through participation on farming shows and writing articles for the local and national farming press.
- **Agri-Industry:** Collaborate with agri-industry of importance in the region. This includes feed merchants, hardware stores, milking machine manufactures.
- **Research:** Collaborate with Teagasc research centres in Moorepark and Johnstown Castle in the successful on- farm Heavy Soils Programme
- **Agencies:** Collaborate on an on-going basis through seminars, workshops, farm walks through a wide range of organisations: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Bord Bia, AI Breeding Companies, Meat Processing
- **Agri-Companies & Services:** Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Grassland Association, Local Veterinarians, National Dairy Council, Local Authorities, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Producer Groups
- **LEADER:** Collaborate with local Leader groups through participation on Leader boards and through participation on agricultural sub-committees of Leader groups.
- **HSA:** Teagasc works with the Health and Safety Authority in developing and implementing farm safety education and campaigns.





Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Dairy for 2020

By 2020, the number of dairy farmers in the Kerry/Limerick Region will be approximately 3,000 farmers. Approximately half of this figure will be Teagasc clients reflecting the trends of previous years. Current trends indicate that dairy cow numbers in Limerick are increasing more rapidly than in Kerry. Cow numbers in Limerick in 2007 were 5% ahead of figures for Kerry. By 2012, the gap had widened to 11% and by 2013, the gap was 13%.

Anticipated trends: Various surveys of dairy farmers intentions post quota removal indicate the following: Approx 20% of dairy farmers will maintain cow numbers. Approximately half will expand by 20% while another 20% will expand will expand by up to 50%. A small number are forecast to expand by greater than 50%.

The major challenges faced by dairy farmers will be: Price volatility, Cash Flow management, Farm Infrastructure, Labour Efficiency and Grass Production and Utilisation

Main Strategic Actions to be Implemented

- Increase Teagasc dairy client numbers and contact time with dairy farmers in the region by 10%.
- Teagasc will work jointly with Kerry Agri-business and Dairygold Co-op to promote sustainable dairy expansion in the region and target an expansion of milk production of 30% +.
- Teagasc will implement activities to support new entrants/significant expanders.
- Prioritise time for one-to-one support of new entrants/significant expanders.
- Provide training for up to 20 new entrants per year.
- Expand outsourcing of non-core work – Derogation, Nitrates Records.
- Collaborate with Drystock Advisers in the identification of potential new entrants.
- Teagasc will promote collaborative farming opportunities and land mobility in partnership with key stakeholders – Kerry Agri-business and Dairygold Co-op and Macra Na Feirme.
- Teagasc will campaign to increase numbers participating in dairy discussion groups. Currently, the Region has 44 dairy discussion groups. The Region will target the new RDP Knowledge Groups to drive numbers of discussion groups to 50. Focus areas will include financial management and managing price volatility.
- Teagasc will work with local milk processors to provide training for clients to ensure they meet the requirements of Bord Bia's new Sustainable Dairy Quality Assurance Scheme.
- Teagasc will work jointly will Animal Health Ireland and milk processors to improve milk quality and the disease status of livestock in the region.
- Teagasc will identify labour efficient farms in the Region to demonstrate best practice in labour management.
- Teagasc will continue to focus on soil fertility to ensure that 50% of dairy clients in the Region have soil sampled by 2018.

Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Beef for 2020

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

Anticipated trends: It is anticipated that suckler cow numbers, at best, will remain static; that there will be a small increase (1%) in the number of farmers with a dairy calf to beef enterprise. A small number of clients (<1%) have begun contract rearing of dairy heifers.

Main Strategic Actions to be Implemented

- Improve profitability of beef through best practice adoption
- Teagasc will use discussion groups as the main vehicle for knowledge transfer to beef farmers in the region. Teagasc will facilitate 37 beef discussion groups. These groups will focus on:
 - Farm management & efficiency
 - Animal health and welfare
 - Breeding management
 - Grass growth and utilisation
- Additional public events and workshops will be hosted for non-discussion group members in lieu of reduced individual farm visits due reductions in advisor numbers.
- Teagasc will continue with the BETTER Beef Farm Programme in the Region to deliver key messages to beef farmers. These events will focus on breeding, grassland management, 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 one to one farm contacts to help stabilise suckler cow numbers.
- Teagasc will assist beef farmers to maximise the retention of direct payments.



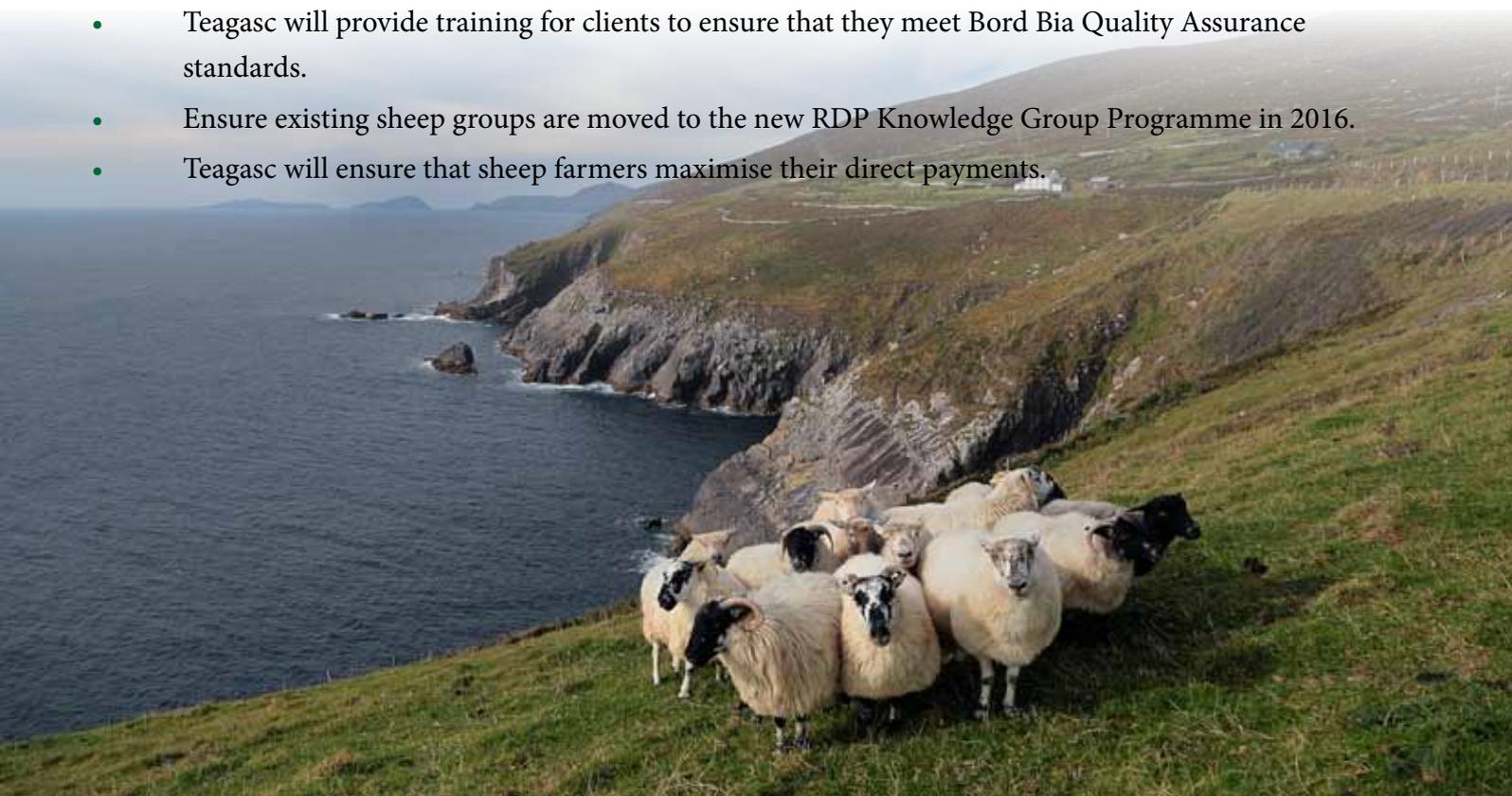
Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Sheep for 2020

The challenges faced by the Region's sheep farmers are similar to those of beef farmers. The viability of the hill sheep sector is a major cause for concern.

Anticipated trends: Ewe numbers in the Region expected to remain static.

Main Strategic Actions to be Implemented

- Improve profitability of sheep through best practice adoption
- Teagasc will promote sheep as a profitable enterprise for clients.
- 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
 - Finishing lambs
- Additional public events and workshops will be hosted for non-discussion group members in lieu of reduced individual farm visits due reductions in advisor numbers.
- One lowland BETTER Sheep Farm will be operated in the Region. This farm will be used to get key performance indicators adopted at farm level.
- Recording of data is non-existent on hill sheep flocks. Genetic progress is very poor. One of the main limiting factors for the Scottish Blackface breed is the absence of a flock book with parentage information.
- Teagasc will support breeders in the development and implementation of a genetic improvement programme in the Region.
- Projects which are based around data collection will be identified and used to get key performance indicators adopted at farm level.
- Teagasc will provide training for clients to ensure that they meet Bord Bia Quality Assurance standards.
- Ensure existing sheep groups are moved to the new RDP Knowledge Group Programme in 2016.
- Teagasc will ensure that sheep farmers maximise their direct payments.



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.

It is expected that cereal acreage may fall in the 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

- Improve profitability of tillage through best practice adoption
- Establish 2 tillage discussion groups under the RDP Programme
- Time critical public event with tillage specialist.
- Maximise payment of direct payments –BPS, Greening.
- Support and educate farmers on Sustainable Use Directive.



Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Education & Training for 2020

Teagasc provides a strong education and training service to farmers in the Region. Demand for its on-line and part courses has never been higher. In addition, a wide range of short courses are also provided on a range of topics. Half day Health and Safety courses for farmers and farm families are run by the education officers each year. With so many farm accidents in 2014, demand for these courses will increase. Short computer courses to help farmers achieve a working knowledge of computers and the internet, are also very popular.

Anticipated trends: Increased demand for education and training courses in the short term.

Main Strategic Actions to be Implemented

- Recruit additional staff member to replace retiring staff member in the Killarney office. Alternatively, outsourcing of the part-time education option will have to be seriously considered.
- It is critical that the part-time education option remains attached to the Killarney office as a number of participants are located in the peninsulas and distance to the agricultural colleges is a major obstacle.
- Offer a distance learning Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Agriculture course to 60 non- agricultural award holders each year.
- Offer Certificate in Agriculture part-time to 35 young farmers each year
- Provide short courses on financial management, dairying for new entrants, farm safety, options and GLAS courses.
- Continue to contribute to courses run by other organisations.



Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Environment for 2020

It is anticipated that 2000 Teagasc clients in the Limerick/Kerry Region 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

- Educate and inform clients of the requirements on eligibility for:
 - Basic Farm Payments
 - GAEC
- 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. Teagasc will complete a Carbon Navigator for 50% of its clients.
- Provide training courses in the Sustainable Use Directive (Pesticides Regulations), biodiversity and water quality protection.
- Develop sustainable methods of ensuring that commonage land is GAEC compliant.



Main Research Requirements Specific to this Advisory Region

Drainage

The Region has a number of areas where poorly drained and impeded soils are a major concern to dairy, drystock and sheep farmers. The Region also has some of the highest annual rainfall areas in Ireland. Continuation of the Heavy Soils Programme in conjunction with Teagasc Moorepark and Teagasc Johnstown Castle is a must in order to be able to demonstrate economically viable and sustainable methods of land improvement. Raising soil Index is a constant challenge on heavy clay soils. On-going research is required for optimum results.

Dairying

As Teagasc Moorepark in Fermoy is relatively close to the region, the research that is being carried out there on grassland management, breeding etc. is very relevant to the majority of dairy farmers in the region.

Beef

Beef research is carried out in Teagasc Grange, Co. Meath. This is located a prohibitive distance from much of the region and only a minority of beef farmers in the region travel there. The primary means of transferring the knowledge of technologies developed in Grange to farmers in the region is through the BETTER farms, discussion groups and open events and this will continue.

Sheep

Research project needed on data collection on hill sheep farms. This is necessary to drive productivity and genetic gain. Resources need to be allocated to such a project.

Engagement with Stakeholders

To review progress and performance, the followings meetings and consultation with stakeholders will take place:

Meeting once per year with the Chairman of dairy beef and sheep discussion groups to review progress and obtain feedback.

- More joint events in collaborations with stakeholders.
- Closer links with Producer Groups, Veterinary Ireland with a view to holding more public meeting/ events.
- Meetings with local stakeholder groups to be established.

Kerry/Limerick Advisory Region Staff Details

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