

Wexford/Wicklow/Carlow 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 Wexford/Wicklow/Carlow Region

Wexford/Wicklow/Carlow Advisory Region

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I am pleased to present the Teagasc Wexford Wicklow Carlow Advisory Region Strategic Plan 2015-2020 which sets out the goals, priorities and strategic actions for the region's publicly funded advisory service.

This plan sets out strategic actions required to deal with the opportunities and challenges that will arise from the removal of milk quota, the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the global increase in demand for food.

Teagasc, as the lead provider of relevant and scientifically verified technologies, is ideally placed to lead the development of the agricultural sector in this region. We will provide leadership to the farming community in the region, allowing farmers to develop farming systems that are sustainable, profitable and competitive.

Development work will be prioritised while outsourcing scheme work, where appropriate. Teagasc is committed to lifelong learning for farmers and providing support to young trained farmers. We will leverage the capacity of existing and potential industry partners / stakeholders to deliver growth beyond the capacity of Teagasc Advisory alone. The regional strategy is in line with the strategies set out in Food Harvest 2020 and will play a key role in delivery of the FH2020 targets.

Siobhān Kavanagh Regional Manager, Teagasc, Wexford/Wicklow/Carlow

Wexford/Wicklow/Carlow Regional Strategic Plan - Summary Actions

- Provide best practice guidance to allow farmers to exploit the opportunities and facilitate a 40% increase in milk output over the next 5 years.
- Increase numbers participating in discussion groups in all enterprises.
- Increased use of workshops as an extension tool for non-discussion group farmers.
- Develop dairy calf to beef systems (expected output increase of 20%) through events, demonstrations and discussion groups.
- Teagasc will operate two BETTER Sheep farms and associated programmes to achieve the target increase in lamb carcass output of 10 kg / ha.
- Increase the focus on the utilisation of profit monitor data to benchmark costs on tillage farms.
- Develop three demonstration tillage farms to meet the expected output growth of 5%.
- Foster strategic alliances with industry partners including feed companies, vets, AHI, ICBF, meat processors, accountants & solicitors as well as the grain trade.
- Develop on-farm projects across enterprises for new technology demonstration.
- Set up a Facebook page for the unit.
- Conduct a survey of young trained farmers to establish the extension requirements.
- Provide Green Cert courses for young farmers in the region.
- Deliver a pilot project, targeting transition year students for projects on farm safety.
- Target 50% of clients to complete the Carbon Navigator annually.



Farming in the Region

Land Base

There are 8,622 farms in the Wexford, Wicklow, Carlow Region with over 50% of these in Wexford. Wicklow has a high proportion of commonage with over 20% of the land in the county being commonage, compared to just 1% in Wexford and 3.6% in Carlow. This will have implications for the type of extension programme that is implemented in Wicklow in particular.

Table 1 - Number of farms and Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) in Wexford, Wicklow & Carlow in 2010

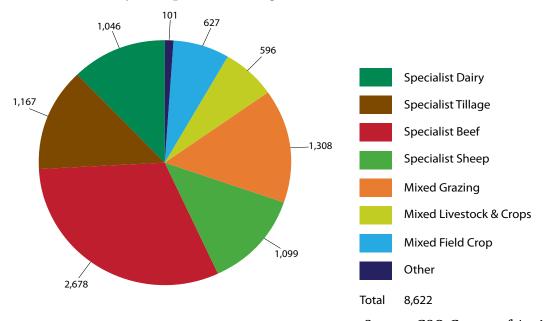
| County | No of Farms | UAA excl. commonage (ha) | Commonage (ha) | UAA incl. commonage (ha) |
|---------|-------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Wexford | 4,426 | 182,110 | 2,626 | 184,736 |
| Wicklow | 2,394 | 101,972 | 25,971 | 127,943 |
| Carlow | 1,802 | 70,415 | 2,637 | 73,052 |
| Total | 8,622 | 354,497 | 31,234 | 385,731 |

Source: CSO Census of Agriculture 2010

Farming Type

Specialist beef farms is the dominant system in Wexford, Wicklow and Carlow with 30% of all farms being specialist beef. Dairying is a significant enterprise with 1193 suppliers, based on co-operative returns. Tillage crops are an important enterprise in pockets throughout the Region. Over 24% of the total area under cereals in the country is in the Wexford/Wicklow/Carlow region.

Figure 1 - Number of Farms by Enterprise in the Region



Source: CSO Census of Agriculture 2010

Table 2 - Number of Farms by Enterprise in each County

| County | Specialist Dairy | Specialist Tillage | Specialist Beef | Specialist Sheep | Mixed Grazing | Mixed Livestock & Crops | Mixed Field Crops | Other |
|---------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------|
| Wexford | 694 | 798 | 1,310 | 282 | 517 | 399 | 365 | 61 |
| Wicklow | 201 | 132 | 719 | 573 | 519 | 71 | 155 | 25 |
| Carlow | 151 | 237 | 649 | 244 | 272 | 127 | 107 | 15 |
| Total | 1,046 | 1,167 | 2,678 | 1,099 | 1,308 | 596 | 627 | 101 |

The average number of cattle per farm in Wexford is 79.7, amongst the most dense in country. Other counties with a high number of cattle per farm include Meath, Cork, Tipperary, Kilkenny and Waterford. Likewise, the average number of sheep per farm in Wicklow is 262, amongst the highest in the country.

Farm Size

Average farm size in Counties Wexford, Wicklow and Carlow at 41.2, 42.5 and 39.2 hectares (ha), respectively. This is higher than the national average at 32.7 ha in 2010. Nationally, there are just 18% of farms greater than 50 ha. In the Wexford, Wicklow and Carlow regions this is 30%, 29% and 27%, respectively.

1,462

Less than 10 ha
10 - 20 ha
20 - 30 ha
30 - 50 ha
50 - 100 ha
100+ ha
Total 8,622

2,045

Figure 2 - The Number of Farms Classified by Farm Size (AAU, ha) in the Region

Source: CSO Census of Agriculture 2010

Table 3 - Number of Farms Classified by Farm Size in each County

1,314

| County | Less than 10 ha | 10 - 20 ha | 20 - 30 ha | 30 - 50 ha | 50 - 100 ha | 100 + ha |
|---------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|----------|
| Wexford | 640 | 711 | 688 | 1,101 | 1,052 | 234 |
| Wicklow | 395 | 417 | 350 | 536 | 505 | 191 |
| Carlow | 299 | 334 | 276 | 408 | 386 | 99 |
| Total | 1,334 | 1,462 | 1,314 | 2,045 | 1,943 | 524 |

Source: CSO Census of Agriculture 2010

Farm Income

Average family farm income in the south east was €37,928 (€691 / ha), according to the National Farm Survey (NFS) in 2013. The South East had the highest Single Farm Payment (SFP) at €531/ha, compared to a national average of €364/ha. A study by the NFS in 2014 showed that 45% of farmers in the South East were viewed as viable, 25% sustainable (i.e. some off-farm income) and 30% vulnerable (neither viable or with an off-farm income).

Land Type

Land type in this region is mixed. The lowlands of the extensive central portion of Carlow are dominated by deep, well-drained fertile soils. The hills associated mainly with the Castlecomer Plateau consist of physically difficult and mostly poorly drained soils. While the Blackstairs Mountains, carry degraded mineral soils on the lower slopes and peats at the higher elevations.

Wexford is largely low lying fertile land with the three predominant soils being brown earth, gley soils in the South East of the county as well as around Gorey and brown podzolics near the edge of the Blackstairs. Brown podzolics are the predominant soil type in Wicklow with some shallow brown earth and pockets of brown earth along the east coast of the county.

Soil fertility remains an important limiting factor in all three counties with just 11% of all dairy farms surveyed between 2007 and 2013 being optimum for P, K and pH.

Age Profile of Farm Holdings

The age profile of farm holdings in the Wexford/Wicklow Carlow region shows that just 26% of farm holdings are less than 44 years old and over 49% are 55 years old or greater. This is reflective of the national average with just 24% of farmers less than 44 years old (half what it was in 2000) and over a quarter of farmers greater than 65 years old.

Table 4 - The percentage of family farm holdings classified by the holding characteristics

| | Age | | | | | | |
|---------|-----|--------|-----|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| | <44 | 45 -54 | 55+ | Sole Occupation | Major Occupation | Subsidiary Occupation | Total No. of Farmers |
| State | 24 | 25 | 51 | 54 | 15 | 31 | 139,556 |
| Wexford | 28 | 26 | 46 | 60 | 15 | 25 | 4,426 |
| Wicklow | 24 | 27 | 49 | 55 | 16 | 29 | 2,394 |
| Carlow | 27 | 24 | 49 | 58 | 15 | 27 | 1,802 |

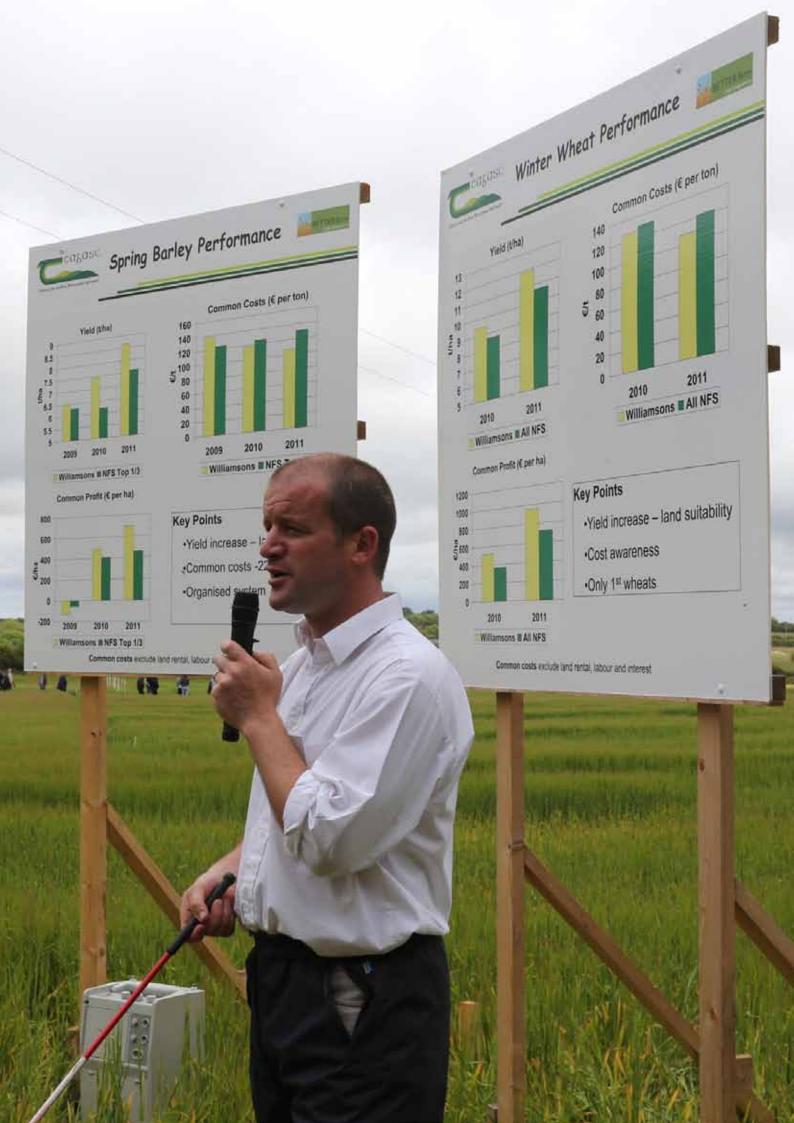
Agricultural Labour Input, CSO 2010

This situation will have an impact on development prospects in the region but also succession planning and farm structures e.g. share farming, partnerships must be an important component of any strategic plan for the unit in future.

Training

National figures would suggest that just 31% of all farmers have had some formal training.

This is greater amongst younger farmers (less than 35 years old) at 51.5% and also greater amongst larger farms (over 50 ha) at 47.2%.



Teagasc in the Region

Human Resources

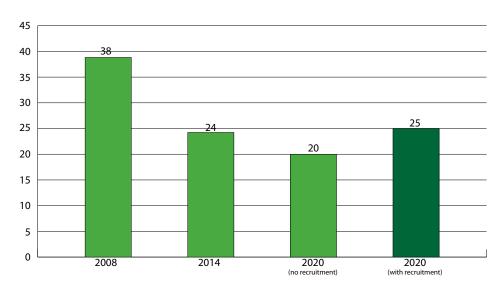
The trends and prediction of staff numbers from 2008 to 2017 are outlined in Table 5. There has been a 47% reduction in staff numbers since 2008 as a result of retirements, redeployment, termination of contracts and an embargo on recruitment in the public service.

Table 5 - Trends and Predicted Numbers of Staff 2008-2020

| | 2008 | 2014 | 2020 | Staff required to achieve 2020 targets |
|-----------|------|------|------|--|
| Advisers | 37.5 | 24 | 20 | 25 |
| Education | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Admin | 11.5 | 8 | 6.5 | 8 |
| Total | 52 | 34 | 28.5 | 35 |

Figure 3 shows that a baseline of 25 advisers are required to implement the Strategic Plan outlined.

Figure 3 - Trends in Wexford/Wicklow/Carlow Total Adviser Numbers



Capital Resources

There are five advisory offices:

- Tinahely, Carlow, Enniscorthy, Gorey & Johnstown Castle with two clinics located in New Ross and Rathnew, Co Wicklow.
- The offices are in good condition. But Enniscorthy will require some additional upgrading over the next few years.

Additional Resources

There are a number of additional Teagasc resources located in the unit:

- Oak Park Cereals research centre
- Johnstown Castle research centre environment, soils, winter milk and calf to beef finishing systems
- Two mini catchments in the region
- Close proximity to Kildalton Agricultural College
- BETTER Beef & Sheep Farms in the Region
- 3 Monitor Dairy Farms in the Region

Clients

The average client numbers per adviser is 176. Dairy advisers are dealing with an average of 140 clients, drystock advisers with 203 clients, tillage advisers with 160 clients and soils and environment advisers with 187 clients.

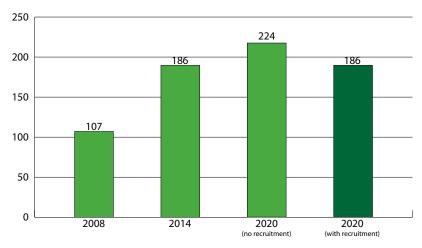


Table 6 - Number of clients, client contracts and clients per adviser

| Year | No. of Clients | Clients per Adviser |
|------|----------------|---------------------|
| 2010 | 4,243 | 157 (27) |
| 2011 | 3,978 | 165 (24) |
| 2012 | 4,315 | 180 (24) |
| 2013 | 4,496 | 195 (23)* |
| 2014 | 4,040 | 176 (23)* |

^{*}C Byrne excluded from calculations

Education

There is a significant emphasis on education in the region with 30-35 students per year completing the Certificate in Farming Course. The demand for these courses is strong, particularly in light of the RDP developments in 2014.



Partners in the Region

- *The Teagasc GII Joint Programme:* The overall purpose of the programme is to position dairy farmers in the Glanbia area to take advantage of emerging opportunities that will arise post 2015. There are currently 3 dairy farmers in the region involved directly with this programme.
- *Vets Cell Check*: Dairy advisers currently collaborate with local vets taking a team-based approach to controlling mastitis. Local vets also attend discussion group meetings.
- *Marts:* Local marts are used at venues for demonstrations and other events in the region.
- *Feed companies:* Feed companies are invited into the seminars and other events.
- *Agricultural Consultants:* Teagasc works in partnership with local agricultural consultants in the delivery of scheme work including Single Farm Payment, derogations & cross compliance work.
- *Cereals Trade:* Teagasc advisers communicate regularly with professionals in the cereals trade, often inviting personnel to discussion groups and demonstrations.
- *IFAC Accountants:* IFAC provide an accountancy service including book keeping to many Teagasc clients in the region. IFAC facilitate the sharing of data which aids advisers in the completion of our benchmarking service Profit Monitor.
- **LEADER:** Teagasc are involved in the Wexford and Wicklow Local Development groups. Staff in the region sit on these boards.
- *Irish Cattle Breeding Federation:* There are strong links with ICBF in relation to the dairy, beef & sheep data sharing and the staging of events and seminars.
- *Farmer partners:* Farmers themselves are a significant source of information and can be used to great effect in leveraging technical information onto farms.
 - Host farmers provide support to Teagasc in the delivery of education programmes in the unit.
 - There are 2 Better Sheep farms and 1 Better Beef farm in the region also.
 - 3 Joint programme dairy monitor farms in the region.
- *The local breed societies* in Wexford, Wicklow & Carlow are involved in events in the region.
- *Farm Relief Service*, in partnership with Teagasc will be delivering GLAS over the next few years.
- Collaborations & joint events: Seminars, demonstrations, workshops and farm walks are organised on an on-going basis in collaboration with a wide range of organisations and agencies. Among the organisations collaborated with include: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Bord Bia, AI breeding companies, meat processing companies, Irish Farmers Journal, livestock marts, Irish Grassland Association, Animal Health Ireland and local veterinarians.
- Teagasc will sub-contract non-technical activities, where appropriate.

Strategy for Dairying

Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Dairying for 2020

The major challenges facing dairy farmers in the region include the cost of expansion, meeting the financial demands of an expanding business – financial monitoring / benchmarking, cash flow management and ensuring efficiency in the unit – labour, work organisation, facilities, herd health, breeding, grassland agronomy and management. The major tipping points for many farms in expansion mode include labour, lifestyle, facilities & technical capacity of the owner.

Anticipated Trends: It is envisaged that there will be a 40% increase in milk output in the region in the next 5 years. It is expected that most of the expansion will come from existing farmers with a small number coming from conversions from drystock & tillage to dairy.

- Provide best practice guidance to allow farmers to exploit the opportunities and deal with the challenges that will arise from the 40% increase in milk output over the next 5 years.
- Intensive support for dairy farmers expanding and / or new entrants, particularly planning (facilities, work organisation, herd health & biosecurity) & financial management.
 - Establish a cross region discussion group for new entrants
 - Providing one to one support from the local adviser and specialists.
 - Financial workshops cash flow planning, profit monitor benchmarking
- Increase the numbers in dairy discussion groups and re-vitalise the discussion groups, provide training for chairpersons ensuring ownership of the group.
- Increased use of topic specific workshops as an extension tool for the non-discussion group farmers.
- Skills training in areas including grazing management, making good grass silage, heifer rearing, calf rearing, etc. A focus on maximising the utilisation of facilities at the dairy and beef units in Johnstown Castle.
- The establishment of 10-15 technically efficient host dairy farmers in the region that are agreeable to opening their farms to discussion groups.
- Central organisation of industry partners. This would involve deciding at the beginning of the year what skills / topics we want to cover in the unit and approach the relevant partners. Possible relationships include:
 - Working with local vets and Animal Health Ireland in the promotion of best practice in terms of animal health & welfare



Strategy for Beef & Sheep

Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Beef & Sheep for 2020

The major challenges facing cattle farmers in the region include low margins, dependency on a second source of income, limited money for re-investment, age profile & succession training and a lack of financial planning.

Anticipated Trends: It is expected that suckler cow numbers, at best will stay static, but may decline by up to 5% over the next 5 years. There will be an increase in the calf to beef system. Anticipated figures would suggest an increase of 20% in calf to beef animals finished in the unit. It is expected that there will be very little change in sheep numbers over the coming years in the unit but a target increased output of 10 kg carcass/ha/year.

- Establish a collaborative cattle weighing project with Slaney Meats.
- Organise open days at Johnstown Castle to highlight the key components of the calf to beef systems
- Promote efficiency through the discussion groups focussing on the major factors that influence profitability. Discussion groups will remain the main vehicle for extension work.
- Teagasc will facilitate the predicted increase in dairy calf to beef systems in the region through targeted events e.g. calf rearing, contract rearing.
- Teagasc will help farmers devise low cost development strategies for their farms.
- Teagasc will establish 2-3 grass groups in the region.
- Focus on farm planning including financial and infrastructural plan by the completion & interpretation of profit monitors.
- Teagasc will operate 2 BETTER Sheep farms in the area on lowland and one hill sheep. We will devise a programme for sheep farming in the upland areas of Wicklow to maximise farm profit and protect this national resource.
- Teagasc will work with other rural professionals in the region including:
 - IFAC data collection for profit monitors
 - Processor representatives attending meetings re specification needed
 - Marts holding events
 - Bord Bia seminars / discussion groups
 - Private consultants outsourcing of scheme work
- The mini catchments & Johnstown Castle calf to beef programme
 Organising nutrition events invite the feed trade to exhibit their wares.

Strategy for Tillage

Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Tillage for 2020

The major challenges facing tillage farmers in the region include poor farm income resulting from a price / cost squeeze and a shrinking Single Farm Payment, access to land, scheme and legislative compliance and maintaining technical and financial efficiency.

Anticipated Trends: It is expected by Teagasc staff in the South East that the tillage output will potentially increase by 5% over the next 5 years as the number of drystock farmers decline and for reasons of lifestyle as well as part time farming. The Teagasc tillage advisers have a significant impact on tillage farmers and this is strengthened in areas where there is a lot of farm visits. The relationship with and influence on the trade is strengthened by maintaining close communication with the farmer.

- There will be a greater focus in the utilisation of profit monitor data to establish inefficiencies on-farm. The target is 20 profit monitors per adviser per year.
- Explore land access options in the region, e.g. share farming.
- The development of 3 demonstration farms in the region where new and not so new technologies can be demonstrated and used for discussion groups, farm walks, trade meetings etc.
- Prioritise work that will give the optional impact discussion groups, visits, demonstration farms, financial monitoring.
- The development of on-farm projects for demonstration purposes e.g. fertiliser projects, optimising use of farm yard manure.
- Implement new methods of communicating with farmers Facebook, Twitter, tech notes, email & text messaging. Set up a Facebook account for the region.
- Make best use of Johnstown Castle, the Mini Catchments and Oak Park for the demonstration of best practice on tillage farms.
- Greater access to the trials at Oak Park and Johnstown Castle to allow groups to visit these centres
 would be very useful in delivering key technical messages and in bringing research to farm level.
- Develop the relationship with Boormalt, publish a booklet on spring barley production.
- There are a significant number of merchants operating in the area and these influence both
 clients and non-clients. Meet with the local merchants 1-2 times per year to discuss technical
 aspects of cereal production



Strategy for Education & Training

Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Education and Training for 2020

The key challenges for agricultural education include meeting the demand for education & training and maintaining a focus on lifelong learning amongst young trained farmers in the region, as well as meeting the demand for services from this cohort of farmers.

- Continue to provide part-time training courses, facilitating 30-35 students every 2 years.
- Establish a register of all the young trained farmers in the region for the past 10 years.
- Conduct a survey with this group and seek guidelines on the demands of these farmers.
- Establish a programme of events for young trained farmers.
- Provide Health & Safety courses in each county in the region annually. Pilot the targeting of transition year students at secondary school level for projects on farm safety.



Strategy for Environment

Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Environment for 2020

Environmental sustainability is now regarded as one of the cornerstones of the agri-food industry in Ireland. Irish agriculture is entering a new growth era, with the removal of milk quota, the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the global increase in demand or food, particularly livestock produce.

- Promoting soil sampling as a management tool for optimising farm production efficiency and profitability
- Optimizing slurry use while minimising the risk to the environment
- Continued focus on cross compliance with 1 major event organised per county, as well as continued promotion of best practice throughout the year
- Promotion of efficient production systems to minimise green house gases. The education of farmers on the Carbon Navigator as a management tool as it becomes part of on-farm audits. Target 50% of clients completing the Navigator annually.
- Provide training on biodiversity & water quality protection using the local mini-catchments to demonstrate the technologies.



Strategy for Rural Development

Overall Expected Changes/Targets for Rural Development for 2020

The region of Wexford Wicklow Carlow is very diverse. There are over 25% of family farms in the region that have a subsidiary occupation. The rural development agencies in the region including Leader, Leo (Local Enterprise Office), Wexford Local Development, County Wicklow Partnership need to work closely to meet the needs of these farmers. This will include appropriate training for off-farm employment, funding for start-up agri-tourism cottage industries etc.

Currently over 50% of farm holdings are retained by persons over 55 years old. Wexford/Wicklow/Carlow currently has 81 partnerships with on average 2½ partners per partnership.

Main Strategic Actions to be Implemented

Awareness on succession planning, and & collaborative farm structures will be an integral part of this strategic plan. This will include:

- Regular succession planning meetings partnering up with local accountants & solicitors.
- Raising awareness of alternative farm structures.
- An annual Options Course for farmers seeking alternative forms of income.



Main Research Requirements Specific to this Region

- Mixed farm research
- Low cost developments for cattle farms with limited re-investment potential
- On-farm monitoring of performance e.g. weighing
- Advise on managing technical efficiency on the commonages
- Local monitor farm on marginal land

Engagement with Stakeholders

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

- Meeting every 2 years with the chairpersons of dairy, beef and sheep discussion groups to obtain feedback.
- More joint events/collaborations with stakeholders.
- Closer links with AHI, Veterinary Ireland, cereals trade with a view to holding more public meeting/ events.
- Local stakeholders to be invited to staff meetings throughout the year.



Wexford/Wicklow/Carlow Advisory Staff Details

| Tinahely Office | | |
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Wexford/Wicklow/Carlow Advisory Region

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