



People in Dairy Action Plan

June, 2018



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Chairperson's Foreword

Mr. Tom Moran

Chairperson, People in Dairy Stakeholder Group, June 2018

The Irish dairy sector is being rapidly transformed. Having been constrained for over thirty years by EU milk quotas, farmers and milk processors prepared diligently for their eventual abolition in 2015. Embracing the freedom to produce and the market demand that exists, Irish milk production has increased by almost 50% since the 2007-09 Food Harvest 2020 reference period. Despite dairy farm income being variable during this period as a result of milk price volatility and weather related challenges such as the availability of fodder this spring; producers remain largely optimistic about the future. Milk processors have also invested heavily in their facilities and in so doing, have for their part endorsed their belief in the long term growth prospects of the Irish dairy industry. Government policy for the sector has also been central in this dynamic. The Food Harvest 2020 Strategy and its successor, Food Wise 2025 have provided an agreed industry strategic vision along with an implementation process for an associated range of actions by all stakeholders which ultimately aim to improve the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the sector. One of the key associated challenges identified for the sustainability of the dairy sector was human capital.

Acknowledging the fact that there are a range of labour and skills shortages across the agri-food sector, as discussed in a Food Wise workshop in April 2017, the Food Wise High Level Implementation Committee agreed in October 2017 that a Working Group be put in place to develop a plan to address farm labour shortages for the dairy sector. This would build on the Teagasc 'People in Dairy' report in June 2017 which highlighted that the sector needs to attract 6,000 people (future farmers and employees) by 2025.

In that context, I was delighted to be asked by Minister Creed to Chair a stakeholder group to consider in detail the broad range of human capital and labour issues facing the Irish dairy sector as it goes through the next period of expansion. The Group held rich and insightful discussions into the short, medium and long term labour challenges and I was heartened by the broad level of consensus between the various members. This made my job considerably easier in chairing the meetings and bringing this Action Plan to finality. I want to sincerely thank all of the stakeholders for their important and well considered contributions. I also wish to acknowledge the assistance provided by the joint Teagasc-Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Secretariat. I have no doubt that implementation of this plan will go a long way towards addressing the issues faced by the sector and enable it to go from strength to strength.

Introduction

Importance of the dairy sector to the Irish economy

The dairy sector in Ireland is undoubtedly one of the most strategically important indigenous sectors of the economy. Driven by increased production and higher dairy market returns, Irish dairy exports increased by 19% in 2017 to €4.02 billion, an increase of €655 million. This contributes one third of total agricultural export value and in addition enhances the value of beef exports.

Dairy exports have increased dramatically in recent years (see Table 1) and have the potential to increase further as Ireland continues to seek to take advantage of growing global food demand and milk quota removal in 2015.

Table 1. Dairy production and export value 2013 - 2017			
Year	Export value (billion)	Litres produced (billion)	% over FH2020 base
2013	€2.97	5.4	+10%
2014	€3.05	5.6	+15%
2015	€3.31	6.4	+30%
2016	€3.38	6.7	+35%
2017	€4.02	7.2	+46%

The significant value of the dairy industry to the Irish economy is not just about the export value it generates; the sector also creates valuable employment at both production / farm level as well as in upstream and downstream activities, thus contributing to the economic and social sustainability of rural areas.

Sustainable growth and human capital

Increased scale, as well as increased milk production per cow, has been major drivers of increased export value. There were 1.4 million dairy cows milked in Ireland in 2017, up from 1.05 million in 2010. Importantly, nearly half of all dairy cows are now milked in herds of >100 cows (as of 2016). The industry has seen a big change in structure as well as scale over a relatively short period of time.

While this expansion was inevitable as a result of the milk quota break on production being removed, the industry now faces a big human capital challenge. Further growth will require the industry to review how it attracts, up-skills and retains people – both future farm employees and future successors. Teagasc research indicates that approximately 6,000 people will need to join Irish dairying between 2016 and 2025. This demand for people is occurring at a time when the unemployment rate nationally has fallen below 6% for the first time in a decade. Careers in Irish dairying are in direct competition with other career offerings. This is the challenge that the People in Dairy Stakeholder Group considered in developing this Action Plan. The Plan sets out a range of actions and initiatives that will help ensure Irish dairying reaches its full potential and delivers a rewarding career to both dairy farmers and farm employees. It will also serve a further very useful and important role in helping to make dairy farms safer places to work. Given that there were over 200 farm deaths over the last ten years, it is hoped that some of the actions contained within this Plan will contribute to improved and safer working practices on Irish dairy farms.

The report was compiled following a series of meetings of the Group (Annex 1 for a full list of group members).

The successful implementation of this report should not be underestimated in terms of the value it can deliver to both people in rural Ireland and the national economy. Total export values of dairy products over the lifetime of the People in Dairy Report (2016-2025) are likely to total over €36 billion. Dairy farming has proven itself time and again to be one of the most profitable farming systems, with 76% of dairy farms being considered economically viable versus only 37% of all farms in 2015 according to Teagasc research. With challenges such as Brexit and CAP reform on the horizon, ensuring Irish dairying has the human capital it needs to continue growing in an economic, environmental and socially sustainable fashion should be made a priority by all stakeholders in Irish dairying.

Building on Food Wise 2025 (FW2025)

The scale of expansion of the dairy sector, along with the potential for a further increase in cow numbers, requires additional actions to complement those identified in FW2025. For more detail on the FW2025 report and workshops held to consider the issue of labour and human capital on farms, (Annex 2).



Summary of key initiatives

To address the short and long term human capital needs on dairy farms, six key initiatives have been identified. These initiatives are further elaborated in the Report.

Implement measures to ensure adequate availability of skilled farm operatives both seasonally and throughout the year. (Action Area 1)

There is no single fix to this problem but a number of measures need to be further developed, including:

- The roll-out of the South East Regional Skills Forum / Farm Relief Service (FRS) / Teagasc / Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) initiative to other regions which targets individuals on the live register, women in agriculture and dry stock farmers;
- Enhanced efforts at recruiting labour from within the European Economic Area (EEA) where employment permits are not required;
- Greater engagement with EURES, the European Employment Service, to increase its success in attracting labour from the EEA market;
- As part of the review of Ireland's economic migration policy and associated managed employment permits system, the encouragement of a policy which would take greater account of the agri-food sector's unique characteristics and requirements for labour, particularly seasonal labour;
- The encouragement and facilitation of workers from New Zealand to work in Ireland for one or more periods.

Labour efficient farms and Employers with good HR skills (Action Area 2 & 3)

One of the biggest factors in attracting and retaining people is that dairy farms must be desirable places to work. A new research and knowledge transfer programme focusing on making farms more labour efficient is required. Aspects that require investigation include the application of new technology to reduce labour requirement on dairy farms and the role of contracting to reduce the workload for those working on dairy farms. The continued broad roll-out of "Lean" principles on dairy farms will further enhance labour efficiency.

There has been a dramatic increase in recent years in the number of dairy farmers that are becoming employers, with 25% of Irish farmers now milking 100 cows or more. These farmers in particular need to have the skills required to be good employers, as well as knowing how their farms should be best set up in order to be attractive places to work. Consequently, information and training needs to be made available to farmers in relation to good HR practice and legal requirements, good management practices and having the right facilities for employees. Stakeholders need to work together to agree a charter of what best practice employment on Irish farms looks like. A 'Great Farm Workplaces' programme is recommended to allow farmers get certified as meeting this standard. These efforts will also contribute to making farms safer places to work.

New training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme for dairy farmers and employees (Action Area 4)

Every progressive industry needs to train and retrain people at all levels and dairy farming is no different. Entry level workers need dairy farming skills training while farm managers and owners need training in cash flow planning, strategic planning, communication skills, time management, etc. as well as in technical farming skills. The Teagasc ‘Stepping Stone to a Career in Dairying’ booklet outlines a clear and consistent role expectation for both employers and employees in the four key on-farm role categories: farm operative/assistant, herd manager, farm manager and farm business owner (with training needs of farm managers and owners being similar). The efforts of different organisations in this area (Teagasc, Macra, FRS) need to be co-ordinated. A comprehensive range of CPD courses need to be developed and made widely available. Such a programme will help retain existing people and attract new people, allowing them to work more efficiently and effectively and help to equip people with the skills to progress within the sector.

“Stepping Up” and “Stepping Back” succession pathways to dairy farming (Action Area 5)

Teagasc has piloted a ‘Dairy Step Up’ initiative targeted at experienced dairy employees who are keen to take the step into owning their own farming business via partnerships, share farming or leasing. If Irish dairying wants to attract good people, it needs to have multiple pathways to allow someone become a dairy farmer. Traditionally, only people born on farms considered a farming career as inheriting land was seen as an essential requirement to becoming a farmer. With collaborative farming models like partnerships, leasing and share farming this is no longer the case. These models need to be supported and examined to identify potential barriers which are limiting the progress of people working in collaborative farming models.

A “Stepping Back” programme, targeted at farmers who are planning to reduce their active role in dairy farming, that may or may not have a family successor, is also needed. Further improving farmer knowledge and skills around succession planning will ensure farmers are aware of the various options of continuing their business, even if they don’t have a successor within the family. Succession is a very sensitive and personal subject, and leasing / joint ventures carry financial risk. Therefore, both of these routes require competent professional advice. Given that c. 4,000 dairy farmers are likely to ‘retire’ or at least step back from farming over the next eight years, more effort is needed in this area and a co-ordinated campaign is required to better inform all concerned about the modes of entry and progression in the sector as well as modes of exit/retirement for older dairy farmers. Helping older farmers to enter arrangements with younger farmers will help reduce isolation and health and safety risks in these farms. More training must be provided to help aspiring farmers develop the considerable skills needed to successfully operate their own joint venture.

Promotion of dairying as an attractive career (Action Area 6)

A sustained multifaceted campaign is needed to change the perception of dairy farming from one of long hours, physically demanding work and poor remuneration to that of a modern, high-tech industry with career opportunities and advancement possibilities at many levels, embracing good working conditions, and with good earning potential for both employees and owners. This is important in both the short and long term to attract new workers to the industry and to encourage greater succession rates among dairy farm families. It would involve an advertising campaign, strong social media activity, working with career guidance systems in schools and colleges, and possibly a competition to promote and highlight different career paths into the industry (linked with Action 5).

Action Area 1: Ensuring adequate availability of skilled farm operatives both seasonally and throughout the year

Overview

Every farm has a requirement for part time labour to allow the farmer take time off. Many farms also require full time labour during the spring and early summer period or even for the full year depending on farm scale. Hence, there is a significant requirement in Irish dairying for both skilled full and part time farm operatives. This is an employment opportunity which may suit a wide variety of people, many of whom may never have previously considered full and part time employment on dairy farms. Hence, promotion work is needed in this area. Short training courses in milking and other farming skills will also be required. See Action 1.1.

Proposed Actions

Action 1.1: Roll out the South East Regional Skills Forum / FRS / Teagasc Kilkenny/ Waterford / Department of Employment, Affairs and Social Protection initiative to further regions where potential exists to recruit labour from potential target groups (job seekers, individuals on “Farm Assist”, women in agriculture and dry stock farmers) and promote results in the media in order to generate further interest and momentum		
<i>Lead organisation:</i> FRS Teagasc DEASP	<i>Support organisations:</i> Farm Organisations Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q1 2018 End: Ongoing

Action 1.2: Enhance efforts to recruit labour from within the EEA: The European Employment Service ‘EURES’ offers a useful tool to recruit labour from within the EEA. Recruiters and employers should continue their engagement with the service and the national coordinator in the DEASP. Potential exists to sell Ireland as a destination which offers learning and training in grass-based, low cost, sustainable dairy farming utilizing the latest research findings and technology from leading Institutions such as Teagasc, UCD and the many Agri companies that operate in Ireland.		
<i>Lead organisation:</i> DEASP	<i>Support organisations:</i> FRS Agricultural recruitment agencies DAFM Farm Organisations	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q1 2018 End: Ongoing

Action 1.3: The group welcome the announced review (to be completed in June 2018) of Ireland's economic migration policy and associated managed employment permits system and would encourage a policy which would take greater account of the agri-food sector's unique characteristics and requirements for labour, particularly seasonal labour, with associated conditions such as salary. Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) should consider allocating a quota of employment permits, particularly during peak labour demand periods such as Spring calving. Training courses for these operators will also need to be provided.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> DBEI	<i>Support organisations:</i> DAFM, DEASP, Farm Organisations, Teagasc, FRS	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q1 2018 End: Q2 2018
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Action 1.4: Due to similar climates and production systems, the Irish and New Zealand dairy sectors have a long and close relationship. This has been built on recently by the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the FRS and New Zealand Dairy Careers (NZDC) for an exchange programme for dairy farm labour. The group strongly welcomes this development and would recommend that it be promoted to a greater extent in New Zealand in order to increase the participation rate. A training programme for New Zealanders working in Ireland (similar to what NZDC provide for Irish people working in NZ) should be developed to help make the placement more attractive to potential candidates.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> FRS	<i>Support organisations:</i> NZDC, Teagasc	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q1 2018 End: Ongoing
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Action 1.5: Consideration should be given to the establishment of a formal reciprocal agreement between Ireland and New Zealand for the exchange of dairy farm labour. This could be implemented through the granting of Exchange Agreement Employment Permits and this would have the advantage of allowing New Zealand individuals to work on Irish farms more than once, as is the case in the FRS-NZDC exchange which operates on the Working Holiday Visa system (which can only be granted to an individual once).

<i>Lead organisation:</i> DAFM	<i>Support organisations:</i> DBEI, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Farm Organisations	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q1 2018 End: Q4 2018
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Action Area 2: Increase labour efficiency on dairy farms – create desirable places to work

Overview

The 30% increase in cow numbers since 2009 has markedly increased the workload on Irish dairy farms. There is growing concern that many farmers have not adapted management practices and farm facilities to match this increase in scale. This is especially a concern during the busy spring period when exhaustion and burn-out can occur due to the sheer volume of work on farm if it is not properly managed. At employee and future successor level, dairy farming currently has difficulty in attracting people because of perceived poor working conditions, long days and inefficient practices.

Proposed Actions

The use and promotion of contracting operations, innovative labour saving technologies and management practices must feature more prominently within research and knowledge transfer activities provided to dairy farmers. Measures such as hours worked per cow per year, cows milked per person milking per hour and turnover rate of farm staff should be used to provide a measure of labour productivity. There is a requirement for a 'time use study' to benchmark the labour productivity of Irish dairy farmers. This would include capturing on-farm innovation and raising awareness of practices that result in improved labour productivity. The application of 'Lean' principals to dairy farming should be rolled out on a broad scale to improve work practices, thereby increasing overall labour efficiency. This is relevant to all farm sizes but is central on farms expanding cow numbers. It is critical to have employees working on labour efficient farms but also for owner operators to minimise their workload and help improve productivity, sustainability, health and safety and reduce or eliminate wasteful and often physically demanding tasks. All of these initiatives as well as those in the HR area should be packaged as one national programme around making farms great places to work e.g. a 'Great Farm Workplaces' programme (See Action Area 3).

Action 2.1: Using data from a 'time use study' that Teagasc have begun on Irish dairy farms, develop appropriate industry benchmarks for labour productivity. Evaluate current levels of labour efficiency and establish where improvements can be made. Continue to evaluate the potential of new technologies to influence these labour Key Performance Indicator's (KPI). Complete a national survey to predict future labour requirements.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> DAFM	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q4 2018 End: On-going
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Action 2.2: Generate awareness and discussion of labour productivity on farm through a number of approaches i.e. media articles, website, discussion groups, Knowledge Transfer (KT) groups, conferences etc. Produce a decision support tool which farmers can use to benchmark their current labour efficiency.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> DAFM	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q3 2018 End: On-going
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Action 2.3: Roll-out the principles of Lean management on dairy farms. Dairygold have completed a pilot on Lean farming and have rolled out a programme across their supplier base. The aim should be to roll out a Lean farming initiative in every milk processor region.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Milk processors	<i>Support organisations:</i> Teagasc / Enterprise Ireland / Farm Organisations/ DAFM	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q4 2018 End: On-going
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Action 2.4: Promote greater use of contractors for tasks such as spreading fertilizer, slurry spreading, winter feeding and silage making. The Teagasc ConnectEd programme could be used for contractors to improve their dairy farming knowledge. Develop a 'best practice with contractors on dairy farm' booklet with Farm Contractors Ireland (FCI) and the Irish Professional Agricultural Contractors (PAC). Additionally there is a requirement to promote greater uptake of contract rearing dairy replacements.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> FCI, PAC, Farm Organisations	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q4 2018 End: On-going
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Action Area 3: Dairy farmers as employers with a reputation for retaining and developing their employees

Overview

Research by Dr Ruth Nettle, University of Melbourne has shown that staff turnover is lower on dairy farms when employees have flexible work hours, limited weekend hours and very long shifts, training and development opportunities, regular constructive feedback, appreciation for a job well-done, individual attention to career development and mentoring, an enjoyable work environment with good facilities and a fair salary. These results proved that employers who had adopted best practice in human resource management not only had greater employee retention but also higher overall farm profitability. There are currently no established annual training programmes in Irish farming for a farmer to improve his/her HR skills. Developing initiatives in this area will raise the standard of employment on farms and help attract both Irish and international employees.

Proposed Actions

Employers need training on how to recruit quality staff, be better managers, be legally compliant and how to grow and nurture the people that work for them. Additional training programmes and support material are required for dairy farmers to become employers of choice based on improved management capabilities, including better teamwork, leadership and communications skills, improved human resource management skills, such as, recruitment and performance management and an enhanced capacity to strategically budget for fairer and more competitive returns to labour over the longer term. Training resources on health and safety on farms should be an integral part of all of the action areas outlined below.

Action 3.1: Develop a work place charter for the Irish dairy industry in relation to hours of work, pay, health and safety, communication and career development. This should be an agreed standard to which the industry aspires to operate. The charter would clearly specify the rights and duties of both employers and employees. This will form the marking scheme for the ‘Great Farm Workplaces’ Programme – see Action 3.2.		
<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Farm Organisations, FRS, DBEI, DEASP, DAFM	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q4 2018 End: Q2 2019

Action 3.2: Develop a ‘Great Farm Workplaces’ Programme where farmers can test themselves against what is the agreed industry best practice and to attain the status of meeting this standard (on a voluntary basis). This will both lift the standard of employment on farms and give confidence to potential employees that they will have a positive employment experience (For an example of this type of initiative see <https://www.nsai.ie/ExcellenceThroughPeople.aspx>). As part of this Programme a Farm Employer of the Year award for the person who has the highest annual score in the assessment could be considered.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Farm Organisations DAFM, FRS	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q4 2018 End: On-going
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Action 3.3: Provide Continious Professional Development training courses for dairy farmers in relation to people management skills – inter-personal, communication, delegation etc. See also Action 4.5. Training for Teagasc advisors and specialists on HR management may be required and consideration could be given to working with HR experts to put together farmer programmes.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> DAFM	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q3 2018 End: On-going
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Action 3.4: Provide a range of support material to dairy farmers in relation to HR e.g. role planners, roster planners, Standard Operating Procedure’s (SOP), etc.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> DAFM	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q4 2018 End: Q4 2019
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Action Area 4: The provision of excellent formal, informal and on farm training

Overview

The future success of the Irish dairy industry is dependent on developing and retaining highly skilled and motivated people, recognising their potential and optimising their performance. The Teagasc ‘Stepping Stone to a Career in Dairying’ booklet outlines a clear and consistent role expectation for both employers and employees in the four key on-farm roles: farm assistant/operative, herd manager, farm manager and farm business owner. This document also outlines the corresponding formal training, informal training and workplace experience required for each role. This includes the experience, skills, knowledge and attributes expected in the four on-farm-role categories.

The equivalent of the current Level 7 Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management should be the desirable level of qualification for a person aspiring to be a dairy farm manager or farm business owner in the future. The industry must endeavour to ensure there are ample training opportunities and pathways for people to develop the essential skills for the different career roles in dairying.

Proposed Actions

The dairy industry needs to review current, and create new, training programs while maintaining an integrated model of formal and informal training, including farm placement. In this regard, it is imperative that future farmers and employees get sufficient exposure to intensive, high quality on-farm placements with host farm mentors who are themselves accredited providers of high quality placements.

Action 4.1: Update the Teagasc ‘Stepping Stones to a Career in Dairying’ booklet to provide a clearer outline of dairy career pathways and the Teagasc Course Prospectus to highlight dairy education pathways .		
<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Farm Organisations	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q4 2018 End: Q1 2019

Action 4.2: As committed to in Food Wise Action 69, replace the existing Teagasc/UCD Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management with an apprenticeship based programme leading to a Level 7 Ordinary Degree in Dairy Farm Management. This will be flagged as the minimum standard training level future dairy farmers and managers should consider acquiring.		
<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Farm Organisations, SOLAS, Dept. of Education and Skills, DAFM	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q3 2019 End: Q4 2019

Action 4.3: Multiple entry points need to be developed into the current Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management (PDDFM) – there is a severe shortage of farm managers and this course is an excellent training platform to up skill potential managers. This could be done by recognising prior learning and previous experience e.g. someone who has managed a farm in New Zealand but has no agricultural education should be able to enter the PDDFM course and attain this qualification.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> UCD	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q1 2019 End: Q4 2019
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Action 4.4: Enrolment in the Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Dairy Herd Management needs to be significantly increased and resourced accordingly. The promotion campaign (outline in Action Area 6) and updating the Stepping Stones to a Career in Dairying document and Teagasc Course Prospectus will hopefully contribute to an increase in numbers. As well as the fulltime course Teagasc will also offer the Level 6 advanced dairy programme through distance education to non –agricultural award-holders. The Level 6 advanced dairy programme will fulfil the education qualification needs for occupational roles such as farm technician and dairy herd managers. It will also provide a pathway to those intending to progress to a farm management qualification. Target 150 Level 6 dairy student enrolments annually and as many as possible into the Level 7 Farm Manager Course.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Farm Organisations	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q4 2018 End: On-going
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Action 4.5: Develop Continious Professional Development programmes to cover the full range of skills described in the Stepping Stones booklet e.g. on milking, grassland management, livestock husbandry, financial management, labour efficiency, HR skills, and effective leadership. These programmes should be available to both farmers and employees. These courses should be made available through a variety of mediums including online learning options. A health and safety and well-being in farming module should be available to people in every career role in the sector.

These courses can also be offered to non-Irish workers who come to Ireland to work on dairy farms and can be used to advertise Ireland as a destination where people can gain employment but also excellent training to improve their farming skills.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> FRS, Farm Organisations, DAFM, Skillnets	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: 2018 End: Q4 2019
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Action 4.6: People in Dairy Programme Manager (See Action 7.1) to work with all bodies (Universities, ITs, private collages etc.) to promote training standards that are in line with the ‘Stepping Stones to a Career in Dairying’ booklet. There are approx. 500 students per year studying different levels of Agricultural Science courses nationally. These courses could be adapted to better prepare students for a career in dairying which may not have been a strong potential career option when these courses were originally planned.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Universities ITs Private colleges etc.	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q1 2019 End: Q4 2019
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Action Area 5: Provide multiple pathways to becoming a dairy farmer

Overview

The Irish dairy industry requires a clear progression pathway from farm employee to farm business owner (owning at least cows and potentially land). In New Zealand the share milking model has been very successful by providing a vital step in the career progression path for young farmers. Other arrangements such as partnerships and long term leasing also facilitate career progression. These types of structures allow new people to progress their careers within the industry and become dairy farmers. They also provide an option for farmers who don't have a successor to step back from farming but have their farm continue to run to a high standard. The results of recent farm surveys indicate that approximately 50% of farmers over 50 do not have a successor identified (Macra 'Land Mobility and Succession in Ireland' study 2013). There is a requirement for the industry to develop successful pathways for progression by investigating, promoting and developing suitable business structures and to establish them similar to the highly successful long term land leasing which was driven by tax reliefs on rental income.

The 'Agri-Taxation Review' published as part of Budget 2015 provides a good basis on which to encourage and assist with these new structures and in farm succession as its policy objectives were to:

- Increase the mobility and the productive use of land.
- Assist succession.
- Complement wider agriculture policies and schemes, such as supporting:
 - » *Investment to enhance competitiveness, including assisting new entrant, young trained farmers.*
 - » *Environmental sustainability, including the improvement of farm efficiency.*
 - » *Alternative farming models such as farm partnerships.*
 - » *Responses to increasing income volatility.*

The strengthening of incentives for long-term leasing has seen a significant increase to these arrangements, which have major advantages over traditional conacre. The retention of Agricultural Relief from Capital Acquisitions Tax, Retirement Relief from Capital Gains Tax and the current stamp duty exemptions on transfers of land, as well as the introduction in 2017 of the 'Succession Farm Partnership Scheme' have all proven essential in facilitating and encouraging generational renewal and land mobility.

Proposed Actions

A variety of business structures are becoming increasingly common within the industry including long term leasing, farm partnerships and share farming. Such arrangements must be supported and incorporated within mainstream education and training activities. Further participative research and demonstration activities are required to design a greater array of new career pathways that equitably share both risks and benefits on the basis of the relative value of the land, skills, time and resources contributed.

Action 5.1: “Stepping Back”: Given that a large number of existing dairy farmers don’t have an identified successor, there is a requirement to develop and communicate succession options for these businesses. The Teagasc Farm Business Advisory Service currently deal with this demand, but it could be augmented with a ‘Farm Options’ pack which would be delivered through milk processors and targeted at farmers without successors. This would provide support material for a farmer and their family to consider future options for the farm if they don’t have an identified successor. Encouraging older farmers with no successors to enter into an arrangement with a younger farmer could reduce isolation and risk of farm accidents.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Milk Processors, DAFM	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q4 2018 End: On-going
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Action 5.2: Although the Irish dairy industry is still dominated by owner occupiers, there is an increasing number of farmers looking to evolve their business by adopting a joint venture business structure such as partnerships, share farming, leasing etc.; using case studies there is a requirement to evaluate the pros and cons of these different structures as well as constraints or barriers to their uptake. Particular attention needs to be paid to models that involve the farm owners in capital expenditure on the farm – dairy farming is an extremely capital intensive business and the more common long term leasing model loads risk on the leasee and can often lead to sub optimal facilities being in place on farm.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Milk Processors, DAFM	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q3 2018 End: On-going
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Action 5.3: Services promoting collaborative farming models, such as those provided by Teagasc and Macra na Feirme’s Land Mobility Service, should continue to be appropriately resourced and supported. Farmers in different business arrangements should also be included in the Teagasc/ milk processor Joint Programmes where possible.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Milk Processors, Macra Land Mobility Service, DAFM	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: 2018 End: On-going
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Action 5.4: “Stepping Up”: Farmers capability in financial analysis, business planning and inter personal skills are key in terms of their ability to attain and operate joint farming arrangements. The new CPD programme outlined in Action 4.5 should include a specific training programme to up-skill future entrepreneurs (potentially current farm employees) that will engage in collaborative farming models. Examples of these in other countries include ‘Progression Groups’ in NZ and ‘Entrepreneurs in Dairying’ in the UK. Explore the roll out of a mentoring programme between young and experienced farmers as part of this course e.g. Dairy Connect run by DairyNZ.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Farm organisations	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q4 2018 End: On-going
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Action 5.5: As committed to in Food Wise 2025, DAFM should continue to explore additional innovative funding mechanisms and financial instruments, specific to the agri-food sector, to complement existing mechanisms such as the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF), the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) and the European Investment Bank (EIB), with a view to improving further competition in relation to credit provision and to maintain and enhance initiatives for succession planning, inter-generational transfer and land mobility.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> DAFM	<i>Support organisations:</i> Teagasc	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: On-going End: On-going
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Action Area 6: Promotion of dairy farming as an attractive career

Overview

A national promotion programme is required which both raises awareness of the importance of the dairy industry in Ireland and highlights the range of career opportunities available. This campaign should dispel myths that dairy farming careers are lowly skilled, poorly remunerated and involve very difficult work.

Dairy farmers themselves must take on the role of being positive role models and ambassadors for their industry. The farming organisations have an important role to play in this regard. More must be done in schools to promote farming as a career choice, and to make better links between teaching curricula and their applications in farming. Implementation of the initiatives in Action Areas 1-5 will assist in making dairy farming an attractive career choice and facilitate the associated promotional campaign.

Proposed Actions

A targeted, well resourced, national promotional campaign to promote dairy farming as an attractive career should be initiated. Inspiration could be drawn from the ‘Go Dairy’ promotional campaign in New Zealand (see www.GoDairy.co.nz). It could be devised in consultation with relevant stakeholders, such as, the farming organisations, Teagasc, milk processors, Bord Bia, Agri Aware, Irish Agricultural Science Teachers Association (IASTA), etc.

The target audience in any first phase roll-out should be secondary school students making 3rd level education / training decisions, parents of those students and career guidance teachers. Other potential audiences could include primary and third level students, people on the Live Register and professionals that are looking for a career change.

Action 6.1: Work closely with the agri-food careers portal being considered for development by DAFM. This portal should prioritise the inclusion of dairy farming promotional material such as a career explorer, guide to life on a dairy farm including testimonials, weekly article/ blog of the life of a person working on a dairy farm through a 12 month period etc. It would provide a guide on training options etc. to show someone how they could go about entering a career in dairy farming.		
Lead organisation: DAFM	Support organisations: Teagasc, Farm Organisations, Milk Processors	Timeline : Start: 2018 End: Q2 2019

Action 6.2: Social media/ national campaigns promoting both the Irish dairy industry and farming lifestyles. This campaign must aim to inform and educate people outside of the regular farming audience to attract new talent.

Within the Agri sector promotional material could be used to improve perceptions of career opportunities by making them available at existing events e.g. at the Ploughing Championships and through the Teagasc ConnEd programme to inform industry professionals of the career opportunities on farms. It should also link in with the agri-food careers portal in Action 6.1

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> DAFM, Farm Organisations, milk processors, AgriAware, IASTA	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: 2018 End: On-going
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Action 6.3: The new Programme Manager (see Action 7.1) and farm organisations to devise a programme to engage with students of all ages. A Transition Year placement programme on dairy farms would be a great way to engage with secondary school students. 'Dairy Farm Visiting Days' for students could be organised to construct a fun educational experience on commercial dairy farms and in agricultural colleges.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Farm Organisations, AgriAware, IASTA	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q4 2018 End: On-going
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Action 6.4: Co-ordinate a 'Careers in Dairying' road show which could be delivered to Ag Science students at second and third level. This could be organised and run at regional level to facilitate access to more students. Schools in the traditional dairy strong holds should be focused on initially.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Farm Organisations, IASTA	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q1 2019 End: On-going
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Action 6.5: Adapt a current, or create a new, farming competition which would promote the range of dairy career pathways. This would help promote successful role models in the industry. The competition should be devised such that the process of competing helps people improve their skills and clarify their career goals, thus providing support to those in the industry looking to progress

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc, Farm Organisations	<i>Support organisations:</i> Milk Processors, DAFM	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: 2019 End: On-going
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Action Area 7: Effective implementation

Overview

The various stakeholders listed in Annex 1 have invested considerable time, both within their own organisations and in the national group, to prepare this Action Plan which the Group believes has the potential to dramatically improve how Irish dairying attracts, up-skills and retains people. The actions decided on by the Group will have no value unless they are successfully implemented. The vision of the Group is that this will be done to a high standard, creating many powerful new initiatives which help to professionalise dairy farming as a career. The following are some key actions highlighted by the Group to help ensure successful implementation of the People in Dairy Action Plan.

Action 7.1: A Programme Manager should be put in place to manage the People in Dairy Plan. The wide scope of actions means many different stakeholders will be working on different aspects of the National Plan. Having a Programme Manager to take ultimate responsibility for the delivery of this Action Plan and who will actively engage with different stakeholders to co-ordinate and implement the Plan will help to ensure its success.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> All	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q3 2018 End: On-going
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Action 7.2: The establishment of a Stakeholder Advisory Group to provide feedback and advice on the implementation of the action plan.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> Membership of the group	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q3 2018 End: On-going
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Action 7.3: Resourcing will be a key issue to ensure the success of the Action Plan. There may be potential to reallocate resources to achieve some objectives but a number of actions will require new resourcing. This may be done in a variety of ways including industry funding (public and private), farmer funding, sponsorship, service fees and any other innovative funding sources that can be accessed. Action Areas 1, 3, 4 and 6 in particular will require new funding resources in order to make a significant impact. The Programme Manager can contribute to the consideration of this aspect as the actions evolve.

<i>Lead organisation:</i> Teagasc	<i>Support organisations:</i> All	<i>Timeline:</i> Start: Q3 2018 End: On-going
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Annex 1. Membership of the Stakeholder Group

Tom Moran (Chairman and former Secretary General, DAFM)

Paidi Kelly, Teagasc (co-secretary of the group)

Karl Walsh, DAFM (co-secretary of the group)

Bill Callanan, DAFM

Valerie Woods, DAFM

Jim Wolfe, Dairygold

Kevin Twomey, dairy farmer and Chair of Teagasc Dairy Stakeholder group

Fiona Ward, DBEI

Peter Byrne, FRS

John Joe Murphy, Glanbia

John Enright/ Paul Smyth, ICMSA

Pat McCormack/Lorcan McCabe, ICMSA

TJ Flanagan, ICOS

Jerry Long, ICOS

Catherine Lascurettes, IFA

Sean O Leary, IFA

Jack Kennedy, Irish Farmers Journal

Denis Duggan, Macra na Feirme

Gerry Boyle, Teagasc

Frank O Mara, Teagasc

Pat Dillon, Teagasc

Tony Pettit, Teagasc

Annex 2. Food Wise 2025

Food Wise 2025 is the 10 year Government strategy for the agri-food sector. Published in 2015, it underlines the agricultural sector's unique and special position within the Irish economy. It identifies the opportunities and challenges facing the sector and provides an enabling strategy that will allow the sector to grow and prosper. The strategy, agreed by a committee of 35 stakeholders from the agri-food sectors, foresees a sector that acts more strategically and achieves a competitive critical mass in the international marketplace, while targeting more quality conscious consumers who will recognize and reward Ireland's food producers for their sustainable production and high quality produce.

Food Wise 2025 identified ambitious and challenging growth projections for the industry over ten years to 2025:

- 85% increase in Agri-food exports to €19 billion
- A 70% increase in value added to €13 billion
- A 60% increase in primary production to €10 billion
- Creation of 23,000 additional jobs all along the supply chain from producer level to high end value added product development

The Food Wise strategy states that the dairy industry is one of Ireland's most important indigenous industries and is central to the agri food sector. It is an export driven sector with exports of dairy products and ingredients valued at over €4.02bn in 2017. The strategy asserts that with the quota regime now consigned to history, the freedom to realise the full potential of the dairy sector in terms of output, export earnings, rural employment and investment is upon us.

Food Wise 2025 highlighted the need for the attraction, retention and development of skills and talent right along the food supply chain. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine hosted a Food Wise 2025 Workshop on Skills Gaps at Farm Level in April 2017. A total of 12 actions and recommendations came from this workshop covering Irish and non-Irish labour, farmers and farm managers, and next generation entrants. Some of these have been, or are in the process of being implemented and the outcomes of the workshop have also fed into the discussions that took place in this 'People in Dairy Stakeholder Group'.

