

# **Abstract –Towards Developing a Continuous Professional Development Programme for Irish Farmers**

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The aim of this study was to inform the development of a farmer Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme in Teagasc. In order to do so, this study incorporated existing Teagasc organisational event data, the opinions of farmers as well as those of Teagasc staff.

This study consisted mainly of quantitative research methods but some qualitative methods were also used. Firstly, key informant meetings were attended and used to guide many aspects of this study. The extent of farmer CPD currently being delivered by Teagasc was examined using secondary organisational event data obtained from the Teagasc Client Information Management System (CIMS) database. Online surveys were issued to farmers (n=480) and Teagasc staff (n=131) in order to gain their opinion regarding the development of a farmer CPD programme.

The findings of this study show that Teagasc is already delivering a considerable number and variety of events to farmers. A number of factors indicated that these events could potentially form the basis of a farmer CPD programme in Teagasc. These are the events that the majority of farmers surveyed attended in the past and plan to attend in the future. Additionally, these events incorporate many of the mechanisms through which farmers requiring CPD want it delivered.

The findings of this study also highlighted a number of deficits that firstly need to be addressed in order to effectively deliver a farmer CPD programme and include defining CPD and CPD events, the setting and recording of learning objectives for CPD events, completion of farmer personal learning plans and the recognising and recording of farmer participation in these CPD events.