

Teagasc Presentation to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine, December 17th, 2019

Introduction

Chairman I would like to thank you and the Committee for the opportunity for my colleagues, Professor Frank O'Mara, Director of Research and Professor Tom Kelly, Director of Knowledge Transfer (Advisory and Education) and I to address the Committee this afternoon.

You have asked us to focus on our 2018 Annual Report and on our current and future plans.

Teagasc funding

Last year, Teagasc's total expenditure was about €185 m. and this year we anticipate an outturn of about €186m. About 70% of this was funded through Grant-in-Aid; 60% when expenditure on pensions is excluded.

Teagasc is unique among non-commercial state-sponsored bodies in having a sizeable amount of expenditure funded through non-GIA sources, including: advisory and education fees; farm receipts; services to industry; industry levies; and receipts from its successful participation in competitive research programmes (e.g. Horizon 2020, FIRM, STIMULUS, COFORD, Enterprise Ireland and SFI).

Teagasc employment

Teagasc's total employment in 2018 was about 1262, including permanent and contract staff. Teagasc employs about 248 researchers (virtually all are employed at Ph.D. level) at seven research centres throughout Ireland. In addition, and not included in the 1260 total, there are also 253 Walsh Fellows (mainly Ph.Ds with about 40 Masters' students being trained on agricultural extension programmes in collaboration with UCD) in training within Teagasc and in partnership with higher education institutions in Ireland and throughout the world.

In our advisory programme we have a total of about 300 front-line advisors across all farming enterprises at our 51 advisory offices: 140 in drystock (mainly beef); 89 in

Dairying; 16 in Tillage; 5 in Horticulture; 6 in Pigs; 1 in Poultry; 10 in Forestry; and 20 dedicated through the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP) programme to improving water quality. We also employ 76 subject matter specialists who provide a critical bridge between research knowledge and its on-farm adoption through our front-line advisory services. Despite a significant reduction in the number of advisors over the last decade, Teagasc has maintained a client base of over 43,000. This has been achieved by innovation in the delivery model with an increased emphasis on Discussion Groups and the outsourcing of scheme-based activity.

The Teagasc education system is delivered through its own four colleges (Kildalton, Ballyhaise, Clonakilty and the Botanic Gardens) and its three affiliate privately-owned colleges (Gurteen, Mountbellew and Pallaskenry). Teagasc also partners with a large number of Institutes of Technology and UCD and UCC in delivering higher level programmes. Teagasc has about 1,700 students enrolled in its colleges. College enrolments have slowed down in recent years as the economic recovery has taken hold. But this trend has been substantially offset by enrolments in its part-time programmes that are delivered across all the 12 Teagasc Advisory Regions. At present about 1,000 are engaged in these part-time programmes which is about twice the level prior to the establishment of the incentivization measures in the Rural Development Programme of the current CAP. In addition Teagasc delivered a wide range of short courses to nearly 6,500 in the current year. In recent years Teagasc has set up an education and training programme, known as ConnectEd, dedicated to the needs of rural professionals, such as, private agricultural consultants, agri-business, banks and other financial institutions. This service is the vehicle through which *inter alia* training in Teagasc's Nutrient Management Planning (NMP) is delivered.

Highlights of Teagasc activities in 2018 and 2019

1. Teagasc played a central role in supporting farmers (both clients and non-clients) during the 2018 "Fodder Crisis".
2. Held a Beef Open Day in Grange in 2018 and a Dairy Open Day in Moorepark this year. Both events attracted large attendances.

3. Teagasc published a major report called Education Vision in 2018 which set out a long-term vision for the evolution of Irish agricultural education. Among the key recommendations of Education Vision, which was implemented in the current academic year, was that the minimum period of attendance at agricultural college should be two years. It is intended to extend this requirement to part-time programmes in due course.
4. The current year also saw the first students enrolled into the new Teagasc-UCC B.Agr.Sc. This will be delivered at Teagasc's Moorepark and Clonakilty campuses.
5. In 2018 Teagasc organized a series of Smart Consent Workshops throughout its college network facilitated by NUIG.
6. Teagasc led a consortium that was successful in its application to establish a Research Centre by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI). This Centre was also supported by significant funding from DAFM. The Centre which has the distinction of being the first SFI Centre in the agri-food area, is known as VistaMilk and will engage in ground-breaking research on the application of precision- based systems across the dairy value chain. The total investment is about €40m over 6 years comprised of public and private funding from over 40 companies.
7. In 2018 Teagasc was the fifth most successful applicant for Horizon 2020 funding in the EU and was awarded €6.3 m. In the current year Teagasc was ranked third with an award total of €3.528m.
8. In 2018 Teagasc published its Greenhouse Gases Abatement Report. This formed the basis for the Government's agricultural measures which were published in its Climate Change Action Plan in June of this year.
9. 2018 also saw the setting up of, ASSAP, to address water quality on the nation's farms. This is a joint initiative of the DAFM and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Teagasc and the dairy co-operatives. Teagasc has 20 advisors dedicated to the programme with the co-ops providing another 10 which delivers advice free of charge to farmers.
10. Substantial investment is being put in place to enable Ireland to be "Brexit ready" as the challenge of Brexit will be to encourage food companies to diversify their exports and this will require significant innovation. With private and public support Teagasc is investing almost €30 m in three major initiatives: extension of its Moorepark Technology Ltd Pilot Plant (€10 m: about €6 m from Teagasc and €4 m from dairy co-op shareholders); establishment of a Prepared Consumer Foods Centre at Teagasc Ashtown, Castleknock (€10 m from DAFM); and the investment of about €9 m provided by DAFM in the development of a Food Innovation Hub at Teagasc Moorepark which has recently commenced construction.

Teagasc Plans for 2020

1. Launch of Teagasc's Statement of Strategy 2020-2022.

2. Publication of Teagasc Sectoral Roadmaps and input into the Government's successor to FoodWise.
3. Implementation of the Teagasc recommendations, as published in the Government's Climate Action Plan, for the mitigation of Greenhouse Gases and Ammonia through an intensive advisory campaign.
4. Ensure that all Teagasc research and college farms adhere to the highest possible standards of sustainability.
5. Launch a Plan to secure sustainability profitability in the beef sector.
6. Hold a Beef Open Day in Grange and a Sheep Open Day in Athenry.
7. Progress research on Antimicrobial and Anthelmintic Resistance.
8. Consolidate and enhance Teagasc's research programme on the sustainable circular bioeconomy.
9. Complete the construction of the Food Innovation Hub at Teagasc Moorepark.
10. Continue support for Irish Aid's development efforts in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Keyna, Tanzania and Vietnam.