



An Comhchoiste um Thalmhaíocht, Bia agus Muir

Tuarascáil Taistil

-

Cuairt ar Devenish

Samhain 2021

Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Travel Report

-

Visit to Devenish

November 2021

Membership

The following Deputies and Senators are members of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine of the 33rd Dáil Éireann and the 26th Seanad Éireann.



Sen. Victor Boyhan
Independent



Sen. Lynn Boylan
Sinn Féin



Martin Browne T.D.
Sinn Féin



Jackie Cahill T.D.
Fianna Fáil
[Cathaoirleach]



Matt Carthy T.D.
Sinn Féin



Michael Collins T.D.
Independent



Sen. Paul Daly
Fianna Fáil



Michael Fitzmaurice
T.D. Independent



Joe Flaherty T.D.
Fianna Fáil



Paul Kehoe T.D.
Fine Gael



Brian Leddin T.D.
Green Party



Sen. Tim Lombard
Fine Gael *[Leas-Chathaoirleach]*



Sen. Denis O'Donovan
Fianna Fáil



Michael Ring T.D.
Fine Gael

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Introduction

In the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine (the Committee) report 'Work Programme 2021'¹, the Committee listed carbon sequestration and innovation in farming among its key policy issues to examine during its work in 2021. The Committee planned to consider the pivotal role that research and technology has in addressing the many challenges facing Irish agriculture and climate change.

In June 2021, Devenish extended an invitation to the Committee to visit its Global Innovation Centre in Dowth in Co. Meath. Devenish is an agri-tech company with several locations including Belfast and Dowth. Their Global Innovation Centre was established in 2018 and is the hub for all of their product and solution-based research and development.² This centre is also where Devenish is developing and showcasing the HEARTLAND Project 'One Health – from Soil to Society'³ research and innovation programme.

On 18 October 2021, the Committee undertook a visit to Dowth in Co. Meath to gain insight into the workings of Devenish and to observe its work in the area of agricultural research and innovation. The Committee wished to develop its understanding of the role that Devenish's research could play in ensuring a sustainable and vibrant future for Irish agriculture.

Committee Delegation

The visit to Devenish was attended by the following members of the Committee:

- Jackie Cahill T.D., *Cathaoirleach*
- Matt Carthy T.D.
- Michael Fitzmaurice T.D.

The delegation was accompanied by two staff members from the Committee's Secretariat.

¹ Joint Committee on Agriculture and the Marine, *Work Programme 2021*, Report, 2021. [Link](#) to report.

² Devenish, *Research & Development – Research Facilities*, Webpage. [Link](#) to webpage.

³ HEARTLAND 'One Health – from Soil to Society', *The Project*, Webpage. [Link](#) to webpage.

Briefing from Devenish

The Committee met with the following representatives of Devenish:

- Owen Brennan, Chairman
- Richard Kennedy, CEO
- Dr. John Gilliland, Director of Global Agriculture & Sustainability
- Dr. Morgan Sheehy, Ruminant Director
- David Hagan, Sustainable Agriculture manager

The briefing consisted of a number of presentations which provided an insight into the workings of the organisation. Devenish discussed their research into methods of accelerating carbon sequestration including multispecies swards and improving water quality through precision management. The delegation had the opportunity to question the representatives of Devenish on their findings and the challenges facing the agriculture sector.

Tour of Devenish's farm

Following the presentations and discussion the Committee was brought on a tour of Devenish's farm. This allowed the delegation to discuss in further detail key aspects from the briefing session and the practicalities of Devenish's findings. As part of this tour the Committee had the opportunity to speak to with Dr. Cornelia Grace, RDico Manager, and Jane Shackleton, PHD candidate, with regards to the ongoing HEARTLAND Project on Devenish's farm.

As part of Devenish's research into multispecies swards the Committee were shown examples of 1 and 12 species swards and their soil type. The delegation was able to ask the researchers about their findings and the advantages and disadvantages of using different types of swards in farming. The Committee found the work of Devenish and the HEARTLAND Project very informative and, of particular interest, their area of research in calculating carbon emissions and accelerating carbon sequestration.



Devenish's farm in Dowth. Left to right: Dr Morgan Sheeey, Dr John Gilliland, David Hagan, Michael Fitzmaurice T.D., Jackie Cahill T.D., Dr Cornelia Grace, Richard Kennedy, Jane Shackleton and Matt Carthy T.D.

Conclusion

The Committee wishes to thank the staff of Devenish for the informative presentations and engaging discussions. The Committee will continue to explore the potential value of science and innovation to the agriculture sector, in particular, in relation to carbon sequestration. The Committee intends to explore this in further detail in its Work Programme.

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Powers of Select Committees (DSO 96 and SSO 72)

DSO 96

Unless the Dáil shall otherwise order, a Committee appointed pursuant to these Standing Orders shall have the following powers:

10. power to—

- (a) engage the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and
- (b) undertake travel;

Provided that the powers under this paragraph are subject to such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under Standing Order 120(4)(a).

SSO 72

Unless the Seanad shall otherwise order, a Committee appointed pursuant to these Standing Orders shall have the following powers:

10. power to –

- (a) engage the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and
- (b) undertake travel;

Provided that the powers under this paragraph are subject to such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under Standing Order 107(4)(a).