
Teagasc Advisory Regional Review Waterford - Kilkenny

Final Report

Author(s): Iain Riddell (Panel Chair)

Date prepared: 13/10/2014

Date
Management
Response
Included:

Status: Final

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Main report recommendations	3
1. Quality of Management and Leadership in the Region	4
2. Productivity and Service Delivery in the Region	6
3. Relevance and Impact in the Region	8
4. Positioning of the Region for the Future.....	10
Conclusion	11
Appendix 1 Advisory Regional Review Panel	12
Appendix 2 Advisory Regional Review High Level Evaluation Criteria	13

Introduction

Teagasc is the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority. It is the national body providing integrated research, advisory and training services to the agriculture and food industry and rural communities. It was established in September 1988 under the Agriculture (Research, Training and Advice) Act, 1988. The organisation is funded by state grant-in-aid, fees for research advisory and training services, income from national and EU competitive research programmes, and revenue from farming activities and commodity levies.

The overall goal of the Teagasc Advisory Programme is to support the on-going development of sustainable family farms in Ireland, through efficient and effective knowledge transfer activities. The programme currently supports almost 140,000 individual farmers with 43,000 farmers contracted to Teagasc for services annually.

This review was undertaken in September 2014. The panel (see Appendix 2 for panel composition) has prepared this report based on meetings with management, staff representatives, enterprise specialists, farmer stakeholders, and analysis of documents such as the region's self - assessment document, business plan, staff questionnaires, and Teagasc Advisory programme documents. The farmer client panel consisted of two dairy, two drystock and a tillage farmer chosen at random based on average enterprise size for the region.

The overall objective of this review is to identify current strengths and weaknesses in the delivery of quality services and value to the customers of the services provided. This evaluation had four main criteria (a more in - depth description of each is outlined in appendix 3):

1. Quality of management and leadership in the Region
2. Relevance and impact of services to the Region's customers
3. Productivity of staff in relation to key performance indicators and outcomes
4. Positioning of the Region to meet current and future service delivery challenges.

The Waterford-Kilkenny Advisory Region in Context

The Waterford- Kilkenny (WDKK) Advisory Region is one of 12 Teagasc advisory regions. It is entrusted with service provision to 4,937 farms (57% of which are clients). In terms of dairy, 84% of the regions suppliers are Teagasc clients, the corresponding figure for suckling is 54%. Average farm size for the region at 44.7 hectares is 12 hectares above the national average. Dairy farming has been a strong contributor to the local economy. The milk quota regime has limited the potential for expansion to date. It is estimated that as a result of the removal of quotas in 2015 farmers will increase production by as much as 60% by 2020.

The region is involved in a joint programmes with Glanbia, which dates back to 1992. Kildalton Agricultural College is based in the region on the border between the two counties. The Greenfield dairy research and demonstration farm; a joint collaboration between Teagasc, FBD (Farmer Business Development), DAFM (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and the Marine), Glanbia, and AIB (Aillied Irish Banks) is also located in the region. There are also industry joint programme beef and sheep (Teagasc, Irish Farmers Journal, AIBP, Dawn Meats, Kepak, and FBD) and tillage demonstration farms located in the region.

Table 1 outlines some of the key recent performance metrics. Since 2008 the number of full - time equivalents (FTEs) has fallen from 36.3 to 27.1, resulting from retirements and the moratorium on recruitment.

Table 1 Waterford- Kilkenny Advisory Region Staff Resources from 2008 to 2014

Resources	2008	2012	2013	2014
Manager	1	1	1	1
Administration	7	5.9	5.1	5.1
Dairy advisers	12	11	11	11
Drystock advisers	4	4	4	4
S & E / REPS Advisers	9	3	2.8	2.8
Tillage Adviser	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
Education	2	1	1	1
JP Coordinator	0	1	1	1
Total FTE	36.2	27.9	27.1	27.1
Client contracts	2911	2945	2885	2906
Clients per adviser	111	155	152	153

Over this time client contract numbers have been maintained, raising the clients per advisor ratio in 2014 up to 153 from 111 in 2008. Measures taken to address staff shortages include the employment of casual staff, students and interns for specific tasks at peak times of the year. Table 2 gives by enterprise the current clients, groups and monitor farms in the region. There are currently 3 advisory offices (Dungarvan, Kilkenny and Mullinavat) in the region following the closure of Lismore and Dunhill in 2009 as part of an office rationalisation process.

Table 2 Teagasc Advisory Service in Waterford Kilkenny

Enterprise	Adviser nos.	Client nos.	Group nos.	Monitor farms
Dairying	11	1,372	42	2
Drystock	4	1,195	26	4
Tillage	1.2	150	1	
Soils & Environment	2.8	103		
Glanbia Joint Programme	1			
Education	1			
Admin Staff + Manager	6.1			
Total	27.1	2,885	69	4

Main report recommendations

1. Management and Leadership

- 1.1 Teagasc should consider the possibility of Regional managers getting more involved in projects involving service delivery if they have the capacity to do so.
- 1.2 Graduates from the Leadership Development Programme should set leadership goals to lead on a relevant issue after completing the training and draw up an action plan to deliver this.
- 1.3 Regional management and staff to consider further development of a technical leadership role to enterprise management in Kildalton College and invite selected groups of students to Advisory Region events.

2. Productivity and Service Delivery

- 2.1 Specialists to prioritise the availability of fresh support material and the mentoring of inexperienced advisors who need technical knowledge and facilitation skills support.
- 2.2 Teagasc should encourage focused networks of advisors sharing technical knowledge and facilitation approaches within the group and across Teagasc.
- 2.3 Managers to ensure that staff targets and related benchmarks are adjusted in line with any changes in work programmes arising from CP3.
- 2.4 Teagasc should consider the merits of reducing farm visits and discussion groups in favour of phone consultations during the SPS period.
- 2.5 Enterprise advisor representatives and administrators could be involved in drawing up new Programmes with Specialists and the Department to add their views on how these programmes can be delivered more efficiently.

3. Relevance and Impact

- 3.1 While the enterprise focused approach clearly has merit in improving enterprise performance, it is important for non-dairy farms especially that advisers do not lose focus on the integration of enterprises and whole farm performance.
- 3.2 While the concentration of resources on dairying is an understandable consequence of having to prioritise activity, the region needs to ensure Drystock and Tillage staff and clients feel valued.
- 3.3 Prioritisation of staff workloads is required to reduce the risk of good staff leaving the service.
- 3.4 Care should be taken to maintain Teagasc contact with soil and environment work after the SAE Advisors are transferred to Enterprise Advisor roles.
- 3.5 Outsourced contracts to be carefully drawn up and overseen to minimise the impact of litigation and loss of reputation to Teagasc.

4. Positioning for the Future

- 4.1 Teagasc management to consider whether a view needs to be taken on services that improve the broader rural economy rather than just technical and financial performance of main enterprises.
- 4.2 The Region should seek feedback on their service delivery through focus groups or customer surveys and share this information across Teagasc.
- 4.3 The Region needs to be ready to expand business through delivery of chargeable services to those who are willing to pay e.g. innovative dairy farmers when embargo on staff recruitment is lifted.
- 4.4 Advisory staff in the Region should try to prioritise an ongoing intake of young clients for the future vibrancy of the service.

Panel Report for the Waterford / Kilkenny Advisory Regional Review

1. Quality of Management and Leadership in the Region

Management and Leadership

- The WDKK management team produced a comprehensive self -assessment document, which covered the advisory effort in the area and its impact on customers in some detail.
- There was strong evidence to demonstrate that the WDKK business plan has been developed to meet local needs and in turn provide linkage to the Teagasc national advisory programmes. The WDKK Business Plan document clearly laid out the objectives for each work programme and individual staff targets, and this was reflected in the presentations from Enterprise Advisers.
- The region would appear to have an effective Management Structure in place particularly at local level where one Regional Manager and a staff officer leads 21 FTE Advisers and 5.1 FTE Admin staff. The Regional Manager has a proactive approach to managing his staff, regularly spending time in each office, and is clearly playing a lead role in mentoring staff as well as liaising with important industry contacts. There was some comment in the staff survey that advisers felt that managers should take on some service delivery initiatives as happens in other advisory services to keep the manager in touch with issues on the ground. Sometimes in situations of staff shortage there tends to be an increased need for strategic planning and management activity and this may need to be balanced against time managers can spend supporting front line delivery.
- The Regional Manager oversees a programme of internal communication that includes quarterly staff meetings, 2 PMDS meetings and weekly face to face interactions with staff – this planning and effort is reflected by a high rating for communication in the staff survey, although one survey comment noted that levels of communication between offices could be improved to enhance teamwork.
- There is a good management programme in place to train those with greater management responsibility (Management Development Programme), as well as a Leadership Development Programme, which the panel have some comment on in the recommendations below. The panel felt that graduates from this programme should set leadership goals to lead on a relevant issue after completing the training, allowing them to put what they have learned into practice.
- Communication between management staff and the industry is good, resulting in some impressive joint programmes such as Glanbia and the BETTER Farms, as well as a number of other key stakeholders. The panel interviewed five farmer clients and they appeared to be familiar with Teagasc Advisory service objectives.

Technical Leadership

- There was good evidence of strong leadership of the advisory programmes from the regional manager and lead enterprise advisers. Specialist staff provided good support to enterprise advisers through regular in service training days and information notes and appeared to act as an effective conduit of research results into practice.
- Declining staff numbers have put constraints on specialist time available to support Advisers at discussion group meetings. The panel discussed ways that managers could ensure a maximization of information exchange relating to running of groups. Targeted groups or networks of enterprise staff meeting up in a focused way could share resources, advisory approaches and methodologies, backed up by discussions with specialists.
- Programme development appeared to be led primarily by Specialist staff. Enterprise Advisers expressed a view that greater involvement from them at the planning stage

could lead to more workable programmes, especially in terms of DAFM designed schemes and programmes

- The panel felt that the Advisory region has been proactive in terms of integrating with other sections of Teagasc and with industry having hosted a number of beef and sheep national events in recent years, and through its interaction with the Greenfield site and joint programmes and initiatives with industry. Kildalton Agricultural college is based in this region and an ACA level 6 course is jointly delivered between the region and the college. Some advisory staff facilitate student discussion groups for the college. Staff expressed some frustration at the lack of linkage between graduates and the advisory service. The panel feel that there is scope for advisory staff to provide a technical leadership role to the college teaching staff and in the process increase face to face contact with selected groups of students such as those on the advanced certificate courses. Invites could be given to these students and those on courses such as the UCD Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management to attend WDKK Advisory Regional events.
- Technical leadership in other areas such as the environment, education and administration is good. The fact that Education delivery is only one deep presents a risk in terms of cover and continuity.
- Administration staff are experienced in programme administration, and the design of DAFM schemes in particular could benefit from more involvement or feedback from administration staff involved in implementation.

Resources

- Delivery staff at both local and specialist level are clearly stretched regarding work commitments following a downsizing of the Teagasc workforce. Difficulty meeting workload and impact on morale featured strongly in the staff survey. Staff are aware that work is to be prioritised under Change Programme 3 and some areas such as GLAS are to be outsourced as a result. This might result in up to 3 Regional staff changing from Environmental roles to delivery of enterprise technical advice. This may assist in relieving workload but may not fully solve the staffing problem given that the recruitment embargo is likely to continue in the near future.
- The flat operating structure in WDKK with one Regional Manager and one staff officer covering most of the management and strategic planning, seems to be effective in allowing the other 25 FTE staff to maximise their time on delivery.
- Management in the WDKK Region have a clear sense of priority activity, with group activity taking precedence over individual visits and dairy taking precedence over other enterprises with industry joint programmes a priority.
- The importance of effective administrators was noted by the panel who were encouraged to hear that administration staff were constantly looking at ways to assist advisors by supporting technical work in addition to their administration duties.

Recommendations

- 1.1 Teagasc should consider the possibility of Regional managers getting more involved in projects involving service delivery if they have the capacity to do so.
- 1.2 Graduates from the Leadership Development should set leadership goals to lead on a relevant issue after completing the training and draw up an action plan to deliver this.
- 1.3 Regional management and staff to consider further development of a technical leadership role to enterprise management in Kildalton College and invite selected groups of students to Advisory Region events.

2. Productivity and Service Delivery in the Region

Productivity

- Some impressive statistics were presented on the percentage of farmers who are clients in the area (57%) with particularly high penetration among dairy farmers (84%).
- Client contracts over the period 2008 to 2014 have been maintained at over 2900 even though the number of staff numbers fell by 9 FTEs.
- This region had the highest income per advisor in 2012 compared to other Teagasc Advisory regions.
- The number of clients per advisor in 2012 was also the highest among Teagasc regions.
- In terms of education each year there are circa 35 graduates completing the ACA programme. This consistency is a good indicator of an efficient well administered programme.
- The number of discussion groups per advisor at 4.2 for this region compares well with the national Teagasc figure in 2013 of 3.4 groups per advisor.
- There was an increase in profit monitors in recent years assisted by incentives in DAFM schemes. The challenge will now be to maintain these numbers without the scheme incentive.
- The panel was told about plans to outsource some scheme work such as GLAS. The region currently delivers a high volume of core work such as discussion groups, and this service may also be under threat if staff numbers continue to decline.
- The panel was impressed at efficiencies gained through smart working in areas such as administration of BTAP (Beef Technology Adoption Programme) and STAP (Sheep Technology Adoption Programme) where one person led the administration at regional level with one Teagasc staff member dealing with DAFM at national level.
- Staff targets and related benchmarks should reflect changes in the organisation such as the prioritisation outlined in Change Programme 3.

Delivery

- The increase in farmer membership of discussion groups and uptake of profit monitors is positive.
- An increase in discussion groups and office consultations are replacing one to one visits. The farmers and advisory staff interviewed felt that the current model of discussion groups provides sufficient one to one interaction if required as a follow up after meetings.
- Feedback from the five farmers interviewed indicated that programmes are meeting client needs with positive comment regarding general organisation, facilitation and content of discussion group meetings. It was most encouraging to note that these farmers were convinced that recording and benchmarking was now an essential tool for improving their businesses.
- The five farmers interviewed felt that in relation to education, there is a place for discussion groups and a place for short courses; the discussion group format a good way to develop technical knowledge, and formal short courses a good format for topics such as IT, farm safety and to target larger numbers on a topical subject such as dairy expansion or new entrants.
- Dairy and beef advisors had access to an impressive amount of information from the profit monitor, external agencies such as ICBF and the cooperatives giving them much useful material and benchmarks to use for group discussion. This information also confirmed the progress that group members were making and is clearly working as a strong motivational tool. Similar developments in other enterprises such as sheep and tillage are to be encouraged.

- When asked about priorities, farmers agreed that both technical advice and completing the SPS form was of greatest value – when pushed technical was the service they most valued from Teagasc. Advisory staff felt that technical advice and SPS were a priority, in addition to fertiliser planning.
- When asked about dissemination of information the five farmers interviewed preferred by phone or by post, with a reticence among the group to receive advice by email.
- Advisers had concerns about keeping discussion group meetings “fresh” and would like more attendance from specialists. Specialists cited their difficulty in finding time to do more than 1-2 meetings each year for each advisor. While its clear there is a limit to the specialist resource, increased circulation of ideas from specialists to advisers, and between enterprise advisers, augmented by external speakers, should help maintain farmer interest.
- Improved circulation of resources including group meeting programmes and agendas would help avoid enterprise advisers “reinventing the wheel.”
- Specialists saw potential in greater liaison and training in conjunction with industry professionals such as vets.
- The Regional SWOT analysis and advisor comment cited the issue of advisers being overwhelmed by work in late spring when SPS (or in future BPS) forms compete with group delivery for time. In other advisory services advisers have limited availability for on farm work during this period and plan group meetings for less busy times of year. Can programmes be re-organised to reflect reduced adviser availability in these busy months?

Recommendations

- 2.1 Specialists to prioritise the availability of fresh support material and the mentoring of inexperienced advisers who need technical knowledge and facilitation skills support.
- 2.2 Teagasc should encourage focused networks of advisers sharing technical knowledge and facilitation approaches within the group and across Teagasc.
- 2.3 Managers to ensure that staff targets and related benchmarks are adjusted in line with any changes in work programmes arising from CP3.
- 2.4 Teagasc should consider the merits of reducing farm visits and discussion groups in favour of phone consultations during the SPS period.
- 2.5 Enterprise advisor representatives and administrators could be involved in drawing up new Programmes with Specialists and the Department to add their views on how these programmes can be delivered more efficiently.

3. Relevance and Impact in the Region

Programme relevance

- Programmes were well aligned to national priorities as stated in the Teagasc business plan, Harvest 2020 Objectives and in the main targeted at customer needs.
- Farmers interviewed gave solid examples of practice they have adopted as a direct result of Teagasc advice and discussion group membership.
- Joint programmes with large supply chain companies are a very effective way of delivery and provide a ready-made supply of attendees for meetings e.g. Glanbia monitor farms and the beef, sheep and tillage Teagasc/ Irish Farmer's Journal BETTER farms.
- Integration of advice for non-dairy farmers – while the enterprise focused approach clearly has merit in improving enterprise performance, it is important that advisers do not lose focus on the integration of enterprises and whole farm performance. We heard evidence of integration between advisers but will this be harder to achieve as staff resources get more and more stretched. One of the farmers interviewed would like Teagasc to devote more resources to the options available for non-dairy enterprises to improve profitability and ensure farmers are continually challenged.
- One tillage farmer expressed a view that more farmers would like to join tillage discussion groups, An incentive scheme to encourage discussion groups is in planning by the DAFM and would be welcome.
- The panel were presented with a number of measures of farm enterprise performance and there was good evidence that farm performance is improving.

Knowledge transfer

- The panel were given strong evidence from advisors and farmers that current programmes are having an impact in changing farmers behavior and encouraging them to adopt new practices. This was most noticeable in the dairy sector where significant improvements had been noted.
- Drystock farmers tend to be more reticent about accept advice, however farmer payment to attend meetings and a requirement to benchmark as a group appeared to have had a profound and positive impact on the Drystock farmers interviewed who were making good progress with the relatively recent development (for them) of paddock grazing.
- There is only one Tillage advisor in the region, and the advisory focus is monitoring or reducing cost, improving soil fertility, and compliance with the SPS scheme and the Sustainable Use Directive. The panel felt that additional ways of measuring progress on profitability would be welcome.
- In terms of education linkages with Kildalton College are in place to co-deliver education programmes.

Reputation and quality of services

- Advisors are clearly enthusiastic about the advice they are delivering and farmer feedback was generally positive on the services they were receiving.
- Reputation of service depends on quality of staff and concern was expressed about the lack of recruitment in recent years and downsizing of staff numbers, which may be building a problem for the future. The panel heard that “only three staff are under 40 years of age”. Staff loyalty is strong, but in similar situations in other advisory services internationally staff have left to set up in opposition when workloads or working conditions became too “stretched”. Care must continue be taken to prioritise workloads and deliver a quality service to customers.
- While the necessity to outsource environmental scheme work to others and convert SAE advisors into enterprise advisors makes sense with the recruitment embargo in

place, care must be taken to avoid loss of all contact with soil and environment work, particularly at a time when climate change and sustainability is a key priority.

- There is risk that outsourcing work on a contracted basis might increase litigation in the event of mistakes and loss of Teagasc reputation.
- One comment, from just one farmer, was that advisors should challenge their clients more. Although from just one source, it is worth advisors keeping in mind the need to maintain an appropriate balance between servicing and challenging.

Recommendations

- 3.1 While the enterprise focused approach clearly has merit in improving enterprise performance, it is important for non-dairy farms especially that advisers do not lose focus on the integration of enterprises and whole farm performance.
- 3.2 While the concentration of resources on dairying is an understandable consequence of having to prioritise activity, the region needs to ensure Drystock and Tillage staff and clients feel valued.
- 3.3 Prioritisation of staff workloads is required to reduce the risk of good staff leaving the service.
- 3.4 Care should be taken to maintain Teagasc contact with soil and environment work after the SAE Advisors are transferred to Enterprise Advisor roles.
- 3.5 Outsourced contracts to be carefully drawn up and overseen to minimise the impact of litigation and loss of reputation to Teagasc.

4. Positioning of the Region for the Future

Robustness and Sustainability

- The Regional Business Plan, submitted to the panel was for a one year period. The panel was told that each region is to develop its own strategic plan for the period to 2020. This will be useful for staff to contribute and work to a medium or longer term plan for the region. This plan should be updated as on a regular basis to ensure continued relevance.
- Development of a national (to support regional) dairy service is seen as a positive development as it will see a dedicated team working with more expansive farmers, who may be prepared to pay more fully for the service provided. It is unfortunate that Teagasc will not be able to recruit more staff on the back of demand or additional revenue while the embargo on recruitment remains in place – this is a disincentive to build new fee paying business, which could be delivered at no extra cost for Government.
- Whilst understandable that the primary regional focus is on the main growth area of dairying, care must be taken not to diminish the programme and staff resources available to Drystock and Tillage farmers.
- While it is clear that the current focus on improving technical and financial performance from the main farming enterprises is correct for the present, the organisation should take a broader view of rural development and the environment in longer term planning because priorities could alter in future.
- The presentations and interviews were enterprise focused. It might benefit Teagasc and the region to set future targets for promoting family farm viability through a more holistic whole farm business approach.
- The Teagasc nutritionist was based in this region and has recently been promoted to another role. The resulting knowledge gap created emphasises the need for succession planning in key areas. Some specialist areas may also be vulnerable given low staff numbers although Teagasc has a ready-made pool of potential replacements from Enterprise Advisers if they are prepared to take on a national role.
- Capacity to self-evaluate – the region has good feedback on the improvement in farm performance but should be encouraged to seek greater feedback from customers on service delivery in areas such as standard of facilitation or organisation and content of group meetings.
- It is important when engaging with farmers to discuss regional strategy that farmers are removed from their daily routine and made to think ahead on the challenges they face for the next 3-5 years and the type of advisory support they will require.
- There is a risk having only one specialised education staff member in the region when education is a high priority.
- Staff expressed concern for recruitment of future clients. Given the resource constraints the organisation should try to source and maintain a small intake of young clients on a continual basis to ensure the vibrancy of the service.

Recommendation

- 4.1 Teagasc management to consider whether a view needs to be taken on services that improve the broader rural economy rather than just technical and financial performance of main enterprises.
- 4.2 The Region should seek feedback on their service delivery through focus groups or customer surveys and share across Teagasc.
- 4.3 The Region needs to be ready to expand business through delivery of chargeable services to those who are willing to pay e.g. innovative dairy farmers when embargo on staff recruitment is lifted.
- 4.4 Advisory staff in the Region should try to prioritise an ongoing intake of young clients for the future vibrancy of the service.

Conclusion

The Waterford- Kilkenny region has been successful in engaging with clients as evidenced by the large numbers attending groups and is delivering some impressive outcomes for farmers, particularly in the dairy sector. This success is due to the efforts of an enthusiastic and well trained Regional team who are dedicated to meet the needs of local farmers. The biggest threat to maintaining high standards of service is the reduction in staff numbers and the embargo on further recruitment. Much effort has gone in to developing a Change Plan which is being implemented well at regional level but will rely on further prioritisation of activity and more efficient ways of working.

The continual development of facilitation skills and new resource materials is a challenge given the workload of advisors and specialists. The team should seek greater feedback from customers on their delivery to ensure that it continues to meet client expectations and to identify how best to prioritise staff resources.

The Waterford- Kilkenny Advisory Region is preparing a regional specific strategic plan to 2020, which should help to identify the future risks, opportunities and actions to benefit customers at regional level. Some of the observations and recommendations from this evaluation are for the Advisory service as a whole given the interaction between the Region, the specialists and the central advisory management.

Appendix 1 Advisory Regional Review Panel

Function / Role	Name
Chair	<p>Iain Riddell Principal Consultant and Regional Manager – East Region and Specialist Teams SAC Consulting, SRUC.</p>
KT Professional with Advisory and Education background	<p>Erich Waldmeier 20 years experience as an advisor later as an advisory specialist in enterprise development; 20 years experience as manager of a regional advisory support centre with 70 staff. Currently Agricultural Expert for CARITAS, IALB board representative for international contacts.</p>
Farmer stakeholder	<p>Jim Treacy, Farm Manger Rockwell, Rockwell College Farm, Cashel, Co. (Former chairman of the Irish Farm Managers Association).</p>
Independent Teagasc Representative	<p>James Maher Business Planning and Performance Evaluation, Teagasc</p>

Appendix 2 Advisory Regional Review High Level Evaluation Criteria

1. Management and Leadership

Management and Leadership refers to the coordination and administration of activities in the Region. The focus in this area includes how the organization structure in place supports programme delivery, communication between staff and management (including staff in a coordinating role), the extent to which staff feel that their role is well defined, the scope for them to develop professionally and personally while contributing to programme objectives. How well regional objectives, resources, activities, and outputs are communicated internally and externally.

2. Productivity and Service Delivery

Productivity reflects the relationship between input and output. Output should always be judged in relation to the mission and resources of Teagasc and the Region and the needs of the customer. When looking at productivity, a verdict is usually quantitative in nature. In this case the list will include metrics such as client numbers, visits, discussion groups, meetings held, Teagasc eProfit Monitors, derogations, farm plans and so on. The panel are asked to include other forms of (qualitative) information in their assessment. The suitability of service delivery methods to customer needs and regional resources should also be assessed.

3. Relevance and impact

Relevance and Impact refer to how well the services delivered by Regional staff are aligned to national Advisory and Education programme priorities, and the needs of the Region's customers. The extent to which staff from the Region collaborate with community actors is also relevant in this context. The extent to which customers have improved their economic activities resulting from interaction with Teagasc is relevant, if this information is available. Feedback from customers and stakeholders gives an insight to the Region's reputation with stakeholders and customers.

4. Positioning for the Future

The Region's capacity to plan for and respond to present and future challenges. Including resources, expertise, and strategy in place. The strengths, opportunities, threats and weaknesses of the Advisory Region are taken into account.