

# Advisory Updates

August 2015

## New Knowledge Groups Programme



*Independent research shows that discussion group members achieve higher profit levels (see **Table 1** on reverse).*

Discussion groups have become an important setting for Irish farmers to learn and exchange knowledge in a structured way. They give farmers the opportunity to share ideas, solve problems and acquire technical expertise. There is also a social aspect where farmers find support and

encouragement and form new friendships. Independent research has shown that farmers who are members of either Teagasc dairy or beef discussion groups achieve higher overall profit levels – largely driven by the increased usage of proven technologies.

Table 1. Summary statistics on profit for discussion group members and non-members: 2009.

Measure	Unit	Member	Non-member	All
Gross output per hectare	€ per hectare	€2,523	€1,928	€2,087
Gross margin per litre	Cent per litre	13c/l	10c/l	11c/l
Gross margin per hectare	€ per hectare	€1,338	€885	€1,006

Source: based on NFS data from Connolly *et al.* (2009).

Teagasc advisers facilitate discussion groups for dairy, beef, sheep and tillage farmers on a nationwide basis. Details of the discussion groups in operation in your area are available from Teagasc locally. New members are always welcome.

### Department of Agriculture Knowledge Transfer Groups Programme

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) recently launched the new Knowledge Transfer Groups Programme, which aims to promote discussion group membership among farmers and with particular emphasis on new entrants. Initially the programme will be targeted towards beef, dairy, and equine farmers.

The Programme is expected to be open to sheep, tillage and poultry farmers later in 2015. The Programme offers a financial incentive to farmers to participate in a structured discussion group for a three-year period.

Participants will be expected to attend five group meetings per year with meetings focussed on profitability, grassland management and sustainability, breeding, animal health and farm safety. In addition, each farmer will have the opportunity to develop a Farm Improvement Plan (FIP) with their adviser. In return for participation, each participant will receive €750 per year (€2,250 for three years' membership) with the DAFM also making a contribution to the cost of the facilitator's involvement of €500 per year.

## How to apply

Teagasc advisers are currently finalising details of groups, including group members, who wish to participate in this new Knowledge Transfer Groups Programme. An indication of the number of discussion groups in each county has to be returned to the DAFM by

August 21. If you are not currently a member of a discussion group, and are interested in finding out more about joining a discussion group, you should contact your Teagasc office now. You can also find out more by visiting [www.teagasc.ie](http://www.teagasc.ie).