

Advisory
Programme

Galway/Clare Advisory Region

Strategic Plan

2015 - 2020



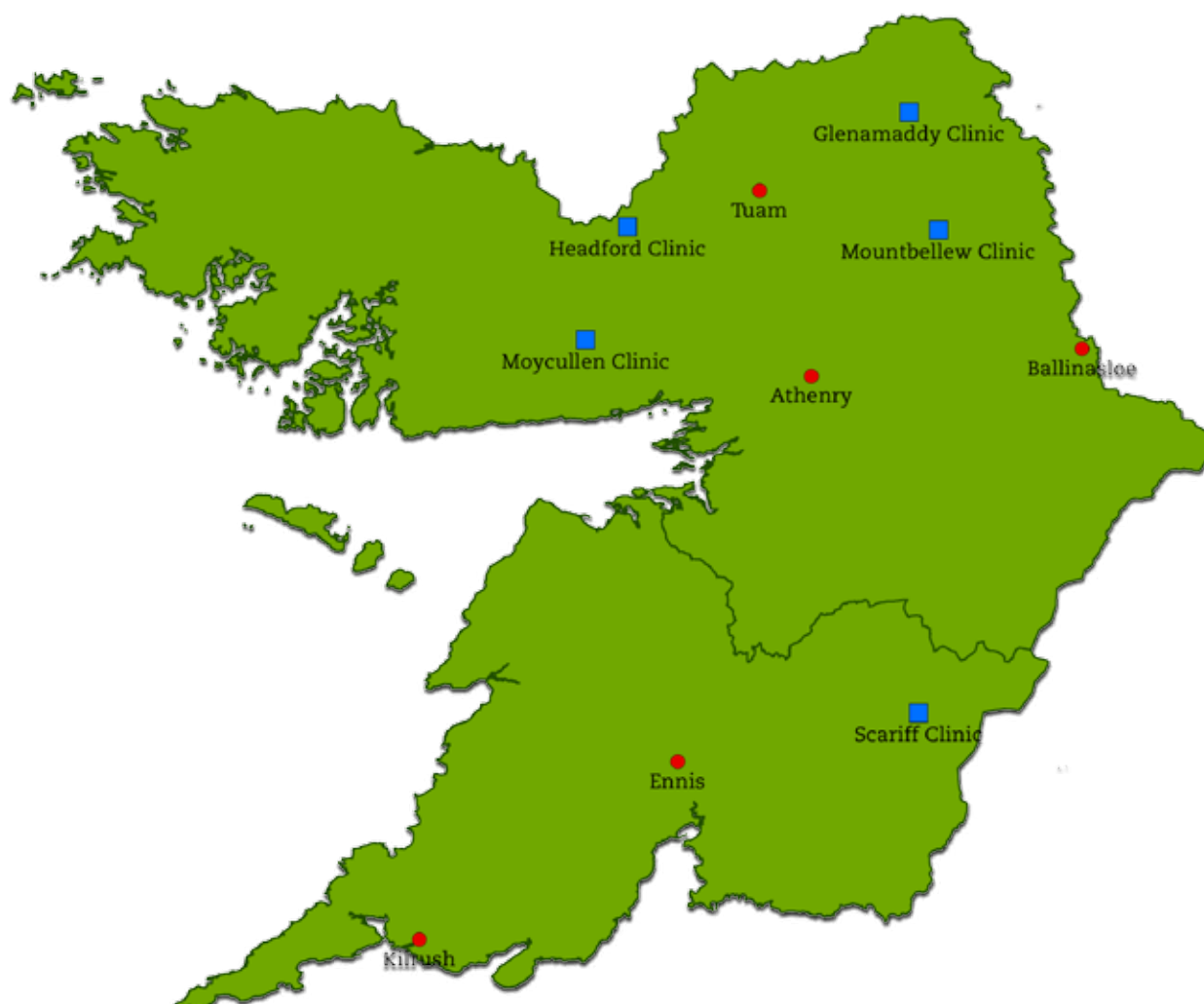
Teagasc Mission Statement

To support science-based innovation in the agri-food sector and wider bioeconomy so as to underpin profitability, competitiveness and sustainability.

Teagasc Goals

1. Improve the competitiveness of agriculture, food and the wider bioeconomy.
2. Support sustainable farming and the environment.
3. Encourage diversification of the rural economy and enhance the quality of life in rural areas.
4. Enhance organisational capability and deliver value for money.

Teagasc Office Locations in the Galway/Clare Region



Galway/Clare Advisory Region

Teagasc, Advisory Office, Athenry, Co. Galway
Teagasc, Deerpark, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway
Teagasc, Upper Dublin Road, Tuam, Co. Galway
Teagasc, Station Road, Ennis, Co. Clare
Teagasc, Ballyurra, Killybegs, Co. Clare

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In this Strategic Plan for the period 2015-2020, we set out the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for the farming sector in the Galway Clare Region. We set goals and targets for each of the main enterprises in the Region – Dairying, Cattle, Sheep, Tillage, and Farm Forestry.

Nationally, Food Harvest 2020 provides the framework for the development of the Agri-Food Sector. Looking at the development of the sector in the Galway Clare Region, I am conscious that the Region has unique characteristics and challenges. While we have some of the best farmers in the country, Galway - Clare is primarily a Region of small farms and variable land quality.

Farming is a very important economic activity in the rural economy with 20,000 farm families in the Region. Part-time farming is the norm with 4 out of every 5 farms dependent on an outside source of income. The health of the overall economy and the availability of employment are crucial to the wellbeing of the farming sector.

It's a time of great change in farming. This strategic plan for the period 2015 -2020 coincides with the introduction of the most recent agreement on the Common Agriculture Policy, which came into effect in January of this year. This agreement provides the framework under which income supports through the Area Based and Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes are paid. Direct payments continue to be crucial to the viability of farming in the Region. It also includes investment schemes for farm buildings, pollution control, fencing and farm safety.

Agri-environmental schemes have been very important in the Region over the past 20 years. Payments for public goods have had a double dividend – protection and enhancement of the environment together with a very important income flow into farms. The REPS Scheme which has just ended resulted in some 675 million euro income flow to farmers in the Region.

The Burren Life Scheme is a great model of how a bottom up innovative approach can be used successfully to design a special scheme for this unique area. There is need for other areas to be more proactive in this regard. The GLAS Scheme which will start shortly is a very important scheme and will provide vital income.

Land use and land mobility is an important issue for the Region. New incentives to encourage land leasing and farm partnerships need to be promoted and adopted if scale and fragmentation are to be addressed. Knowledge Transfer is the new title that describes our Advisory and Education Service. Our key message across all enterprises is “Efficiency before Expansion “. In other words, there is no point producing extra milk, keeping extra suckler cows and ewes, growing more acres of tillage unless farmers can improve the productivity of their existing enterprise.

Dairy farmers will continue to make up the vast bulk of full time farms. The abolition of milk quotas in April of this year provides the single biggest opportunity. We expect milk production to increase by 30% in the Region. Existing producers will expand their production and young farmers will have an opportunity to get into dairying. Price volatility presents a major challenge but the expected drop in milk price this year, will bring a reality check to the sector. Access to milking platform and additional land is a particularly major challenge.

Over 90% of farmers are involved in cattle production. Sheep is also very important enterprise in Galway. The reality is that the viability of drystock production is dependent on Direct Payments. Changes in the system on which the Area Based Payment is calculated will impact negatively on the more progressive farmers and there is a real urgency to improve the productivity of drystock for farming to remain viable.

Teagasc has its own challenges. The Galway Clare Region has lost 50% of its front line advisory Staff since 2009. The staffing situation in the Region is in crises with the retirement of a further four front line advisers this year. This comes at a time when demand for our services is at an all-time high. This Plan identifies the necessity to recruit an additional six advisers in the Region.

In line with our national Strategy, Teagasc in the Region is prioritising Knowledge Transfer and support to farmers to become more efficient and in growing their business. This Plan also focuses on the need to get more young people involved in Discussion Groups. We will actively target young trained entrants coming out from our Green Cert Courses from local centres and from Agricultural Colleges.

In drawing up this plan, we have consulted with important stakeholders and partners in the Region. We will continue to collaborate with key organisations, both locally and nationally, to optimise our effectiveness and play our part in the future of agriculture and food in the Region.

Brendan Heneghan

Regional Manager, Teagasc, Galway/Clare



Farming in the Region

With almost 20,000 farms, agriculture forms a very important part of the economy and society in the Galway Clare Region. Farmers make up 6% of the population but the sector “punches above its weight” in terms of its importance as a generator of economic activity in rural areas. The Clare Cattle Study (2012) conducted by Teagasc shows the importance of farming to the local economy. The report found that farmers sell 80% of their livestock within the county and rely upon local suppliers for almost 90% of their inputs and overheads.

Part time farming is the norm. Four out of every 5 farms are farmed part time.

Off Farm Income - employment of farmer or spouse, Social Welfare and Farm Assist payments effectively maintains the viability of those farms.

Farm Enterprises

With over 90% of farmers involved in cattle production it is by far the most important enterprise in the Region. Galway is the third largest sheep producing county in the country and this is reflected in the figure of 4,600 sheep producers in the Region. There are 1,300 dairy farmers while tillage is a minor enterprise. Farm forestry can now be regarded as a mainstream enterprise with over 9% of land in Clare under forestry and 3% of land in Galway in private forestry plantations.

Figure 1 - Number of Farms in Region (1991 -2010)



Source: CSO Census of Agriculture 2010

Figure 2 - Age Profile of Farmers in Clare (1991 -2010)

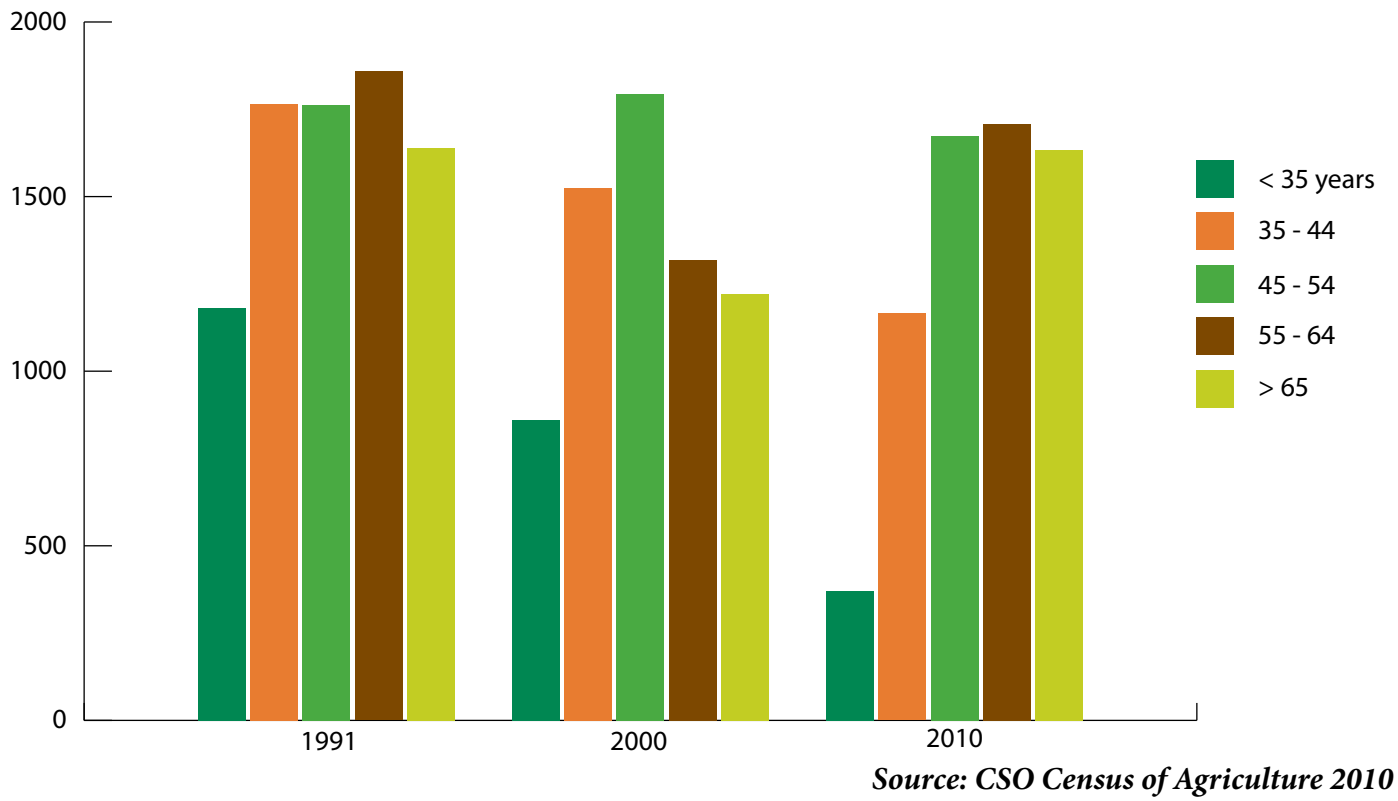
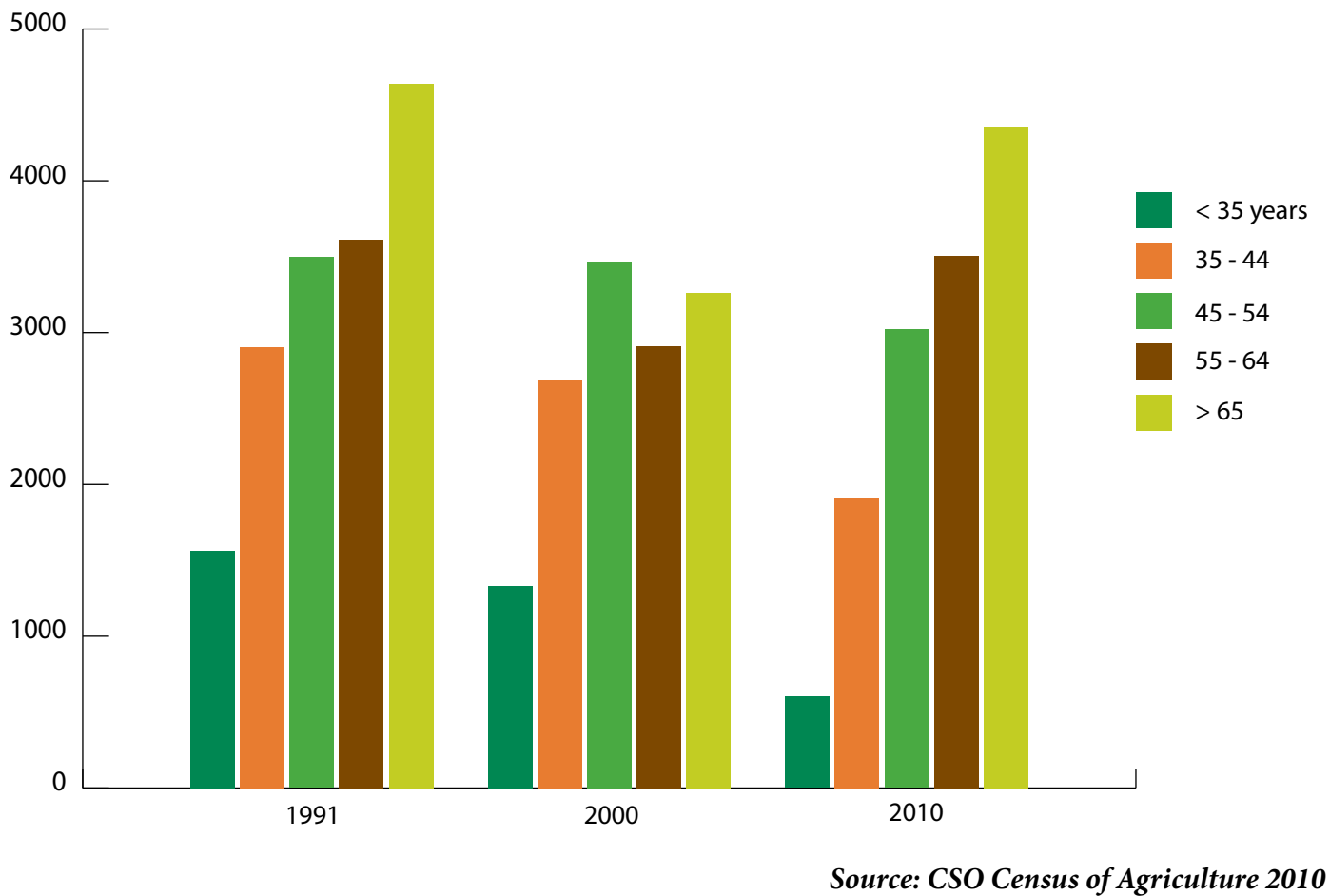


Figure 3 - Age Profile of Farmers in Galway (1991 -2010)



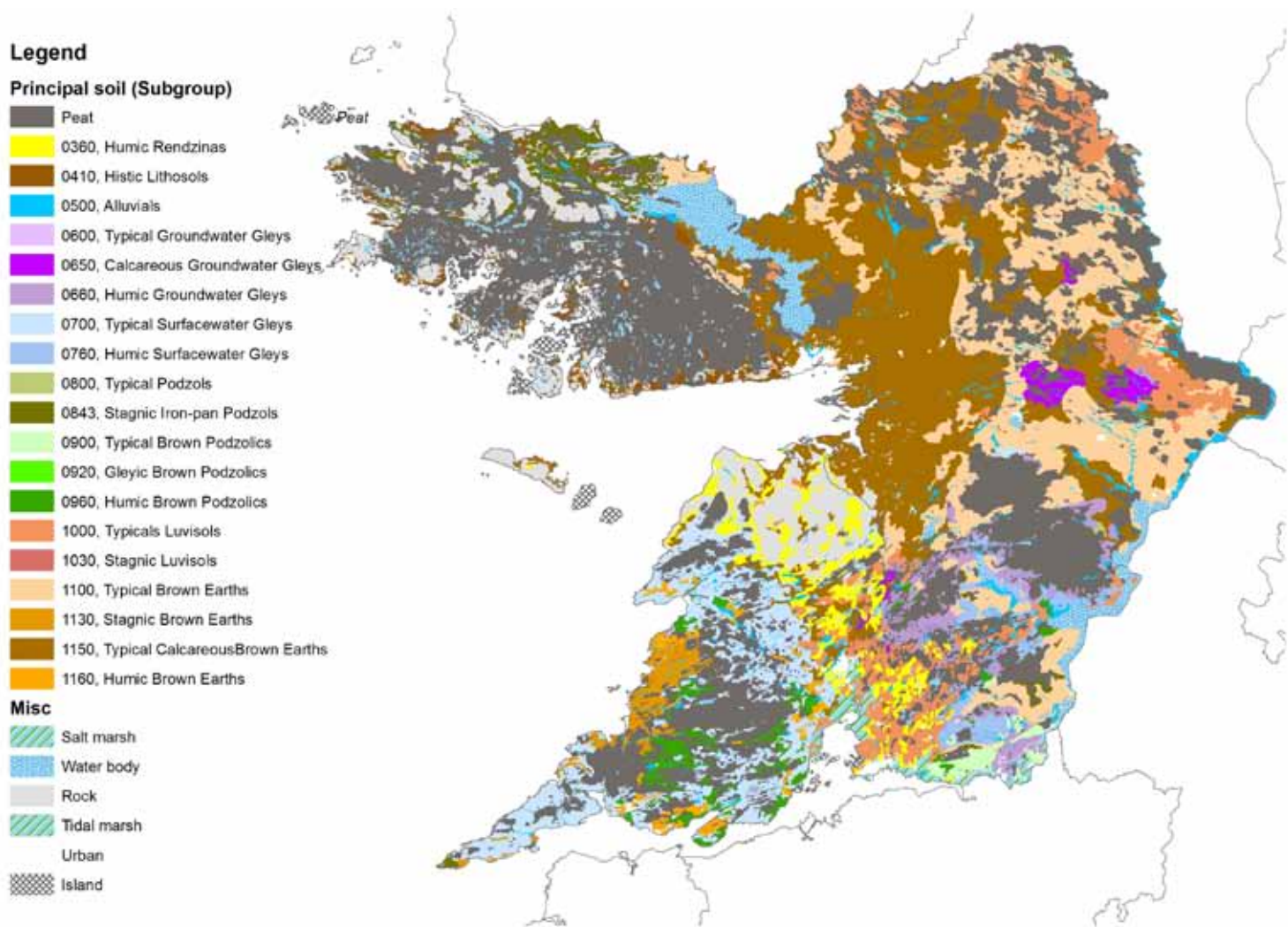
Land Type and Soil Fertility

Agriculture is the predominant land use in the Region. Land use is governed by landscape and soil type and tradition.

Connemara with its mountains, lakes, blanket bogs and rock outcrops is predominantly stocked with hill sheep and small sucker cow herds. East Galway has a wide variety of soil types. The Grey Brown Podzolic and Shallow Brown Earth Soils are very productive and suitable for a wide variety of farm enterprises. Peat, Gley and low lying soils along the Shannon and Suck Valley make for difficult farming conditions.

Land quality in Clare is very variable. Gley soils interspersed with peat predominate especially in West Clare. North East Clare with steep slopes and peaty soils make for particularly difficult farming conditions. The Burren with its unique landscape dominates North Clare. Right throughout the county there are pockets of very good free draining land.

Figure 4 - Soils of Galway/Clare Region





Clients: We provide one to one advice on Farm Management and Schemes to some 5,000 Clients in the Region. This represents an average of 200 clients per adviser. In 2014, advisers provided 7,500 office consultations and conducted almost 1,300 farm visits.

Discussion Groups: We facilitate 65 Discussion Groups with over 1,000 farmers involved – in Dairying, Cattle and Sheep.

Public Events: Each year we organize some 30 Public Events - Farm Walks, Seminars, Workshops, meetings.

Education: We deliver FETAC accredited Courses for young entrants to farming leading to the Certificate in Farming together with a range of short courses.

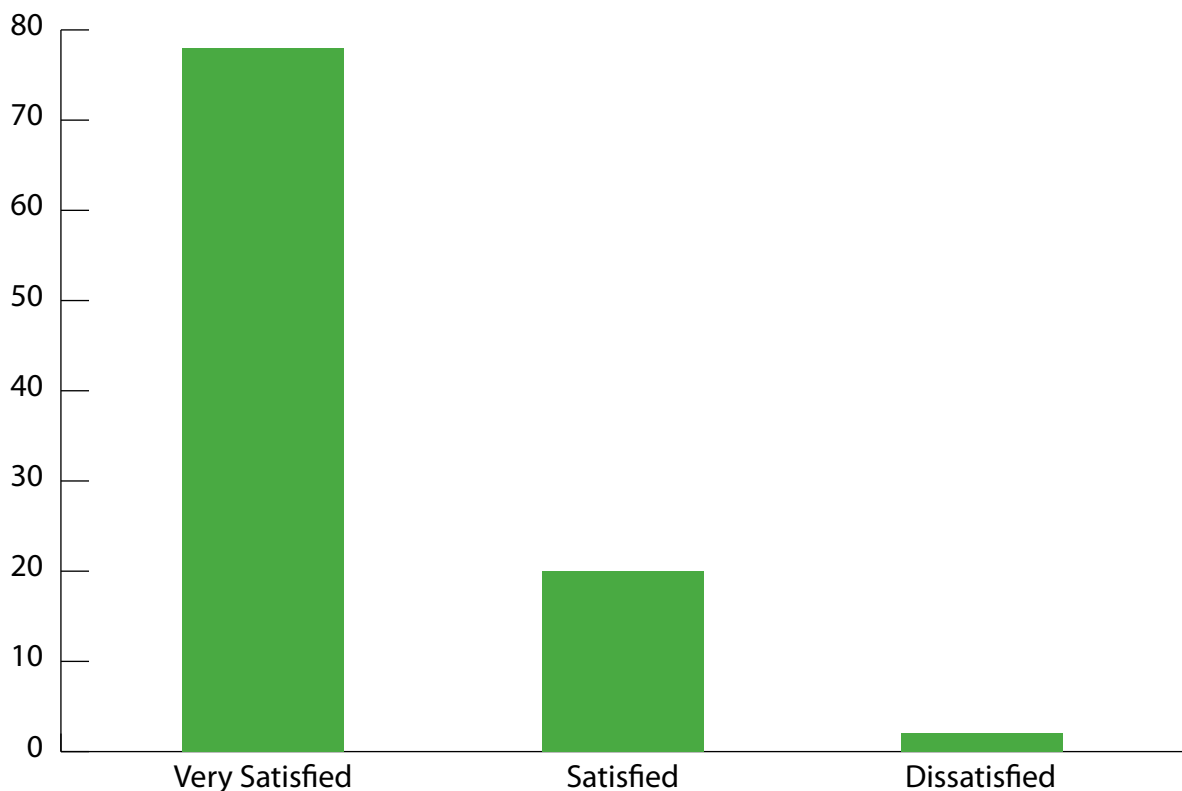
Local Radio (Clare FM): Weekly Radio Programme.

Weekly Press: Features in all the local newspapers.

Customer Service

Figure 5 shows the results of a Customer Service Survey of 250 Clients in the Region in Nov–Dec 2014

**Figure 5 - Client response to the question
"Were you Happy with the level of Service from your Teagasc Adviser?"**



Staff Resources

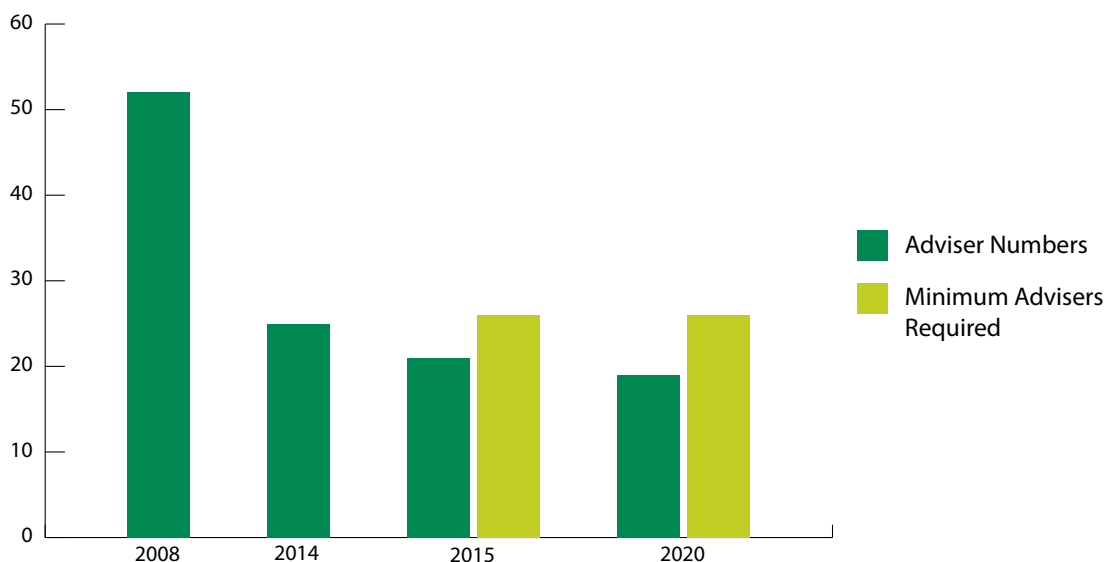
The number of front line advisers in the Region has halved since 2008 – see Figure 6. This reduction is a consequence of retirements and the absence of recruitment due to the embargo in the public service.

The number of clients per adviser has grown to unsustainable levels. Estimates show that the Region will need a minimum of 26 front line advisers to achieve the ambitious targets set out in this plan. See Table 1.

Table 1 - Staff Numbers 2008 – 2015 and Projection to 2020

Staff Type	2008	2014	2015	2015 - 2020 Minimum Staff Required
Adviser	52	25	21	26
Education	3	2	2	2
Administration	12.5	7.5	7.5	8
Managers	2	1	1	1
Staff Total	69.5	35.5	31.5	37

Figure 6 - Adviser Numbers in the Galway/Clare Region



Staff Resources and Delivery of Strategic Plan 2015 -2020

- This Strategic Plan identifies the urgent necessity to recruit a minimum of 6 advisers for the Region.
- We will prioritise Knowledge Transfer and Agricultural Education - Discussion Groups, Monitor Farms, Open Days, Seminars, Farm Visits, Green Cert.
- We will target the recruitment of Young Clients – Green Cert Graduates to rejuvenate Client base and re-energise Discussion Groups.

Agricultural Education and Training Strategy

Our Mission is to provide career guidance and a quality Agricultural Education Programme for young entrants to farming in the Region.

The Green Cert is an important Certification for young entrants to farming. Our objective is that every young farmer in the Region can participate in the programme. Recent Teagasc research has demonstrated the very positive benefits and return on investment of agricultural education. Formal agricultural education improves the farmer's ability to apply new knowledge to manage their farm and helps farmers become better decision makers in relation to production and innovation.

Changes in the CAP have resulted in additional incentives for young farmers to participate in the Green Cert. Young farmers with the Green Cert, taking over the farm will get a top up of 25% in their Basic Payment each year until 2020. This has resulted in a big increase in the demand for courses and this trend is likely to continue over the coming years. Green Cert courses are run in 4 centres in the Region.

Strategic Actions to be implemented

- Teagasc run the Green Cert. Programme at Mellows Campus, Athenry where a course with 24 students is running at present. A further course commences this month.
- The Teagasc centre in Ennis provides training for young farmers in county Clare with 30 participating in a Green Cert Course at present with a further course starting this month.
- Mountbellew Agricultural College is the major college for the West of Ireland and we work in close collaboration with them. They offer a wide range of courses with a new Green Cert Course starting this month.
- We work in partnership with FORUM and GRETB (formerly VEC) in running the Green Cert Programme in Letterfrack, Connemara. One Course with 22 young farmers participating is underway and plans are advanced to start a new programme shortly.
- Demand for Distance Education Courses in Teagasc is increasing and at present exceeds our capacity to deliver due to staff shortages in the centres from which they are run.
- Health and Safety is of paramount importance and our County Programme is led by our Education Officers. Each year in each centre we run short courses on Health and Safety with the aim of enabling farmers complete their Health and Safety Plan.



Students at Green Cert Course at Mellows, Athenry

Partners

We work closely with Rural Schools in relation to providing career guidance.

We work in close collaboration with Mountbellew and Pallaskenry Agricultural Colleges.

Much of the practical skills training take place at the Colleges. We have a selected a number of Benchmark Farms which we use for Discussion Groups and some practical skills training. In the Letterfrack course we work in partnership with the GRETB and with FORUM, the local Development Company.



Students and Teachers at the Letterfrack Green Cert Course



Our Mission

To Support Dairy Farmers in the Planning and Development of their Business with the aim of improving profitability and their quality of life.

Expected Changes/Targets for 2020

Unlike many areas of the country, extra milk quota was available in some co-op areas which meant that some farmers have been able to expand over the years. In consultation with Stakeholders, we believe Milk Production in the Region will expand by 30% over the next 5 years. We expect some 50 new entrants to Dairying but most of the expansion will come from existing suppliers increasing production.

Surveys indicate that half of the total milk suppliers plan to expand. The focus must continue to be on Good Planning and increasing profitability. Efficiency before Expansion is a Key Message which must be communicated to Dairy Farmers with the focus on improving the Profitability of Milk Production.

Situation in the Dairy Sector in the Region 2014

There are a total 1,300 Milk Suppliers who produce some 350 Million Litres of Milk in the Region. There are four Milk Processors in the Region – see Table 2.

Table 2 - Milk Production in the Region

Processor	Number of Suppliers
Arrabawn	565
Aurivo	75
Dairygold	65
Kerry	592
Total	1,297

Collaboration with Partners

Working in collaboration with the milk processors enhances the effectiveness of Knowledge Transfer. We have in place Joint Dairy Development Programmes with Kerry, Aurivo and Dairygold. We are in the process of meeting with Arrabawn with a view towards developing a Joint Programme in the near future.

Challenges facing the Sector

- Price Volatility
- Access to Land/Milking Block
- Land Suitability & Unfavourable Weather
- Availability of Credit
- Difficulty in sourcing skilled Labour

Goals/Strategic Actions

1. Support farmers in the Adoption of Best Practice in the Key Performance Indicators of Profitable Milk Production:
 - Six week calving rate – target 90% of herd calved in six weeks
 - Grass utilised per ha – target 12t/ha on dry soils, 10t/ha on mixed soils
 - Output per ha – target 1,300 kg milk solids per ha
 - Cost control – Less than 20 Cpl (€2.80/kg milk solids) for spring milk producers
2. Knowledge Transfer:
 - One to One Service to Clients - Increase the number of Dairy Clients from 500 to 600 in the Region, targeting those farmers who plan to expand their production together with new Entrants
 - Discussion Groups; Increase the number of Farmers participating in Discussion Groups from 300 to 400 - same target group as above
 - Monitor Farms are a key method of demonstrating Best Farm Management practice and the focus on low cost efficient systems. The selection of Monitor Farms should reflect dairying in the region and reflect the fact that many dairy farmers operate on wet land where weather presents a major challenge
 - Open Days, workshops
 - Support farmers in Improving Financial Management Skills - Profit Monitor, Cash Flow Budgeting and in preparing Financial Plans for Loan Applications
3. Working collaboratively with others, promote Land Mobility arrangements - Land Leasing, Partnerships and Contract Rearing of Replacements.
4. Sourcing and Managing Labour is a new skill Dairy Farmers will need to master especially on Dairy Herds with over 100 cows.
5. Improve grassland management on farms and use data generated from local grass focussed groups to benchmark grass growth potential in the region.

Research

Advisers and Specialists work closely with Moorepark Research Centre. The Heavy Soils project is particularly relevant in a region with a lot of difficult wet land.





Our Mission

To support Cattle Farmers improve their Income and quality of Life by adopting improved Farm Management Practices together with optimising Direct Payments and support schemes.

Expected Changes/Targets for 2020

The cattle sector is by far the most important in the Region with over 90% of all farmers involved in Cattle production. The suckler cow herd in the Region amounts to over 200,000 cows – some 20% of the national herd. There has been a 15% decline in the herd over the past 6 years and this trend is likely to continue. The output from the suckler herd has a major impact on farm profitability. Our focus will be very much to support farmers add value by better breeding, higher weight for age and better Reproductive performance. With direct payments declining, Improved Efficiency and Productivity is imperative if farmers are to maintain their incomes. With increased availability of calves' from the Dairy Herd, we expect that there will be a modest increase in Calf to Beef Systems.

On active well stocked farms, the value of direct payments will fall under the Area Based Payment. There is also uncertainty in the Areas of Natural constraint payment (ANC). The GLAS Scheme will be a vital income support. Contract rearing of Dairy Herd Replacements is in its infancy but we expect there will be interest in this option from drystock farmers.

Figure 7 - Beef Calf Registration (2008-2013)



Source: CMMS Calf Registration Data

Challenges

- Low Profit Margins compounded by Reduction in Direct Payments
- Uncertainty - Markets, Prices, Weather
- Price Cost Squeeze
- Structure of Cattle Farms - Part time Farming, small Scale and fragmentation of land
- Age Profile and Succession

Collaboration with Partners

The lack of partnership between farmers and the meat Industry is a very serious hindrance to the development of the sector. One would hope the Beef Industry FORUM would herald the enabling of this badly needed collaboration. Teagasc have a very good association with many of the livestock marts in the Region. Our jointly run events also involves working with Breeding Stations with the focus on improving the quality of cattle. We also work in association with An Bord Bia, and ICBF. We have two farmers participating in the BETTER Farm Programme, in association with the Irish Farmers Journal and one farmer in the SUPERVALU Programme. With regard to herd health we collaborate with Animal Health Ireland, District Veterinary Office and Vets.

Goals/Strategic Actions

- 1.** Support farmers in the Adoption of Best Practice in the Key Performance Indicators of Profitable Cattle and Beef Production through:
 - Increase output/Ha
 - Animal Quality - Matching Breed to land, Better Breeding
 - Calf / Cow/Year - Better Reproductive Performance Management
 - Reach Weight for Age Targets
 - Reduce Costs of Production
 - Grow More Grass – Soil Fertility, Management
 - Better Utilisation Grass - Rotational Grazing, Grass Measurement
 - Better Silage
 - Herd Health Plan on the Farm
 - Better Farm and Financial Management
 - Regular Weighing to Monitor Stock Performance
 - eProfit Monitor – Completion, Feedback
 - More Focus on the Net Margin
- 2.** Knowledge Transfer
 - Discussion Groups
 - Continue to build the effectiveness of the existing 32 Beef Discussion Groups
 - Effective introduction of the Knowledge Transfer Scheme
 - Increase the number of Farmers participating in Discussion Groups from 500 to 600 with the focus on recruiting younger farmers
 - Continue to promote Profit Monitor and Group Discussion on the key factors affecting profitability
 - BETTER / Monitor Farms – Identify and select new BETTER Farms - selection should reflect that many farmers operate on marginal land where weather presents a major challenge
 - West Clare for example
 - Open Days – More Variety in the type of Farm - BETTER Farm, Monitor Farms, Select Dairy Farms
 - On Farm Advice - farmers value the Farm Visit
 - Knowledge Dissemination; Radio and Newspaper Articles
- 3.** Optimise Returns on all Schemes .
- 4.** Working collaboratively with others, promote Land Mobility arrangements - Land Leasing, Partnerships, Contract Rearing of Replacements.

Research Focus in the Region

The establishment of the Green Field Suckler Farm at Athenry will provide valuable information for farmers. Cattle farming is carried out on a lot of wet marginal soils in the Region and there is need to demonstrate best practice on those farms. We must continue to focus on encouraging more farmers to do the Profit Monitor.

Our Mission

To support sheep farmers improve their profitability and quality of life by adopting improved Farm Management Practices together with optimising Direct Payments and support schemes.

Current Situation

Sheep are a very important farm enterprise in County Galway with 4,000 flocks and almost 400,000 sheep. In contrast, sheep are a relatively minor enterprise in County Clare.

Hill sheep is the main enterprise in the Connemara area. While farming conditions in the hill areas is challenging, significant improvements in productivity and profitability are possible through programmes such as the Sheep Technology Adoption Programme. Flock and sheep numbers in the Region have stabilised after a period of decline.

Collaboration with Partners

Teagasc will continue to work in collaboration with Sheep Ireland and their important work in the Breed Improvement Scheme. Quality Assurance is very important in the market place and we will work closely with Bord Bia in this area. Animal Health issues are critical in the Sector and we need to have a closer association with Veterinary Surgeons and with the District Veterinary Laboratories. Similar to the cattle sector, there is limited dialogue between producers and processors.

Challenges

- Poor Productivity and Returns
- Lack of Collaboration between Producers and Processors
- Price Volatility Knocking Confidence
- Labour Requirements
- Animal Health and Disease
- Age Profile of Sheep Farmers

Expected Changes/Targets 2020

The number of ewe flocks is expected to remain static. We expect a 5 % increase in the number of ewes. There is an urgent need to improve output from sheep farms. We are fortunate to have the National Sheep Research Centre in Athenry. The Sheep Demonstration unit at Mellows in particular should provide the information from the Application of Research. The challenge is to get this information adopted by our more progressive farmers. Some 200 of those farmers are participating in the Sheep Technology Adoption Programme (STAP) which provides an ideal mechanism to promote adoption of the Key Management factors affecting productivity.

We need to encourage younger farmers into sheep. We will target graduates of the Green Cert and use the new Knowledge Exchange Scheme to do this. We will also encourage farmers to establish Producer Groups under the Scheme.

Goals/ Strategic Actions

1. Support farmers in the Adoption of Best Practice in the Key Performance Indicators of Profitable Cattle and Beef Production through:
 - Ewe Productivity - 1.5 + Lambs reared per ewe to ram
 - Stocking Rate – Increase Flock Size
 - Growth Rate of Lambs – management, nutrition and parasite control
 - Cost Control
 - Grassland Management

2. Knowledge Transfer
 - Discussion Groups;
 - Continue to build the effectiveness of the existing 10 Sheep Discussion Groups in the STAP.
 - Effective introduction of the new Knowledge Transfer Scheme.
 - Increase the number of Farmers participating in Discussion Groups from 200 to 250 with the focus on recruiting young entrants.
 - Special Task Force to advise on the best method of Transferring Best Practice from the Mellows Sheep Demonstration Farm to Sheep Producers in the Region.
 - Continue to promote Profit Monitor and Group Discussion on the key factors affecting profitability.
 - Open Days - Research, Mellows Sheep Demonstration Unit and farms
 - On farm Advice
 - Newsletters, Local Radio and Newspaper Articles
 - Promote Investment in Sheep handling facilities to reduce labour and make the enterprise attractive for young farmers.
 - Use new Knowledge Exchange Scheme to promote Producer Groups and marketing initiatives.
 - Optimise Returns on all Schemes.
 - Work closely with Sheep Ireland to promote better Sheep Breeding.

Research

- Active involvement with the Sheep Research Centre and the Sheep Demonstration Unit.
- We need to demonstrate Best Practice in Mixed Grazing as most drystock farmers operate a cattle enterprise alongside their Sheep enterprise.
- Identify suitable Hill Farm where best practice can be demonstrated.



Our Mission

To provide a comprehensive advisory service to farmers considering a forestry enterprise and extension and training for forest owners to manage their plantations in a sustainable manner to maximise economic, social and environmental returns.

Current Situation

In 2014, forest cover in Ireland was 10.5% or 785,000 hectares. Forty six percent of this area, or 336,000 hectares, is privately owned of which 85% are farmers. In Clare and Galway forestry is now a mainstream farm enterprise. In Clare there are now 1600 forest owners with 29,500 hectares (9.2%) of plantations and 1,300 forest owners in Galway with 20,000 hectares (3.3%) of plantations.

Expected Changes/Targets for 2020

The new afforestation scheme provides a 15 year annual premium to all landowners and the Basic Payment is also payable on BPS eligible land until 2020. With planting in Clare and Galway averaging 750-800 hectares per annum this level should be maintained if not increased over the next five years.

In 2013, 2.5 million cubic metres commercial round wood was harvested nationally. Nationally private timber production exceeded 1 million m³ for the first time in 2014.

Timber production is estimated to double to 7.38 million m³ by 2028 - almost all of this increase will come from the private sector. In the next five years private timber harvesting in Clare and Galway is forecast to produce 0.53 million cubic metres increasing to 1.7 million cubic metres by 2025.

The new forestry programme provides support for the establishment of forestry knowledge transfer groups (KTGs) and for the setting up of producer groups. These important measures in addition to the on-going developmental support from Teagasc will make an important contribution to the empowerment of forest owners to efficiently manage their forests and mobilise this valuable resource.

Challenges

- Provision of an effective advisory service with limited forestry staff resources.
- Effective communication of multiple short and longer term benefits of forestry.
- Long term nature and permanency of forestry.
- Competing farming schemes eg GLAS.
- Building a base of knowledge amongst forest owners to instil confidence and motivate proactive management involvement from planting stage.
- Maintain knowledge building to effect mobilisation of timber through thinning and generation of a revenue stream.
- Supporting owners to work together as local clusters or part of a larger owners'/producer group to achieve economies of scale.
- Economic and practical challenges of establishing and harvesting Small scale and fragmented plantations.
- Availability of suitable harvesting machinery.
- Increasing environmental regulation.
- Awareness of forest Health and Safety issues.

Collaboration with Partners

Forest Service (DAFM), Forest Owner Groups, Registered foresters, IFFPA, Coford, Timber processors, IFA, local authorities, other state agencies eg NPWS

Research and Forestry

Forestry research focuses on conifer thinning and harvesting management and broadleaf tree improvement and silviculture. Teagasc forestry researchers are also currently involved in a European wide project into Chalara – Ash Dieback disease.

Goals/Strategic Actions

- Successful uptake of afforestation and management support measures in new forestry programme.
- Increase in the number of farmers planting to achieve additional 4000 hectares within region by 2020.
- Support farmers in their decision making process through the provision of independent and objective advice and information including FIVE - forestry financial analysis tool.
- Adoption of a whole farm planning approach as part of this process.
- Adoption by forest owners of best practice in sustainable forest management including thinning practice to minimise risk of windblow resulting in higher quality and more resilient plantations.
- Training of forest owners in clear-fell and reforestation techniques including cash flow management.
- Increase in number of Felling licences and forest roads reflecting an increased thinning activity and achieve forecast timber production.
- Active involvement in facilitation of new Knowledge Transfer Groups.
- Increased number of forest owners attending practical knowledge transfer events eg demonstrations, workshops and short courses.
- Increase in number of forest owners subscribing to the Teagasc E-newsletter for up to date information.
- Provide updates on Chalara (Ash Dieback) disease and encourage vigilance for its presence.
- On-going development of CCWEP.
- Increase awareness of native woodland planting opportunities.
- Increased awareness of forest Health and Safety issues.

Forestry development support services in Galway and Clare are provided by Teagasc Forestry Development Department in co-operation with regional staff.



A group of Clare Forestry Growers visiting Murray's Sawmill, Ballygar

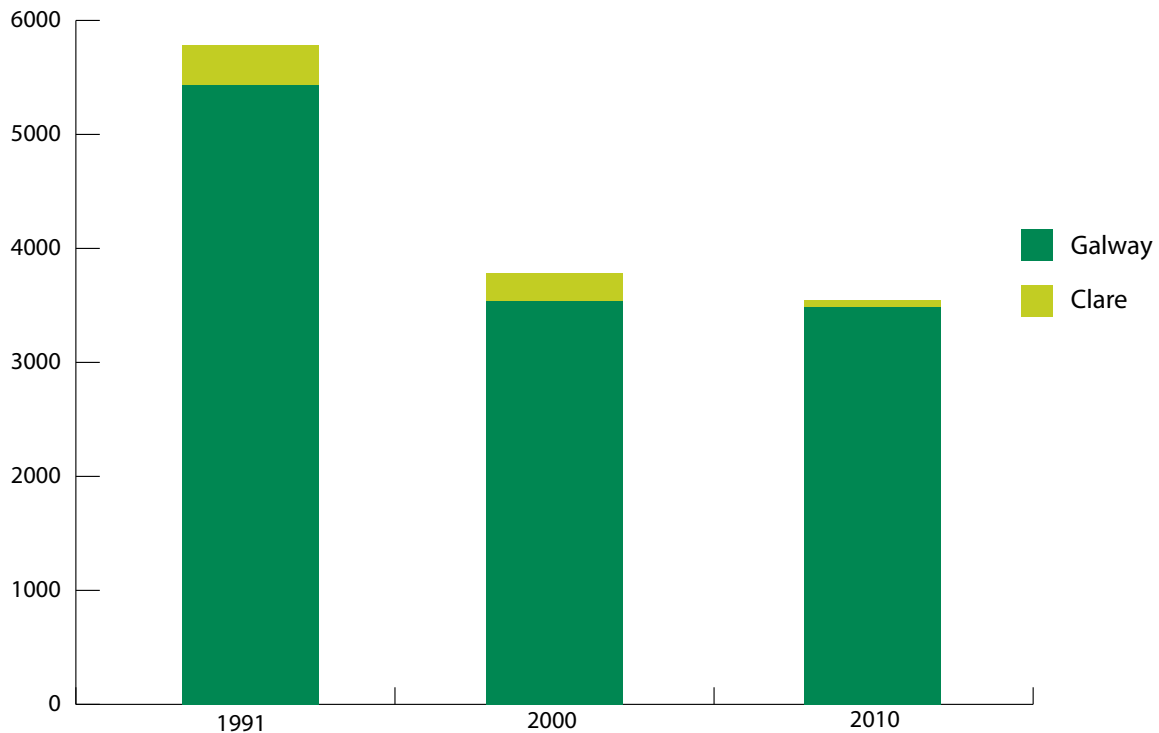
Our Mission

To provide information, advice and support to tillage farmers in the Region.

Current Situation

Tillage was once an important enterprise in Galway with some 30,000 Ha being grown in the 1970's. Today, the amount of tillage in the Region is small. Figure 8 shows that after decades of decline, the tillage area has stabilised at around 3,500 Hectares mainly Spring Barley. There are a few hundred growers. There are two different profiles of growers. The traditional farmer who grows a small amount of barley for feeding on the farm and a small number of intensive farmer / contractor growers who have a substantial area under barley.

Figure 8 - Area of Cereals Grown in Region (1991-2010) Source CSO



Source: CSO Census of Agriculture 2010

Challenges

The key challenges for the crop growers are poor profitability in the sector, price volatility, land availability and meeting growing regulatory requirements.

Partners

Our mission to develop farmers and growers within the region will be best achieved through cooperation with other external stakeholders including Farm Relief Service, Farm Organisations, Chemical companies and Feed Merchants including Flynn's of Lackagh and Liffey Mills.

Goals/Strategic Actions

1. Improve farm profits by provision of relevant information and cost efficiency production.
2. Improving Soil fertility and farm fertiliser planning by regular soil testing.
3. Increase awareness and promote Sustainable Use Directive and Integrated Pest Management at farm level.
4. Assist growers in complying with CAP reform and enable them to maximise income from Basic Payment Scheme and other schemes i.e. Greening and GLAS.
5. To create a constant awareness of the importance of health and safety to be to the forefront of every growers mind.

Knowledge Transfer

- Spring Crops Seminar
- Spring Crop Walks outlining best practice spray programmes
- Newsletters and local press articles
- On-farm advice
- Establishment of KT discussion groups within the region
- Development of monitor farm within the region
- Pesticide Application courses

Research

- The research being carried out in Teagasc Oak Park is all very relevant to the growers in the region and is available via open days and KT methods as described above.



Our Mission

To provide the Knowledge, Information and demonstrate best practice to Support farmers in sustainable farming - economically and environmentally.

Background and Situation

Over the past 20 years, there has been a huge focus on protection and enhancement of the environment. This has been achieved by a carrot and stick approach.

REPS

Undoubtedly REPS has been the most successful scheme ever introduced. Galway and Clare have been two of the leading counties in REPS. Total payments in the 20 years of the Scheme 1994 -2014 amounted to 450 Million Euro and 225 Million Euro in County Galway and Clare respectively. The stick involves very strict guidelines under a plethora of Nitrate Directive and Cross Compliance measures, farm inspections and penalties. REPS has also resulted in considerable progress being made at farm level in the areas of livestock accommodation, increased slurry and waste water storage, general tidying of farms and farmyards with much emphasis also on biodiversity measures.

Burren Life for Conservation Programme

This programme is a great example of a Community coming together, doing the Research and successfully getting funding for a tailor made programme. 2014 was the 5th year of the programme with 157 farmers participating in the scheme which is worth 1 million euro per annum.

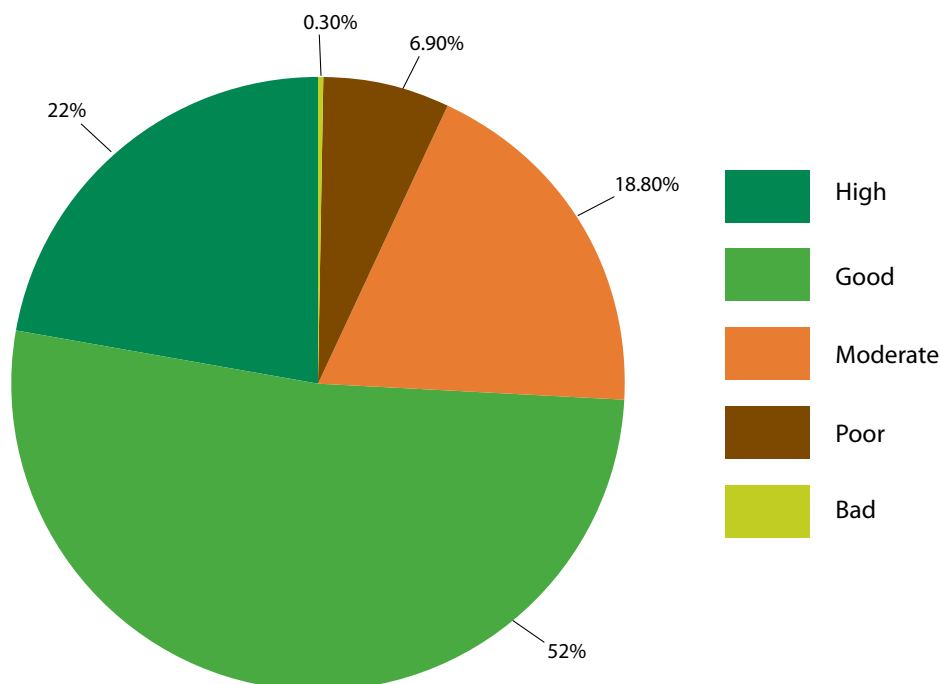


Water Quality

The quality of water in County Galway has improved as can be seen from the latest EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) Integrated Water Quality Report published in 2013.

The river basin districts continue to be ranked as one of the most unpolluted in Ireland (Fig 9) with over 74% of river channel deemed unpolluted. River water quality in Clare is not nearly as good a story with 27% deemed to be poor and only 53% in the Good – High water quality status.

Figure 9 - Water Quality in County Galway



Source - EPA

For lakes, it is a similar story with 86% of lakes in County Galway deemed high or good status – this compares with a figure of 47% nationally. Clare compares unfavourably with only 33% of Lake Water Quality in the Good / High status. For ground water contamination, phosphate and faecal coli form are the main threats to quality. Nitrate levels are low with a reduction in the period 2007-2012. Phosphate levels have also decreased but there are still a number of black spots in the County.



Soil Fertility

Whilst the REPS scheme was a huge success in many ways, one of the down sides was the drop in the level of soil fertility with a severe decline in the usage of Phosphorus and Potash.

Figure 10 - Soil Fertility Levels in County Galway 2014

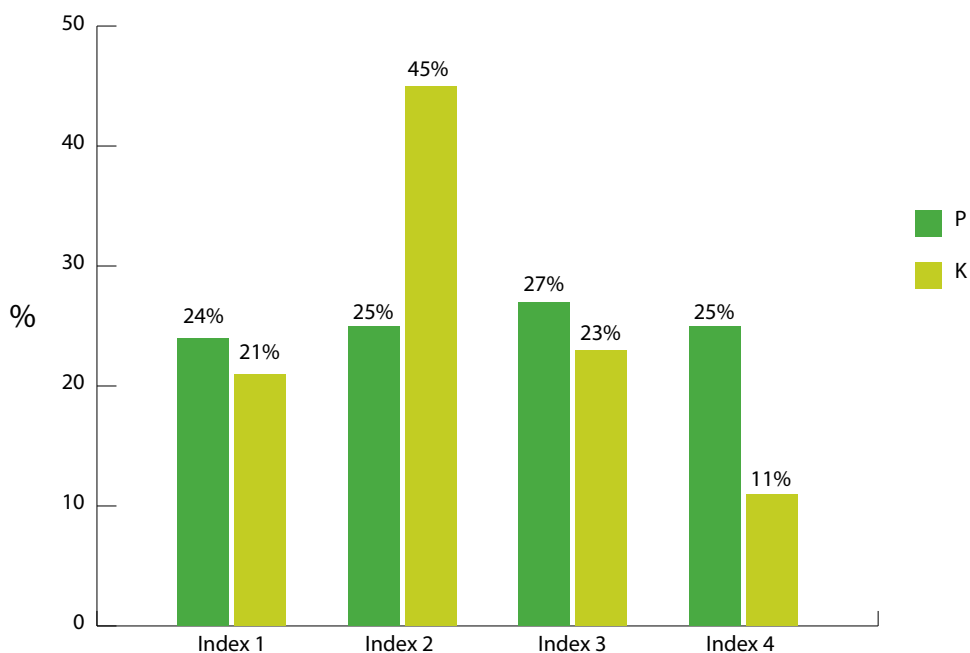
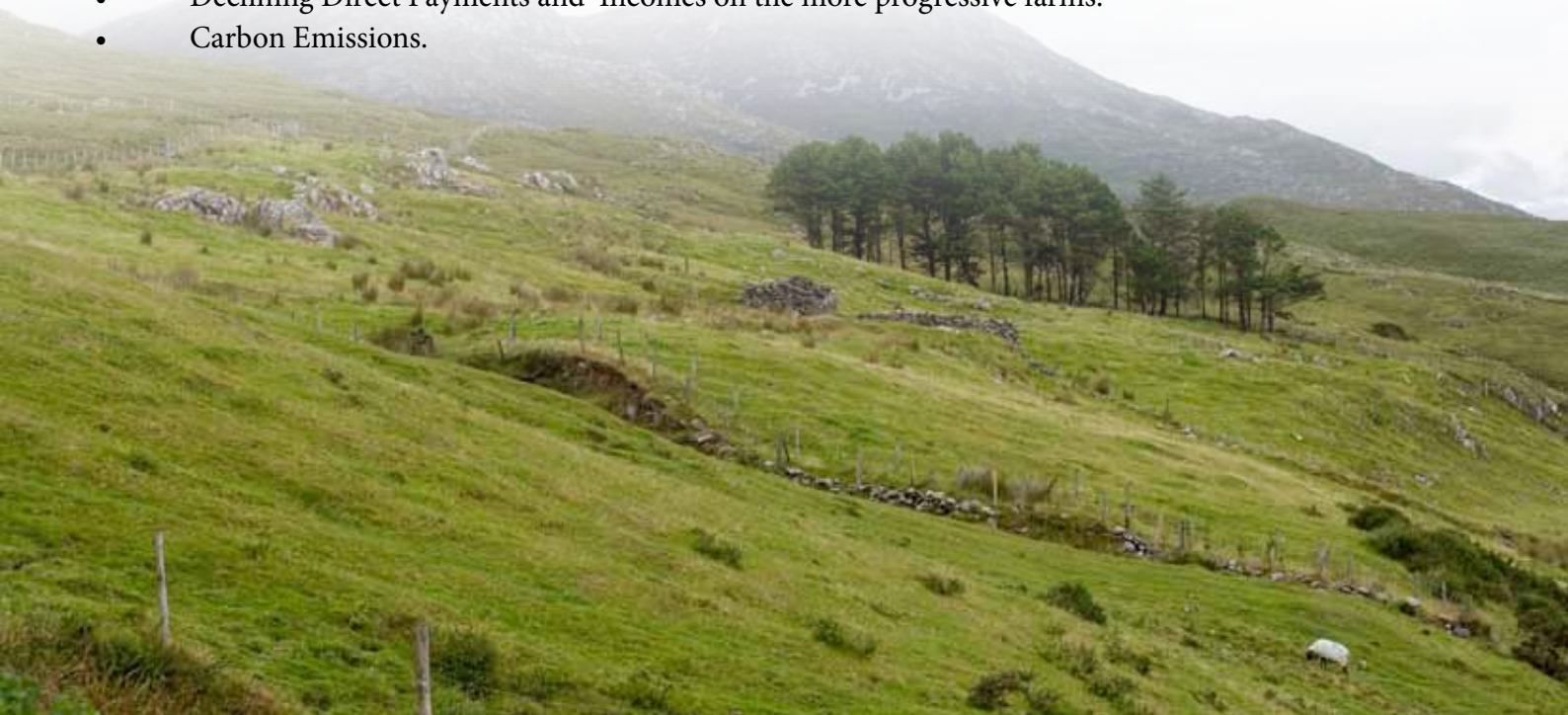


Figure 10 shows that Soil Fertility levels in Galway also give rise for concern. The story is similar for Clare. The high price of fertilizer was also a contributing factor. A big effort was made in the past 2 years to address this with a huge number of soil samples being taken and farmers supplied with Fertilizer Plans. We must continue to do this to bring soil fertility figures back to optimum levels. Lime usage has also been well below what is required to keep pH levels of 6.3 or higher. With a revised Nitrates Directive allowing for higher usage of Phosphate and making optimum use of soil sampling, highlighting the value of lime, all of those should lead to a huge improvement in soil fertility over the next few years.

Challenges

- Compliance with Regulations, Inspections and Penalties.
- Extra Investment in Farm Building, Soil fertility and land Improvement.
- Declining Direct Payments and Incomes on the more progressive farms.
- Carbon Emissions.





Partners

Farm Relief Services, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Galway County Council, Clare County Council, EPA, National Parks and Wildlife, IFA, ICMSA, Burren Life, Aran Life, Agricultural Contractors.

Goals/Strategic Actions

1. Support farmers in the Adoption of Best Practice in Good Farming Practice and to encourage farmers participate in Environment Schemes;
 - Farmyard Planning and Grant Application support - Farm Building, Slurry Management and Pollution Control.
 - Farm Infrastructure Planning – Roadways, Water, Land Management and Drainage.
 - Inform, encourage and support Clients join the GLAS Scheme and Optimise payments.
 - Inform, support farmers on addressing the Soil Fertility deficit, Fertiliser Plans and other Cross Compliance Measures.
 - Inform, support Farmers with Optimising payments under the Basic Payment Scheme – stacking and eligibility issues especially.
 - Greenhouse Gas emissions - increase awareness of farmers in this important topic and promote use of carbon navigator.

2. Knowledge Transfer
 - Public Meetings
 - Open Days / Demonstrations
 - Short Courses
 - Discussion Groups
 - Farm Walks
 - Press and Local Radio Features
 - Newsletter
 - One to One Consultations

3. Promote New Innovative Programmes

- Burren Life for Conservation - A new programme will be launched in 2015 with plans to increase the number of farmers participating in the scheme. Teagasc will continue to be actively involved.
- Aran Life – 2014-2017. This project is worth 2.5 Million to the Aran Islands to support the traditional farming in this unique habitat. Teagasc are on the project steering Group.

Research

Extension of Catchment Area research to Region, effect of stocking on Commonages and a Special Environmental Scheme for Connemara.

Engagement with Stakeholders

There are currently two Stakeholder groups within the Region. An annual meeting takes place with all Stakeholders in the Region. There is potential to increase the membership of these groups in the future.



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