

2024 Masters in Agricultural Innovation Support

Project Summary

1. Project Title and Associated Programme

Project title

The development of a competency framework to support a life-long learning programme for farmers.

2. Project background

Teagasc Evolve is a life-long learning (LLL) programme for farmers in Ireland's agricultural sector. The aim of Evolve is to develop a structured life-long learning programme for farmers. This programme will focus on training and developing farmers by equipping them with new skills, knowledge and best practices, helping them to farm in a way that is more productive, profitable, efficient and sustainable.

The proposed study aims to address the need for a competency framework to support lifelong learning programmes for farmers in Ireland. Farmers are facing numerous challenges, including technology advancements, changing environmental conditions and evolving market demands. In this context, there is a growing recognition of the importance of continuous learning for farmers to adapt, innovate, and thrive in the face of these challenges.

The importance of life-long learning has been acknowledged at National and International level. Following on from an EU CAP Network Seminar on 'Skills and lifelong learning for agricultural advisory and training service providers' a number of case studies were presented from a farmer LLL point of view and these highlighted the importance of continuous growth and improvement.

3. Project aims and objectives

The proposed study aim is to contribute to the development of a competency framework for farmers in Ireland, which identifies the core competencies necessary for farmers, which can be improved through a life-long learning programme.

Objectives:

1. Carry out a systematic review of existing life-long learning frameworks.
2. Identify and analyse the competencies required by farmers by developing persona's for farmers.
3. Develop a competency framework that outlines the essential knowledge areas, skills, and attributes necessary for farmers.
4. Develop a competency wheel, which encompasses the key competencies required by farmers in Ireland.

Make recommendations of learning pathways for farmers as part of a life-long learning programme.

4. Suggestions for methodology

Key Informant Interviews:

- By interviewing advisors, educators, and agricultural experts, insights will be gathered into existing frameworks and the perspectives of experts regarding essential competencies for farmers.

Storytelling/Narrative Inquiry:

- By encouraging farmers to share their personal stories and experiences related to lifelong learning in agriculture, researchers can gain valuable insights into farmers' challenges, learning needs, and aspirations.
- Through the analysis of narratives, common themes and insights can be extracted, contributing to the development of personas that represent different segments of the farming community.

Workshops/Discussion Groups:

- Through collaborative activities with farmers, diverse perspectives will be gathered to co-create the competency framework together.

Prototyping and Iterative Design:

- This method is crucial for developing the competency framework, competency wheel, and refining learning pathways.
Testing these prototypes with farmers and stakeholders in real-world settings allows for iterative refinement based on feedback, ensuring that the final framework and recommendations are practical, user-friendly, and aligned with the needs of farmers.

5. Expected impact of the project

This project aligns closely with the objectives of the Teagasc KT Programme by focusing on enhancing the knowledge and skills of farmers through innovative educational initiatives.

By developing a competency framework tailored to the needs of Irish farmers, the project facilitates targeted knowledge transfer and lifelong learning opportunities. Additionally, the engagement of farmers, agricultural experts, educators, and stakeholders in the co-creation process reflects best practices in innovation support, advisory, and education by fostering collaboration and ensuring that the resulting competency framework is practical, relevant, and responsive to the evolving needs of the agricultural sector.

Through these efforts, the project will empower farmers with the necessary tools and resources to thrive in Irish agriculture.

Overall this project will help in the delivery of a life-long learning programme for farmers by developing a competency framework for farmers taking into consideration the different persona's and by outlining the knowledge and skill gaps from a farmers perspective.

6. Other relevant information

