

2024 Masters in Agricultural Innovation Support

Project Summary

1. Project Title and Associated Programme

Project title

Advisers' use of technology to increase client interactions and dissemination of information to farmers (link to Fairshare project)

2. Project background

In recent years, advisors' workloads have increased significantly due to the increased amount of scheme work. This can result in a service being provided to clients that is less beneficial for the farmer clients in terms of farm development and diversification.

Advisers have been trialling a tablet style laptop as part of the Fairshare Programme. This laptop aids remote work on farms and allows queries to be answered on the farm or in the field.

It is very important for advisors to be highly efficient in terms of their client interactions and daily workload in order to ensure all queries are answered and information is disseminated effectively to clients.

Utilising the tablet computers provided by the FairShare Programme and incorporating the benefits of the likes of Whatsapp Web on the laptop as well as better client file organisation has the potential to free up time for advisors and result in more client interactions via digital and traditional (phone/office) means. The use of Whatsapp on a laptop has also the potential to provide for improved client interactions by reducing the number of phone calls that arise from minor scheme related queries. It is also an efficient means to send farmers information such as documents and screenshots during phone consultations.

3. Project aims and objectives

The overall aim of the project is to increase the amount and quality of farmer-advisor interactions whilst reducing the time spent dealing with individual queries.

The project objectives are:

- To evaluate the benefits of the technology trialled through the Fairshare Programme on the advisors' day to day work.
- To evaluate barriers and opportunities for advisors implementing these technologies in their day to day roles.
- To identify potentially useful technological aids and methods that can be utilised by advisors that will result in better dissemination of information to farmers as well as reduce advisor workloads.

4. Suggestions for methodology

- Interviews and focus groups with advisers who have partaken in Fairshare Project
- Focus Group with advisers not involved in Fairshare Project
- Measurement of number of client interactions on a daily basis with advisers (through survey or other appropriate method)
- Measurement of time taken up for each day to day task
- Survey of farmers regarding advisor contactability and quality of information dissemination

5. Expected impact of the project

- Better dissemination of information to farmers
- More efficient use of advisers' time allowing for time to be utilised on other important tasks.
- Increased client interactions (messages are very easy and fast to respond to which allows more time for phone consultations and other ADO work)

6. Other relevant information