

## Masters in Agricultural Innovation Support (MAIS) 2023

### PROJECT SUMMARY

#### 1. Project Details

**Project title**

**Development of a model for the evaluation of Signpost Events and their impact on farmer behaviour in climate action**

#### 2. Project background

The Signpost programme is a multi-annual campaign to lead climate action by all Irish farmers. Events on demonstration farms, targeted at encouraging climate action by the wider farming population, are an important KT mechanism of the Signpost advisory programme. Therefore, we need to evaluate how these events raise awareness of, and move farmers towards, climate actions on their own farms. This study will, building on existing tools, develop an integrated approach to evaluating the impact of such events based on a 2 pronged approach: first, an assessment of farmer learning at the actual event itself and, second, a follow up survey 6 to 12 months later of the farmers who attended the event to identify what actions a farmer took on his/her farm. This latter survey will provide an insight into the farmers' position on the awareness-knowledge-skills-attitude "pathway" toward on-farm climate actions. This pathway is the foundation of all advisory/KT programmes. In addition, selected learning workshops/focus groups with programme advisors, farmers and programme partners will be used to reflect on the survey(s) findings and assess whether the content or delivery of the events should be adjusted and what additional supports if any farmers still need to take help them move along the "pathway" to taking actions on their farms. This project is relevant at this time as we currently have poor procedures for the evaluation of the effectiveness of Teagasc events in technology adoption at farm level. This project will result in a protocol for such evaluations that can be used across the organisation.

#### 3. Project aims and objectives

The primary aim of the project is to develop an integrated approach to evaluating on-farm events in the Signpost programme and understanding their impact on farmer climate action behaviour  
Overall objectives:

1. To refine and implement an evaluation tool that will assess farmers' change in climate action awareness and learning about climate actions that takes place at Signpost Demonstration Programme events.
2. To understand any changes needed to the content or delivery of Signpost Programme events based on a reflection on the event evaluations.
3. To gain an insight into where farmers who attend Signpost events are on the awareness-knowledge-skills-attitude "pathway" towards implementing climate actions on their farms.
4. To identify any additional KT supports needed by farmers to help move them along the "pathway" towards implementing climate actions on their farms.
5. To test a protocol for evaluating Signpost events
6. To contribute to the development of a model for farmer events evaluation across the organisation

#### 4. Suggestions for methodology

Key elements of the mixed methodology for the project are:

1. Design and pilot a questionnaire that forms the basis of a tool to evaluate an on-farm event immediately after the event.
2. Drawing on the positive experience of implementing the Net Promoter Score based survey of Teagasc clients since 2020, the questionnaire will be implemented via SMS text of a link to event attendees. This will involve developing a protocol for gathering information at the event which will include the capture of farmer phone numbers to enable sending the survey link via text
3. Identify 10 Signpost events to evaluate through 2024
4. Carry out learning workshop(s) with a selection of programme advisors, farmers and Signpost partners based on the findings of the event evaluations in order to assess whether the content and/or delivery of the events need adjusting.
5. Design, pilot and implement a survey to be circulated to the farmers who attended the events, 6-12 months after the event to evaluate the actions a farmer took as a result of the learning outcomes from the event.
6. Conduct sense making workshop(s)/focus groups with a selection of farmers to gain a better understanding of their 'pathway' journeys to action after the events.
7. Establish a framework for evaluation of events across Teagasc.

#### 5. How this project links to the Teagasc KT Programme objectives and best practice in innovation support, advisory and education

On-farm events are a key component of the engagement with farmers of the Teagasc Advisory programme. Considerable resources are used in delivering events each year and its important that we have a good understanding of the impact on these events on farmer behaviour. This project will help us assess events and get an insight into what works and what doesn't work at events, and the awareness raising and learning that occurs at such events, allowing Teagasc to develop events that ensure good farmer engagement and encourage farmer action after the event.

Currently the feedback mechanism for most events is an exit poll of the attendees with no follow-up to capture the impact of the event on farmer behaviour. This project would allow us to develop a framework for capturing data from attendees giving a more comprehensive insight into the impact of Teagasc events.