

Masters in Agricultural Innovation Support (MAIS) 2023

PROJECT SUMMARY

1. Proposer Details

Project title	Determination of the effectiveness of monitor farms as a Knowledge Transfer method on tillage farms
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2. Project background

Teagasc has completed a number of KT programmes, which have made use of monitor farms i.e. host farmers, as an extension tool to promote new technology, regulations and research. Peer to peer learning is seen as an effective method of information transfer with clients.

However, while exit polls have been conducted at various events, there is limited evidence about the effectiveness of the monitor farm to influence practice change in the wider population of farmers.

Likewise there is little evidence of impact, either positive or negative, of participation of the monitor farmer network in the project and whether or not they continued with the practice change after the project was completed.

While Teagasc are currently working with over 100 Signpost farms at present, this project will help to give guidance as how to make most use of the limited resources available, including farms, advisors, researchers and industry partners.

Farmers now have many sources of information available to them and this project would try to establish if a monitor farm network is an effective KT tool in the digital age.

3. Project aims and objectives

To carry out a detailed assessment of the participating monitor farms, their advisors and attendees at the farm events. There will also be an examination of neighbouring farms, within the locality to establish whether the key messages from the farm had any influence on their decisions. This will help to determine the suitability of particular farms for particular projects and more critically how to structure messages from that from for the most impact to neighbouring farms.

The project objectives are:

- To establish the reasons why farmers participated in the various projects
- To establish if the main messages of the project were clear and disseminated to the wider farmer community by extending to also include people who may not have visited the farm
- To examine if the KPI's of the project were met.
- To determine if the monitor farmer continued with the change of practice after the project was completed

4. Suggestions for methodology

The research would use a range of methods in data collection.

Targeted interviews face to face with the monitor farmers would be used to discuss their experiences in participating in the network and to receive feedback from them as to any issues experienced and suggestions as to how to improve the working aspects of a monitor farm.

Target group workshops would bring together a selection of farmers who visited the Monitor Farms a number of times through various groups activities. The purpose is to examine the messages from the Monitor Farm and the effects of these messages on encouraging change on the participants' farms.

It would undertake a survey of farmers in the local area who are involved in the same enterprise to ascertain if the monitor farm had any effect on them. This would include Teagasc clients and non Teagasc clients plus commercial trade representatives working in the area

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

The use of monitor farm networks is seen as a very effective tool in knowledge transfer in promoting new technologies and they also strengthen the position of Teagasc in the local farming community.

The project will deliver clear messages to Teagasc in terms of how to make monitor farm networks as efficient and as effective as a KT tool as possible while also making most of the resources that are available.

The project will also identify areas where improvements can be made to maximise the outcomes from Teagasc research through monitor farms.