



On-farm demonstrations in Ireland

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Topics of demonstration

The FarmDemo survey found:

- The most common farm demonstration topic is *Pasture Management*.
- This was followed by *Animal Nutrition and Feeding, Housing and Rearing Systems, Animal Health Management and Welfare, Quality Enhancement and Promotion and Strategies to Reduce Risk of Antibiotic Resistance Development*.
- 56% of the farmers reported that on-farm demonstrations focused on *Business Development, Planning and Labour efficiency issues*
- Topics focusing on the environment such as *Biodiversity and Nature Management, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation* as well as the topics *Processing to food/feed, Machinery and Waste management* were least prevalent.

Providers and Purposes of demonstrations

Teagasc, a semi –state (public) organisation, is the most frequent organiser of demonstration activities in Ireland. Teagasc is furthermore leading a number of ‘joint programmes’ co-funded and co-developed by other actors (mainly supply chain actors, co-ops and agri-media) across Ireland.

The Teagasc adviser is identified as the ‘main demonstrator’, yet demonstrations typically take place on client farmers’ farms. In this context, the farmer was also identified by respondents to the FarmDemo survey as having involvement in choosing topics, and preparing for demonstration events as well as communicating to participants at open days.

The five main cited reasons to organise or host demonstration activities (for farmers) are *Information gathering/sharing; Competitiveness/Productivity; Monetary/Financial; Educational and training opportunities; and Research Implementation*.

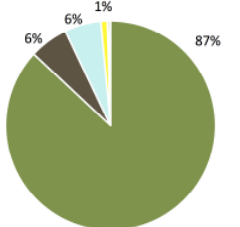
History

The formal use of open days by statutory institutions on farms in Ireland is traced back to 1839 (the Royal Dublin Society annual ‘Spring Show’); 1907 (*An Foras Talúntais (AFT)** agricultural demonstration stations in Ballyhaise and Athenry); 1963 (AFT dairy research farm Moorepark). There is photographic evidence of demonstrations on private farms taking place as far back as 1974 (see photo, lower right). In recent years (since the 1990s), there has been a tendency towards the co-ordinated organisation, primarily by Teagasc, and delivery of demonstration events on private farms in collaboration with industry partners (see photo, upper right).

Types of demonstrations

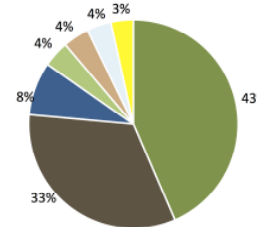
- ‘Expert’-led presentations
- Farm field walks
- Field trials
- Exhibitions
- Demonstration displays
- Interactive discussions

Primary organisers



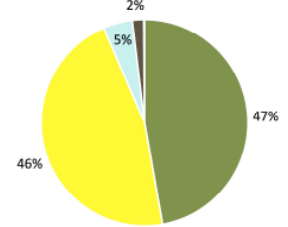
- Private/public extension or advisory service
- Supply chain company
- Research institution
- Farmers' organization

Funders



- Advisory/extension service funded
- Supply chain company funded
- Other
- Self-funded
- Research funded
- Public funded (regional, national, EU...)
- Farming organization funded

Demonstrators



- Public/Private advisor(s)
- Farmer
- Researcher, Students
- Supply chain actor

Access Issues

Gender: Farmers reported that 75% -90% of attendees at demonstration events on their farms were male and therefore women are under-represented

Age: The majority of attendees were described as aged over 40 although it was explained that: “the audience attending open days are generally 40+ but they are also generally younger than the average demography of Irish farmers” . Demonstration farmers reported that experienced, new entrants and ‘innovative’ farmer/farm leaders attend demonstrations. A limited number of farm demonstrations are focusing specifically on new entrant dairy farming

Geography: There is a wide and balanced geographical spread of demonstration activities throughout the country.

Distinguishing Characteristics

- The majority of farm demonstrations are organised by Teagasc’s advisory service and are co-funded/co-developed by the private sector (supply actors, as well as local farming co-ops and the farming media).
- The primary focus of on-farm demonstrations in Ireland is pasture management.
- Most demonstration farm walks are official 'Knowledge Transfer (KT) events' - a certain number of these must be attended (as part of the CAP-funded KT Groups scheme) in order for farmers to fulfil their obligations to receive a payment under the scheme.

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