



Foreword



The report of the Agri Vision 2015 Committee set out the main issues facing the Irish agriculture and food industries as well as a series of recommendations for the sector's optimal development into the future. The Government responded, in March 2006, by launching the Agri Vision 2015 Action Plan, which contained details of the specific actions to be undertaken by the main actors within the sector to achieve a vibrant future for the industry.

This report takes the process a stage further as it provides a snapshot of the actual progress achieved a year into the process. I believe that it is an important document as it illustrates the Government's commitment to real action based on a clear strategic plan as well as demonstrating what can be achieved with the cooperation of all parties. I am pleased to note that progress has been made on the major elements of the Action Plan with substantive progress on most action points.

When I launched the 2015 Action Plan last year, I focused specifically on competitiveness, innovation and consumer focus as the key drivers for our continued success. Nothing has occurred in the interim that has, in any way, deterred my belief that these key concepts encapsulate the best way forward. Consequently, I have used the last year to underpin the Action Plan by entering into major Government commitments in both the Towards 2016 Social Partnership Agreement and under the 2007-2013 National Development Plan.

The €8.7 billion agri-food package set out in the 2007-2013 NDP constitutes an integrated package of policies, schemes and resources that addresses the financial and directional needs of the agri-food industry. It also provides a concrete recognition of the Government's commitment to the Agri Vision 2015 Action Plan and to the continued development of this vital indigenous sector.

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Summary

The 2015 Action Plan was published in March 2006 and contained 167 specific commitments which the Government is committed to implementing over a 3-5 year period. This is the first report outlining the progress made to date.

The layout follows the key concepts outlined in the AgriVision 2015 Action Plan and so there are four main chapters which deal with the key drivers of competitiveness, knowledge based, sustainability and consumer focus. Each action in the Plan is addressed and brief details of the measures taken to progress the action are noted. Progress is evaluated on a four-point basis and the overall progress can be categorised as follows

	Description	%
A	Action completed	10
B	Action implemented on an ongoing basis	55
C	Substantial action taken but required further work	35
D	Minimal action taken	0

Overall, 65.1 % of the action points have been completed or are being implemented on an ongoing basis. This is a satisfactory result one year into the Action Plan. As there is no room for complacency, monitoring of progress will continue into the future.



focusing on the consumer

***Status**

- A:** Action Completed
- B:** Action implemented on an ongoing basis
- C:** Substantial Action Taken
- D:** Minimal Action Taken

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>DAF will enforce food legislation in accordance with the terms of its service contract with the FSAI and it will take a proactive role in prioritising and delivering food safety initiatives in conjunction with both the FSAI and Safefood, the all-island food safety body.</p>	1	<p>The service contract was renewed with the FSAI in February 2006 for the period up to 31st December 2009. The enforcement of the food legislation listed in this contract is constantly reviewed through regular liaison meetings between DAF and the FSAI as well as through quarterly reports and the Annual Report required under the FSAI Act. There is a strong co-operative working relationship between both agencies on the implementation of the service contract and DAF is represented on a significant number of FSAI committees and working groups working on initiatives addressing food safety concerns. In 2006, the Department also collaborated with Safefood on a number of all-island food safety projects, e.g. assessing the occurrence of salmonella in pork and the risk factors contributing to its transmission, developing a harmonised system for approval and monitoring of private laboratories testing foodborne pathogens and consumer surveys on specific agricultural products.</p>	B
<p>DAF and other agencies involved will put the necessary measures in place to ensure the full implementation of the EU Food and Feed legislation, including the EU Hygiene Package.</p>	2	<p>The EU Hygiene Package revised and consolidated legislation in relation to food and feed hygiene as well as other issues. A key aspect of Regulation 178/2002 is that all food and feed operators, from farmers and processors to retailers and caterers, have primary responsibility for ensuring that food put on the EU market meets the required safety standard. The enforcement of the legislation crosses a number of Departments/Agencies and the FSAI has formed an inter-agency working group to ensure effective cross- departmental working.</p> <p>This progress report concentrates on the responsibilities of the Department of Agriculture and Food whose main tasks are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a)-the registration and re-approval of feed and food plants including the registration of retail premises, (b)-provision of training for all DAF personnel involved in food and feed handling, (c)-implementation of independent audit programme, (d)-accreditation of laboratories, (e)-input into the guides for good hygiene practices and into the Multi-Annual National Control Plan. <p>(a) Re-registrations of food and feed premises are proceeding based on the outcome of the risk-based inspections in meat, milk processing and feed premises. To date 128 (70%) out of 184 meat plants have met the standards required by the legislation and have been re-approved. Of these 102 have received full approval. The other 26 have been conditionally approved in respect of some or all of their activities. It is expected that the re-approval inspection process should be substantially completed during 2007.</p>	B

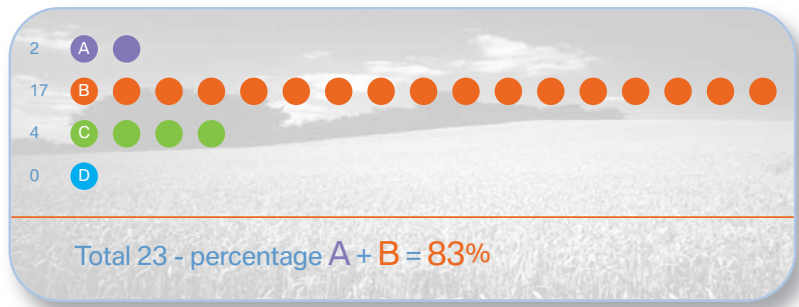
Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>(continued)</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>(b) All the Dairy Produce Inspectors involved in food inspections have been trained while a suitable programme for the training of Veterinary Inspectors and auxiliary staff is being developed and will be rolled out shortly.</p> <p>(c) An internal audit unit with trained staff has recently been established for the Veterinary Public Health Inspection Service (VPHIS). This unit has developed structures and procedures to ensure that audits conducted comply with the independent criteria required by the EU Hygiene Package. Following on from the audit of controls on Intake of Cattle into Slaughter Plants undertaken in 2006, three more audits of different areas of official controls within the area of Veterinary Public Health are scheduled for 2007.</p> <p>The establishment of a similar Audit Unit for Dairying, Feedingstuffs, Plant Health and Pesticides is well advanced. Personnel have been assigned and procedures are currently being developed for the conduct of audits.</p> <p>(d) Considerable progress has been made in the accreditation of a number of the Department's laboratories, with an expanding number of test methodologies having achieved the required ISO 17025 standard. Further developments are in hand in this important area.</p> <p>(e) The Multi- Annual National Control Plans for animal feed, plant health, animal health and welfare are completed and are being edited. The draft plan relating to food has been prepared by the Department and has been submitted to FSAI for incorporation into the overall plan which that body is preparing. It is anticipated that the agreed plan should be available by April 2007.</p>	<p>B</p>
<p>DAF will support research and programmes which facilitates accurate assessment of possible risks from food constituents or contaminants in the diet of consumers.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>The Department implements a comprehensive National Residue Plan designed to protect consumers from illegal residues by sampling a range of foodstuffs to check for traces for illegal substances and by following up any positive results with the necessary enforcement action, up to and including legal action; see Action 6 following.</p> <p>The 2006 Food Institutional Research Measure (FIRM) call included food safety as a research theme. IUNA (Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance) has been approved for FIRM and FSAI funding for research into the safety and nutritional quality of the diets of Irish children and adolescents. Building on the FIRM and FSAI funded 'Study of Children's Diet', this research will upgrade the National Food Ingredient Database; produce an estimation of intakes of selected food additive of 5 to 12 year olds, and develop a food composition database; see also Action 19.</p> <p>Overall funding totalling €8.1m was awarded under the 2006 FIRM call to research projects on the theme of food safety and security in the food chain.</p> <p>In addition, the Pesticide Control Service of the Department has agreed to be a partner institution providing advice and oversight on FIRM supported research projects in the area of consumer exposure to pesticide residues in food. The use of techniques to provide more realistic estimates of actual levels of consumer exposure is being evaluated.</p>	<p>B</p>

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
Existing systems on animal traceability will be further developed by DAF in line with emerging health and consumer concerns.	4	<p>Comprehensive traceability systems have been developed for bovines, sheep, pigs and goats to enhance consumer confidence in food safety standards. These are being implemented and developed on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>A new format for sheep flock registers and dispatch documents, which are designed to be user-friendly and to reduce the amount of recording required under the National Sheep Identification System, were distributed to all sheep flock keepers in November 2006. Work is also ongoing in developing an internet based bovine traceability system.</p>	B
In consultation with the FSAI and the Department of Health and Children, DAF will ensure that the optimum level of laboratory services are available to maintain food safety standards. In this regard, DAF's central laboratories at Backweston will be further developed and utilised as a science based centre by DAF and the agri-food industry.	5	The new laboratories at Backweston are now complete and operational. The majority of statutory and other regulatory activities undertaken by the Department's laboratory services have been transferred from a number of other locations to Backweston, with virtually all services commissioned. As the necessary groundwork has now been completed, the development of the new laboratories as a science based centre for the agri-food industry can proceed.	C
The Veterinary Medicines and Animal Remedies Regulations will be implemented by DAF to protect consumers from exposure to potentially harmful organisms.	6	<p>Consumers are protected from exposure to potentially harmful residues through the enforcement of the Animal Remedies legislation under which veterinary medicines are regulated. Foodstuffs are also monitored for residues of harmful substances under the National Residues Plan. The monitoring regime is implemented under contract with the FSAI and in accordance with EU requirements. In 2005, 45,827 samples of foodstuffs were tested for residues under the regime. The overall level of positive samples was 0.2% (94 samples) which was a reduction on 2004 figures. No residues for growth promoters were found in 2005. Preliminary results for 2006 indicate a continuation of the high level of compliance established in recent years. Final results will be available in April.</p> <p>Finally, the animal remedies regulations were substantially updated in 2005 to give effect to a new EU Medicines Directive; see Action 146.</p>	B
DAF will continue to promote best practice in food safety and quality, recognising their importance to consumers and the competitive advantage that such practices offer, particularly in the context of competing with low cost imports.	7	<p>The promotion of food safety and quality is integral to the work of the Department. Sophisticated animal traceability systems underpin safety and quality requirements while over 1,700 staff input into monitoring, surveillance and inspection services along the links in the food chain. Actions 1 and 2 above set out the ongoing activities in the area of food law enforcement by DAF, while the FSAI and Safefood have been actively supported by the Department in their food safety education, training and promotion activities.</p> <p>Bord Bia has been active in implementing Quality Assurance Schemes for beef, pigmeat, poultry, eggs and horticulture and work is well advanced on developing a lamb quality scheme.</p>	B
DAF will consider ways to enhance the usage of the existing animal traceability systems for marketing and labelling of food products.	8	<p>The DAF traceability systems have been used to support claims made under the Bord Bia Beef Quality Assurance Scheme and voluntary labelling claims made by some retailers and meat plants.</p> <p>Research projects have also focused on improving links between traceability systems and marketing of produce. Grant aid of €1.1 m has been awarded under the 2006 FIRM call for research (i) to develop a protocol using unique animal biometrics and state-of-the-art low cost e-tracking systems for assuring the origin and food chain history of poultry/poultry products and (ii) biomarkers to authenticate Irish grass-fed beef. The results of the research will assist in managing external risks such as avian flu, meeting consumer demand for assurance on where products come from, identification of product with a nutritional advantage and thus providing producers and industry with a route to premium markets.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
Farm bodies should commit to, and actively promote amongst their members, maximum participation in Quality Assurance Schemes for all livestock, grain and horticultural products	9	The farming organisations were actively involved in the promotion of the beef quality assurance scheme throughout 2006, in conjunction with the relevant state agencies and processors. In addition they are represented on the technical advisory committees for various schemes which agree on the standards to be implemented. The farm bodies have also been actively involved in the developmental stages of the new Lamb Quality Assurance which will be introduced in 2007.	B
Bord Bia will actively promote maximum participation in the existing quality assurance schemes for pigmeat, poultry and eggs.	10	Bord Bia has ongoing campaigns to promote participation levels and DAF has membership on the Bord Bia Board and the Quality Assurance Sub-Board. The current situation is that all key processors/packers in the pigmeat, egg and poultry sectors are participating in the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Schemes. The pigmeat quality standard is EN45011 recognised. The Poultry Quality Assurance Scheme is being revised in 2007 which will include a move towards full accreditation to the EN45011 standard. The Egg Quality Assurance Scheme was the first Bord Bia scheme to achieve EN45011 accreditation and the scheme assists greatly in promoting eggs at consumer level.	B
DAF will encourage the participants in the beef industry to agree an appropriate and stable funding mechanism for the Beef Quality Assurance Scheme. Provided agreement can be reached with stakeholders, exchequer funding will be made available to assist with some of the costs involved.	11	Following intensive discussions involving all stakeholders, agreement on the way forward was reached in May 2006. Consequently DAF provided €1.9m in 2006 to kick-start the expansion of the EN45011 Beef Quality Assurance Scheme. A similar amount is being provided for 2007.	A
Beef processors and Meat Industry Ireland (MII) should continue to actively promote and support the extension of Quality Assurance Schemes.	12	Membership of the Bord Bia Beef Quality Assurance Scheme continues to expand. Over 4,000 holdings were inspected in 2005. This increased to 14,000 in 2006 and by end 2008 it is intended to have 35,000 farms participating in the scheme, with inspections fully up to date.	B
Producers, Processors, DAF and Bord Bia will jointly implement a Sheepmeat Quality Assurance scheme to orient production methods to meet market demands at home and abroad.	13	On foot of the Sheep Strategy, Exchequer funding has been provided for a Lamb Quality Assurance Scheme which is being introduced in 2007. The scheme will involve the major commercial flocks and the objective is to carry out 11,000 inspections this year. Some 10,000 of these would be joint beef/sheep holdings while 1,000 would be single operations.	C
Proactive steps will be taken in conjunction with the industry to introduce country of origin labelling and to promote and support Quality Assurance schemes to differentiate Irish poultry and pigmeat products.	14	Draft new regulations, to require operators in the retail and catering sectors to provide country of origin information on poultrymeat, pigmeat and sheepmeat are currently being finalised. On completion these will be submitted to the European Commission for approval as required by EU legislation.	C
The operation of the Consumer Panel will be reviewed and strengthened to ensure that an up-to-date consumer viewpoint is available on Department activities.	15	The Department is currently reviewing proposals in relation to the future direction of the Consumer Panel.	C

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>The relevant Departments will enact the necessary legislative basis and implement a food labelling regime to provide the maximum information to all consumers on "country of origin". This will apply in the first instance to beef products and will be extended as rapidly as possible to other meats.</p>	16	<p>Country of Origin labelling regulations were made in June 2006 extending the labelling requirements on beef to the catering sector. In relation to other meats, this Department has made a submission on origin labelling to the Department of Health and Children (which coordinates the Irish contribution) to the DG Sanco consultative process on the subject. This submission confirmed a strong preference for origin labelling of meat and meat products and the desirability of there being common EU-wide legislation to support a labelling regime. Draft legislation to implement national measures has been prepared and are being discussed with the Department of Health and Children in advance of being sent to the EU for approval.</p>	B
<p>DAF, in conjunction with the state agencies, will work with the food industry to develop a nutritional focus in product development and marketing.</p>	17	<p>A call has been issued by Enterprise Ireland for research proposals on dairy-based functional ingredients focusing on the development of new products with strong commercial potential. DAF has been involved in the proposal assessment process which will see up to €15m investment by Enterprise Ireland and major dairy companies.</p> <p>This initiative will seek to employ the best publicly funded research resources available to allow companies to exploit rapidly the expanding international demand for functional ingredients. The programme will focus on products with specific nutritional applications with an emphasis on keeping healthy people healthy. It will employ the very latest technology in milk mining, rapid assay screening, GMP manufacturing and human intervention studies. It will have the direct effect of moving dairy production from commodity to higher value applications both in terms of raw material usage and in new consumer food development.</p>	B
<p>DAF will commission further research in the area of human nutrition and food science, including dietary requirements, nutritional assessments, food composition and food uses, to provide information to the food industry to support innovation, new product development and product promotion.</p>	18	<p>These themes were included in the 2006 FIRM call after consultation with research bodies and industry. Following external evaluation, funding of €30m has been approved for 57 projects; €11m of this is on Food and Health research using dairy, meat, cereals, fruit and vegetable ingredients. Examples of projects are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the development of tests as a basis for a research platform into milk genomics; the development of expertise and processes to initiate meat nutraceutical research in Ireland ■ engineering of novel highly nutritious oat based ingredients and products for the functional foods, cereal and beverage industries ■ reformulation of reduced salt chilled ready meals with improved nutritional safety and taste ■ development of technologies to improve anti-cancer properties in carrots following processing ■ improved knowledge on formulation of low glycaemic breads. 	B
<p>DAF, in co-operation with other Government Departments and state agencies, will examine food use and food consumption patterns among the Irish population to determine areas for food production, marketing and promotion initiatives.</p>	19	<p>DAF and the FSAI co-funded a Scientific Study on Children's Diet by the Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance (IUNA). This showed an increase in obesity in children, especially girls; the critical role of parents and the home environment in shaping the eating behaviour, diet and physical activity habits of the 5-12 year old group; high salt intake and below recommended intakes on fibre, fruit and vegetable, milk and fresh meat, and factors influencing fussy eating habits. The findings of the Study are available for use by other parties and industry has commissioned research from IUNA. DAF in conjunction with the FSAI are funding further research to exploit the potential of the Scientific Study data for the development of the food sector.</p> <p>In February 2007 the Minister launched a Healthy Eating Initiative in February 2007 to make a Food Dude programme available nationally in primary schools. This uses repeat tasting, rewards and peer models to effect attitudinal and behavioural change. Reaction by children, teachers and parents to the pilot was very positive. Bord Bia is managing the programme for which €4million has been allocated in 2007 and will continue subject to evaluation. More dairy products have been included in the school milk scheme to make it more attractive. The co-operation of other Departments in these areas is appreciated.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
DAF will work with other Governments and international institutions to identify global trends and patterns with regard to nutrition related issues and promote appropriate food industry responses.	20	In 2006, DAF participated with the Department of Health and Children (DOHC) in a WHO/FAO European Region Conference in Rome on strategies to combat obesity and spoke on the success of Food Dude and the importance of understanding influences on consumer decisions. In November 2006 WHO Health Ministers adopted a Charter on Obesity in Istanbul. Awards made on the occasion included one for the Irish Food Dude programme. DAF also contributed to DOHC in relation to WHO policy on population nutrition and met with industry groups on these developments.	B
In order to promote the nutritional benefits of milk and milk products DAF, in consultation with the dairy industry, will launch a new School Milk scheme.	21	A new School Milk Scheme was launched in August 2006 aimed at increasing consumption of milk among school pupils. The new scheme has a positive health/nutritional message and includes a broader range of milk products including flavoured and low-fat milk. As part of the launch, the Department provided funding for the provision of 1,000 refrigerators, which were allocated to primary schools throughout the country.	A
Teagasc will expand further its programme of research on food and health to identify potential components for food that will impact positively on health and will become actively involved in research towards the development of nutraceuticals.	22	The agreed new vision for food research in Teagasc has prioritised food for health and research in the areas of functional foods and nutraceuticals. The implementation of these plans is facilitated by their participation in the 2006 FIRM call under the Food and Health theme and by the decision of the Minister that Teagasc may retain €27m from sales of their property. Plans for the facilities necessary to carry out this research programme have now advanced to the planning application stage.	B
Secondary research as well as market research will be prioritised to support the opportunities provided for the Irish food sector to develop and supply appropriate food products to meet the changing demographics of national and international markets.	23	Market research is an integral part of Bord Bia's strategy. Funding of €0.5m was provided in 2006 for research into Continental EU markets and opportunities on Asian markets. The results of research into consumer trends on the UK and Irish markets were made available to industry and, through Regional Food Fora, to small food producers and businesses. See also Actions 17 and 18 in relation to secondary research.	B





Building on our Knowledge Base

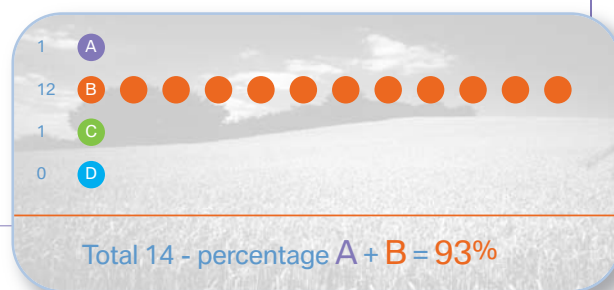
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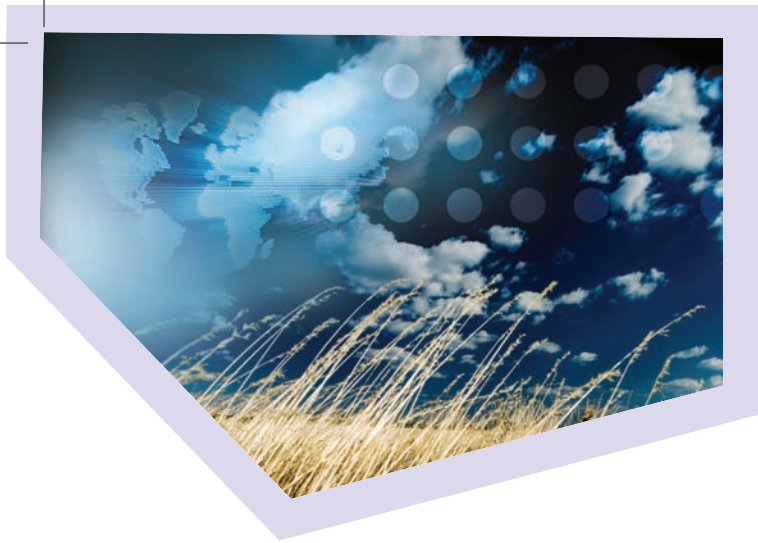
- A:** Action Completed
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Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>The Department of Agriculture and Food will prioritise increased funding for Research and Development in the National Development Plan 2007-2013.</p>	24	<p>The NDP 2007-2013 includes provision for agri-food research funding of €641million. Actions under the R & D sub –programme will provide scientific support for the sector and assist the generation of new knowledge and technologies that are critical to the growth of a market-orientated and sustainable industry.</p>	A
<p>DAF will ensure that its public good competitive research programmes, (FIRM, RSF, COFORD), will be focused on the needs of the sector and will continue to facilitate collaboration and capacity building in Irish research centres.</p>	25	<p>In 2006, calls were made under the two public good competitive programmes, FIRM and Research Stimulus Fund (RSF). A total of 58 projects were funded under FIRM and 35 under the Research Stimulus (RSF). To ensure that the calls reflected the needs of the agri-food sector, advance consultative sessions were organised with the relevant stakeholders prior to the drafting of a call text.</p> <p>To facilitate collaboration and capacity building in research institutions, the second FIRM call of August 2006 was specifically aimed at strategic equipment, graduate education and research network/ team building with a view to promoting expertise in new technologies, developing research teams capable of competing at EU level. In addition 53 R & D projects were funded by COFORD in 2006. In 2007, €4.8m has been awarded to DAF from the Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation (SSTI) competitive fund with anticipated funding of €9 million in 2008.</p>	B
<p>DAF will ensure that agricultural production research, including socio-economic research, supports a competitive profitable farming sector that is sustainable in relation to soil, water, air quality and biodiversity and is a key part of a vibrant rural economy.</p>	26	<p>The 2006 Research Stimulus Fund call was heavily focused on sustainable agriculture. Included in the call were themes on Agri-Environment, Biodiversity, Agri-Economics and Policy, Animal Biosciences and Plant Biosciences.</p> <p>At an EU level, the Framework Programmes for R & D are the EU's main instruments for supporting collaborative research. DAF's contribution has ensured that agricultural production continues to receive considerable emphasis in the work programme for the 7th Framework Programme.</p>	B
<p>DAF will ensure that food research provides a base of expertise in generic technologies to support a modern, innovative and consumer focused food industry, with attention to food safety and quality issues.</p>	27	<p>Generic technologies refer to the broad base of scientific knowledge and capability required by the food industry. The National Development Plan 2007-2013 recognises that the food industry needs the most modern techniques of food manufacturing to operate competitively and to engage in new product development. The FIRM call was successful in developing this area via the development of suitable call themes following stakeholder consultation. It also provided funding for suitable and worthy research proposals. The 58 projects funded under FIRM will each support 1 to 2 PhD students. The second FIRM call in August 2006 further facilitates this key action by funding 1) a graduate development programme to familiarise PhD students with the food industry, 2) a team building initiative to focus on food science areas, and 3) equipment purchase, including Mass Spectrometry, 3D Nuclear Resonance, and Atomic Imaging Analysis equipment to allow detailed identification and analysis of the bio-active components and molecular structures in foods.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
DAF, through Teagasc and its own competitive research programmes, will support the building and strengthening of a research capability in new technologies, and will exploit their application to natural resources including agriculture, food, non-food land uses and the bio-economy generally.	28	The development of new technologies was central to the calls issued in 2006 under the Research Stimulus Fund and FIRM. Theme areas focused on new BioSciences and at strengthening research capability in new technologies. Teagasc is re-organising its resources into centres of excellence that will support those in the business of agriculture and food production to improve efficiency, competitiveness and responsiveness to market. It will expand its resources devoted to biotechnology so that world class competence is developed in selected key areas, particularly in food and plant bio-sciences. DAF support for the newly opened Plant Biosciences Centre in Teagasc Oakpark will aid the development of new technologies in plant science.	B
DAF will ensure that the new DAF Agricultural and Veterinary laboratories will operate as science based centres and will seek to integrate them into the national research infrastructure and support their participation in collaborative research. Linkages will be pursued through outside bodies to achieve this.	29	Some tests at the new laboratories have been accredited and other tests are being prepared for accreditation. Further collaborative research with Universities and Institutes will be pursued.	C
Teagasc will organise its resources into centres of excellence, so as to build critical mass, improve market led R&D capability.	30	Teagasc has made excellent progress in developing centres of excellence at its two food centres at Moorepark and Ashtown. Plans have been initiated to implement at both centres the agreed new research vision for "Food for Health" Teagasc is in the process of establishing a major alliance in food research with UCC that will further promote the building of critical mass and improve market led R&D capability. Implementation of the agreed new vision for agricultural research is being planned, including laboratory buildings for the new Animal Bioscience Centre at Grange, enhanced research programmes at Johnstown Castle for environmental research. Oak Park will focus on alternative crops and renewable energy while Mellows College, Athenry will concentrate on rural economy.	B
Teagasc will continue to develop its agricultural colleges to provide education and training courses that meet the skills needs of the agri-food industry. Teagasc will also broaden the role of the colleges with a view to their playing an enhanced role in rural society.	31	<p>The action plan for implementation of the Forum Review of the Teagasc Education and Training programmes has been agreed by the Teagasc Authority and is being implemented. This plan includes the objectives of providing training that meet the skill needs of the agri-food sector and broadening the role of the colleges to play an enhanced role in rural society. More than 90% of the Forum recommendations have now been implemented. Examples of ways in which the role of the colleges is being broadened include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Courses are being offered at all colleges outside of normal working hours to facilitate part time farmers. These courses are provided jointly by the local advisory service and college staff. 2. Work based training has been provided for migrant workers at Kildalton College and will be extended to other colleges. 3. Three education coordinators have been appointed and have been assigned to colleges and associated Area Management Units (AMUs) with the objective of using Teagasc resources efficiently to meet the changing needs of adult learners. 4. Regional Working Committees have been established to plan and agree all aspects of course delivery between the colleges and the AMUs. 5. A research programme has been established at Ballyhaise College and it is planned to establish applied research programmes at all colleges. 6. 'Agriculture and Food 2006' was held at Kildalton College in June and was attended by 40,000 farm family members, agri-food industry representatives and the general public. 7. Outside agencies are being facilitated to use college facilities as appropriate. <p>In addition a major capital programme was commenced in the colleges in 2001. To date €17 million has been invested in upgrading facilities.</p>	B

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Enhanced Teagasc commodity groups are being established and programmes will be implemented jointly with industry, which foster early and widespread adoption of new technologies.	32	Enhanced Commodity Teams have been established for Dairy, Beef, Sheep, Crops, Environment, Rural Development, Farm Management, Mushrooms, Nursery Stock, Soft Fruit and Vegetables. All these teams actively keep abreast of new technologies and input into the planning and delivery of advisory and research services that best meet the needs of the industry.	B
Results of food R&D will continue to be rapidly and widely disseminated to industry through RELAY, the food research dissemination programme.	33	RELAY disseminates the latest R & D findings to a wide audience through its website project updates, workshops and company visits on an ongoing basis. In November 2006, the Minister launched a publication 'Quality Food founded on Science' setting out some 2006 FIRM research achievements.	B
Teagasc will continue to place emphasis on ensuring that R&D results and technology developments are published and are transferred rapidly to clients through its advisory and education programmes.	34	Early and widespread adoption of new technologies in agriculture is progressed through monitor farms, discussion groups, open days, seminars, conferences, newsletters, project reports, publications, one to one advisory sessions and joint programmes with industry. Teagasc food research is actively disseminated to the food industry through the RELAY project, open days, seminars/conferences and project reports. Areas which benefited include, knowledge on gut flora provided the scientific base for commercial development in the Teagasc/UCC Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre and research at Teagasc Ashtown, has provided the basis for commercial development of new pizza base and gluten free products. A comprehensive innovation management strategy on transfer technology to individual companies is currently being pursued.	B
DAF will continue to strengthen co-operation with other Departments and state agencies to achieve a strategic and seamless approach to R&D funding and to bring about increased involvement and funding by industry.	35	Co-operation with other state agencies is continuous and facilitated through involvement with a range of cross-departmental groups. In a R & D context, the Department is actively involved with D/ETE, Enterprise Ireland, FORFAS, Teagasc, Bord Bia, interdepartmental committees and other groups to achieve a strategic and seamless approach to R&D strategies and funding. In 2006, DAF developed joint proposals for funding with the following Departments/Agencies: 1) the Health Research Board on 'Food and Health' including consumption patterns, development of a gene library, and nutritional health of the elderly, 2) EPA on supporting sustainable agriculture and forestry practices relating to groundwater environments, nitrates, transboundary and greenhouse gases and bio-diversity, and 3) Dept of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources on farming aspects of bio-energy production.	B
DAF will promote and assist collaboration by Irish researchers in collaborative international research initiatives and EU Framework Programmes.	36	The Department provides the National Delegate and National Contact Point for the EU Framework R&D Programmes FP6 and FP7 and provides ongoing information, support advice, and mentoring to Irish researchers. Irish researchers achieved eight partnerships, including the lead role in one large project, with funding value of approx €3.7m in the final call of FP6 in 2006. Overall, 64 Irish research teams were successful in 40 funded projects in the five- year FP6 Programme, with funding value of approx €15m.	B
Teagasc will carry out agricultural production research, including research on the socio-economic determinants of agricultural productivity, so as to assist in providing a greater understanding of competitiveness.	37	The Teagasc 2007 Research Programme includes research in agri-economics and rural sociology and development. The objective is to gain a better understanding of areas where rural households can undertake profitable activity, including new activities such as biomass/bio-technology, it also includes economic analysis of competitiveness and understanding the barriers that exist to change. The Rural Economy Research Centre has been rebuilt following its relocation to Athenry and has significantly enhanced its research capacity.	B





Strengthening Competitiveness

***Status**

- A:** Action Completed
- B:** Action implemented on an ongoing basis
- C:** Substantial Action Taken
- D:** Minimal Action Taken

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>At EU and International fora, Ireland will secure the optimum policy framework and the highest achievable level of support for the farming sector. At WTO negotiations, DAF will seek an outcome for the overall agri-food industry that respects the internal reforms already agreed, while maintaining an appropriate balance between export competitiveness and EU market access.</p>	38	<p>The Department continues, on an on-going basis, to defend the national interest and to seek a satisfactory outcome on all policy proposals on the CAP and rural development. In this context, particular attention will be given to preparations for the forthcoming CAP 'Health Check' in 2008 and review of the Financial Perspective, 2007-2013.</p> <p>Following the suspension of the negotiations in July 2006 and the low-key resumption in December 2006, there will be a full resumption of the negotiations on a new WTO round in 2007. While committed to a successful conclusion to the negotiations, Ireland's position is that the outcome must be balanced as between the various elements of a new agreement (trade in industrial goods, services, agriculture, etc.) and between the three pillars of the agriculture negotiations (domestic support, export subsidies and market access). The underlying objective remains to secure a new agreement which will not necessitate further reform of the CAP. The Department will continue to participate fully in the negotiations.</p>	C
<p>The Government remains committed to maintaining the optimal number of family farms through the development of commercial full-time farming. At the same time, the Government will continue to provide an economic environment which enables smaller farmers to avail of both on and off-farm opportunities to secure their future.</p>	39	<p>Annual expenditure of almost €2 billion on SPS payments is made by this Department to help achieve the objective of protecting farmers' incomes and of maintaining the optimal number of family farms. The implementation of the measures in the AgriVision 2015 Action Plan and the Agriculture Chapter of Towards 2016 are further evidence of creating an environment which will assist all farmers full and part-time secure their future. These measures underpin the € 8.7 billion commitment under the 2007-2013 National Development Plan.</p> <p>This Government's commitment is to continue to maintain a core of competitive full-time farmers, while at the same time providing an economic environment which enables smaller scale producers to avail of both on and off-farm opportunities to secure their future. Full-time farmers are looking to the new flexibility offered to them under decoupling to develop and intensify their commercial farm enterprises while many small-scale producers are finding that combining farming with off-farm employment is an effective way to ensure the viability of their holdings.</p>	B
<p>The Government will continue to focus on maximising farm incomes through a combination of direct income supports, which will continue to account for 75-80% of farm incomes and a range of measures which improve competitiveness and productivity and thereby getting the best possible return from the market.</p>	40	<p>In 2006, direct payments to farmers totalled over €1,898 million (excluding forestry grants / premium, on-farm investment grants and payment under the early retirement scheme) and accounted for over 81% of operating surplus; see also action 39.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>The Government will continue to support low income farmers through the Farm Assist Scheme.</p>	41	<p>The Farm Assist, which is designed to support low-income farm families, was introduced in April 1999. It replaced the former Smallholders Unemployment Assistance Scheme. It is administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and in 2006 total expenditure was €71.1 million. The numbers in receipt of Farm Assist at the end of 2006 was 7,500, a decrease of 4% on the end of 2005. Applicants who were former recipients of the Smallholder's Unemployment Assistance Scheme were receiving an average payment of €230.05 per week. Other applicants received an average payment of approximately €196.69 per week. Budget 2007 increased personal payment rates by €20 per week from €165.80 to €185.80, in line with other social welfare increases.</p>	B
<p>Both State policy and industrial strategy must be sufficiently flexible to adapt to the sectoral needs of both full-time and part-time farmers.</p>	42	<p>This Government is focused on ensuring that farming families have the best possible options available for them to stay on the land. That may mean as full-time farmers, if their farm size and resources are sufficient, and if they choose that option. Alternatively it may be through the combination of on-farm and off-farm income, which many small-scale producers are finding as the best route to a viable life on the land. This Government is committed to supporting and encouraging our farm families in whichever option they choose and the range of policies and schemes operated by DAF and Teagasc, in particular, indicate a very flexible approach to meeting this objective.</p> <p>At farm level, land mobility measures, which include the Early Retirement Scheme, Installation Aid, various tax measures and the flexible quota management process recently introduced are important aspects in facilitating structural change. This structural change is necessary to increase productivity levels, improve economies of scale and maximise income earning potential.</p>	B
<p>To allow for meaningful farm planning, incentives to encourage greater productivity, consolidation and improved land mobility are required. The Government will continue to implement measures, including appropriate taxation measures, to improve the availability of land for farmers who wish to increase their scale of production and maximise their income from farming.</p>	43	<p>The Government is committed to developing and implementing policies, schemes and services that help sustain the rural economy, maximise the number of farm households and facilitate structural change within the agricultural sector. Structural change within agriculture is facilitated through the taxation system in terms of supporting our most productive farmers. High land prices coupled with low levels of land sales are an obstacle to farm expansion for many farmers. To assist more productive farmers gain access to additional land to expand, successive Budgets have increased the income tax exemption limits, for land leased out on a long-term basis by farmers over 40 years of age to non-connected persons. Budget 2007 introduced a third exemption threshold of €20,000 for leases of 10 years or more. It also extended stamp duty relief for farm consolidation for situations where on one farmer is consolidating his holding. An adjustment was also made to CGT Retirement relief to allow for situations where the land may have been leased prior to disposal to a family member.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
Arrangements will be made for the establishment by 1 January 2007 of the farm advisory system provided for in the Single Payment Regulations to advise farmers on meeting their requirements.	44	The Department is in the process of providing training for Teagasc and other Private Planners who constitute the "Farm Advisory Service" in Ireland.	C
<p>Teagasc will implement a comprehensive advisory programme with specialist enterprise advisors to promote the adoption of proven and innovative farm production. This will be pursued through its four restructured advisory programmes: Options Analysis,</p> <p>Business Competitiveness and Technology, Good Farm Practice, Advisory and Training Programme for Part-Time Farmers.</p>	45	<p>Implementation of the new vision for the advisory services is well advanced. The new management structure involving 18 Area Management Units (AMUs) is in place. AMU managers have been appointed and the process of restructuring the advisory service into four programmes: Options Analysis, Business and Technology, Good Farming Practice and Advisory and Training Programmes for Part-Time Farmers is well advanced. The Option programme is focused on assisting farmers adjust their farm and family situation post-decoupling. It allows farmers and their families to look objectively at their situation, analyse the options available for the farmer and his or her spouse and provides independent advice and guidance on the best way forward. This programme witnessed huge uptake in 2006 with some 5,000 Way Forward Action Plans completed. To date over 15,000 farm families have participated in the programme with detailed guidelines being given on future options. Teagasc will continue the programme in 2007 when over 3,500 farm families will be assisted in making decisions for the future.</p> <p>Specialist enterprise advisers are currently being assigned within each AMU to better meet the needs of specialised enterprises and promote the adoption of proven innovative and profitable farming.</p>	B
The Department will seek to ensure that processes are operated in the most cost effective manner possible, with the minimum necessary burden of paperwork and regulation consistent with ensuring proper controls.	46	The adoption by Ireland of full decoupling under the Single Payment Scheme, thereby replacing six EU subsidy schemes each with complex application, qualification and implementation procedures, served to ensure the reduction of unnecessary bureaucracy. The benefits of IT have also been used, wherever possible, in the interests of quality customer service. Early this year, specific proposals have been put to the Commission for simplification of the Single Payment Scheme, including the application of cross-compliance. These will be considered in the context of the review of cross compliance due in 2007 and the CAP Health Check due in 2008. The cost effectiveness of regulations on the food processing industry has been discussed by the AV 2015 Food Industry Committees and this important issue will be explored in more detail in future meetings.	B
DAF will be proactive in the EU review of cross-compliance in 2008 with a view to simplifying implementation of the scheme.	47	Following the audit in 2005 and the follow-up bilateral in July 2006 with the European Commission, the on-the-spot inspection procedures were amended to satisfy the Cross Compliance requirements and to avoid national sanctions. In the view of the Department the EU requirement for a proportion of unannounced inspections is difficult to operate in view of the high level of part time farming and the consequential need to take time from work. The Department has already made proposals to the Commission for simplification of the cross-compliance provisions including 14 day's notice of on-farm inspections and lower levels of inspections generally.	C
Partnership and alliances between farmers and the food industry will be encouraged to promote the supply of quality produce to the processor and in return to provide certainty and income stability to the producer.	48	Regular meetings take place with farm organisations, meat processors and Bord Bia to promote quality and efficiency in the production, processing and promotion of Irish meat and meat products. In addition an Animal Welfare, Recording and Breeding Scheme for Suckler Herds was included in the draft RDP 2007 - 2013. The scheme aims to encourage and underpin the adoption of high standards of animal welfare and to improve the quality of breeding cattle in the beef sector. A budget of €250 million has been allocated to the scheme.	C

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>A high-level group of CEOs of the food agencies, chaired at Ministerial level will be established to ensure and implement a fully consolidated approach towards the development of the food sector, as a whole.</p>	49	<p>The Agri-Vision 2015 CEO Group was established in July 2006 and at its meetings has discussed the challenges of WTO and review of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), need for research to benefit the sector, regional importance of the industry, cost issues and emerging issues such as food miles. This group has played a very proactive part in developing the Regional Food Forum initiative, in developing links between the state agencies and food businesses and will be involved in the Agri-Food Research subgroup to be established.</p>	B
<p>DAF will also establish a Food Industry Committee, chaired at Ministerial level and comprised of senior representatives of the industry to identify issues impeding the development of the sector.</p>	50	<p>Two food industry committees, chaired at ministerial level have been established and have met a number of times. An artisan committee has also been formed, has met three times with further meetings planned. The importance of the food industry to the economy, the need for greater recognition of its direct and indirect contribution to Irish Economic Expenditure and for joined-up approaches to policy and regulation were emphasised. WTO and CAP challenges were flagged. The cost/price squeeze, energy and compliance costs were raised.</p> <p>All the groups emphasised the need for commercialisation of research to ensure direct benefit to the industry. A new Agri- Food Research Subgroup comprising industry, academic and state agency representatives has been established with the twofold objective of acting as the national platform for the EU technology platform while also identifying high level research priorities.</p> <p>The artisan sector welcomed the recognition afforded to the sector in the Agri-Vision 2015 Action Plan and sought supports to develop the potential of the sector and a regulatory regime and advisory and investment assistance appropriate to its scale of operation.</p>	B
<p>The Department will proactively engage with the food industry at all levels, multinational, domestic, regional/local enterprises, and the food retail sector to drive forward its development having regard to the accelerating rate of change in its operating environment.</p>	51	<p>The Department consults and engages closely with companies and associations representative of the food industry at all levels on an ongoing basis. It also promotes close inter-agency involvement to develop all avenues of potential; see Actions 49 and 50 specifically.</p>	B
<p>DAF will support Bord Bia in strengthening strategic market intelligence capability and in developing promotion and market development services with clear targets and objectives to meet current and future challenges, particularly those that emerge as a result of decoupling and the outcome of WTO trade negotiations.</p>	52	<p>DAF has substantially increased Bord Bia's funding for 2007 to enable it to implement a strategic plan aimed at assisting industry to deal with the challenge of the new market environment. The strategic plan includes provision for a small business centre of excellence, strategic market intelligence, increased market information facilities and focused marketing and promotion.</p>	B
<p>DAF will support Bord Bia in providing assistance to companies developing value-added business in continental EU markets and overseas and identifying specific opportunities in emerging Asian markets.</p>	53	<p>DAF has provided Bord Bia with funding for specific programmes on the Continental EU and Asian markets; see also Action 54.</p>	C
<p>DAF and Bord Bia will facilitate, support and promote a target of doubling the value of food and drink exports to the Far East over three years.</p>	54	<p>The Government's Asia strategy includes a target to double food and drink exports over the years 2005-2009 to €400 million. DAF has provided Bord Bia with the necessary support and resources to enable it to pursue this strategy. The value of food and drink exports at the end of 2006 is forecast at over €300 million. The strategy is on target to meet its objectives.</p>	C

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
DAF will work with other bodies to support availability of information on innovation/NPD opportunities and the possibilities offered by ICT.	55	The Department, including its Information Systems Division, is fully committed to supporting the availability of information on innovation and work closely with its agencies on its delivery. Bord Bia has developed the innovation features of their Client Portal (a password protected extranet web site available to manufacturers) and this now include both the "Inspiration Centre" - coverage of new products, new flavours, new menu trends and new packaging ideas from around the world - and the "Consumer Lifestyle Trends" programme that seeks to identify emerging trends that could form the basis of sustainable business for new products.	C
Bord Bia will establish a Centre of Excellence focused on servicing the market development related needs of small business and will promote regional food and food marketing initiatives through a series of local and international specialist forums.	56	The Centre of Excellence for small businesses was established in December 2006. Bord Bia is also currently developing a Resource Centre and programmes tailored to small business needs. A Bord Bia Guide to the Speciality Retail Sector was launched at the South-East Food Forum in 2006. Bord Bia organised a successful International Speciality Food Forum in the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham in May 2006, which has led to new business. See Action 59 for details of regional food fora.	B
Farmers' Markets, modelled on the Farmleigh experience, will be rolled out in co-operation with the Office of Public Works. DAF will also work with Bord Bia and other Departments in promoting this sector as an important alternative outlet for farm produce as well as a valuable showcase and tourist amenity.	57	<p>Bord Bia has taken a lead in providing a guide, information pack, website and detailed advice on establishing farmers markets. These now number over 100 and are spread throughout the country. Its partnership with the Office of Public Works (OPW) has developed the exceptionally successful market in Farmleigh. In addition, in 2006, Bord Bia worked closely with Dublin City Council on the Smithfield market project and developed a seasonal market at the Fota and JFK arboretum locations.</p> <p>Bord Bia and Teagasc are currently working with the Irish Farmers Market Traders Association on a training course for establishing farmers markets and a strategic approach to their development.</p>	B
DAF will encourage EU Protected Origin/Protected Geographical Indication status within the terms of the relevant EU regime.	58	The EU Protected Origin/Protected Geographical Indication system protects names of certain products traditionally made by groups of producers which can be shown to have a uniqueness in terms of reputation, origin or method of manufacture. DAF has succeeded in having Connemara Hill Lamb, its 4th Irish product, registered and protected on the PDO/PGI register in February 2007.	B
DAF in conjunction with the relevant state agencies will also promote the development of local and regional food enterprises particularly in speciality and artisan food products.	59	<p>In November 2005 the Department launched the Regional Food Forum initiative to build closer links between state agencies and food businesses and to develop regional and local foods. As they developed, these fora were used to showcase local food and drinks products, research presentations on emerging market opportunities and to publish a regional trade directory of food agencies and businesses. Successful local food entrepreneurs generously shared their experiences and there was a very good response from small, speciality and artisan businesses attending the event.</p> <p>Following the first Forum in the North-West (Killybegs), three fora were held in 2006 in the North-East (Carrickmacross), Midlands (Port Laoise) and South-East (Kilkenny). A West Forum was held in February 2007 (Claregalway) and the South West Forum (Cork) in March will complete the series. In response to issues raised at the fora a, food safety workshops were added to the programme.</p> <p>The International Specialty Foods Forum held by Bord Bia in the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham in 2006 gave speciality producers an opportunity to showcase their produce have pre-planned meetings with international and Irish buyers and generate new business opportunities. Produce from the sector was also featured in Ryder Cup menus providing further international exposure. The meetings of the Agri-Vision 2015 Artisan group have provided the sector with a structure for the sector and the Department to examine issues to promote the development of the industry.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
DAF will seek to strengthen links between producers in the artisan and speciality food sectors and relevant agencies such as the Taste Council, Teagasc and the Third Level Colleges.	60	<p>Teagasc appointed a full-time Specialty Development officer in 2006 who is working with producers and other agencies to develop the sector. Funding was also awarded in 2006 under the Department's FIRM programme for research by Teagasc in partnership with farmhouse cheese producers to provide a knowledge base to support the sustainable development of the farmhouse cheese industry.</p> <p>The Agri-Vision 2015 Artisan group, which was established in 2006, includes Taste Council members. State agencies (FAS, FSAI, Safefood, Bord Bia) have financially supported the UCC Diploma in Speciality Food Production which has now been run for three years.</p>	B
Teagasc will put in place a specific programme to support people wishing to set up artisan and speciality food businesses.	61	Teagasc has appointed a full-time Specialty Development adviser as a precursor to developing a specialist advisory service.	C
The National Functional Foods Forum, under the chairmanship of Enterprise Ireland, will develop a strategic plan for the development of the functional foods & ingredients industry in Ireland.	62	See Action 17 on the establishment of a €15 million fund by Enterprise Ireland and major dairy companies for research for functional foods which would have commercial value.	C
Bord Bia will hold Marketplace Ireland events to specifically match suppliers with international buyers.	63	Bord Bia organised a very successful Marketplace event for the Speciality sector in May 2006 which resulted in commercial listings. Marketplace 2007 is being planned and will showcase the major food and drink sectors building on the successful showcasing of the quality and capacity of the Irish food and drinks sector during the Ryder Cup.	A
The Féile Bia campaign will be enhanced to promote the use of local, regional and speciality produce in all catering outlets.	64	A review of Feile Bia is currently underway. This review will examine how the use of local, regional and speciality produce in all catering outlets can be enhanced	C
At EU level the Department will work to ensure the continuation of an appropriate support framework for the meat sector within the Common Organisation of the Markets.	65	DAF continually argues strongly at EU and WTO level for the best support framework to allow our meat sector to trade competitively on EU and Third Country markets.	C
The Department, in conjunction with other state agencies will oversee systems to ensure that the high standards of Irish food safety, quality and traceability will be vigorously promoted to provide a competitive advantage against low cost imports.	66	<p>The Department and other agencies continues to actively pursue with the EU Commission the question of providing country of origin labelling and ensuring enforcement of existing legislation.</p> <p>The Department also participates at EU management and technical committee level in the formation of the EU's Food Hygiene standards for imports in accord with WTO trade commitments and applies these harmonised controls on animal products imported for food and technical purposes at designated Border Inspection Posts.</p>	C
Joint action will be taken by the Department, Bord Bia and the meat industry both to identify new markets for Irish meat products and to promote and improve Irish market share in European and Third Country markets.	67	Regular meetings are held with Bord Bia and MII to agree an appropriate strategy on and continually assess market access and meat and meat products promotion. Bord Bia's three year beef promotion strategy completed its second year in 2006 and is achieving its objective. Exports of Irish beef to Continental markets have risen steadily and Irish beef is now listed by the major EU retail chains; over 90% of total exports now go into the high value EU markets compared to just 50% as recently as 2000. The next step will be to seek a premium position for the product.	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
The Department and state agencies will support increased investment in R&D and product development.	68	See progress outlined under Actions 24 to 37 above. Agriculture's R & D sectoral plan was launched in September 2006 in keeping with the Government Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation 2006-2013.	B
All parties involved in the beef sector will coordinate their efforts to increase the quality of beef produced under the National Beef Quality Assurance Scheme accredited to EN 45011 Standard.	69	See Actions 11 and 12.	B
Enterprise Ireland will provide support for investment projects by the meat processing sector in developing value-added products.	70	A Capital Investment Aid Scheme, directed towards improving efficiency and competitiveness in both the beef and sheepmeat primary processing sectors, was announced in November 2006. The support package, amounting to €50 million, should trigger overall investment of some €120 million. Enterprise Ireland will manage the scheme and evaluate the suitability of projects. Specific details will be announced in the near future. The funding will be targeted towards achieving efficiencies in processing and improving competitiveness, market sustainability and added value.	B
Beef processing plants should strengthen and refine quality related pricing systems to encourage production of high quality carcasses, which meet consumer preferences.	71	DAF has requested the meat industry to print the classification outcome on the 15-point scale (rather than the 5 point scale) and to reward and encourage breeders by paying for quality. To date a number of meat plants (5 out of 25 using mechanical grading) are providing the full information.	C
Recognising the critical importance of the suckler herd to the Irish beef industry, the Department will consider what measures are required for the suckler herd in the context of decoupling.	72	DAF has submitted proposals to the EU under the animal welfare provisions of the RD Regulation and State Aid Rules to improve the quality of the suckler herd. The European Commission response is awaited.	C
Increased use of artificial breeding techniques in the suckler herd will be promoted.	73	Various initiatives are being operated to promote the increased use of artificial breeding techniques. In Spring 2006 an enhanced AI promotion 'Breeding Future Profits - A Collaborative Effort' was conducted with DAF funding and with an initial focus on the dairy herd. This promotion worked well and ICBF provided coordination, technical support and administration. A follow -up review was conducted in October 2006 and an improved Industry led campaign 'The profit with AI partnership' is underway for 2007, also with DAF funding which will place a particular focus on the suckler herd.	B
The mechanical grading of beef carcasses will continue to be monitored on an objective basis to encourage the production of consistent quality carcasses which best meet consumer preferences. The industry will continue to develop the system towards measurement of meat yields.	74	The mechanical carcass grading system is monitored on an ongoing basis. The system for archiving of historical mechanical grading data has also been established. Teagasc is calibrating carcass-cut prediction system in collaboration with E+V Technology GmbH by dissecting carcasses of beef animals in trials. Teagasc is also attempting to calibrate CAT scanners as an alternative to carcass dissection.	B
Beef processors should engage in partnership and supply chain management arrangements with individual beef producers to actively match specific consumer requirements with product delivered.	75	A number of meat plants have undertaken such initiatives and DAF will continue to support such developments.	C

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>With support from DAF, the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) will intensify its efforts to deliver a significant increase in the rate of genetic improvement of beef cattle through a combination of improved breeding schemes, greater use of artificial insemination, genetic evaluation and information services to all sectors of the industry.</p>	76	<p>ICBF has completed its research into the optimum design of the ideal beef breeding scheme for Ireland and developed an operational proposal in consultation with beef breed societies and the AI industry. ICBF are also coordinating the industry led AI promotion campaign for 2007 'Profit with AI partnership' designed to increase the usage of AI in the suckler herd. Beef genetic evaluation services have been further enhanced with the new 'Eurostar' indices which will be launched shortly and which reflect an animals different breeding traits of importance in simple terms. The new breeding information system 'Herdplus' was launched in September 2006 which provides a range of farm management aids such as EBI reports (indicating rate of genetic progress of herd), breeding charts, fertility reports all which enable the farmer to track the progress of his herd over a number of years, and compare it with other herds in the country.</p>	B
<p>Teagasc will strengthen its animal breeding expertise and will work closely with ICBF to support improved livestock breeding.</p>	77	<p>Teagasc has recently strengthened its animal breeding expertise on dairy and beef cattle at Moorepark and Grange. This includes expertise in the new bioscience areas of Genomics and Proteomics which will be strengthened further with the putting in place of the new bioscience centre at Grange. TEAGASC made several successful applications to DAF for new funding in 2006. Teagasc and ICBF are working on a number of collaborative project to support improved breeding by the beef and dairy cattle sector.</p>	B
<p>The Department, in consultation with the industry, farm organisations and other interests, will explore the possibility of including a cattle breeding measure in the RD programme 2007-2013.</p>	78	<p>A proposed welfare scheme for the Suckler herd is included in the Rural Development Programme submitted to the EU Commission which if approved will lead to improved welfare standards in the suckler herd, and will also lead to significant gains in the breeding quality of the suckler herd.</p>	B
<p>A strategic plan will be produced for the long term development of all aspects of the sheepmeat sector, from breeding and production to processing and marketing.</p>	79	<p>A strategic plan for the sheep industry has been produced and a Sheep Strategy Implementation Group was established by the Minister in July 2006 to ensure effective implementation of all recommendations in the Sheep Strategy Report. Funding is being provided to ICBF and Bord Bia towards the development of a comprehensive sheep breed improvement programme and a lamb quality assurance scheme. Aid will be made available to the sector for on-farm investments from the RDP 2007-13. Bord Bia has developed proposals on promotion and Teagasc has launched an initiative on an enhanced research and advice programme. Work on other issues such as mechanical carcass classification is being progressed. The final report of the Strategy Implementation Group is expected in the near future.</p>	B
<p>The pig and poultry sectors will be examined in the light of the existing and emerging competitive market pressures with a view to securing efficiencies at production and processing levels</p>	80	<p>The Department is in the process of establishing an expert group to examine the current difficulties facing the poultry sector. To improve efficiency at producer level, pig grading is being reviewed in conjunction with Teagasc and the industry.</p>	C



Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>At EU level Ireland will continue to negotiate an appropriate support framework that will secure a competitive milk production sector within the EU and improved export competitiveness on world markets.</p>	81	<p>The Department continues to represent Irish interests at EU level and actively negotiates appropriate market support mechanisms to stimulate demand and stabilise markets. This strategy has helped retain and expand market access opportunities and has seen dairy exports increase in value to over €2 billion in 2006, a rise of 4% compared with 2005.</p>	C
<p>Consolidation has taken place at processing level in line with Prospectus recommendations. The main recommendations of the Prospectus Report, however, remain to be implemented. This is primarily the responsibility of the processing sector. The Department will continue to engage with the processing sector to achieve optimum configuration within the sector especially in terms of scale.</p>	82	<p>A new dairy processing industry investment package was announced in late 2006 amounting to some €300 million in gross capital investment over the next three years. The investment is to include €100 million of Government grant assistance. The package recognises the critical need for the State to engage with the processing sector in order to achieve the most favourable climate in which the sector can operate and assist it especially in terms of increasing scale and efficiency. Enterprise Ireland will administer the package and support will be available toward the cost of construction and acquisition of buildings, new machinery, equipment, and associated costs and geared toward the individual needs of each investment. The fund has been oversubscribed with projects from all the major dairy companies. The commercial and technical evaluation of applications has begun and announcement of grant awards will be made in April/May of this year.</p>	C
<p>The Department and state agencies will promote and support continued and increased investment in R&D and market development.</p>	83	<p>See Actions 24 to 37 above.</p>	B
<p>Measures to support, through milk quota allocations, the development of high value and specialist milk products by small scale operators, will be strengthened.</p>	84	<p>In the context of the newly announced Milk Quota Trading Scheme, the Department is actively exploring the most efficient method of allocating quota to small-scale operators, which is consistent and complies with the milk quota and control/verification regulations..</p>	B
<p>The current two-year quota restructuring programme will continue in 2006.</p>	85	<p>The two-year quota restructuring programme continued in 2006 and will terminate as stipulated in the regulations at the end of the 2006/2007 Milk Quota Year.</p>	A

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>A substantial change in the quota restructuring system will commence on 1 April 2007. In association with stakeholders, arrangements will be made to introduce an open-market system of transferring quotas designed to facilitate consolidation of holdings, increase efficiency and contribute to more competitive milk production.</p>	86	<p>This move to a more transparent and open market system of transferring milk quota commenced towards the end of 2006. The results of the 1st Milk Quota Trading Scheme were announced on the 31st January 2007. The date for the second exchange has been announced with a closing date of 9th March 2007. The exchange will run in early April. Thus new milk quota system provides for the more efficient management of quota policy in the new environment of dismantled internal market supports and increased international competition arising from world trade liberalisation. The quota exchange will ensure the early release of quota from those who wish to exit dairy production and place it into the hands of committed and progressive dairy farmers. The exchanges will continue to operate in each Coop area and the quota transacted through the scheme will be available to purchasers for the 2007/2008 milk quota year.</p>	A
<p>Teagasc will continue to assist farmers in optimising their returns from dairy enterprises including efforts to increase the protein content of milk and meeting environmental requirements.</p>	87	<p>The Teagasc dairy advisory and research programme is sharply focussed on optimising returns from dairying while respecting environmental protection. Increasing the protein content of milk is an important part of this programme. One of the agriculture commitments of Towards 2016 is that DAF will extend its monitoring of the milk testing regime to include milk protein and other constituents which are used for payment purposes and this is progressing.</p>	B
<p>DAF will support ICBF in the development and delivery of significant increases in the rate of genetic improvement of dairy cattle through a combination of improved breeding schemes, genetic evaluation and information services to all sectors of the industry.</p>	88	<p>DAF provided financial support for further development of genetic evaluations for traits relevant to dairy replacement breeding decisions. Dairy genetic evaluation services have been developed with further enhancement of the dairy genetic evaluation index, the EBI. The ICBF Active bull list publication allows farmers to make breeding decisions easily using the best available information on bulls that are relevant to Irish conditions. The new 'Herdplus' information service to farmers has been launched offering reports on an individual herd that covers areas such as calving pattern, milk quality report, reproductive performance and genetic quality of herd, all of which can be viewed on-line if required. A new web based search facility, Sire Advice, is at an advanced stage of development and will allow for each cow in a herd to be matched with the most appropriate AI bull. The Gene Ireland bull testing programme has arranged testing of 45 bulls in spring calving herds in 2006 allowing these bulls to be tested in Irish conditions which will lead to the most suitable bulls for Irish farming systems</p>	B
<p>DAF, in conjunction with the Forestry Liaison Group, will complete its review of the long-term objectives for forestry and ensure that the range of Government supports in place for forestry development in Ireland are suitable and appropriate.</p>	89	<p>The forestry strategic review has been completed and the report is being finalised. Substantial progress is also been made on a number of other fronts, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Retention of the 100% grant and 20 year premium for the new RDP period. ■ Major increases secured for the planting and roading grant ■ Comprehensive range of measures designed and included in Rural Development Programme – broadly welcomed by all stakeholders. ■ New schemes on the way for biomass and wood-energy, stimulating new markets ■ Successful implementation of IFORIS, the new forestry computer system with online application now being investigated. ■ Fieldwork for National Forest Inventory completed with publication expected in June. ■ Legislative Review completed and Heads of Bill ready for Government.. ■ Indicative Forest Strategy completed – major GIS project which will focus policy and planting into the future. ■ Very successful call for proposals for innovation in the sector ■ New training programme, designed and delivered in conjunction with the sector ■ New promotional campaign, again designed and delivered in conjunction with the sector <p>These combine to make forestry an attractive option.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
The forestry funding programme for 2007 – 2013 will ensure that farmers who might wish to afforest all or part of their land can make their decisions on the basis of continued commitment of the Government to forestry. This commitment will be consistent with and complementary to other land based supports.	90	The new RDP has been drafted in consultation with sector which has broadly welcomed its provisions. It is currently with the EU for approval and a general 15% increase in the annual Forest Premium is being implemented with effect from April and a new Forest Environment Protection Scheme (FEPS) has been launched which specifically targets REPS farmers, offering a more attractive premium rate in return for a more environmentally focused forestry.	B
A new annualised planting target will be established which maintains the necessary critical mass of production to secure the development of the timber industry well into the next decade.	91	Proposals on planting targets are contained in the forestry strategic review which will be published shortly.	C
DAF will launch a major forestry promotion campaign in 2006.	92	A Joint DAF and Irish Forestry Industry Chain forestry promotion campaign was launched in June 2006	A
The IFORIS programme will be in place in early 2006 to ensure that forestry grants and premium payments are managed by an effective IT system.	93	IFORIS payment programme went live in March 2006 and is operating very successfully. It is an improved IT platform which will facilitate the introduction of new regulatory controls and the roll-out of new technology. Work has also started on scoping out Phase 2 of the IFORIS project which will include an on-line application facility	A
DAF will complete its national inventory of forest production in 2006 and will develop further inventory information, particularly in regard to wood biomass production.	94	The National Forestry Inventory is in the course of completion. The fieldwork has been completed and the desk analysis is currently underway. It is anticipated that the inventory will be published in Summer 2007.	C
Teagasc will put in place an integrated advisory and research programme to encourage greater development of forestry.	95	Teagasc forestry programme for 2006 has been approved by DAF and is in operation. A dedicated Forestry Development Unit has been established with 20 research and advisory staff managed by a Head of Unit on a national basis. The unit has close links with the general advisory service and forestry is being promoted as a main on-farm alternative. The advisory and training programme is run jointly with the DAF Forest Service while the research programme is co-funded by COFORD which has the lead role in forestry research.	A
New market opportunities for thinnings will be developed, particularly in relation to renewable energy.	96	A range of initiatives are being supported, including pilot projects, greener homes scheme and proposed biomass harvesting scheme. These provide new market opportunities for thinnings and will improve supply of raw material. The Forest Energy 2006 Programme was jointly undertaken by COFORD, Bord na Mona, Forest Service, and Teagasc and involved wood energy harvesting and processing demonstrations to over 1,000 participants at 5 venues with a conference in Dec 2006.	B
Support for the better management of the forest estate including pruning, thinning, training, reconstitution and forest roads will be considered	97	This is one of the proposals included in the proposed new RDP which is awaiting Commission approval.	C

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
Support for the native woodland, neighbour wood schemes and broadleaves products will continue.	98	Provision for these schemes has been made in the proposed new RDP. The commitment to planting 30% broadleaves, achieved in 2006, will remain in place for the new Programme.	C
The commitment to adequate research and development in the forestry sector will be maintained.	99	As part of its 2006 research and development programme, COFORD launched a call for proposals covering climate change, biodiversity, forest planning/ management, economics & policy. Proposals were also designed to encourage longer-term research programmes. Increased funding of €4 m has been provided to COFORD for 2007 to enable it continue its R & D programme.	B
Support schemes for equipment in thinning, harvesting and the production of wood biomass will be actively pursued in 2006.	100	The proposed new RDP includes a measure designed to provide support for such investments. Details of a new Wood Biomass Harvesting Machinery Scheme will be made public very shortly. The purpose of the proposed scheme is to encourage investment in wood biomass processing machinery, such as whole tree chippers and forest residue bundlers.	C
A grant scheme for the installation of wood burning stoves is being launched by the Department of Marine and Natural Resources in support of increased use of renewable energy in Ireland.	101	The scheme has been initiated and grants are now available from SEI for the installation of pellet and chip boilers.	A
Protection of the health of forest estate from biological or other threats will be strengthened.	102	Damage to forest estates by the two main predators, deer and grey squirrel, is being addressed through the Pilot Deer Fencing Scheme, launched in 2006, and the Research Project for control of Grey Squirrel.	B
DAF will continue to contribute to the development of policies on biofuels, especially having regard to further advances in technology.	103	DAF will actively contribute to the development of biofuel policies in relation to the Actions set out in the National Bioenergy Action Plan to support production of energy crops, increased afforestation and research and development in the agriculture sector. €2.5 million has been allocated for a collaborative research project with the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources on the farming aspects of bioenergy production.	B

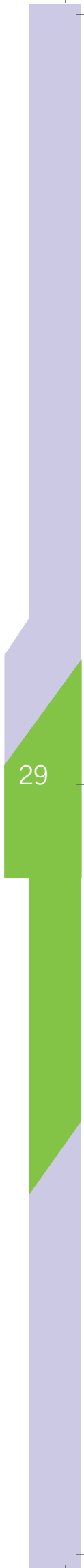
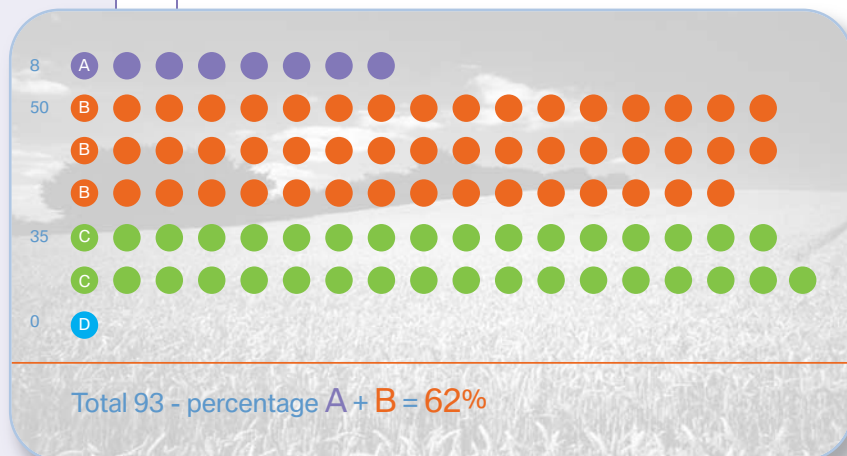
Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
DAF will engage actively with the development of EU policy on biofuels and will, in particular, promote and seek improvements in the energy crops scheme.	104	DAF will continue to monitor progress in regard to implementation of the EU Biomass Action Plan, EU Strategy for Biofuels and the EU Energy Crops Scheme. €6 million is being made available from 2007- 2009 to top-up the existing EU Energy Crops premium of €45 per hectare with a national payment of €80 per hectare.	B
The Research Stimulus Programme will be used to encourage research projects on biofuels and other non-food use of crops. Teagasc will also commit additional resources to this area.	105	The Department's Research Stimulus Fund Programme (RSF) was broadened in 2005 to incorporate biofuels research. Projects supported under this Programme will complement the research work being done by Teagasc and others in the biofuels area. In the 2005 RSF call, 12 projects were awarded grant assistance totalling €4.5 million. Three of these relate to biofuels and energy crops with funding value of €0.9m. RSF funding was increased to €18m in the 2006 call and 2 further projects were funded at a value of €0.6m.	B
DAF will continue to facilitate the use of tallow as a biofuel in thermal boilers in rendering plants and larger meat plants to provide energy.	106	The Department supplies information and guidance to the trade via its inspectorate to facilitate compliance with the EC Regulation 2067 of 2005 and S.I. 612 of 2006, which set out the conditions that must be met to burn tallow in thermal boilers. One Meat Plant (two burners) and three Rendering Plants (total of six burners) have been approved. Expressions of interest have been received from a further 2 Rendering Plants, 4 Dairy Plants, 11 Meat Plants, 1 Animal Feed Manufacturer, 1 Producer of Fishmeal and 1 Bottling and Juice Manufacturing Plant. These applications will be processed in the near future.	B
DAF will introduce procedures for the conversion of tallow to biodiesel.	107	EU Regulation 92 of 2005 and S.I. 612 of 2006 provide for the conversion of tallow to bio-diesel. The Department has had discussions with potential investors regarding the planned establishment of biodiesel plants which would use tallow as a feedstock, in Ballinasloe and New Ross respectively. There has also been preliminary correspondence with an operator proposing to develop a very large combined biogas and biodiesel plant. Media coverage indicates interest in the area from other sources including a meat company, a co-op and a farmer. Planning permission has been obtained in some instances. As yet no formal application for approval has been submitted to the Department. The Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources announced in November that 16 projects are to be granted excise relief under the Biofuels Scheme II, and it is expected that a number of these will seek to use tallow as a feedstock for bio-diesel.	C
DAF will seek EU approval for a new scheme of supports to encourage the harvesting and processing of biomass from forests and otherwise promote the use of wood biomass as a source of renewable energy.	108	Details of a new Wood Biomass Harvesting Machinery Scheme will be made public very shortly. The purpose of the proposed scheme is to encourage investment in wood biomass processing machinery, such as whole tree chippers and forest residue bundlers. In conjunction with Teagasc, the Department hosted the National Renewable Energy Conference on 6th and 7th March 2007.	C
DAF will launch a pilot project on willow planting to evaluate further its potential from a bioenergy and waste disposal viewpoint. The potential of miscanthus as a biomass crop will also be explored.	109	DAF has announced a new Bioenergy Scheme for a limited period to provide establishment grants to farmers to plant willow and miscanthus for use as a renewable source of energy. The maximum grant aid payable is €1,450 per hectare, subject to an overall limit of 20 hectares per applicant in 2007. €8m is being allocated to this scheme over the period 2007- 2009.	B

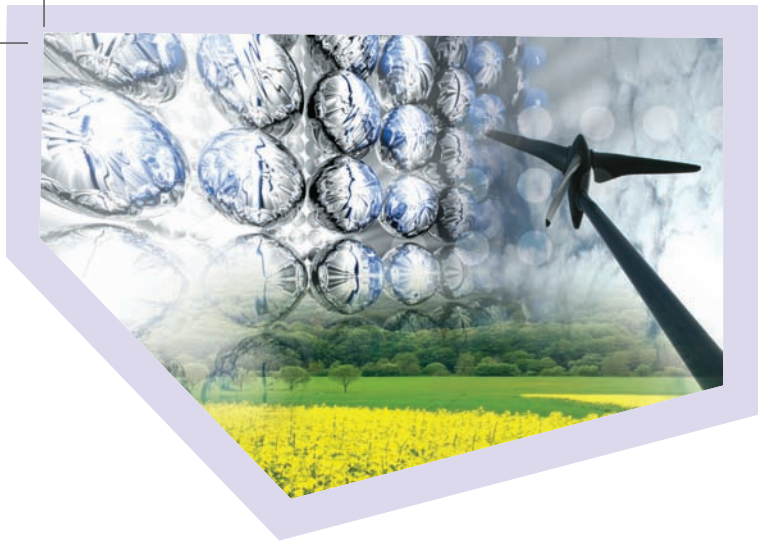
Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
DAF will promote the use of emerging technologies such as anaerobic digestion and fluidised bed combustion.	110	see Action 160	A
The variety evaluation and seed certification and testing services provided by DAF will be enhanced to improve the efficiency, quality and viability of cereal production.	111	A total of 317 varieties of cereals, herbage, forage maize, potatoes and oilseed rape are being monitored on a continuous basis for quality and agronomic traits at trial sites on DAF and Teagasc farms. Discussions are ongoing with breeders to bring about further efficiencies this season in the cereal variety evaluation system whilst changes in the seed certification scheme are being introduced which will lead to greater efficiencies	B
The regulatory regime for plant protection products will be further developed and implemented to ensure the highest standards of plant health, food safety and consumer protection are achieved.	112	The new facilities provided at Backweston, facilitated use of an expanded range of analytical equipment, permitting implementation of an expanded monitoring programme for pesticide residues in food. In the context of OECD, collaborative arrangements have been introduced to provide improved efficiency and more robust regulatory decisions on plant protection products. In this context, a pilot project for the joint review of a new insecticide, by Ireland, Australia, Canada, US and UK commenced on 2 February 2007 and is due for completion on 17th March 2008. If successful the approach adopted will facilitate earlier access by farmers to new crop protection solutions.	B
DAF will put in place comprehensive co-existence arrangements to enable conventional and organic crops co-exist with genetically modified crops.	113	The Report of the inter-agency Working Group (D/AF, D/EHLG, Teagasc and the EPA) developed necessary strategies and best practices relating to coexistence of authorised GM crops alongside non GM crops in Ireland. A public consultation process was initiated following the publication of this report. A draft Statutory Instrument has been prepared based on this report, the consultative process and international best practice. Following ministerial approval, the legislation will be submitted to the EU Commission for clearance.	C
DAF will encourage industry initiatives to improve the safety and quality of grain.	114	A number of meetings have been held between the farm organisations, Bord Bia, Irish National Accreditation Board and the industry with a view to the introduction of a fully accredited quality assurance scheme. Discussions are ongoing with all interested parties.	C
Teagasc will continue to assist farmers in optimising their returns from cereal enterprises through its research, training and advisory services.	115	The needs of the cereal producers have been reviewed by the Teagasc Crops Commodity Team. Priorities for the tillage crops advisory programme includes optimising Single Farm Payments, achieving top yields and quality at as low a cost as possible. Best practice technology and financial assessment is being promoted and demonstrated on monitor farms, communication bulletins and one to one advisory sessions. The growing and use of alternative crops for bio- energy and other non-food purposes is also a focus for crops research.	B
In the light of the modifications secured in the sugar reform arrangements, decisions on the future production of sugar and sugar beet will be made by the producers and processor.	116	In March 2006, the sugar processor (Greencore Group plc) decided to cease sugar production in Ireland. The sole remaining sugar factory at Mallow duly closed in May 2006.	C

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>The Government will take the necessary steps to implement the compensation arrangements for the sugar sector, as required in consultation with relevant stakeholders.</p>	117	<p>The compensation package, worth in excess of €310m to Ireland, comprises three elements.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compensation to growers for the sugar beet price reduction. This has been incorporated into the Single Payment Scheme from 2006. It is worth approx €123m to Irish growers over seven years. 2. EU restructuring aid for the sugar industry worth €145m approx. In accordance with the EU Regulations, the Government made certain decisions in July 2006 regarding the implementation of the restructuring aid, in particular the percentage to be reserved for beet growers and contractors. These decisions, which were based on independent expert advice following a rigorous consultation process with stakeholders, are now the subject of judicial review proceedings instituted by Greencore in the High Court. The hearing is due to begin on 1 May 2007. Under the EU Regulations, the first instalment of aid would fall to be paid in June 2007. 3. Diversification aid worth almost €44m. A national restructuring programme has been prepared and submitted to the EU Commission, in accordance with the EU Regulations, with a view to drawing down the diversification aid. The Regulations provide that payment of this aid could commence in September 2007. 	B
<p>The interests of Irish producers and consumers will be maximised by DAF in the negotiations on the future reform of the common organisation of the market in fruit and vegetables. The aim will be to strengthen the role of Producer Organisations in the supply and marketing of fruit and vegetables to give them influence in a market dictated by the multiple retailers.</p>	118	<p>Proposals for the reform of the Fruit and Vegetable regime were presented to the Council of Ministers on 31 January 2007. Discussions on the proposals, which involve increased funding for certain measures and greater flexibility in the rules governing producer organisations, continue at Working Group Level under the German Presidency who hope to reach agreement by the June Council.</p>	C
<p>DAF will provide grant support strategically targeted at horticultural projects in production, processing and marketing and aimed at improving the overall development and competitiveness of the sector.</p>	119	<p>The current NDP Capital Grant Aid Scheme for producers continues to be the catalyst for development of the horticulture and potato sectors. For 2006 over €7m in grant aid has been awarded in capital investment which leveraged overall investment of some €20m for the 174 growers involved. Grant aid of €1.5m is being provided for the development of the seed potato sector bringing to €2.5m the support provided since 2005.</p> <p>Under the 2007-2013 NDP funding continues to be provided for capital investments towards the development of the commercial horticulture sector and the seed potato sector. These measures are included in the rural development Programme which has been submitted to the EU Commission for approval. When approved a scheme will be launched following consultation with stakeholders.</p>	C
<p>DAF will support all year round production of horticultural products to meet the increased demands of Irish consumers.</p>	120	<p>Under the National Development Plan and the Producer Organisation Scheme growers are being provided with the support to meet local demands for the supply of fresh fruit and vegetables on all year round basis.</p>	C
<p>Teagasc will target its programmes in research, advisory services and training at underpinning the competitiveness of the commercial horticulture sector.</p>	121	<p>The Teagasc Horticultural Development Unit has been established with 28 advisory and research staff managed on a national basis. Four Staff Development Teams have been established, namely, Fruit, Vegetables, Nursery Stock and Mushrooms. The programme for each team is planned and guided by four Commodity Teams representing the Industry, DAF and Bord Bia and is targeted at underpinning the competitiveness of the commercial horticulture sectors.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>Bord Bia will continue to implement its Quality Assurance Programme for vegetables and potatoes and, in conjunction with industry stakeholders, it will strongly promote the importance of fruit and vegetables in a healthy diet.</p>	122	<p>The 2nd year of a 'Food Dude' programme to encourage fruit and vegetable consumption by schoolchildren via repeat tasting, rewards and peer models, commenced in September 2006. It is funded by the EU, DAF and the trade. The programme received an international best practice award from the World Health Organisation in 2006. Following the positive response to the programme, a Healthy Eating Initiative, which will make the programme available to primary schools on a nationally funded basis was launched on the 18 February by Minister Coughlan.</p> <p>The proposals for reform of the EU regime for fruit and vegetables currently under discussion (see Action 118 above) include new measures to promote consumption of fruit and vegetables by young people.</p> <p>Bord Bia has a well established Quality Assurance programme for fruit and vegetables and membership of this is a key condition for support under the NDP Horticulture grant aid scheme and the Producer Organisation Scheme. Bord Bia is continuing with other elements of its programme of activities for development of the horticulture sector, viz promotion programmes for both trade and consumer, market intelligence, Business Support Scheme, industrial development, amenity horticulture and buyer programmes for exports of nursery stock. Bord Bia has identified good growth potential in the prepared vegetable sector.</p>	B
<p>DAF will implement efficient and effective potato variety testing and seed certification services to enable Ireland maintain its high grade seed area status and foster the development of a competitive seed potato sector.</p>	123	<p>Changes and improved efficiencies in the seed potato variety evaluation and certification scheme are being introduced. Under the NDP 2007-2013 funding will be provided for capital investments towards the development of the seed potato sector. This measure is included in the draft Rural Development Programme which remains to be approved by the EU Commission.</p>	C
<p>The recommendations of the Mushroom Task Force will be implemented as far as possible to ensure that the industry is put on a solid footing and can exploit the potential for further growth in exports.</p>	124	<p>Under the National Development Plan and the Producer Organisation Scheme growers are being provided with the support to meet local demands for the supply of fresh fruit and vegetables on all year round basis.</p>	C
<p>DAF will promote the development of the organic sector by direct support to organic farmers and also by grant aid for investment, both on-farm and off-farm.</p>	125	<p>Direct support has up to now been provided to organic farmers as a supplementary measure of the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS). The new Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 proposes however to provide this support through a stand-alone measure, with the intention of encouraging organic production by farmers for whom participation in REPS itself is not attractive. DAF will continue to operate a Scheme of Grant Aid for the Development of the Organic Sector.</p>	C
<p>DAF will strengthen the processing and retail representation on the Organic Steering Group to specifically enhance the commercial focus of the organic sector. The experience of other countries is that retail driven development is critical to the growth of the organic sector.</p>	126	<p>Representation of the processing and retail sectors on the Steering Group has been increased and will be kept under review.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
In relation to the organic industry, REPS will have a twin objective in the next programme, to be more attractive to organic farmers and also to aim to maximise organic output.	127	See Action 125	C
DAF will work with the organic farming bodies and other stakeholders to maintain consumer confidence in the integrity of organic produce.	128	DAF has assigned extra resources to inspect retailers selling or purporting to sell organic produce. One retailer has been prosecuted successfully and other proceedings are in preparation. DAF works with the organic farming bodies and other stakeholders, through the National Steering Group for the Organic Sector, to advance and promote the development of the sector.	B
Farmers' Markets will be encouraged through practical advice and support from An Bord Bia and the Department.	129	See Action 57.	B
Teagasc will work with DAF and the farming community to ensure that farmers are well informed about the opportunities that exist in the organic sector. To this end Teagasc will enhance its organic advisory, research, demonstration and training activities.	130	Teagasc has designated an organic farming advisor in each Area Management Unit and to meet advisory needs is recruiting a replacement for the national organic specialist recently retired. Teagasc is committed to ensuring that training needs for the organic sector are met for example, Mountbellow agricultural college offers the Advanced Certificate in Agriculture with a specialism in organics. Teagasc has an organic research/demonstration programme at Mellows, Athenry (Dairy, beef, sheep), Oak Park (Tillage) and Johnstown Castle (Beef). Teagasc works closely with DAF in ensuring that the designated organic demonstration farms are effectively used to disseminate knowledge about organic farming.	B





Promoting a Sustainable Future

***Status**

- A:** Action Completed
- B:** Action implemented on an ongoing basis
- C:** Substantial Action Taken
- D:** Minimal Action Taken

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>The Department will develop and implement appropriate strategies and actions for the agriculture sector, in line with the National Biodiversity Plan, with the aim of meeting the EU target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010.</p>	131	<p>DAF participates in the Inter-Departmental Steering Group which monitors the implementation of the National Biodiversity Action Plan. The current plan includes a number of significant actions to be taken by the agriculture sector.</p>	C
<p>DAF will continue to work towards the target for reduced emissions from the agriculture sector set down in the Government's Climate Change Strategy.</p>	132	<p>The agriculture sector is already projected to meet the target set down for it in the Government's Climate Change Strategy. DAF continues to evaluate other strategies that may have potential to deliver benefits.</p>	C
<p>Using the key principles contained in the report from Comhairle na Tuaithe, the Dept. of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will seek agreement on the issues of access and countryside recreation.</p>	133	<p>The Comhairle na Tuaithe, National Countryside Recreation Strategy was published in September 2006 and is available on the Department's website www.pobail.ie. The Strategy defines the scope and vision for countryside recreation and it sets out the broad principles under which sustainable countryside recreation can be managed into the future. It also sets out the tasks that should be undertaken to achieve this vision and recommends the actions needed to be taken.</p> <p>The draft Rural Development Programme 2007 – 13 has been submitted to the European Commission for approval. The development of countryside recreation will be a key part of the measures to be rolled out under the new Programme.</p> <p>Details of the access parameters and the countryside code were launched in September 2005 and are also available on the departments website.</p> <p>A branch of the "Leave No Trace" initiative has recently been established in Ireland and the Department supported that organisation by allocating €30,000 towards the employment of a Strategic Co-ordinator. The initiative sets out principles of outdoor ethics for all users of our countryside to encourage respectful enjoyment of this precious resource. The Co-ordinator will be involved in actively promoting the Leave No Trace message among the many countryside recreation groups around the country. Details of the "Leave No Trace" initiative can be found on the Department's website www.pobail.ie.</p>	D

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
<p>The Department will provide ongoing assurances of the effectiveness of the cross-compliance requirements of the Single Payment Scheme to the European Commission and to the general public.</p>	134	<p>The cross-compliance arrangements developed by the Department have already been the subject of audits by both the ECA and the European Commission. Some changes had to be introduced following a Commission audit in 2005. The Department is required to ensure that the control environment established under cross-compliance is robust and meets with regulatory and audit requirements. Nevertheless, the Department believes that the cross-compliance provisions are overly complex for farmers and is seeking appropriate simplification in the context of the review of cross-compliance currently being undertaken by the Commission; see Action 47.</p>	C
<p>DAF will engage with the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to maximise synergies on an all-island approach on research, animal health and welfare, plant health, forestry and other matters of mutual interest.</p>	135	<p>Regular meetings are held at Ministerial and official levels to progress alignment of policies and protection arrangements in relation to animal and plant disease control, research, forestry and other matters. On the specific issue of avian influenza, contingency planning to deal with the possible incursion of this disease is at an advanced stage and involves the active participation of a number of other Government Departments and agencies, which will be required to provide a range of services and personnel to work alongside Department personnel. In the context of cross-border cooperation there is ongoing contact and interaction with DARD NI on disease planning, including training programmes.</p> <p>There is a close working relationship between DARNI and DAF on Plant Health matters, including Forest plant health, with at least two meetings per year. There is a move to a more harmonised approach especially with regard to quarantine organisms of particular interest to this island. Meetings of the North/South Pesticide Steering Group to co-ordinate and review the continuing co-operation in the field of pesticide regulation take place annually with the last meeting being held on 13 June 2006. In the area of crop variety evaluation, Nth/Sth collaborative projects are underway for cereals, herbages and potatoes with preparatory meetings, joint trials and reciprocal visits to inspect trials</p>	C
<p>The high-level review of forestry policy will be finalised in 2006. This review will include consideration of the public goods aspect of the forest programme.</p>	136	<p>The review has been completed and the report, which includes an analysis of the public goods aspect of forestry, is being finalised</p>	C
<p>The Department will add to its suite of environmental guidelines in the forest sector with the publication of Guidelines for Forest Recreation and Guidelines for the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessments and will legislate for the control of aerial fertilisation.</p>	137	<p>The Forest Recreation guidelines have been published. The Statutory Instrument on aerial fertilisation has been signed. Draft guidelines on the Preparation of Environmental Impact Assessments are being prepared.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
DAF will strengthen policies, and in particular continue the vaccine research project, aimed at containing the incidence of TB to enhance consumer safety and trade.	138	The current eradication programme is being reviewed under the Value for Money process which is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2007. Any recommendations contained in the report aimed at improving the effectiveness or efficiency of the programme will be examined carefully, with a view to early adoption. The presence of TB infected wildlife is an impediment to the eradication of this disease and consequently the programme includes a research project which is seeking to develop a vaccine for wildlife so as to minimise the spread of infection from wildlife to cattle. While significant progress has been made in the development of a vaccine, it is unlikely that a fully licensed and effective vaccine will be available in the short term.	C
Effective Brucellosis and BSE programmes will be continued, and focused on the aim of early eradication of both diseases.	139	The incidence of Brucellosis has declined significantly in recent years and an effective programme is being maintained with a view to eradicating this disease in the short term. In 2006, 3 herds were depopulated compared with 27 during 2005. The current intensive BSE programme has succeeded in reducing the number of BSE cases from 333 in 2002 to 41 in 2006 and the age profile of cases is increasing. The current control regime for eradication of BSE will be maintained to eradicate the disease but efforts will continue to be made to secure EU approval to raise the age limits for rapid testing in view of the consumer protection measures in place and the improved situation.	B
In the short term, scrapie surveillance will continue for sheep and goats so as to identify and deal with affected flocks. Following consultation with relevant interests, a genotyping programme for sheep will be introduced to promote production of scrapie resistant sheep thereby providing further reassurances to consumers.	140	The surveillance and related measures that are provided for in relation to scrapie will continue to be applied. Future arrangements for genotyping will be discussed with the farming and other interests following finalisation of the current negotiations at EU level.	C
The Department will encourage and support the development of industry led initiatives to further improve animal health by implementation of measures to control a range of production related diseases in cattle, sheep and pigs.	141	The Department is continuing to develop its approach to progressing an industry led initiative to deal with various non-regulated diseases which affect productivity, animal welfare and potentially public health. Further meetings are to be held with relevant stakeholders in the short to medium term to finalise outstanding issues.	C
Contingency Planning for significant disease outbreaks will be updated and further co-ordinated with industry stakeholders and other state agencies to enhance our capacity to deal with exotic diseases and pests.	142	Contingency plans for a range of animal diseases continue to be refined and updated and contacts are maintained with Departments and agencies that would assist the Department in the event of an outbreak of disease. Close liaison is also maintained with authorities in Northern Ireland and as appropriate in London. Plant Health Contingency Plans are in place for 4 major diseases which are under continuous review. A generic format for contingencies is also being developed.	B
An enhanced national monitoring and control programme for harmful plant and forest pests will be put in place, based on risk analysis and using emerging science and technologies.	143	<p>Annual surveys for specific quarantine pests as required by EU Plant Health regulations are being carried out and the situation monitored on an ongoing basis to maintain our protected zone status.</p> <p>In 2006, as part of an EU wide requirement the national forest estate was surveyed by the Forest Service for the following forest pests and diseases: Phytophthora ramorum, the causal agent of the disease known as sudden oak death, pine wood nematode and oriental chestnut gall wasp. In addition surveys of the national forest estate were also carried out for 11 separate forest pests and diseases for which Ireland has special Protected Zone status within the EU Internal Market. No quarantine pests or diseases were detected on any tree species but Phytophthora ramorum was found in two forest areas on Rhododendron.</p> <p>In addition, a special forest pest monitoring exercise was carried out on imports from non EU countries of wood packaging material associated with goods of all kinds. An Additional Forestry Inspector has been recruited for Forest Protection duties.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
Liaison with other national bodies and research institutes will be increased with the intention of developing collaborative research and control programmes for quarantine organisms.	144	The Forest Service is involved with EUPHRESKO on certain plant health research and also RAPRA project to produce an EU PRA on Phytophthora ramorum. There is also continued contact and liaison with Teagasc and COFORD, the National Council for Forest Research and Development in identifying research needs and facilitating and promoting forestry research..	C
Work will continue on the development of common policies on animal and plant health and animal welfare on an all-island basis with a view to ultimately achieving free movement of animals on the island.	145	There is close contact to DARDNI with regards to Animal and Plant Health issues and an all-island approach to specific quarantine organisms is being pursued. Progress on delivering an all-island animal health regime is also continuing.	C
The veterinary medicines regime will be revised in 2006 and kept under review thereafter to take account of developments at EU level, to protect public and animal health and welfare and to promote competitiveness of Irish agriculture.	146	The regime introduced in 2005 can be maintained largely intact in the light of the successful outcome at EU level to the case made by the Department on the exemption criteria for veterinary medicines. That outcome allows for retention of the status quo for veterinary medicines that currently do not require a veterinary prescription. The detailed arrangements for prescribing intramammary treatments which are being discussed with the relevant interests, are designed to protect public and animal health and to ensure a competitive market for medicines.	B
The animal welfare early warning system will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that it is achieving its objective of improving animal welfare by dealing with problem cases at the earliest possible stage.	147	The system continues to be kept under review with regular meetings at regional and national levels to review operation of system in different areas. In general the system is working well and relevant parties continue to contribute.	C
The new DAF Veterinary and Agriculture laboratories will be developed as centres of excellence and scientific knowledge to support and enable the effective operation of national and industry programmes on animal health, plant health and food hygiene.	148	Testing capacity to support national and industry programmes is being transferred to the new site for the laboratories at Backweston, Celbridge, Co. Kildare .	C
<p>The Department will develop joint animal health and welfare research programmes with Third Level Institutions, Teagasc, farming organisations, and the veterinary profession. These programmes, centred on the new Central Veterinary Laboratory complex at Backweston, Co. Kildare, will focus on :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Surveillance for and control of Zoonotic diseases - Surveillance for those endemic animal diseases that are of commercial significance and -The enhancement of animal welfare compliance 	149	Collaborative projects will be expanded. Surveillance for zoonotic diseases and economically important endemic diseases will be extended and control plans assisted	C

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
ICBF will work in close collaboration with researchers and farmers to establish the potential of cattle breeding for reduced disease levels and enhanced animal welfare.	150	A research project on the genetics of resistance to TB has been initiated in collaboration with ICBF, TEAGASC, DAF and UCD. ICBF has developed and implemented an evaluation system for somatic cell counts and lameness across breeds. ICBF also operate across-breed genetic evaluation system for calving ease, calf mortality and gestation length	B
A proactive approach will be taken to welfare issues and in particular a registration system and related measures for transporters of animals will put in place by DAF by January 2007 to improve conditions under which animals are transported and thereby ensuring the possibility of continuing the live trade.	151	Legislation was enacted in December 2006 and other necessary actions were taken to provide for implementation of the EU Transport Regulation from January 2007. Training and other requirements in the legislation are being addressed on an ongoing basis.	B
DAF, in conjunction with the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, will publish a national Rural Development Strategy in mid 2006, following extensive consultation with stakeholders. This will set the principles for rural development support until 2013.	152	The national rural development strategy, which provides an overview of the priorities and proposed actions for 2007-2013, was sent to the EU Commission in November 2006. The EU Commission's agreement to the proposal is still awaited. The strategy provides the basis for the support measures detailed in the CAP Rural Development Programme.	A
The two Departments will seek EU approval for a detailed CAP Rural Development Programme in the latter half of 2006. This will involve significant policy and exchequer decisions for the period 2007-2013 for major schemes such as REPS, Forestry, Disadvantaged Areas, Early Retirement, Installation Aid and the on-farm investment measures. This programme will also encompass other measures targeted in the three EU priorities mentioned above.	153	<p>Following consultation with stakeholders and an independent evaluation, the rural development programme was sent to the EU Commission in December 2006. Discussions will continue with the Commission with a view to early approval. The programme envisages total public expenditure of €7.5 billion over the three priorities of competitiveness, environment and quality of life/diversification. It reflects the outcome of the consultative/partnership process and include the following :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A REPS 4 measure that will continue to pro-actively enhance the rural environment, water quality and biodiversity. Payments under the scheme, including Natura 2000, will rise by 17% compared to REPS 3. ■ An 8% increase in Disadvantaged Area payments for approximately 100,000 farmers. ■ A new forestry programme, based on the strategic review now being undertaken, with a 15% increase in forestry premium rates. ■ A new early retirement scheme at an increased maximum payment rate of €15,000 per annum. Maximum payments to existing retirees will also be increased to €14,075 for those in ERS1 and €15,000 for those in ERS2. ■ A young farmer installation aid of €15,000. This is a 56% increase on the current rate. It will support young farmers who commit to the development of their business. ■ Special measures for suckler and dairy farmers that are set out in paragraphs 5.1 and 5.3. ■ An on-farm investment measure targeted at farmers modernising their production systems. The measure will include support for the livestock and crops sectors. <p>Payments under the new Farm Waste Management measure will be financed, at the rates already announced, from this funding package. A total of €350m will be allocated for farm waste and other on-farm investment measures.</p>	B

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
It is envisaged that the 2007-2013 Rural Development Plan will also cover the development of alternative /supplementary farm enterprises including equine breeding and production..	154	The 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme proposes the introduction of a Farm Improvement Scheme which is intended to subsume many of the elements of current OFI schemes, including the Alternative Enterprises Scheme. The grant assistance will be available for capital investments on farms.	C
An ex-ante evaluation will be carried out on the Rural Development Programme to develop priorities for future measures. It will be vital to ensure value for public money in all the measures included in the programme and that public good benefits must be clear and measurable.	155	An independent ex-ante evaluation was completed on the draft rural development programme. The evaluation report was available for the consultative process on the programme and was taken into account in finalising it prior to submission to the EU Commission.	A
As the Government is committed to an integrated approach to rural development, the national RD Strategy and Programme will complement other policy initiatives that address the economic and social well-being of rural areas.	156	The new National Development Plan recognises that the economic and social well-being of rural areas is not contingent solely on the CAP rural development strategy and programme. The NDP sets out a series of complementary policy initiatives that are summarised in its chapter on the rural economy.	B
In consultation with relevant stakeholders, a new agri-environmental scheme that pro-actively enhances environment and biodiversity will be developed by the Department for inclusion in the 2007 - 2013 RD programme. It is anticipated that this will require a very significant commitment of exchequer resources.	157	Following agreement in October 2006 on the new Social Partnership Agreement, Towards 2016, a new agri-environmental scheme is included in the draft Rural Development Plan that has been submitted to the Commission for approval. The proposed measure provides for a substantial increase in rates over the existing REPS and represents a major commitment of EU and exchequer funding for the period 2007-2013.	A
The Department will seek to ensure that the new agri-environmental scheme is operationally straightforward, with the minimum necessary burden of paperwork while ensuring proper controls on public funds and effectiveness in delivering public goods.	158	Proposals for a new agri-environmental scheme, REPS 4, have been submitted to the European Commission as part of the draft Rural Development Programme 2007-13. Detailed terms and conditions, and planning specifications, are currently being drafted although they cannot be finalised until a Commission response to the general proposals is available.	C
In the context of the Nitrates Directive, the new Farm Waste Management Scheme, with broader eligibility and enhanced grant rates, will be implemented by the Department to increase on-farm slurry storage capacity and to protect water resources. This package includes funding rates above the norm for EU co-funded schemes. It will be available for all farmers, including for the first time pig and poultry producers, who are required to carry out investment works to comply with the directive.	159	A revised FWMS was introduced in March 2006 to assist farmers meet additional requirements of the Nitrates Directive. The Scheme provided, inter alia, for: (a) increase in the max. eligible investment ceiling from €75,000 to €120,000; (b) increase in the standard grant rate to 60%, with 70% available in the four Zone C counties; (c) extension of the Scheme to include horses, deer, goats, pigs, poultry and mushroom compost; (d) removal of minimum income requirement from farming so that all farmers can participate in scheme; (e) ext of the max. income unit (IU) ceiling from 450 IUs to 650 IUs, with no upper limit being applied in the case of pig & poultry farmers. The scheme closed for new applications at the end of 2006.	C
A scheme of grant aid, demonstrating the advantages of innovative and emerging technologies in treating livestock manures, will be implemented.	160	A new Scheme was introduced in June 2006 to support the demonstration of new and emerging technologies to further assist the agricultural sector meet the requirements of the Nitrates Directive. Explain relationships of text to 'treating livestock manure'. The Scheme, which closed for new applications at the end of 2006, provided grant aid for up to ten projects throughout the State for this purpose. The maximum investment ceiling per project is €1 million and the grant rate is 40%. The 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme provides for the continuation of this Scheme.	A

Actions from 2015 Action Plan	No	Measures taken	*Status
Teagasc will intensify its advisory campaign to support pig and poultry producers in the context of complying with environmental and animal welfare requests.	161	Teagasc is conscious of the new requirements being placed on pig and poultry producers by recent environment and animal welfare legislation. It has strengthened its advisory and research programme in these areas for example, an additional pig advisor has been recruited and new research has been initiated on ways in which animal manure might be treated and used in an environmentally satisfactory way. In addition, a Working Group, chaired by DAF, has been established with terms of reference " to underpin the future of the Intensive Livestock Sector (pig, poultry incl. mushroom production) in the context of the Nitrates Regulations S.I. 378 of 2006."	B
DAF will support research and initiatives to monitor and ameliorate the impact of chemicals used in agriculture on water, air and on species inhabiting agricultural ecosystems.	162	Researchers have been encouraged to submit relevant research proposals for funding under the Stimulus and Firm programmes. 2006 RSF call Theme Area Agri-Environment included the area of environmental pollution via agriculture. DAF supported EPA monitoring of chemicals in water in the context of the Water Framework Directive requirements.	B
In consultation with the European Commission, the Department will develop a forestry programme for the 2007–2013 Rural Development period, which will underline the environmental values of forestry, including health, amenity and diversification.	163	Draft RDP prepared and submitted	A
Progress on the implementation of this Plan will be assessed each year in the Annual Report of the Minister.	164	Preparatory work on first progress report is well advanced and will be included in the 2006 Annual Report	C
DAF will review its current structure and operational strategies in 2006 to consider what changes may be required to reflect the new priorities set out in this Plan.	165	The Department appointed a firm of consultants to facilitate a review of DAF's organisation being carried out by an internal group under the direction of the Management Advisory Committee. A number of sub-groups are examining the themes identified in the Agri-vision 2015 Action Plan. The review commenced on 6th November 2006 and a draft report is expected shortly.	C
Teagasc and Bord Bia will also consider the implications of this plan for their organisations.	166	Teagasc and Bord Bia are taking full account of the AV2015 Action Plan in the development of their organisational strategies. They will consider relevant organisational issues once the DAF organisational review is further advanced.	C
A forum involving the main stakeholders, including farmers, processors consumers and retailers, as well as relevant public bodies, will be established to consider key issues for the future of the sector. The forum will also receive progress reports on the implementation of this action plan and will focus in particular on the role of the private sector in fulfilling its objectives.	167	The Stakeholder Forum will be held on 23 March 2007 in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. Minister Coughlan will host the event which includes international keynote speakers. The first progress report on the AgriVision 2015 Action Plan was presented to the forum.	A

