



Customer Action Plan

2023 - 2025

Customer Action Plan

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce Teagasc's fifth Customer Action Plan, covering the period 2023 - 2025.

We greatly value all the people and organisations we interact with and want to provide them with the best possible service. This plan provides a framework to measure, report on and develop our customer service across the organisation.

Much has changed in the world since our previous plan was published in 2019. We have been presented with new challenges and some new opportunities - many of which affect how we deliver our range of services to Teagasc customers, clients, students and stakeholders. Customer expectations also continue to evolve and it remains as important

as ever for Teagasc to adapt and develop to continue to provide high quality customer service.

In preparing this document, we have incorporated feedback from both internal and external customers to help identify opportunities to improve. A key focus that emerged from this process was the need for a more agile action plan. This plan will be reviewed and reported on annually, with provision for 'course correction' through additional or amended actions. This more flexible approach will enable us to better adapt to emerging priorities in the years ahead.

The plan supports Teagasc's Statement of Strategy 2021-2024, "Teagasc Together". The ongoing provision of high quality

research, advisory and education services relies heavily on the Teagasc Together concept. Every staff member has an important role to play in the collective effort required to ensure the successful delivery of this plan.

I would like to assure our staff that, as valued internal customers, they will be supported in working towards the delivery of the actions and initiatives set out in this plan

I am grateful to all members of staff who contributed to the preparation of the plan and to those who will be involved in its implementation.



Professor Frank O'Mara
Director of Teagasc

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Teagasc's Mandate

Teagasc – the Agriculture and Food Development authority – is the national public body providing integrated research, advisory, education and training services to the Irish agri-food sector. It was established under the Agriculture (Research, Training and Advice) Act 1988, which states that its principal functions shall be:

- ▶▶ To provide or procure educational, training, and advisory services in agriculture, including such educational, training or advisory services in agriculture as may be specified by the Minister for the purpose of giving effect to any directive, regulation or other act adopted by an institution of the European Communities.
- ▶▶ To obtain and make available to the agricultural industry the scientific and practical information in relation to agriculture required by it
- ▶▶ To understand, promote, encourage, assist, co-ordinate, facilitate and review agricultural research and development (including research and development in relation to food processing and the food processing industry).

This mandate gives Teagasc responsibility for meeting the knowledge and technology needs of the entire food chain and the authority to integrate research, advice and education services to deliver the innovation support necessary to add value to Ireland's agri-food sector.

Our Mission

To provide scientific leadership and support to Irish farmers and food companies in achieving a sustainable food system

“A sustainable food system is a food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised”.¹

Our Vision

For Teagasc to be a globally recognised leader in developing innovative science-based solutions for the sustainable transformation of our land resources into products and services for the benefit of society

¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf>

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Our Values

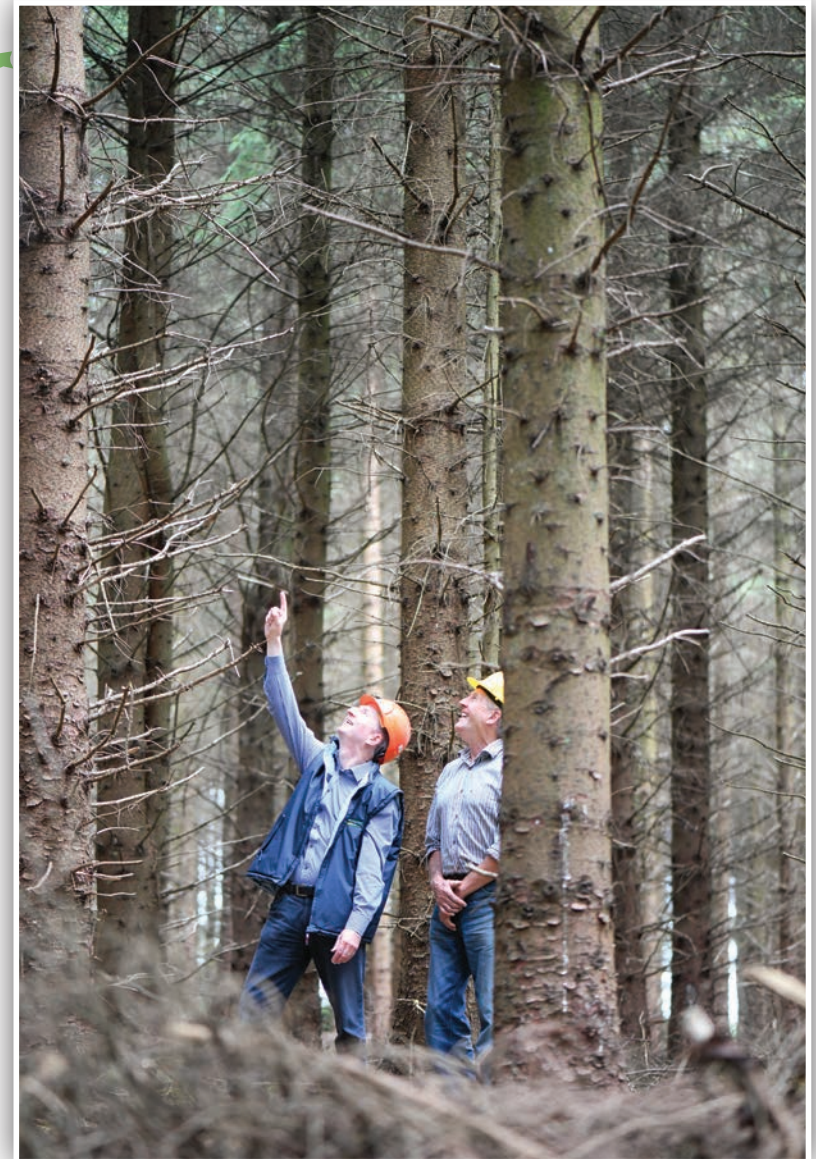
Teagasc seeks to be professional, responsive, efficient, innovative, accountable, independent and scientifically excellent in carrying out its functions

Overarching Strategic Goal

To make sustainability front and centre of all Teagasc activities

Teagasc Goals

- ▶▶ Support improvements in farmers' living standards and well-being
- ▶▶ Enhance the production and processing of safe, nutritious and flavoursome foods in line with sustainable circular bioeconomy principles
- ▶▶ Provide science-based evidence and technologies to enable Ireland meet commitments in regard to gaseous emissions, water quality and biodiversity
- ▶▶ Ensure, through science-based innovation, healthier soils, animals and people
- ▶▶ Constantly improve organisational excellence and efficiency in the delivery of our services



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Introduction

This Customer Action Plan is a framework for our customer service development. The Plan supports our efforts towards the achievement of all five of Teagasc's Strategic Goals, and in particular contributes to the pursuit of Strategic Goal 5: to constantly improve organisational excellence and efficiency in the delivery of our services.

Teagasc is committed to providing services to our customers in accordance with the twelve Quality Customer Service Guiding Principles for the public service, as set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. This action plan, developed in line with these principles, supports our Customer Charter and reinforces our commitment to evaluating and improving our customer service.

Context

The organisation's overarching strategic goal is *'to make sustainability front and centre of all Teagasc activities'*. Our work for the coming years will be framed by key national and international policy developments as set out in our Statement of Strategy 'Teagasc Together' and in Teagasc's Climate Action Strategy 2022-2030 – 'Supporting Farmers for Climate Action'.

Teagasc will provide leadership and support in a range of interconnected areas: addressing climate change and broader environmental sustainability challenges; protecting biodiversity and avoiding further losses; ensuring good livelihoods for farmers and rural businesses; enhancing the production and processing of safe, nutritious and

flavoursome foods in line with sustainable circular bioeconomy principles; ensuring healthier soils, animals and people; supporting diversification of the rural economy; promoting the circular bioeconomy, digitalisation and new disruptive technologies; and responding to changing consumer expectations for healthy and sustainable diets.

The effects these challenges will have on our customers, combined with evolving customer preferences, will need to be met with a proactive approach to providing quality customer service at Teagasc - with an emphasis on innovation, efficiency and continuous improvement.

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Plan Development and Direction

The Teagasc Quality Customer Service Committee was established by senior management to guide the development of this Action Plan and to drive its successful implementation. The Committee comprises nominated members representing a cross-section of Teagasc staff from all Directorates and functions.

As part of the plan development, the Committee held a staff workshop with input from external customer experience experts. The workshop explored three main areas: a) a retrospective on the previous plan; b) future thinking - developing a perspective of external factors that may impact our services; and c) scale of ambition - mapping the organisational and customer value of prioritised areas of focus.

A central take-away from the workshop was the need to move from a static

document to a more directional and guiding framework which supports the efficient and agile provision of quality customer services across the organisation. In acknowledging from the outset that context and priorities can and will evolve during the period of the plan, it was considered that a mechanism to facilitate regular review and reporting - with corrective action as required - would significantly improve the effectiveness of the plan throughout its duration.

To facilitate this approach, the Committee will review progress and propose corrective actions (additions or amendments) to the Senior Management Group as part of its annual progress report, as set out in the action list below.



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Our Customers

Teagasc has a wide range of customers, including, in no particular order:

- ▶▶ Farmer clients
- ▶▶ Existing and prospective students
- ▶▶ The Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine
- ▶▶ Our staff
- ▶▶ The general public
- ▶▶ Other government departments and agencies
- ▶▶ Farm organisations
- ▶▶ Agriculture and food industry stakeholders
- ▶▶ Collaborating researchers and research institutions
- ▶▶ Suppliers

How we deliver services

Teagasc is a leading public organisation in the fields of agriculture and food research in Ireland, undertaking innovative research, advisory and education covering the following broad thematic areas:

- ▶▶ Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation
- ▶▶ Crops, Environment and Land Use
- ▶▶ Food
- ▶▶ Rural Economy and Development

Teagasc is a key node in Ireland's Agri-food Knowledge Innovation System (AKIS) (see Figure 1). It is unique internationally in having the three pillars of the innovation system (research, education and advisory functions) within one organisation.

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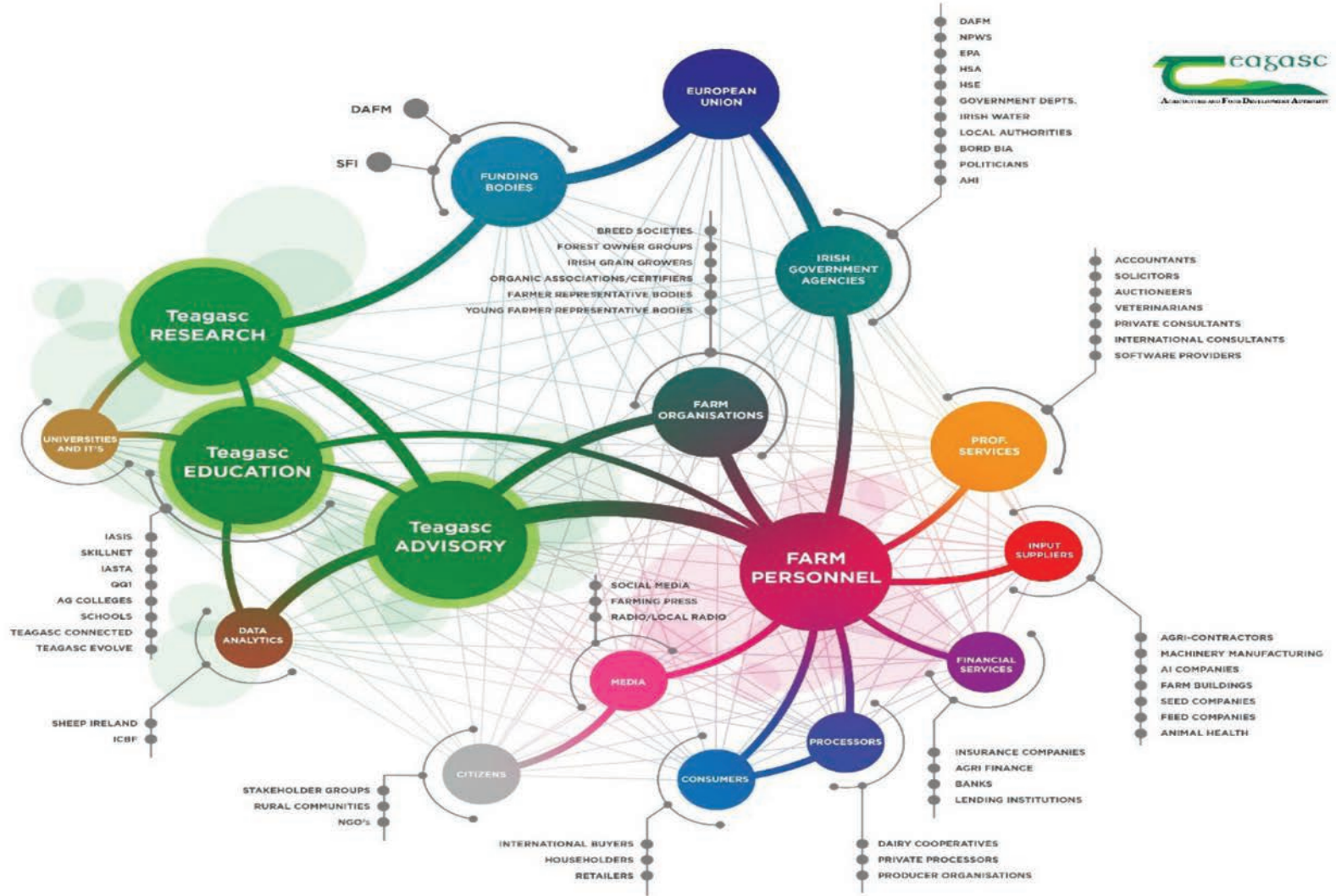


Figure 1: The Irish Agricultural Knowledge Innovation System (AKIS)

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Research

Our internationally competitive research programme is delivered by approximately 250 researchers trained to PhD level and supported by technical, farm and administrative staff. The organisation's highly innovative Walsh Scholarship Programme enables the training of the future generation of scientists and professional farm advisors.

Teagasc is a much sought-after research partner by international research organisations, with close relationships with more than 150 research institutes and universities around the world. Teagasc research is highly competitive at national and international level; Teagasc is ranked 6th in 2022 in terms of the number and value of projects funded by the European Commission in Horizon Europe under the Cluster that addresses Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment. The 2022 Clarivate list of highly cited researchers which identifies the top researchers from all over the world based on their publication record over the last decade includes four Teagasc researchers which is the third highest number of any research organisation or university in Ireland.



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Advisory

Our advisory services support farmer innovation in the management of their farms and provide access to technologies they can apply to improve their competitiveness and address sustainability challenges on their farms.

The advisory programme is delivered by approximately 260 front-line advisors located across twelve regional advisory areas. Teagasc provides an information service to all (approximately 130,000) farmers in Ireland, of whom approximately 44,000 avail of our intensive farm advisory services.

Our advisory programme areas include Business and Technology (focussed on dairy, drystock and tillage enterprises), Soils and Environment, ASSAP (focussed on water quality), organic farming, and commencing in 2023 the Signpost Advisory Programme – a key pillar of Teagasc’s Climate Action Strategy 2022-2030 – ‘Supporting Farmers for Climate Action’.

Teagasc uses a blended approach of digital and face-to-face methodologies to communicate with advisory clients. Significant progress has been made in recent years in moving to digital advisory service delivery, and we are now in a position to provide many online services to clients, such as webinars and online applications. Teagasc has also developed a number of innovative decision-support tools to assist farmers, including Profit Monitor, Nutrient Management Planning Online and PastureBase Ireland. Farm visits and one-to-one contact continue to be essential for some aspects of advisory work and especially in relation to environmental work, which is becoming a bigger proportion of our activity.



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Education and Training

Education and training lie at the heart of our mission and the organisation is the main provider of education and training for the land-based sector, as well as being a significant training provider to the food industry. Teagasc is a registered training provider with Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and collaborates with many education stakeholders including the Universities, to deliver quality-driven, applied education and training programmes. These are delivered through our four Teagasc Colleges and also in partnership with three private agricultural Colleges.

We have recently begun to develop a new continuous professional development (CPD) service known as Teagasc Evolve, which will enable farmers and others to continue to upskill and adapt to challenges and opportunities in the industry.

The organisation is equally committed to transferring its latest discoveries to the food industry through facilitation of access to cutting-edge research, infrastructure and highly qualified and skilled employees.



Teagasc Customer Charter

*This charter outlines the level of service we aim to provide to our customers.
Our Customer Action Plan is available on our website www.teagasc.ie.*

Customer Charter

Our commitments to you

In providing services we will ensure:

- ▶ Your requests are responded to promptly and in a helpful and courteous manner
- ▶ You are treated fairly and professionally
- ▶ Your information is protected
- ▶ You can easily access information about our services
- ▶ Persons under 18 years of age are safeguarded in line with the Children First Act 2015 and the Teagasc Safeguarding Policy

In providing information we will ensure:

- ▶ Our website is up-to-date, clear, accurate and accessible
- ▶ Technical information is presented in easily understood formats
- ▶ Information is delivered to a consistently high standard

In arranging events we will ensure:

- ▶ You are notified at least three days in advance
- ▶ Events are well signposted and start punctually

We will strive to ensure our facilities:

- ▶ Are safe, accessible, clean and comfortable
- ▶ Have clear and appropriate signage

For office meetings or farm visits we will:

- ▶ Keep our appointments with you or inform you of unavoidable delays



To maintain the high quality of our services and research we will:

- ▶ Consult with stakeholders to ensure our services remain relevant to industry needs
- ▶ Undertake regular international peer review of our research services
- ▶ Promote publication of research results in international peer-reviewed journals

Help us to help you

To assist us in providing quality services we ask that you:

- ▶ Make appointments for consultations or visits
- ▶ Notify us in the event of delay or cancellation
- ▶ Treat our staff with courtesy and consideration
- ▶ Notify our staff of issues for discussion in advance, to enable us to prepare
- ▶ Provide information or documents requested by our staff without delay

What to expect when you contact us

We aim to:

- ▶ Answer your calls promptly during office hours
- ▶ Connect you with someone who can help, or arrange a call back
- ▶ Respond to queries promptly
- ▶ Include full staff contact details on all correspondence

Target query response times:

Telephone:	Two working days
Email:	Two working days
Letter:	Five working days

Where an answer cannot be provided within these timeframes, we will inform you of when you can expect a full response.

Service through Irish

- ▶ We will endeavour to deal with customers through Irish where requested
- ▶ The Irish language version of the Customer Charter is available on our website www.teagasc.ie

We value your feedback

Please email comments and suggestions to qcs@teagasc.ie or fill out a Customer Comment Card, available at Teagasc offices or online at www.teagasc.ie.

If you are not satisfied with our service, please tell us. Complaints will be promptly and fairly investigated. If we have made a mistake, we will apologise and work to rectify the situation quickly.

Teagasc is committed to safeguarding the rights of the complainant and Teagasc staff.

A complaint will not affect how we treat you in the future.

Customer complaints procedure

- ▶ Tell the staff member you normally deal with that you are not satisfied. You can do this in person, on the phone or in writing.
- ▶ If you are not satisfied with the response you receive, you can make a written request for a local review of your complaint to the staff member's manager.
- ▶ If, having gone through the local review process, you are not satisfied, please contact our Quality Customer Service Officer on **059 9170200** or email qcs@teagasc.ie to request a review by an independent Teagasc staff member.

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been adequately resolved by our customer complaints process, you can contact the Ombudsman, or the Ombudsman for Children if you are under 18.

Office of the Ombudsman

6 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02W773
Tel: +353 (0)1 639 5600
www.ombudsman.ie

Ombudsman for Children's Office

Millennium House,
52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1, D01 F5P8
Tel: Freephone 1800 202040
Email: ococomplaint@oco.ie
www.oco.ie



Contact Details:

Teagasc Head Office

Teagasc, Oak Park, Carlow, R93 XE12

Email: info@teagasc.ie

(General Enquiries)

Email: qcs@teagasc.ie

(Quality Customer Service Officer)

Website: www.teagasc.ie

Phone: +353 (0)59 917 0200

Teagasc registered Charity Number: 20022754

January 2023

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Actions

Teagasc will undertake a range of actions to improve the quality of our customer service during the period of this plan. The actions are set out in accordance with the twelve Principles of Quality Customer Service for the public service, as defined by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

1. Quality Service Standards

Publish a statement (Customer Charter) that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
1.1	Promote and raise awareness of our Customer Charter	> Customer Charter on display in all offices and available on our website
1.2	Report annually on progress in achieving service standards and propose course correction actions	> Report annually to Senior Management on Customer Action Plan progress > Review and update Action List annually

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2. Equality/Diversity

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community). Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
2.1	Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Certificate of competence designed and rolled out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Programme of D&I training modules available and promoted to staff
2.2	Identify a calendar month that Teagasc will focus on D&I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > After the conclusion of 2022 as the year of D&I, agree a particular month each year going forward that will be Teagasc D&I month
2.3	Identify organisations to partner with in order to encourage and support candidates with disabilities taking up employment in Teagasc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Organisations identified and recruitment pilot carried out with selected organisation
2.4	Take measures to maintain access to Teagasc for Advisory clients at a geographic disadvantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Review provision of local clinics annually
2.5	Provide information in formats accessible to all people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Number and nature of requests for information in alternative formats > Number of podcasts and subtitled videos produced > Survey customers on accessibility and identify actions > Evaluate introduction of website text-to-speech software
2.6	Encourage participation of a diversity of learners on Teagasc Education Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Access Officer in place > Number of participants on Special Purpose programme > Percentage of college places reserved for people with disadvantage / disability > Provision of readers for students with learning disabilities when completing college written assessments > Student advice programme introduced on 24/7 basis for full-time Teagasc students who may be encountering personal difficulties > Dedicated learning support specialist appointed
2.7	Progress the actions from the Teagasc Report on the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Report on Action Plan progress annually

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3. Physical Access

Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
3.1	Ensure access is a priority concern in all new building or renovation works	> New offices and refurbishments meet accessibility regulations
3.2	Ensure Teagasc locations comply with health and safety legislation	> Up-to-date safety statements in place at all locations
3.3	Ensure Teagasc locations can offer clients privacy if required	> Proportion of locations with facilities to enable client privacy

4. Information

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication. Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
4.1	Ensure staff are equipped with the technical knowledge, skills and attributes to deliver a quality service	> Corporate training plan aligned to business needs in place
4.2	Ensure that Teagasc information communicated to the public is clear and accurate	> Use of the <i>Customer Communications Toolkit for the Public Service</i> and the <i>Plain English Style Guide for the Public Service</i> promoted > Satisfaction levels among surveyed groups in relation to information
4.3	Expand and Improve the use of social media platforms and video content to engage with our customers	> Numbers trained in social media use / video production > Up-to-date guidelines for social media usage in place > Social media metrics
4.4	Ensure public website content is up-to-date, clear, accurate and accessible	> Departments with scheduled web content reviews > Regular update of staff contact details

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5. Timeliness and Courtesy

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer. Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
5.1	Adhere to the timeliness and courtesy protocols detailed in the Customer Charter	> Satisfaction levels among surveyed groups in relation to timeliness and courtesy
5.2	Follow best practice in the use of voicemail and email out-of-office	> Up-to-date telephone and email usage guidelines in place
5.3	Provide and promote customer service training	> Number of staff participating in customer service training
5.4	Review reception phone technology and procedures	> Standardised procedures/guidelines for reception with appropriate reporting and KPI's

6. Complaints

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
6.1	Publicise our customer complaints procedure widely	> Customer Charter available at all offices and prominent on website
6.2	Ensure Customer Comment Cards are readily available	> Customer Comment Cards available in all offices/centres > Digital version prominently available on website > Feedback received reviewed and actions identified
6.3	Monitor customer complaints and feedback to identify opportunities for improvement	> Customer complaints and feedback collated centrally > Annual report on trends and areas for improvement to Senior Management
6.4	Review complaints management processes and procedures	> Review completed with revised processes promoted internally

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7. Appeals

Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
7.1	Ensure customers are aware of their options if unhappy with how a complaint has been dealt with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Customer Charter available at all offices and prominent on website > Ombudsman contact details included on Customer Charter
7.2	Publish a revised recruitment appeals process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Recruitment appeals documentation updated

8. Consultation and Evaluation

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
8.1	Stakeholder partnership groups to meet at least once a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Number of stakeholder groups and meetings held
8.2	Carry out surveys with external customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Numbers of surveys carried out, customers surveyed > Actions arising from survey results > Surveying tools and usage policy in place
8.3	Evaluate a range of Teagasc programmes and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Numbers of evaluation reports and action plans completed

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9. Choice

Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
9.1	Provide courses through a variety of channels	> Numbers of online and part-time courses and participants
9.2	Provide choice in payment options	> Range of payment options in place
9.3	Communicate information to customers using a range of appropriate channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Number of clients receiving newsletters by post and email > Number of newsletters published online > Number of SMS messages sent > Number of Teagasc App and Teagasc Daily posts > Social media metrics > Number of virtual, in person and hybrid events held

10. Official Language Equality

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
10.1	Provide Teagasc services through Irish on request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Number of customers requesting and availing of services through Irish > List of staff available to provide services through Irish reviewed annually > Services and information available in Irish detailed on the Teagasc website

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No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
10.2	Produce key publications and press releases in both English and Irish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Number / proportion of press releases issued in English and Irish > Number of publications published in English and Irish
10.3	Continue to implement provision of Irish Language services under the Official Language (Amendment) Act 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Progress against service targets set out in the Official Language (Amendment) Act 2021

11. Better Coordination

Foster a more coordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
11.1	Collaborate with Universities particularly through the Walsh Scholarships Programme and QQI approved agricultural training courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Number of students participating in the Walsh Scholarships Programme > Number of students enrolled on higher education courses > Agreements / alliances with higher education institutions
11.2	Continue to develop and implement joint programmes with industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Number of joint programmes with industry
11.3	Leverage Teagasc's integrated research, advisory and education capacity to improve our service delivery, in support of the 'Teagasc Together' ethos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Report on internal collaboration initiatives > Number of cross-functional working groups reporting to Senior Management Group

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12. Internal Customer

Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

No.	Action	Deliverables/Performance Indicators
12.1	E-Induction programme rolled out to ensure new staff get a timely, consistent induction experience across the organisation	> New programme rolled out
12.2	Ensure FAQs are available for reception staff at each centre / office to address common queries	> FAQs updated by local management and staff and in place
12.3	Encourage QCS improvement suggestions from staff	> Collate and report on suggestions submitted
12.4	Manager Elevate Programme rolled out to ensure that Teagasc managers receive ongoing CPD to assist with their people manager roles	> A minimum of two days people skills development delivered per year to Teagasc Managers
12.5	Improve internal communications	> Up-to-date guidelines in place for communication systems/tools > Proportion of staff using profile pictures > Numbers of staff surveys carried out, staff surveyed > Actions arising from staff survey results > WNet information kept up-to-date, clear and accessible
12.6	Roll out new home working policy	> Policy fully operational with information and training provided to staff and managers
12.7	New Manager Human Resource Management (HRM) Induction training	> Pilot programme up and running
12.8	Mid-Career Checkpoint programme to assist staff to reassess their pension/financial options and prepare for the future	> Programme rolled out
12.9	Develop Accommodation Passport to ensure ease of access to accommodations or supports required by staff who have a disability	> Accommodation Passport rolled out to all staff, training provided to all managers

