



# Customer Action Plan

2019 - 2021

# Customer Action Plan

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# Customer Action Plan

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## Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the fourth Customer Action Plan for Teagasc, covering the period 2019 - 2021.

This action plan aims to build on progress achieved in recent years, and provides a framework to measure, report on and improve the quality of our customer service across the organisation. Communication and engagement with our customers is essential in planning and developing our service delivery. In preparing this document, we have incorporated feedback from both internal and external customers to help identify emerging challenges and opportunities to improve our customer service.

The significant challenges facing our customers and stakeholders in the agri-food industry in the coming years, coupled with the rapid level of technological change in the environment in which we operate, will continue to impact on how we do our work and deliver value at Teagasc.

Every Teagasc staff member has an important role to play in delivering quality customer service. There will be an increasing need for staff to be adaptable and to develop their knowledge and skills. I would like to assure staff that, as valued internal customers, they will be properly supported in working towards the successful delivery of the improvements and new 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 in the years ahead.



Professor Gerry Boyle  
**Director**

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## *Teagasc mandate*

Teagasc 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”
- » “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.

### *Mission*

“To support science-based innovation in the agri-food sector and wider bio economy so as to underpin profitability, competitiveness, and sustainability”

### *Vision*

Teagasc wishes to be nationally and internationally recognized as the knowledge provider of choice for Ireland’s agri-food sector.

### *Organisational values*

We aim to be professional, responsive, efficient, accountable and independent while endeavouring to attain scientific excellence in all our activities and working in partnership with other organisations to meet the needs of our stakeholders.

### *Teagasc goals*

- » Improve the competitiveness of agriculture, food and the wider bioeconomy
- » Support sustainable farming and the environment
- » Encourage diversification of the rural economy and enhance the quality of life in rural areas
- » Enhance organisational capability and deliver value for money

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## Introduction

This Customer Action Plan is a framework for our customer service development over the next three years. It plays a key role in contributing towards our goal of enhancing organisational capability and delivering value for money.

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

Agriculture faces significant challenges in the coming decades. On the one hand, it must produce more food for a growing, increasingly affluent global population that requires a more diverse, protein-rich diet. On the other, it must also compete for lucrative new markets, while vying for access to increasingly scarce natural resources, preserving biodiversity, water and soil quality, restoring fragile ecosystems and mitigating the effects of climate change.

The agri-food industry is also facing new challenges arising from the decision of the UK to exit the European Union (Brexit). While the short-term implications of this decision are already apparent in terms of the impact of changes in the value of Sterling against the Euro, the medium-to-long-term impact will only become clear as the exact terms of Brexit are agreed over the coming years.

The effects these challenges will have on our customers, combined with evolving customer expectations and preferences, will need to be met with a proactive approach to providing quality customer service at Teagasc - with a renewed emphasis on innovation, efficiency and continuous improvement. Increasingly, customers expect to avail of information and services online and via mobile devices and to engage with service providers through social media. Developing our capacity in these areas will be a key focus, whilst also striving to build on our strong record of customer service delivered in person and through traditional communication channels.

Meeting the needs and expectations of our customers will present significant challenges in the years ahead. This plan seeks to help meet these challenges, and is aligned with and supports objectives set out in the Teagasc Statement of Strategy, Teagasc People Strategy and Teagasc Education Vision.

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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
- ▶▶ Other government departments and agencies
- ▶▶ Farm organisations
- ▶▶ Agriculture and food industry stakeholders
- ▶▶ Collaborating researchers and research institutions
- ▶▶ Suppliers
- ▶▶ Our staff
- ▶▶ The general public

## How we deliver services

Teagasc is the leading public organisation in the fields of agriculture and food research in Ireland, undertaking innovative research, knowledge dissemination 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 the one organisation.

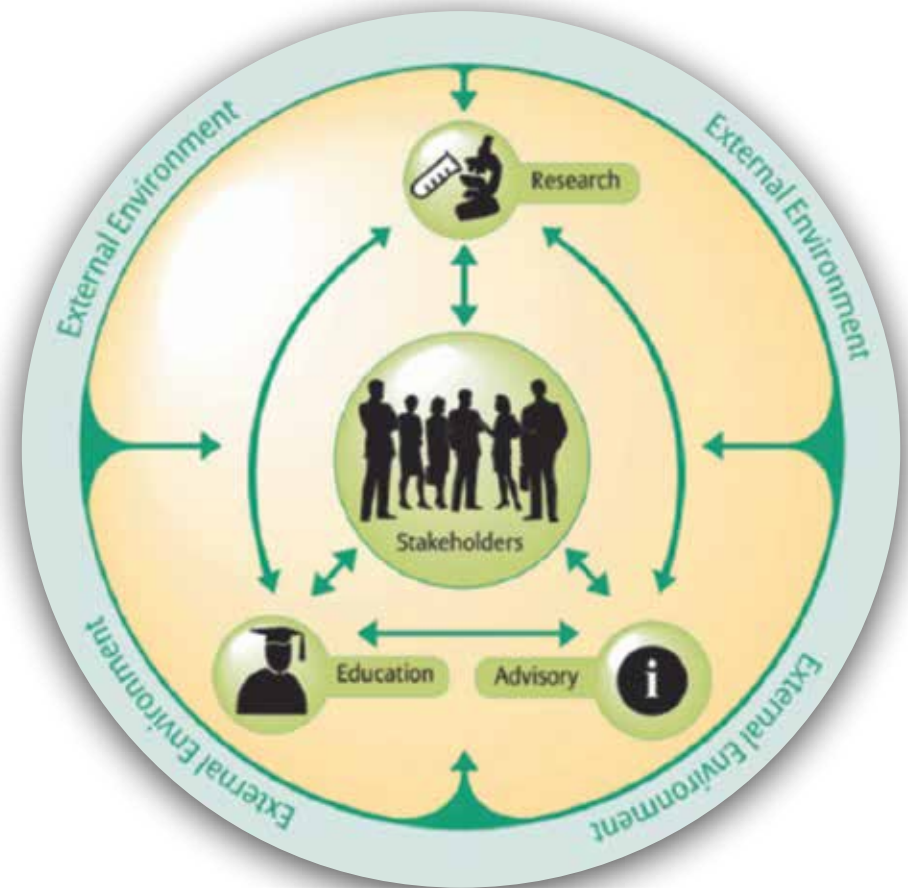


Figure 1: Teagasc Agricultural Knowledge Innovation System (AKIS)

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## Research

Our annual research portfolio comprises some 300 research projects undertaken by 500 scientific and technical staff. We collaborate extensively with our colleagues in Irish institutes of higher education. Our Walsh Fellowships post-graduate programme supports more than 250 Ph.D. and M.Sc. students annually and enhances this collaboration. We compete successfully in EU research programmes and we have developed bilateral agreements with many research organisations internationally.

## Advisory

Knowledge transfer supports innovation by farmers in the management of their businesses and provides access to the technologies they can apply to improve their competitiveness. The Teagasc Knowledge Transfer advisory programme is delivered by advisers in twelve advisory regions. These advisers are in contact with some 80,000 farmers and rural dwellers each year, of whom approximately 45,000 avail of our intensive farm consultancy service.

The best technologies and the latest research are transferred to farmers using a variety of methods, including discussion groups, individual consultations, farm management newsletters, education and training, and a large number of public events. The advisory programme is supported by subject-matter specialists within the research programme to ensure effective transfer of new information and to focus on meeting the development needs of a diverse farming and rural population.

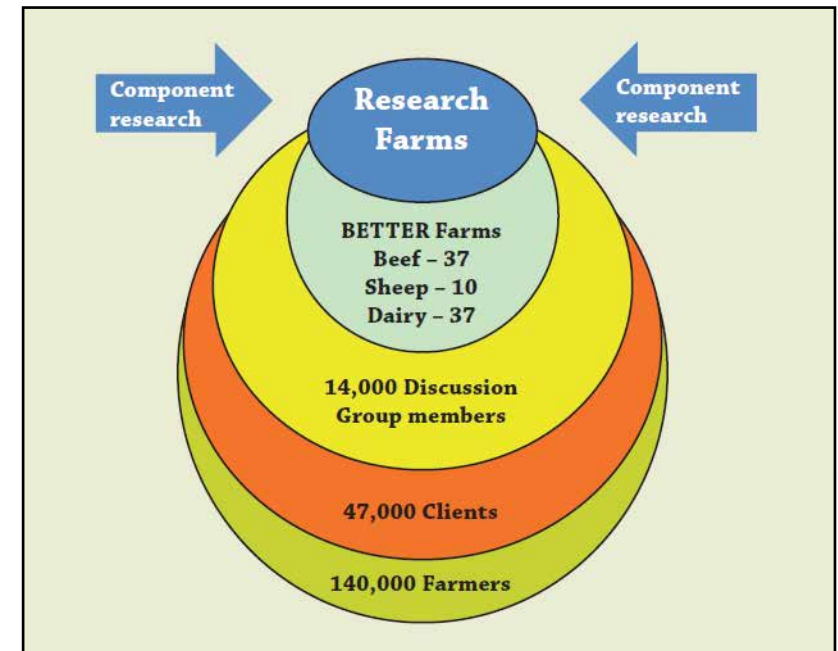


Figure 2: Cascade Model – operational version of the Teagasc AKIS

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## Education

Teagasc has a statutory remit to provide and procure the provision of 'educational training and advisory services in agriculture'. The Act requires Teagasc to '... have particular regard to the need for, and the importance of, agricultural training and education for young person s...'

Teagasc is the primary provider of accredited further (vocational) education and training at Levels 5 and 6 on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) for the land sector. Teagasc, through its partnership with the higher education sector, has a substantial input into higher education delivery at NFQ Levels 7 and 8. The organisation also has a substantial collaborative involvement in postgraduate education studies at Level 9 (Masters) and even more extensively at Level 10 (PhD) with about 250 postgraduates participating annually.

Teagasc education, advisory and research services also have a substantial involvement in both accredited and non-accredited short duration training courses and continuous professional development for adult farmers, operatives and professionals operating across the land and food sectors.





# Teagasc Customer Charter

*This charter outlines the level of service we aim to provide to our customers. Our Customer Action Plan for 2019-2021 is available on our website [www.teagasc.ie](http://www.teagasc.ie).*

## Customer Charter 2019 - 2021



### 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 clean, comfortable, safe and accessible
- ▶ 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](http://www.teagasc.ie)

## We value your feedback

Please email comments and suggestions to [qcs@teagasc.ie](mailto:qcs@teagasc.ie) or fill out a Customer Comment Card, available at Teagasc offices or online at [www.teagasc.ie](http://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 any staff member involved.

A complaint will not affect how we might 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](mailto: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

18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2, D02 HE97  
Tel: 01 639 5600  
Email: [info@ombudsman.ie](mailto:info@ombudsman.ie)  
[www.ombudsman.ie](http://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](mailto:ococomplaint@oco.ie)  
[www.oco.ie](http://www.oco.ie)



### Contact Details:

#### Teagasc Head Office

Oak Park, Carlow, R93 XE12, Ireland.

Tel: +353 (0) 59 9170200

Fax: +353 (0) 59 9182097

Email: [info@teagasc.ie](mailto:info@teagasc.ie) (general enquiries)

Email: [qcs@teagasc.ie](mailto:qcs@teagasc.ie) (Quality Customer Service Officer)

[www.teagasc.ie](http://www.teagasc.ie)

January 2019



# Customer Action Plan

## 2019 - 2021

## Actions

Teagasc will undertake a range of actions to improve the quality of its customer service during the period of this plan (2019-2021). 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	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	> Report annually to senior management and the Authority on Customer Action Plan progress
1.3	Develop a new Staff Excellence Reward & Recognition programme to include an award for excellence in customer service	> Programme developed and initiated
1.4	Review and improve the induction and probation processes including enhancing the formal induction training programme to include an awareness session on our Customer Charter and Action Plan	> Process review carried out in 2019 > Actions arising implemented

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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	Performance Indicators
2.1	Raise awareness of diversity/equality through an appropriate forum (e.g. training/workshop)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Annual Conference held (commencing 2018)</li> <li>&gt; Diversity training rolled out across Teagasc by end of 2019</li> <li>&gt; Diversity video developed for interview boards and new staff for 2019</li> <li>&gt; Leadership skills for female staff rolled out in 2019-2020</li> <li>&gt; Diversity updates on intranet, Table Talk and staff meetings</li> </ul>
2.2	Develop a Gender Action Plan, commence implementation, measure impact and apply for a relevant industry award/accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Gender Action Plan developed in 2019</li> <li>&gt; Action Plan implemented</li> <li>&gt; Achieve EU Horizon 2020 funding to progress gender initiatives by 2019</li> <li>&gt; Partner with Athena Swan to extend charter for Teagasc application by end 2020</li> <li>&gt; Gender and diversity statistics more widely available and showing trends of improvement</li> </ul>
2.3	Take measures to maintain access to Teagasc for Advisory clients at a geographic disadvantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Review provision of local clinics annually</li> </ul>
2.4	Provide information in formats accessible to people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Number and nature of requests for information in alternative formats</li> <li>&gt; Number of podcasts and subtitled videos produced</li> <li>&gt; Survey customers on accessibility and identify actions</li> <li>&gt; Evaluate introduction of website text-to-speech software</li> </ul>

Continued Overleaf

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## 2. Equality/Diversity continued

No.	Action	Performance Indicators
2.5	Encourage participation of people with disadvantage/disabilities on Teagasc education courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Access Officer in place</li> <li>&gt; Number of participants on Special Purpose programme</li> <li>&gt; Percentage of college places reserved for people with disadvantage / disability</li> <li>&gt; Provision of readers for students with learning disabilities when completing college written assessments</li> <li>&gt; Student advice programme introduced on 24/7 basis for full-time Teagasc students who may be encountering personal difficulties</li> <li>&gt; Dedicated learning support specialist appointed</li> </ul>

## 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	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

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## 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	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	Introduce online application system for full-time education courses	> Online application system implemented replacing current paper-based application system

## 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	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

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### 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	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 to customers	> 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

### 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	Performance Indicators
7.1	Ensure customers are aware of their options if unhappy with how a complaint has been dealt with	> Customer Charter available at all offices and prominent on website > Ombudsman contact details included on Customer Charter



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## 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	Performance Indicators
8.1	Stakeholder partnership groups to meet at least once a year	> Number of stakeholder groups and meetings held
8.2	Carry out surveys with external customers	> 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	> Numbers of evaluation reports and action plans completed > Use of Net Promoter Score piloted

## 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	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	> Improved / expanded online payment options in place
9.3	Communicate information to customers using a range of appropriate channels	> Number of clients receiving newsletters by email > Number of newsletters published online > Number of SMS messages sent > Social media metrics > Number of conferences available in digital format

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## 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	Performance Indicators
10.1	Provide Teagasc services through Irish on request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Number of customers requesting and availing of services through Irish</li><li>&gt; List of staff available to provide services through Irish reviewed annually</li><li>&gt; Services and information available in Irish detailed on the Teagasc website</li></ul>
10.2	Produce key publications and press releases in both English and Irish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Number / proportion of press releases issued in Irish</li><li>&gt; Number of publications published in Irish</li></ul>

## 11. Better Coordination

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

No.	Action	Performance Indicators
11.1	Collaborate with Universities and Institutes of Technology, particularly through the Walsh Fellowships Programme and HETAC-approved agricultural training courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Number of students participating in the Walsh Fellowships Programme</li><li>&gt; Number of students enrolled on higher education courses</li><li>&gt; Agreements / alliances with higher education institutions</li></ul>
11.2	Continue to develop and implement joint programmes with industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Number of joint programmes with industry</li></ul>

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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	Performance Indicators
12.1	Implement an eRecruit solution that delivers a better service to end users and the organisation	> New solution deployed
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 12.4	Encourage QCS improvement suggestions from staff Implement roll out of new internal health and safety system	> 'Suggestion box' form added to QCS intranet page > Number of centres with new H&S software system rolled out > Number of centres with new traffic management plan implemented
12.5	Improve internal communications	> Up-to-date Lync (or Skype for Business) and Outlook guidelines in place > Proportion of staff using Lync/Outlook profile pictures > Effective meeting guidelines in place > Numbers of staff surveys carried out, staff surveyed > Actions arising from staff survey results

