

# Surge in diversification – register now for an Options workshop

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**S**hocks like COVID-19, Brexit uncertainty and falling farm-gate prices force us to think about long-term resilience, so it's not a coincidence that there has been a recent steady increase in enquiries about future-proofing farm businesses through diversification; big farms, tiny farms, all looking for ways to do things differently and supplement family income.

Farm diversification involves adding further or different products and services to your existing produce. The best diversifications complement the existing farm business by improving cashflow and reducing income volatility.

Before progressing a diversification idea, rural families need to examine all aspects of their existing business, such as:

- What resources are available in relation to land, finances, labour, buildings and family skills?
- Does a diversification idea fit in with long-term plans in terms of education or succession?
- Is your farm suitable in terms of location, access, distance to markets and broadband?
- Are there other locally based enterprises that you could work with?
- Is your idea seasonal? Does it complement your existing enterprise or is it totally new?
- Look at similar enterprises, or products online – think like a customer!

The key is to think ahead and look at every aspect of the project before making a commitment – and seek advice.

Each autumn, Teagasc Options workshops are held regionally to explore potential to generate additional income streams both inside and outside the farm gate.

Farmers who have taken the plunge explain why and how they diversified their farm businesses, while Teagasc



specialists provide information on organics, renewable energy/energy-saving, equine enterprises, tourism, forestry and artisan food.

Visits to farms with successfully diversified farm enterprises are usually a key aspect of the workshops.

Participants also have the opportunity to network with local development and training agencies such as the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), Local Development (LEADER) Companies, Education and Training Boards (ETB) and Intreo.

Options workshops provide an opportunity to meet like-minded people and mentors who can answer questions about grants, legal, finance and insurance issues. Options workshops cover a wide range of topics; click to view the short Options video made by Brendan Garry at Teagasc Mayo or go to [www.teagasc.ie/ruraldev](http://www.teagasc.ie/ruraldev).

Rural tourism is one of the most

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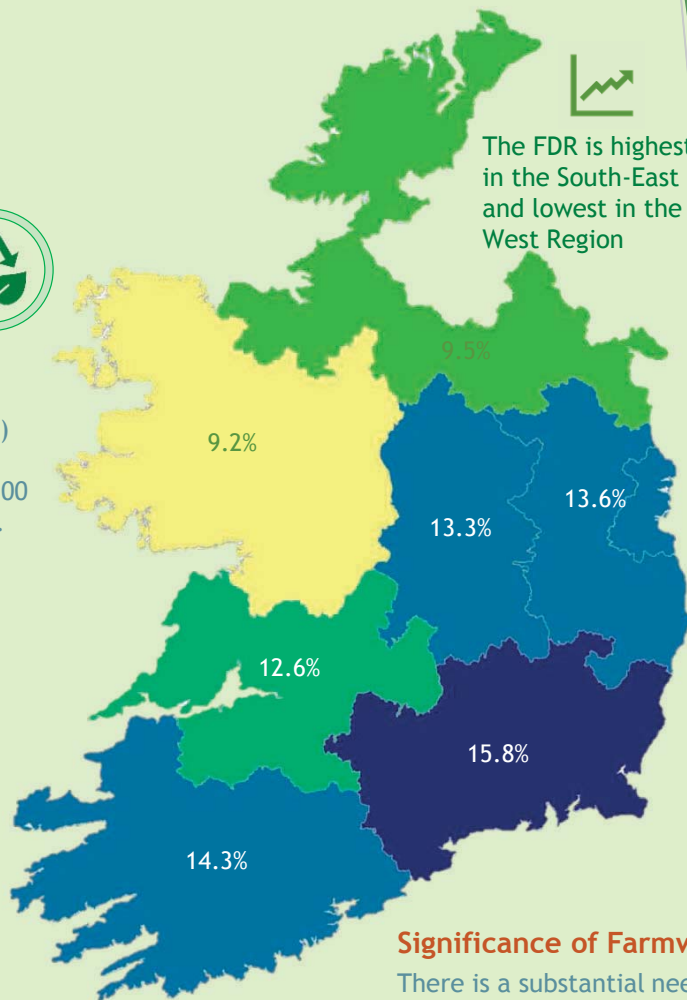
## Farm Diversification



www.teagasc.ie/ruraldev



### Regional Farm Diversification Rate (FDR)



The FDR is highest in the South-East and lowest in the West Region

Of the 137,000 farms in Ireland in 2016, 11,500 (12%) had at least one diversified enterprise. There were 19,500 diversified farm enterprises.

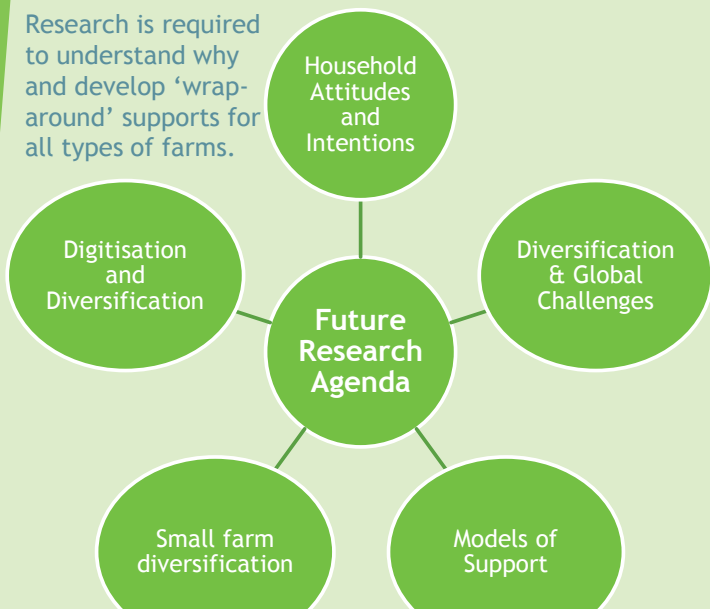
The most common types of diversified enterprises are forestry and contracting. These account for 76% of all diversified enterprises

There are a variety of other types of diversified enterprises including tourism related businesses, food processing, home crafts and renewable energy production.

### Supporting Sustainable Farm Livelihoods

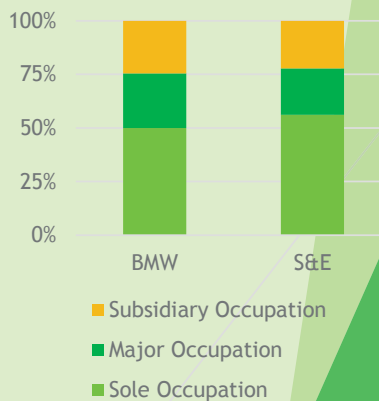
Compared to other EU countries, the diversification rate in Ireland remains low.

Research is required to understand why and develop 'wrap-around' supports for all types of farms.



### Significance of Farmwork

There is a substantial need for additional farm household income. 50% of farms in the BMW region do not generate sufficient income to meet their needs.



David Meredith, Teagasc, 2020. Data: CSO, Farm Structures Survey 2016



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popular diversification workshops each year and resulted in the publication of the Teagasc Rural Tourism Booklet which is a “how-to” guide to rural and agri-tourism opportunities.

From mid-2021, the BIA Innovator Campus under construction at Teagasc, Athenry, will provide training and supports for a wide range of artisan food, food tourism products and food business development, where food producers can also benefit from access to Teagasc Food Research Centres in Ashtown and Moorepark, through on-site and remote training and advice.

To express an interest in a Teagasc Options workshop in your region, please register on [www.opt-in.ie/options](http://www.opt-in.ie/options) to receive information regarding upcoming Options workshops.

Workshops are generally free of charge but prior booking is essential. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, some elements of Options 2020 workshops may take place online.

Visit [www.teagasc.ie/ruraldev](http://www.teagasc.ie/ruraldev) for more information and for the web-links in this article. You can also register with [www.Opt-In.ie](http://www.Opt-In.ie) to view training opportunities with national and local agencies and receive notifications of training opportunities in your area.



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**Options 2020**  
think • plan • act

Improve your Farm Income with Teagasc Options for Farm Families Workshops

**A Teagasc Options workshop will:**

- Provide you with new thinking
- Generate new ideas
- Generate additional income on and off farm

**The specific aims of this workshop are to:**

- Build ambition for growth and change
- Build belief that: 'it is possible'
- Build an understanding that there are lots of existing supports available to do this
- Remove common barriers to diversification such as: Fear of the unknown; Fear of failure; Fear of change

**Some of the topics covered will be:**

- Assessing your enterprise
- Developing your idea
- Food enterprise possibilities
- Energy crops
- Forestry
- Renewables
- Organic opportunities
- Rural Tourism
- Marketing and direct selling
- A business plan - the basics
- Applying for grant aid
- Family farm finance
- Business supports
- Succession

**Network with local agencies such as:**

- Local Enterprise Offices
- Local Development Companies (LEADER)
- Education and Training Boards (ETB)



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**Examples of Enterprises which could be supported through Options:**

- RENEWABLE ENERGY
- RURAL TOURISM
- POULTRY
- CONTRACT REARING
- ORGANIC FARMING
- EQUINE
- FORESTRY
- HORTICULTURE
- CONSULTANCY
- FARM CONTRACTING
- FOOD PRODUCTION
- BEE KEEPING

Contact your local Teagasc office or the numbers below to hear about option courses in your area.  
Express your interest on [www.opt-in.ie/options](http://www.opt-in.ie/options)

Clare	Martina Enright	(076) 1114132
	Mary Grogan	(065) 6828676
Kildare/ Laois/ Meath/ Dublin/Louth	Veronica Nyhan	(087) 7935409
	Rachel Taylor	(045) 843648
Kerry/ Limerick	David Trant	(076) 1114385
	Padraig Fitzgerald	(076) 1114307
	Louise Keane	(066) 7195464
Kilkenny/ Waterford	Sinead Barrow	(056) 7789354
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