

Annex 7. Dairy Discussion Groups: Presentation by Tom O'Dwyer

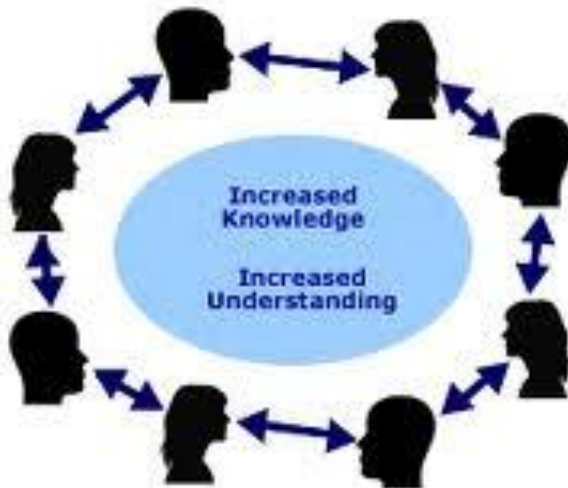


AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority

Discussion Groups: the key to knowledge transfer and change

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Introduction

- ❑ Impossible to give unlimited, one-to-one advice to all
- ❑ Groups are widely used...esp. in times of change
- ❑ **A group of farmers coming together to allow learning to take place**
- ❑ Main mechanism for KT used by Teagasc
 - ❑ Dairy **351 groups, 5,775 members**
 - ❑ Beef **274 groups, 5,131 members**

Facilitation

- ❑ A way of working with groups of individuals to enable them to work cooperatively and effectively
- ❑ A process in which a neutral person helps a group work together more effectively
- ❑ Three core values guide the practice of facilitation:
 - ❑ Valid information;
 - ❑ Free and informed choice;
 - ❑ Internal (group) commitment to those choices.

Benefits of group membership

- ❑ (New) technical information
- ❑ problem solving
- ❑ Support
- ❑ Interaction
- ❑ Positive environment
- ❑ New friendships/ support network
- ❑ Personal development
- ❑ Improved farm performance
- ❑ 3C's – commitment, communication, competition

Financial benefits

Teagasc research has indicated that group members had a higher gross margin of **€125/cow (2.5 cent/ litre or €247/Ha)** when compared with non-group members.

“You will earn what you learn.”

Bill Clinton

Getting started

- ❑ What does the group want to achieve?
 - ❑ Is there a need for a group? Best if there is a common focus
- ❑ Advertise, generate interest
- ❑ Start with an information meeting
 - ❑ Avoid seeking commitment but record interest for follow-up
 - ❑ Highlight opportunities for groups
- ❑ Set date for first group meeting
- ❑ Agree terms of reference/ 'rules'
 - ❑ Regular date for meeting, information to be shared
- ❑ Get help
 - ❑ Plenty of trained facilitators available
- ❑ Group will take a while to operate effectively