



# The Development and Implementation of an Accredited Continuing Professional Development Framework in Agriculture

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Macra  
Agricultural  
Skillnet,



BROADMORE  
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## FOREWORD



**Y**ou learn something new every day is a saying that I'm sure we have all used from time to time, but it is one that sums up the idea of continuing professional development. Every farmer knows that they need to update their technical, business and personal skills, amongst others, on a regular basis to ensure that their farm is as profitable an enterprise as possible. This is evidenced by the large numbers that complete training provided by a wide range of organisations and Macra Agricultural Skillnet is proud of the role we have played in offering young farmers these opportunities. The findings of this report highlight the need to create a formal structure to bring all this training together.

Macra Agricultural Skillnet wish to acknowledge all those involved in the commissioning and publication of this research, in particular, Skillnet Ireland for providing the funding that allowed us to carry out this research. Trojan work was done by the team of Broadmore Research and Limerick Institute of Technology, who undertook the research independently on behalf of ourselves and Skillnet Ireland. We also wish to thank the hundreds of farmers who responded to our survey, those who made submissions and those organisations from the industry who were so supportive to the carrying out of this research.

Macra Agricultural Skillnet is guided by a committed Steering Group, with oversight provided by the National Council of Macra na Feirme. Continuous Professional Development goes to the heart of Macra na Feirme and takes us to the roots of the establishment of the organisation which was based on educating the young farmers of Ireland. This commitment to the development of young farmers shapes Macra Agricultural Skillnet and thanks must also go to the staff of Macra Agricultural Skillnet who turn this passion in to a reality.

Continuing Professional Development has long been a key part of many professions and it is clear from the findings of the report that there is a requirement for it in the agricultural sector. We hope that stakeholders will see the call to action provided by this research and encourage them to develop a CPD Framework for Farming and see it through to its implementation.

**James Healy**  
**National President**  
**Macra na Feirme**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the findings from research conducted into the potential establishment of a **Continuing Professional Development framework within the farming and agricultural industry in Ireland**. Many industries have established Continuing Professional Development frameworks and models. Within the farming and agricultural industry in Ireland, no such framework exists. Several stakeholders within the agricultural sector including Macra na Feirme, Department of Agriculture, Health & Safety Authority and Teagasc have consistently referred to the need for a culture and climate of CPD for farmers.

This research action was commissioned by Skillnet Ireland and Macra Agricultural Skillnet with the following objectives:

- Looking at other countries and industries who have a CPD framework relevant to farming.
- Examining current further education options for farmers/those working in the sector.
- Suggesting the potential structure of a CPD framework for farming conscious of what is practical in an Irish agricultural setting.
- Defining Career Pathways in Farming.
- Giving preferred options as to who or what might be the entity that is the repository for the information and awarding body.

The report identifies the critical components which could form part of a CPD framework in Ireland through a review of existing CPD frameworks from other relevant sectors. Inputs from the farming and agricultural sector were sought and the results from surveys and interviews are presented. The positioning of CPD and its connection with the broader education and training environment is considered. Finally, a series of recommendations are made on how a CPD framework for the sector could be developed, operated and established.

A broad review of CPD is provided in Chapter 3 highlighting the substantive requirements and broad principles applied with CPD in general. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is defined by the UK CPD Certification Service as 'the learning activities professionals engage in to develop and enhance their abilities' (CPDCS, 2018).

A further definition says that CPD needs to:

- Be a documented process;
- Be self-directed by the individual;
- Focus on learning from experience, reflective learning and review;
- Help set development goals and objectives; and
- Include both formal and informal learning (jobs.ac.uk, 2019).

It is important to consider the potential development of a CPD Framework within the overall education and training structures in Ireland. Chapter 4 outlines the education and training structures in Ireland and highlights the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The current baseline agricultural training qualification is at Level 6 of the NFQ and there are a wide range of public and private education and training providers delivering high quality programmes across the country. A future CPD Framework must be developed to be complimentary to the existing education and training structures in place within the industry.

A review of CPD structures and systems applied in various farming, agricultural and other sectors is presented in Chapter 5. Examples from the UK (Farming Connects, CPD for Dairy Farmers, Pig Industry Professional Register) demonstrated that some progress has been made in the implementation of such schemes. Other models from forestry, cooperative and consultant organisations are also presented to further inform the knowledge base.

The core data to inform the potential structure of a CPD structure for farming and agricultural industry in Ireland was gathered through surveys, interviews and engagement with key stakeholders. Data was gathered through:

- A survey circulated to Macra na Feirme members, young farmers and promoted in the agricultural media and on social media. A total of 226 people responded to the survey.
- An Open Call for Submissions was advertised in the agri-media and directed to members of the Agricultural Science Association. A total of 26 submissions were received. The survey is primarily composed of young people, under 35 years which needs to be considered in the review of the results.
- Interviews were undertaken with individuals and organisations across the spectrum of the agri-industry – a total of 18 individuals from 14 organisations provided feedback.
- Two focus group meetings were held with young farmers.

Key findings from the research are presented in Chapter 6 and include:

- From the survey responses it is clear that there is an interest in skills and knowledge development as four out of five (79.2%) respondents participated in agriculture related training courses in the past five years. One quarter (23.9%) had attended one course and one fifth (19%) had attended at least four training courses.
- The main areas that respondents measure implementation of learning from training include: efficiency changes (58.8%); change in practices (57.1%); lifestyle, health and well-being (50.9%); financial changes (49.1%); and change in productivity (43.4%).
- Approximately 50% of respondents had a preference for the training that they have completed to be accredited (37.2% had no preference and 9.7% did not check) and there is a strong preference towards workshop and peer to peer type learning methods to be used. Blended learning where some content is online and there is also face to face engagement was considered more preferable than 100% online learning.

- Two-thirds (66.8%) of respondents believe that there is a need for a system in farming which recognises participation in continuing education/training/upskilling while a further one quarter (23.9%) think that there could possibly be a need for CPD.
- Some key words mentioned in support of CPD were “motivation”, “recognition”, “model on other sectors”, “benchmarking”, “increase skills”, “demonstrate competency” and “quality”. There were also concerns raised about making CPD compulsory i.e. not linked to EU payments, lack of time for training, avoiding a tick box exercise, further bureaucracy being imposed, how to attract the “hard to reach” farmers.
- When farmers achieve managerial roles, they very often need refreshing on the concepts which were covered in their initial training. CPD can potentially play a role in delivering this practical farm management training.
- Almost nine out of ten (87.1%) respondents believe that CPD could benefit Irish Farmers in General, 90.2% believe that it could benefit Those Working in Farming and four out of five (81.9%) believe it could benefit themselves.
- Critical benefits highlighted related to improved efficiency, more informed decision making, increase awareness of regulations and compliance schemes, potential to enhance ability to access finance, better structures for recruitment and management of staff.

There is detailed feedback provided within the report on how farmers and the sector could be encouraged to engage in a CPD system and how it might operate. It was generally felt that some incentives would be required initially (financial or other) and that maintaining high-quality standards would be vital. There are some suggestions that it could be linked to EU payments while others disagreed with such an approach. An awareness campaign of the benefits of CPD will be required and consideration should be given to the introduction of other incentives (rebates, tax credits, discounts etc) in the initial stages. The CPD to be developed must be backed by the industry also and developed in partnership with all key stakeholders as such a system will not just benefit the individual but the entire sector. The main organisations which respondents would like to see recognising CPD include: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (71.2%); Bord Bia (67.3%); Teagasc (59.7%); Financial Institutions (55.3%); and Insurance companies (53.5%).

One in five (22.2%) respondents are concerned about the introduction of a system of CPD in farming with the main issues raised relating to bureaucracy, potential future links to payments, quality standards and cost/benefit. The design of a CPD system will have to consider other issues raised by the industry including quality, time demands on farmers, quality standards, cost of participation and recognition.

When asked about structures which could be applied to a future CPD system and payment for same two-thirds (67.3%) of respondents say that they are likely to register for CPD points/credits if available while only one in ten (8.8%) say that they would not (note: sample had high proportion of younger dairy farmers). Twice as many respondents indicate that they would be willing to pay an annual subscription to manage CPD points/credits than those who would not (47.3% compared to 23%). The initial phased should be funded to keep costs to the farmers as low as possible, thus maximising engagement (avoiding just the leading farmers taking part). Provision of a wide suite of CPD activities which are attractive to the sector is vital. There were some concerns raised over the application of a points-based system (which is typically used in other sectors) for CPD in farming, but an initial approach of recording attendance could be applied. A future CPD frameworks needs to be coordinated by a single organisation responsible for provision, monitoring and promotion of the CPD structure so that "Farmers ...feel that they will miss something in terms of learning or experience if they don't engage with CPD."

Chapter 7 outlines a proposed framework for CPD in farming in Ireland. It sets out the overall framework and principles which would apply to the system. The key principles proposed include:

- The CPD framework should be voluntary initially and consideration could be given to a mandatory system in the longer term.
  - The ambition would be to achieve a status of Registered Farmer or Registered Farm Operative, which would be connected to the CPD system.
  - Further investigation of the application of a point/credit based system within a farming CPD structure is needed. The initial system could be established with on a "Record of Attendance" basis with the aim to move to a credit-based system in time.
- Appropriate IT technologies would need to be applied to support the CPD system, thus facilitating farmers to record and track their CPD activities. An example from the construction sector in the Netherlands is referenced which allows individuals to identify training needs and build their CPD portfolio.
  - CPD provision should be broad (covering the majority of events which farmers tend to attend in any case) and delivery would be by a wide range of stakeholders and bodies.
  - A coordinating body will be vital if such a CPD system is to be developed. This body would be responsible for approval of CPD providers and associated events, quality control and monitoring, promotion and marketing as well as overall financial and administrative management.
  - A CPD advisory group, representative of the wider industry, should also be established to provide strategic direction, guidance on the development and implementation of CPD, support and encourage farmer and industry buy-in.
  - Wider industry buy-in will be critical and the coordinating body should work with all stakeholders to develop support structures and incentives for the system.
  - A registration cost (annual) for the CPD systems of €30-50 per individual is recommended. Initial funding will be required to fund the initial set up and systems required, and various funding avenues will need to be explored.

The overall conclusion from the research is that a CPD system for farming and agriculture is needed and would be welcomed. The next step in the process is to engage in an industry wide discussion on how the framework can be developed and implemented. It is recommended that Macra Agricultural Skillnet should lead on the establishment of the advisory group which would have the remit of developing the framework proposed in this report. This advisory group would require voluntary input from industry stakeholders and should set a time limited period for the exploration of the framework.



## INTRODUCTION

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a common feature of many industries and professions, operating with a range of different structures and frameworks. Professions such as accountants, solicitors and engineers have systems of CPD in operation and it is recognised within these professions as being part of their work practice. Within farming in Ireland, there are many individual providers of training and information events but no CPD framework exists and while farmers engage in ongoing training and information events/activities, they are typically not coordinated or linked together in any formal way. CPD is typically not designed to be a replacement for formal core agricultural training/education but should be complementary to existing education/training.

The need for a system of CPD in farming has been identified by many stakeholders including Macra na Feirme, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc and the Health and Safety Authority. The Teagasc Education Vision Report<sup>1</sup> identified that:

- CPD has a crucial role in enabling future farmers to keep pace with changes in farming.
- Farmers will need to pursue CPD in a structured manner.
- CPD routes need to be provided for farmers to improve their skills.
- While Teagasc and others provide CPD to farmers currently, there is a need for a more holistic and integrated approach.

The People in Dairy Action Plan (DAFM, 2018<sup>2</sup>) concludes that every progressive industry needs to train and retrain people at all levels (owners/managers, entry level workers) and recommends that a CPD programme is required for dairy farmers and employees. The Action Plan also recommends that the efforts of a range of different organisers providing training needs to be coordinated in order to provide a comprehensive range of courses which are widely available.

Despite the agreement that CPD is important, to date, there has been no significant process on developing a CPD framework for the farming and agricultural sector in Ireland.

This research project was commissioned by Macra Agricultural Skillnet with funding provided by Skillnet Ireland. This research aims to explore current CPD models and frameworks in farming and other similar industries across comparative countries.

The objectives and anticipated outputs of the research include:

- Looking at other countries and industries who have a CPD framework relevant to farming.
- Examining current further education options for farmers/those working in the sector.
- Suggesting the potential structure of a CPD framework for farming conscious of what is practical in an Irish agricultural setting.
- Defining career pathways in farming.
- Giving preferred options as to who or what might be the entity that is the repository for the information and awarding body.

Macra Agricultural Skillnet commissioned Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) and Broadmore Research & Consulting to undertake the research on CPD.

An overview of the research approach is provided in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 explores definitions of CPD. A review of examples of CPD in other sectors and countries is presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 explores provides some context to the agricultural education and training framework. The research outcomes and analysis are presented in Chapter 6. A framework for CPD is proposed in Chapter 7. Key conclusions are drawn in Chapter 8.

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- 1 Teagasc, 2018. Teagasc Education Vision – meeting future needs. (<https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/publications/2018/Teagasc-Education-Vision-Report.pdf>) (7/12/2018).
  - 2 Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), 2018. People in Dairy Action Plan. (<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/foodindustrydevelopmenttrademarkets/agri-foodandtheeconomy/foodwise2025/PeopleDairyActionPlan060618.pdf>) (7/12/2018).

## 2. Research Approach

The LIT/Broadmore Research & Consulting team undertook a multi-faceted research approach to collate the research data to inform the project outcomes. These included:

- Online survey of farmers (circulated to Macra na Feirme members & contacts, promoted in the agricultural and social media).
- Open call for submissions to the wider agricultural industry (promoted in the agricultural and social media).
- Stakeholder interviews (telephone interviews undertaken with members of the agri-industry).
- Focus group meetings.
- Desk research<sup>3</sup>.

## 3. Defining Continuing Professional Development

While structured CPD in farming is rare, the concept of CPD is common across many other sectors and industries, with the specific details changing depending on the nature of each industry. Essentially CPD refers to the process of recording and documenting the experience, skills and knowledge that an individual gains through their working career (both formally and informally) subsequent to any initial training or education. It focuses on the acquisition and application of learning. CPD is often viewed as something that is driven by an industry or profession, but this view is somewhat flawed as while industries/professions can coordinate or facilitate CPD, it must be undertaken and managed by the individual for their own personal and skills development.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is defined by the UK CPD Certification Service as *'the learning activities professionals engage in to develop and enhance their abilities'* (CPDCS, 2018<sup>4</sup>). A further definition says that CPD needs to:

- Be a documented process;
- Be self-directed by the individual;
- Focus on learning from experience, reflective learning and review;
- Help set development goals and objectives; and
- Include both formal and informal learning (jobs.ac.uk, 2019<sup>5</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> The research team would like to acknowledge with gratitude those who participated in the research project and supported the development of this report: Macra na Feirme staff; Members of the Macra Skillnet Steering Group; Macra na Feirme officers and members; survey respondents; those who made submissions; agri media; and the industry stakeholders who participated in the research interviews.

Very often, CPD is a requirement for membership of a professional body or organisation (e.g. Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, Engineers Ireland etc.). However, the process of CPD is about reflecting and reviewing an individual's learning and skills.

### CPD can:

- Provide an overview of professional development to date.
- Serve as a reminder of achievements and progress.
- Provide direction and maintain focus on goals/targets
- Identify gaps in skills.
- Identify possibilities for future development.
- Provide evidence for job interviews.
- Demonstrate professional accomplishment to others.
- Help with career development or movement into a new career (Jobs.ac.uk, 2019<sup>6</sup>).

CPD can involve a range of approaches all focused on improving the individual including, training courses, workshops, seminars, online programmes and ideas sharing. Training courses are an important element of CPD but effective CPD programmes are not designed solely around training, but in fact encompass a range of learning and development opportunities/methods. CPD can take a number of different forms including:

- Active Learning/Formal/Structured:
  - Involves the participation in a training course, attending a conference/seminar, event or online training (CPD certified).
- Reflective:
  - Involves reading relevant articles, magazines, updates or listening to podcasts.
- Self-directed/unstructured:
  - Essentially unaccompanied CPD activities – reading of documents in print or online, books by experts or trade magazines etc. (CPDCS, 2018<sup>7</sup>).

<sup>4</sup> CPD Certification Service (CPDCS), 2018. Information provided on the website of CPDCS ([www.cpduk.co.uk](http://www.cpduk.co.uk)) (7/12/2018).

Jobs.ac.uk, 2019. What is Continuing Professional Development?

<sup>5</sup> Article published on [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk). (<https://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/managing-your-career/1318/what-is-continuing-professional-development-cpd>) (5/3/2019). Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> CPD Certification Service (CPDCS), 2018. Information provided on

<sup>7</sup> the website of CPDCS ([www.cpduk.co.uk](http://www.cpduk.co.uk)) (7/12/2018).

CPD provides individuals with the opportunity to continually upskill and in a changing environment, help to ensure that their qualification/initial training does not become outdated. The benefit of recording CPD activities is that it provides the opportunity to build up a record/portfolio of evidence of activities undertaken.

Once commenced, CPD is an ongoing process through the working career of an individual as they continue to upskill, apply the learning to their work and gain new knowledge and skills. CPD encourages a culture of learning within an organisation, industry or workforce. While farming is a more isolated and individual career, in other sectors CPD becomes something that work colleagues engage with and progress together.

Specific examples of how CPD operates are provided in a later section in this report, however for the purposes of introduction, it is worth providing a broad overview of CPD at this stage. Typically, the introduction of a programme of CPD into an industry or profession involves the establishment of a structure within which individuals engage in CPD activities. At its simplest CPD involves the attendance at or engagement in personal and skills development activities. However, once introduced, it typically involves participants meeting minimum levels of annual (or other specified period) hours/credits/points by way of attending training, seminars, conferences, workshops, events, open days etc.

In order to accumulate and maintain CPD credits, individuals participating must record their CPD activities and maintain them up to date. CPD activity is recorded in terms of learning outcomes and practical application of the knowledge obtained. CPD providers/event organisers typically provide guidance on how many CPD hours/credits are achievable from the completion of different activities (CPDCS, 2018<sup>8</sup>). CPD is generally recorded by way of a certificate of attendance, sign-in sheets or other self-assessment/recorded forms. Organisers submit the records to the relevant organisation which collates or manages the CPD records for the industry. Individuals can also submit certificates to the organisation for updating of their records.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Business Wales, 2018. Farming Connect Website (<https://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/cpd>) (7/12/2018).

## 4. Examples of CPD in Practice

In order to get an appreciation for how CPD operates in practice, examples from other sectors, farming and farming related from Ireland and other countries are presented.

### 4.1 Farming Connect CPD (Wales)<sup>9</sup>

*Farming Connect* was introduced and funded in Wales under the RDP 2014-2020. The programme supports the development of more professional, profitable and resilient farming sector. *Farming Connect* brings together key stakeholders, organisations and institutions that support the farming and forestry industries. One of the elements of *Farming Connect* is a fully funded CPD recording system to record all knowledge transfer and training activity undertaken by clients (discussion group meetings, training, visits, online learning etc). Individuals can upload certificates onto system and store all records on one system.

*Farming Connect* CPD is seen as beneficial for: those wishing to provide evidence to future employers; proof of training undertaken for farm assurance schemes; and proof to customers (e.g. Supermarkets). All activities undertaken in the *Farming Connect* programme are recorded on the farmers behalf, including:

- Accredited training completed and certificates uploaded.
- E-learning courses completed.
- Knowledge transfer events attended.

*Farming Connect* CPD services are free to farmers. RDP funding has meant that there is no financial burden placed on the farmer for participation in CDP events/activities. Once a farmer registers (whether for CPD or general advice/information services), they are set up on the online system. When a farmer attends any event/activity, their personal records are updated on their behalf. Farmers can access their records online. As businesses (coop, milk producer, meat factory, purchaser etc) register with *Farming Connect* their events/activities can be assessed, approved and become part of the programme. The system does not allocate credits/points and does not have a minimum level of engagement/participation. The programme is also expanding in terms of the organisations which are willing to register as providers/trainers. The Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers now allows farmers to upload their CPD records onto their system. An increasing number of organisations are now looking for evidence of CPD in the UK.

#### 4.2 CPD for Dairy Farmers (UK)<sup>10, 11</sup>

A CPD for dairy farmers in the UK was established in 2011 to formally recognise the variety of skills in the industry and give recognition to those farmers who were engaging in activities to improve their skills. Members must maintain a minimum number of CPD points each year. *Dairy Pro* was set up to assist farmers to develop their skills and lifelong learning and in doing so equip them with the skills they need to run professional farm businesses. It was anticipated that this participating in CPD would be recognised by other farmers, suppliers and customers, and would assure consumers and the wider public of the dairy industry's professionalism.

The potential benefits identified to participation in CPD include:

- Demonstrating skills when applying for a job.
- Helping employers to assess potential employees.
- Farmers enhancing their reputation with customers.
- Presenting the overall image of the industry as professional.

*Dairy Pro* membership costs £20 per year and is open to and is flexible to meet the needs of: dairy farmers; employers; managers; herdsman; or farm workers. *Dairy Pro* points can be collected at meetings, seminars, conferences, training courses or other events/activities. Events/activities either receive *Dairy Pro* accreditation and relevant points allocated in advance or farmers contact *Dairy Pro* and request assessment and allocation of points.

*Dairy Pro* runs on an online platform which can be accessed by website or by way of an App for: accessing information on upcoming events/activities; points available for events/activities; and updating or reviewing points. *Dairy Pro* currently has the training and activities of over 100 organisations linked to it. Businesses are also encouraged to become supporters of *Dairy Pro* by recognising or rewarding those who have *Dairy Pro* Endorsement. *Dairy Pro* Endorsement is achieved by individuals who reach 20 points in one year. Once this level is reached, a certificate is issued to farmers. Farmers are also allowed use the *Dairy Pro* Endorsement logo on all material associated with themselves/their business (website, marketing material, CV etc) for the period of one year. *Dairy Pro* Endorsement is seen as demonstrating a commitment to learning and personal development.

#### 4.3 Pig Industry Professional Register (PIPR) (UK)

The PIPR<sup>12</sup> was established to recognise professionalism in the pig industry and encourage lifelong learning by its members. The programme aims to:

- Encourage people to develop themselves and their skills.
- Formally record and recognise the ongoing training and development.
- Encourage progression in the industry.

Benefits of PIPR include:

- Promotes an improved and professional image of the pig industry.
- Recognises formal skills/training and the importance of experience, practical development and other learning opportunities.
- Establishing an independent record of skill making it easier for staff to progress.
- Promoting a clearer image of personal development for new recruits.
- Developing well deserved respect for the progressive members of the pig industry.
- Raising productivity and profitability.
- Providing a positive response to animal welfare, environmental management and bio security issues.
- Raising self-esteem and confidence in the workforce.
- Easing recruitment issues.

Members are required to collect 60 or more CPD points in each 3-year period from 'registered activities'. Members at different levels in the industry are expected to maintain different levels of CPD points (e.g. stockman – 60 points, Manager - 120 points). A scale of different CPD points is provided for different types of events/activities. All approved events are issued with a PIPR reference number and have an attendance register for signing by participants. Registers of attendance are submitted by event organisers and CPD records of participants are updated. Once these registers are returned to the PIPR, members records are updated. Points for other activities are claimed by submitting specific claim forms.

<sup>10</sup> Dairy AHDB, 2011. Press release on Dairy AHDB website. (<https://dairy.ahdb.org.uk/news/news-archive/press-archive/2011/october-2011/new-cpd-program/#.XAqZpHT7RaS>) (9/12/2018).

<sup>11</sup> Dairy Pro, 2019. Details on Dairy Pro CPD provided on website. ([www.dairypro.co.uk](http://www.dairypro.co.uk))(6/3/2019).

<sup>12</sup> Pig Industry Professional Register (PIPR), 2019. Details on PIPR website ([www.pipr.ork.uk](http://www.pipr.ork.uk)) (8/12/2018).

Members can collect CPD points at any stage throughout the three-year membership term. If more than 60 points are collected within the period, a maximum of 10 points can be carried forward to the next period. Members are expected to adhere to ethical and operational standards which are included in the PIPR Code of Conduct. Members who fail to meet the requirements are suspended until the minimum points are achieved.

CPD points statements are sent to all members when payment renewal reminders are issued, and they can also login into the website and check their points and request statements of their points. The registration fee is £6 and an annual fee of £20 is charged to all members.

### 4.4 Society of Irish Foresters<sup>13</sup>

The Society of Irish Foresters have operated a CPD programme since 2003 as a means of confirming the skills and knowledge of professional foresters. The programme was revised in 2016 under the Knowledge Transfer and Information Action measure of the Forestry Programme (RDP) 2014-2020.

The programme is industry led and representatives of the forestry and timber industry are on the CPD Review Board which oversees the programme. The programme maintains a level of professionalism in the industry and continuously records the extent to which individuals are upgrading their knowledge and skills. The register of foresters on the Forest Service website shows the presence of up-to-date CPD accreditation. The Society of Irish Foresters keeps members informed on relevant CPD events and activities.

On joining, each participant receives 180 points and thereafter, 15 points is deducted each quarter. An additional 15 points is deducted at the end of the year if a registered participant has not attended any CPD event in that year. A minimum balance of 60 CPD points is required. Typically, 15 points is available for a half day (lecture/seminar/field trip) and 30 points for a full day. Higher points are available for longer courses/programmes.

### 4.5 Irish Cooperative Organisation Society - Plunkett Institutez

The Plunkett Institute<sup>14</sup> run by the Irish Cooperative Organisation Society (ICOS) offers opportunities for members to grow and improve their skills. Members are actively involved in cooperatives across the country. The system of CPD requires members (of all levels) to engage in governance and strategy related training and development programmes. The Institute provides formal training by way of three programmes (Levels 1, 2 & 3).

The CPD system has three aims:

- Maintaining core professional knowledge and skills.
- Developing professional skills.
- Developing transferable skills.

Compliance with the CPD scheme is obligatory for all members of the Plunkett Institute.

CPD activities include training courses, attendance at conferences and workshops, writing articles, professional activities, work-based learning, attending meetings and similar activities over a rolling two-year period. Members must maintain a minimum of 200 points to maintain their membership. A minimum of 50% of points must be achieved through training.

The points available range from: 2 points for attending board or representative committee meetings; 5 points for attending a discussion group meeting; 10 points for attending industry conferences; 25 points for attending the ICOS conference; and 200 points for completion of the Level 3 Institute Training Programme.

### 4.6 Agricultural Consultants Association

The Agricultural Consultants Association has introduced the concept of a Registered Agricultural Consultant primarily to:

- Enhance the recognition and respect for agricultural consultants.
- Establish a baseline for minimum standards for consultants.
- Establish a gold standard for practitioners.
- Take ownership of CPD requirements for practitioners.

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- <sup>13</sup> Society of Irish Foresters, 2019. Details on Continuous Professional Development provide on Society of Irish Foresters Website (<https://www.societyofirishforesters.ie/continuous-professional-development/>). (10/1/2019).
- <sup>14</sup> Plunkett Institute, 2019. Details on the Plunkett Institute Website. ([www.plunkettinstitute.ie](http://www.plunkettinstitute.ie)) (15/01/2019).

Members who register and meet the CPD requirements will be entitled to use the title *'Registered Agricultural Consultant'*. The programme commenced in 2017 and members are required to maintain a two-year rolling average of 100 credits (e.g. 100 credits per year with rolling average allowing for fluctuations). Credits are available from a range of categories of activities/events (18 in total) including: membership of organisations; publications; meetings; events; Department of Agriculture meetings; presentations; training courses etc) and points must be achieved from a minimum of five different categories.

#### 4.7 Chartered Accountants Ireland CPD

The Chartered Accountants Ireland<sup>15</sup> require members to engage in CPD to maintain their professional competence. There are three approaches to CPD:

- Input-based approach: amount of learning activity that is considered appropriate to develop and maintain professional competence.
- Output-based approach: demonstrate by way of outcomes, the development and maintenance of professional competence.
- Combination approach: combination of elements of the input-based and output-based approaches setting the amount of learning activity required and measuring the outcomes achieved.

Input-based approach requires 70 hours of CPD per year of which at least 20 hours must be structured CPD, if working in practice, there is a requirement for a minimum of 10 hours of structured CPD in each service area in which a member practices (audit/accounting, investment business, insolvency practice, tax).

Structured CPD include: courses, conferences, seminars; pre- and post-course reading; interactive multi-media reading; in house training; research and lecture preparation; and additional qualifications. Unstructured CPD includes: individual home study; network and focus groups; and reading.

Output-based approach requires showing that a member has thought about training needs and followed through on developing their skills. It does not require completing a prescribed number of hours. Combination approach involves both input-based and output-based approaches.

Members are responsible for recording their own CPD and provide an annual return as evidence of compliance with CPD requirements.

#### 4.8 Association of Chartered Certified Accountants CPD<sup>16</sup>

The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants operates a programme of CPD for members. In order to maintain membership of the ACCA each year, members must complete CPD. There are four main routes by which members can achieve their CPD points, the most common of which is the CPD Unit Route. A total of 120 credits must be achieved over a three-year period.

For those following the CPD Unit Route, members must complete 40 units of CPD annually: 21 units of verifiable CPD; and 19 units of non-verifiable CPD. Verifiable CPD is a learning activity which is relevant to a member's career, learning can be applied to the workplace and there is evidence that the learning activity was undertaken. Non-verifiable CPD is general learning which is not related to specific outcome or which is difficult to provide evidence for.

#### 4.9 Example from New Zealand

The New Zealand 'Primary ITO' system which combines on-farm learning with blended learning and in-person tuition is an example worth considering. It combines elements of CPD with the provision of core agricultural education and training. The ability for individuals to register their own Industry Training Organisation or ITO and deliver fully funded training in a targeted manner means that training funds are used effectively, and participants are trained with a *'just in time, just enough, just for me'* ethos. The ITO levels are progressive and are matched to roles and responsibilities, the modules within levels are flexible in that participants have a level of choice in their elective specialisations. This system allows people to earn while they learn in their own area and maintain their lifestyle often while transitioning from another role or industry. This concept would be worthy of further exploration for use in Ireland and could offer a valuable contribution which could co-exist with the existing vocational offering in agricultural colleges.

<sup>15</sup> Chartered Accountants Ireland, 2019. CDP Requirements provided on website (<https://www.charteredaccountants.ie/professional-development/cpd-courses-and-networking-events/CPD-Requirements>) (5/3/2019).

<sup>16</sup> ACCA, 2019. Details on CPD Requirements on ACCA website. (<https://www.accaglobal.com/ie/en/member/cpd/your-guide-to-cpd/cpd-what-you-need-to-do.html>) (5/3/2019).

### 4.10 Relevant Conclusions on CPD in Practice

The review of CPD in practice in other sectors and other countries provides interesting insights into how CPD could be developed in farming. Some of the main relevant conclusions include:

- Involvement of wide range of industry stakeholders is important for success both in the development of the concept and in the recognition across the industry.
- CPD needs to have practical tangible benefits for participants.
- CPD needs to appeal to farmers and those working in farming.
- Registration needs to have an easy process.
- IT provides opportunities for use friendly recording systems particularly the use of Apps and interactive websites.
- The options for recording of CPD include certificates of completion/achievement or credits/points. Certificates of completion/achievement are the most basic record of CPD and are often seen as a first step into CPD. Credits/points have the benefit of being clear and measurable whereby the merits of different types of activities/events can be assessed. However, it can initially appear complicated for participants.
- Annual fee to participants needs to be pitched at a level that is not prohibitive to farmers.
- RDP funding may provide a potential source of funding for the establishment of CPD.
- Potential to operate different scales of CPD within the one system (cater for owners/managers and technicians/operatives).
- Compliance with CPD can either be voluntary or mandatory, however, if mandatory, there needs to be acceptance of the concept of CPD.
- In many sectors, the completion of CPD is required in order to maintain a professional qualification. This is not the case with farming but the concept of a registered farmer could be considered.
- CPD can be focused on inputs, outputs or a combination of both.
- CPD can include structured and unstructured elements.

### 5. Agricultural Educational Framework

This section provides an overview of educational structure, relevant to agriculture in Ireland. It describes the relevant providers and the associated qualifications awarding bodies. The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and its relevance to quality assurance and recognition, in Ireland and abroad, are explained. Relationship between the NFQ and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is illustrated to contextualise the competences achieved. An outline of how a CPD framework could reinforce the knowledge and skills of people working in agriculture who have a formal academic qualification is provided.

#### 5.1 Training and Qualification Bodies

Education after secondary school is primarily provided by the Education and Training Boards (ETB) and Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in Ireland. There are also private providers and within the Agricultural sector Teagasc is also a key player in course provision particularly for those intent on following a career as farm owners/managers, technicians or operatives. Skillnet Ireland Learning Networks are also key providers of subsidised in-employment training to the agricultural industry.

Vocational educational training in Ireland is largely the responsibility of the ETBs. ETBs were established following the re-alignment of the Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) structure. They have responsibility for vocational educational training, youth work and a range of other statutory functions. ETBs also manage and operate secondary schools, further education colleges, pilot community primary schools, and a range of adult and further education centres. They have also, since their establishment, been specifically involved in the delivery of apprenticeship programmes nationally. Traditional apprenticeships e.g. in the crafts sector are delivered in conjunction with employers and the existing Institutes of Technology (IoTs).

In July 2011, a new further education and training authority – SOLAS – was established to have the strategic responsibility for further education that was currently under Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and training programmes that were delivered by FÁS.

Teagasc is a key provider of training and education within the Agriculture sector with specific course provision at dedicated colleges/training centres throughout the country and through distance learning. It also provides dedicated information and promotes training programmes to those working or wishing to enter the agricultural sector. Many of the ongoing training/education programmes provided by Teagasc are a form of CPD for farmers.

Within the Higher Education sector Institutes of Technology and Universities provide a wide variety of Certificate and Degree programmes. These programmes are required to meet exacting quality standards which are overseen by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Agency (QQI). A comprehensive database of courses relevant to the agriculture sector is available via various databases e.g. [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie).

Within the formal education system, the Level 5 Certificate in Agriculture and Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Agriculture (commonly referred to as the Green Cert) have emerged as the baseline qualification standard within agriculture are provided by a range of education and training providers nationally.

Skillnet Ireland is the national agency responsible for the promotion of workforce learning and development in Ireland. Skillnet Ireland funds a number of enterprise-led learning networks that support the agricultural sector including Macra Agricultural Skillnet, Farm Business Skillnet, ICOS Skillnet, National Organic Training Skillnet and XL Vets Skillnet. Each Network provides relevant training that is co-funded by member companies and Skillnet Ireland, through the National Training Fund.

There are a range of other training providers emerging e.g. Irish Farmers Journal, private training providers who have aligned their programmes, or have had them accredited in line with the NFQ.

This diversity of provision is important in terms of access from the farming industry but can cause some confusion in the market for those seeking to access programmes (or consider which programme to access). This confusion is due to uncertainty about the best course for an individual, complementarity or duplicity between courses and uncertainty about overlap and progression across courses.

### 5.2 The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

The NFQ provides a structure to compare qualifications from different awarding bodies across ten different levels based on nationally agreed standards knowledge, skill and competence. This aids learners to make informed decisions about their qualification choices and to consider progression opportunities available to them on completion of training programmes. The NFQ also makes it easier for learners to demonstrate both here and abroad, the qualifications that they hold or are studying for. Figure 1 shows the NFQ award scheme which superimposes a number of other national awarding bodies in the framework.

Within the agricultural context the Advanced Certificate in Agriculture is offered at Level 6 on the NFQ. As such it provides a basis to advance, if appropriate, onto Level 7 further within the NFQ.



Figure 1. National Framework of Qualifications (QQI, 2019) Source: (QQI, 2019)<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Quality and Qualifications Ireland, 2019. Access online. [https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-\(NFQ\).aspx](https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx). February, 2019.

### 5.2.1 The International Context

Ireland has been actively seeking to establish links with other countries and education/training authorities to facilitate mutual recognition of Irish qualifications by international training collaborators and partners. Such mutual recognition is to facilitate mobility of labour, particularly in the EU countries. The two European frameworks which deal with higher education (NFQ Levels 6 to 10) are the 'Bologna framework', created by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which deals with all educational levels including schools, further education and training, and higher education and training. The NFQ was referenced to the 'Bologna framework' in 2006 and was mapped to the EQF in June 2009 (Table 1).

EQF Level	EHEA Framework (Bologna)*	NFQ Level	NFQ Major Award-Types
EQF Level 1		NFQ Level 1	Level 1 Certificate
		NFQ Level 2	Level 2 Certificate
EQF Level 2		NFQ Level 3	Level 3 Certificate; Junior Certificate
EQF Level 3		NFQ Level 4	Level 4 Certificate; Leaving Certificate
EQF Level 4		NFQ Level 5	Level 5 Certificate; Leaving Certificate
EQF Level 5	Short Cycle within First Cycle	NFQ Level 6	Advanced Certificate (FET award); Higher Certificate (HET award)
EQF Level 6	First Cycle	NFQ Level 7	Ordinary Bachelor's Degree
		NFQ Level 8	Honours Bachelor's Degree; Higher Diploma
EQF Level 7	Second Cycle	NFQ Level 9	Master's Degree; Post-Graduate Diploma
EQF Level 8	Third Cycle	NFQ Level 10	Doctoral Degree; Higher Doctorate

Table 1: Mapping of EQF, Bologna Framework and NFQ

### 5.3 CPD and Career Pathways in Agriculture

The development of clear pathways which farmers could potentially follow in the context of education and training is important. Through the range of programmes now accredited within the NFQ farmers can continue their education beyond Level 6 to higher level awards and indeed into postgraduate programmes (Level 9 and 10) if they wish. The majority of farmers however, at present, are not expected to progress beyond their initial Level 6 qualification. Farm operatives/technicians may not have qualifications other than state examinations at secondary school or perhaps Level 5 qualifications. It is vital therefore that the development of a CPD programme will build on the existing knowledge, capacities and skills of the participants in a meaningful way.

For the majority of CPD schemes which exist across various sectors they are seen as being supplementary and additional to the formal vocational and/or higher education awards that the CPD participant might hold. In some cases, the CPD activities can be a means to re-engage the participant in a learning process/environment which they have not connected with for some time.

There is potential for relevant CPD offerings to be mapped against the NFQ by the CPD provider – these would typically take the form of short courses or programmes addressing specific issues. Direct mapping against the NFQ and assigning credits is not always possible. Further and Higher Educational bodies such as ETBs, IoTs and Universities have Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) frameworks which could ultimately be utilised to recognise learning from other programmes. However considerable consultation and discussion would be required to map relevant CPD offerings to programmes within such institutions.

Anecdotal evidence from the Welsh CPD initiative suggests that those who have undertaken some form of education or training are more likely to seek out further development opportunities. Similar evidence suggests that employees evolve during the process from that of being sent to train to that of wishing to take control of their own personal development. A consequence of introducing a national approach to CPD would be an increased wish, particularly by younger age groups, for this learning to be recognised within some form of continuous learning framework.

It is possible that CPD activity will generate increased interest in participation in continuous lifelong learning in farming, based on accumulation of credits towards an educational qualification or an industry or sectorial recognised professional qualification. The latter would enable similar initiatives being credited formally.

Given the wide variety of CPD offerings which could be included within a CPD framework within the agricultural sector (formal/informal; accredited/non-accredited etc.) there would be a challenge in the immediate term to connect the CPD offerings with the formal education systems and the NFQ. In the short to medium term the CPD Framework should be viewed primarily as adding knowledge, skills and competences that are in addition to that gained through formal vocational or higher education programmes.

## 6. Research Outcome and Analysis

In order to determine the views of farmers, those working in farming and the wider industry, a multifaceted research approach of a survey questionnaire, open submissions, interviews and focus groups was undertaken.

- The survey questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was developed in conjunction with Macra na Feirme and was conducted using the SurveyMethods online survey platform. The survey was circulated to Macra na Feirme members, young farmers and promoted in the agricultural media and on social media. A total of 226 people responded to the survey.
- An Open Call for Submissions was advertised in the agri-media and directed to members of the Agricultural Science Association. A total of 26 submissions were received.
- Interviews were undertaken with individuals and organisations across the spectrum of the agri-industry – a total of 18 individuals from 14 organisations provided feedback.
- Two focus group meetings were held with young farmers.

The findings from the different elements of the research process are presented in this section. These findings provide both a context to CPD in farming and insights into how a CPD framework could be structured. In the review of the survey findings, cross analysis was undertaken to determine the impact of age, gender, enterprise and farm size. In general, these factors did not significantly influence responses except where specifically mentioned in the findings.



### 6.1 Profile of Respondents

One in five (21.2%) survey respondents is female. Survey respondents are primarily in the under 35-year-old category due to the profile of Macra na Feirme members. Almost one quarter (23.5%) are aged less than 25 years while 29.6% are between 26-30 years and one fifth (20.4%) aged between 31 and 35 years. Only 15.9% are aged over 40 years of age. **The survey is primarily composed of young people, under 35 years which needs to be considered in the review of the results.**

Some 36.7% of the survey respondents are working on the family farm while a further one third (33.6%) own or rent/lease their own land. One in five (20.4%) are involved in a collaborative agreement and one in ten (9.3%) are agricultural students (Table 2).

Table 2: Main Occupational Status of Macra na Feirme CPD Survey Respondents (n=226)

Current Occupational Status*	%
Working on Family Farm (full or part time)	36.7
Farming Own Land Independently (owned and/or rented/leased)	33.6
Farming in Partnership/Collaborative Arrangement	20.4
Working in Agricultural Related Job (full or part time)	17.3
Working on Other Farm (full or part time)	12.8
Working in Non-Agricultural Related Job (full or part time)	10.2
Agricultural Student	9.3

\* Respondents could select more than one occupational status

Over half (55.2%) of respondents identify their main enterprise as dairy farming while one quarter (25.1%) identify beef (suckling or drystock) as the main farm enterprise<sup>18</sup>. Some 6.7% indicate that they are currently not farming.

The survey respondents are involved in farms of a range of sizes, with 38.2% farming less than 50 hectares (15.5% less than 30 ha) and some 45.5% are farming 75 hectares or more (28% over 100 ha).

Almost three-quarters (72.6%) of respondents are members of Macra na Feirme, 35% are actively involved. While half are members of other farm organisations (Table 3).

Table 3: Level of Current Involvement of Survey Respondents in Local Organisations (n=226)

Organisation	Actively Involved	Low Level Involvement	Member in Name Only	Not Involved
%				
Macra na Feirme	35	24.3	13.3	27.4
IFA/ICMSA/ICSA	8.8	19	22.1	50
Agricultural Cooperative	8.4	16.4	15.9	59.3
Other Agricultural Organisation/Association	12.8	15.9	11.9	59.3
Community/Sports/Charity Group	37.2	27.9	8.4	26.5

<sup>18</sup> Approximately 15% of Irish farmers are involved in dairying and 55% in beef production. Therefore, the sample has a significant representation of dairy farmers. However, dairy farming has a higher proportion of young people involved at owner/manager and operative level. Cross analysis was undertaken to determine the extent to which enterprise type impacted on the research findings.

## 6.2 Participation in Training

Four out of five (79.2%) respondents participated in agriculture related training courses in the past five years (Figure 2). One quarter (23.9%) had attended one course and one fifth (19%) had attended at least 4 training courses.

Skillnet courses (45.1%), practical/skill training (38.9%), health and safety training (31%), farm management training (26.1%) and people management courses (23.5%) were the most popular areas of training undertaken.

### Training Courses Undertaken in Past Five Years (n=226)

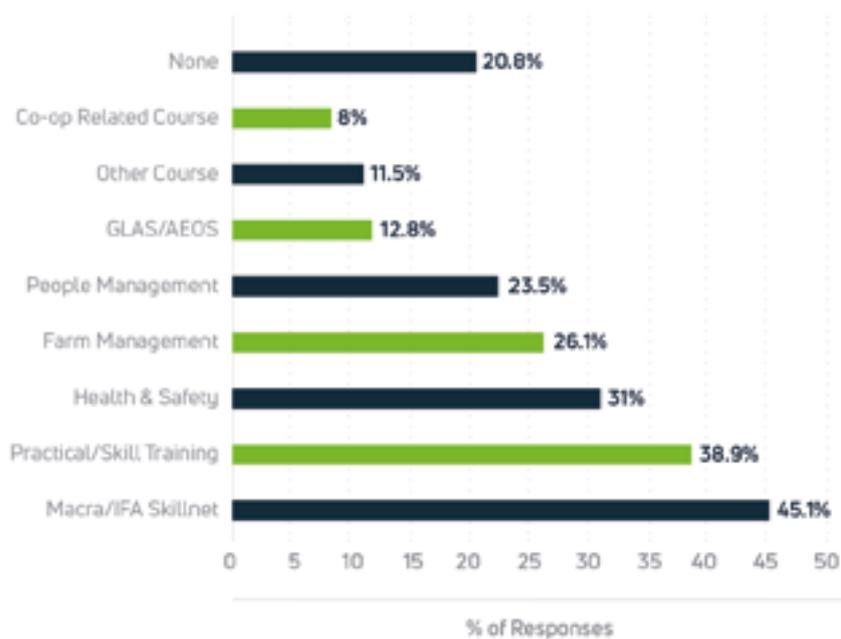


Figure 2: Training Courses Undertaken by Respondents Over the Past Five Years (n=226)

Some 85.4% of dairy farmers had undertaken a training course in the past five years compared to 75% of beef farmers and 68.1% of other farmers. Seven out of ten (70.7%) dairy farmers had undertaken two or more courses, compared to 37.5% of beef farmers and 36.1% of others. Participation in training courses increased with farm size, 40.5% of those farming less than 50 hectares had participated in at least two courses, compared to 58.6% of those farming between 51 and 100 hectares and 75.8% of those farming over 100 ha.

The extent of engagement in training increased with age, 71.7% of under 30's having participated in training courses over the past five years compared to 84.3% of those aged in their 30's and 94.4% of those aged over 40 years.

Half (49.1%) of respondents believe that the quality of training currently available is good/excellent while 41.1% believe that the cost of training is good/excellent (Figure 3).

### Adequacy of Current Training Courses (n=226)



Figure 3: Perception of the Adequacy of Current Training Courses for Farmers/Those Working in Farming (n=226)

### 6.3 Implementation of Learning From Training

The main areas that respondents measure implementation of learning from training include: efficiency changes (58.8%); change in practices (57.1%); lifestyle, health and well-being (50.9%); financial changes (49.1%); and change in productivity (43.4%) (Figure 4).

### Measures of Implementation of Learning from Training (n=226)

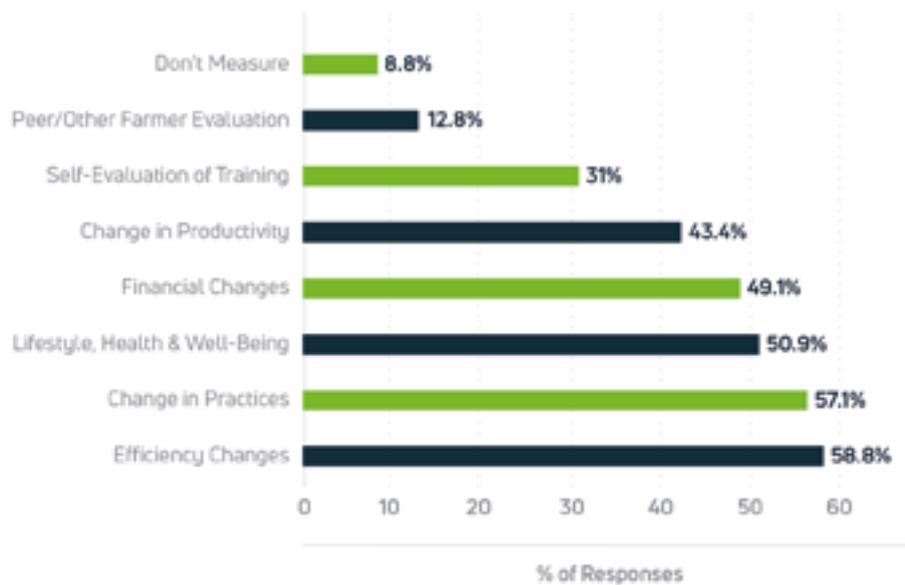


Figure 4: Measures of Implementation of Learning from Training Identified by Survey Respondents (n=226)

### 6.4 Accreditation of Training

Half of survey (50.9%) respondents prefer accredited training, while 37.2% have no preferences and 9.7% never check whether training is accredited or not (Figure 5). The main reasons for a preference for accredited training include: recognition by employers; acceptance by financial institutions; more acceptable as evidence for agricultural schemes/programmes; better standards and quality; and when paying for courses, accreditation is expected. Accreditation is cited as being less important, if the training is: worthwhile and beneficial; practical in nature; run by reputable organisations; and of a good quality and standard.

#### Preference for Accredited/Non-Accredited Training (n=226)

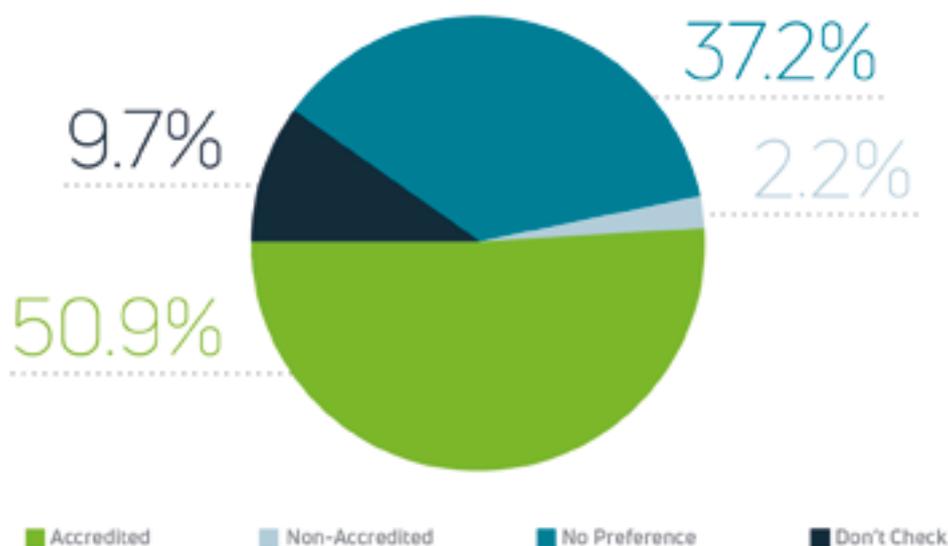


Figure 5: Preference Among Respondents for Accredited/Non-Accredited Training (n=226)

### 6.5 Preferred Method of Training Delivery

The order of preference (ranked by respondents) for the delivery of agricultural training courses is:



### 6.6 Need for CPD in Farming

Two-thirds (66.8%) of respondents believe that there is a need for a system in farming which recognises participation in continuing education/training/upskilling while a further one quarter (23.9%) think that there could possibly be a need for CPD. Male respondents (72.4%) are more likely to see the need for a system of CPD in farming compared to 53.2% of females.

**The most significant comments made by survey respondents on the need for CPD include:**

- A CPD system could serve to motivate people to participate in courses and improve skills.
- Farming is evolving and needs a system of CPD.
- Those who strive to improve themselves deserve recognition/reward – respected as professionals and CPD can do this.
- Other sectors have CPD, so farming needs it as well.
- Provides the opportunity to benchmark the performance of the farm business and farmer against others.
- Could lead to an overall increase in skill levels.
- Availability of courses/events is more important than a framework or collecting points.
- Should be beneficial when seeking employment.
- Worthwhile for demonstrating capability and competency to lenders when seeking finance.

- Has potential to improve health and safety and compliance with regulations.
- Important to be able to verify skills and training.
- Needs to cater for all farm enterprises and scales of enterprise (including full and part-time).
- Quality courses representing value for money should encourage farmers to engage.
- CPD could potentially be utilised in the future to define an ‘active farmer’.

**Negative comments relating to the need for CPD include:**

- Farmers should not be forced to engage in CPD and it should not be linked to EU payments.
- No need for the system or database – farmers will engage in training if they need it.
- Farmers do not have the time to avail of training opportunities.
- CPD is most needed by those in the farming population who are least likely to participate.
- CPD should not become a box-ticking exercise.
- Concern that CPD courses could be of poor quality.
- CPD could become another layer of bureaucracy.

Over two-thirds (68.6%) of respondents believe that a system of CPD could help to record/measure skills/training/knowledge of farmers and those working in farming (Figure 6).

### CPD Help to Record/Measure Skills/Training (n=226)

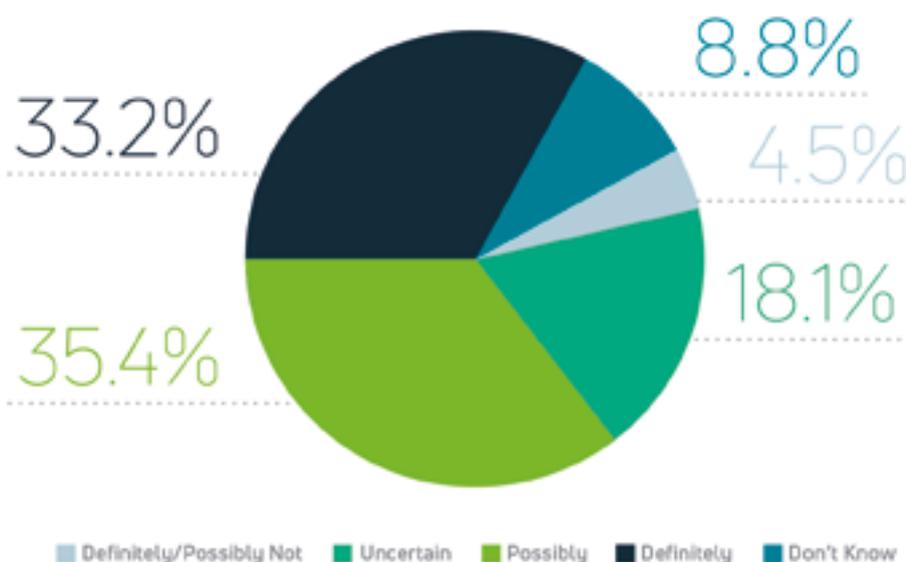


Figure 6: Extent to Which Survey Respondents Believe that a CPD System Could Help to Record/Measure Skills/Training/ Knowledge of Farmers and Those Working in Farming (n=226)

Some 59.1% of respondents aged less than 30 years possibly/definitely believe that a CPD system could help to record/measure skills/training/knowledge of farmers and those working in farming compared to 77.1% of those aged in their 30's and 83.4% of those aged over 40 years.

The main comments made by respondents regarding the recording/measuring skills/training/knowledge are presented in Table 4.

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Could give recognition for completion of several CPD activities</li> <li>● Allows for benchmarking of performance</li> <li>● Could be used to allocate students to host farmers</li> <li>● Particularly beneficial in obligatory elements such as safety and environment</li> <li>● Help farmers to identify inefficiencies in their system and skills gaps</li> <li>● Need a system to measure skills/training/knowledge</li> <li>● Useful for recruitment of staff</li> <li>● Encourages farmers to invest in themselves</li> <li>● Carrot better than stick – demonstrate benefits and create awareness</li> <li>● Need effective coordination and one organisation taking the lead</li> <li>● Needs to have international as well as national recognition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adding a bureaucratic system could be detrimental to participation – could complicate CPD and there is no need to waste resources on a system or framework</li> <li>● Could favour those who are interested in training and disadvantage those who are more practical</li> <li>● May not differentiate between attendance, understanding and implementation</li> <li>● Should not force farmers into CPD</li> <li>● Scores, credits might discourage farmers from doing something which is for their own benefit</li> <li>● Will not get the 'hard to reach farmers' to engage in CPD</li> <li>● Farmers are slow to change and engage in something new</li> </ul>

Table 4: Main Comments on Recording/Measuring Skills/Training/Knowledge

Farmers and those working in farming are increasingly likely to have completed agricultural education/training. However, training is usually undertaken at a young age when not in management control to apply their learning on their own farms. The skill set to be a successful farmer is constantly changing as new issues and challenges emerge and therefore farmers need ongoing upskilling in order to maintain their knowledge and skill-set. When farmers achieve managerial roles, they very often need refreshing on the concepts which were covered in their initial training. CPD can potentially play a role in delivering this practical farm management training.

The view of stakeholders is that CPD needs to respond and adjust as the needs of farmers change throughout the lifespan of their farm career e.g. young farmers – educating them on options for entry into farming whereas for older farmers it might be exploring their options for collaboration, long term leasing or options for getting out of farming.

CPD is considered as complementing traditional education and training options but requires a different approach to traditional education courses, where the focus is not just on imparting knowledge but also encouraging application at farm level.

CPD also provides opportunities to pitch training at different levels for different groups, there is concern that training is often pitched at the lowest level to appeal to all. This approach can frustrate many and may not accommodate those most interested in training and those who are most driven to achieving something from training.

### 6.7 Benefits of CPD to Agriculture

Almost nine out of ten (87.1%) respondents believe that CPD could benefit Irish Farmers in General, 90.2% believe that it could benefit Those Working in Farming and four out of five (81.9%) believe it could benefit themselves (Figure 7).

#### Benefit of CPD to Agriculture (n=226)



Figure 7: Extent to Which Respondents Believe that a CPD System Could Benefit Irish Agriculture (n=226)

Recruitment/job hunting (83.5%) are seen by respondents as the areas which are most likely to benefit from the introduction of a system of CPD (Figure 8). Over three-quarters (77.2%) of respondents believe it could benefit them in negotiating finance and 73.5% believe it could be of benefit to compliance with Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine programmes.

#### Special Benefits of CPD (n=226)

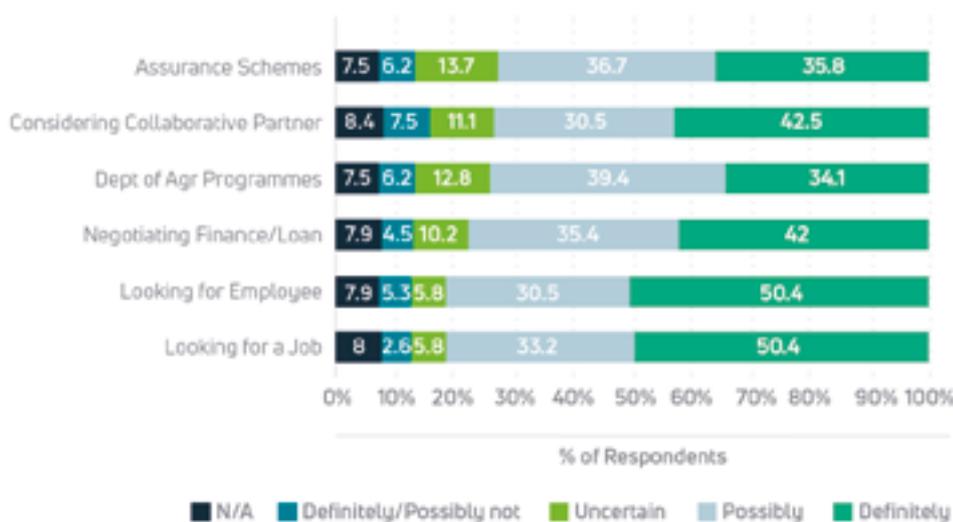


Figure 8: Views of Survey Respondents on the Potential Benefits of a Formal CPD System (n=226)

### The key benefits of CPD for farmers/those working in agriculture identified in the industry feedback included:

- A more knowledgeable sector which has access to up-to-date advice and information which they can apply in their farming activities. In addition, farmers have the opportunity to improve current skills and gain new skills necessary for running their farm enterprises.
- More informed decision-making at farm level as farmers have access to information but also, they have the skills to assess the implications for their own farm business and how best to apply their learning.
- More knowledge and more informed decision-making ultimately lead to improved efficiency and productivity at farm level.
- Increased awareness of the requirements of regulations, schemes, compliance etc. – CPD can provide the details behind regulations and help to increase the understanding of the reasons for the introduction of regulations which could lead to increased compliance.
- A specific area where CPD could provide an important benefit is in the area of farm health and safety by providing guidance on best practices and safer farm activities.
- Participation in CPD has the potential to enhance the potential for farmers to obtain finance for farm investment as it demonstrates efficiency and best practices.
- Engagement in CPD activities provides farmers with the opportunity to interact with their peers, in person at events and over the telephone and in online forums. This interaction provides farmers with the opportunity to benchmark themselves with other farmers, establish best practice and make necessary changes at farm level. In addition, the contacts made provide an opportunity for ongoing interaction.
- An increasing number of farmers (particularly in dairying) are employers as the level of family labour has declined and scale of farm operations have increased. Sourcing suitable employees can be challenging and CPD provides the opportunity to recruit staff who do not have the full complement of necessary skills but are willing to learn. Potential employees who have engaged in CPD should be a much more attractive prospect to an employer.
- There is a belief that employers in future may favour recruiting those who have participated in CPD. Employers may both pay for this and provide time off to engage in training which directly benefits the employee but also the employer by having a more skilled workforce. It could also contribute to addressing the labour and skills shortage in farming whereby those lacking the skills but with appropriate enthusiasm and interest are recruited.
- CPD could provide short term, less intensive courses.
- CPD could provide background knowledge and technical knowledge which farmers may not be able to provide.
- Learning as you earn becomes a recognised concept in farming.
- This also is an opportunity for farmers to promote farming as a worthwhile career option with potential for employees to develop skills while working on farm.

A formal programme of CPD would provide farmers and those working in the industry the opportunity to engage in training/upskilling activities/events in a more structured manner. It has the potential to create a more professional, vibrant, knowledgeable and skilled industry. CPD provides the opportunity to ultimately improve the resilience of individuals and their business by gaining a better understanding of the business and the environment in which it operates; upskilling them; presenting best practice; benchmarking performance; planning for the future; encouraging innovation; and the mutual support of others in the industry.

### 6.8 Encouraging Farmer Participation in CPD

The main suggestions made by survey respondents for encouraging farmer participation and buy-in into the concept of CPD include:

- Financial incentive of some sort (not EU payments).
- Financial incentive – linked to EU payments/top-ups
- Demonstrating benefits of CPD (productivity; financial; lifestyle; social etc).
- Endorsement/testimonials for other farmers – ‘farmers recommending to farmers’.
- Provision of funding for the running of CPD programmes.
- Availability of a wide range of CPD courses/ events/activities.
- Maintaining a high standard in terms of content and delivery.
- Provision of tax benefits/credits upon completion.

- Bonus payments on product prices (quality assurance schemes).
- Content that is relevant and appropriate to farmers.
- Making engagement in CPD mandatory.
- Inclusion of elements of relevance to all farmers/enterprises, not just large-scale dairy herds.
- Location and timing of events/activities which are appropriate for farmers.
- Provision of progression options for those engaging in CPD.
- Collaborative approach with other stakeholders.
- Including obligatory training (e.g. environmental schemes, health and safety etc) in CPD programme.
- Encouraging farmers to involve employees in CPD.
- Promoting/advertising CPD in agri-media.
- Demonstrating practical experiences through case studies.

### **There was considerable feedback from the agri-industry on how to encourage farmer engagement with CPD:**

- Some believe that CPD should be made a requirement for EU payments and schemes (and/or top-ups) while others believe that it should be totally voluntary with no link to payments. Many farmers are already engaging in a level of CPD currently and the requirement as part of their basic payment would not be an issue. However, it would favour those most active in farming. Those who believe that CPD should not be linked to payments or incentives, state that farmers must want CPD and be willing to freely engage with it for their own benefit. Linking CPD to payments could have the potential to tarnish the image of CPD as it would be seen as an element of compliance/regulation and could lead to resistance from farmers.
- Considerable effort is required to get widespread acceptance and uptake by farmers. It will be necessary to build awareness and educate farmers on the potential of CPD and encourage them to engage in CPD activities. The benefit of CPD activities (particularly improved efficiency, productivity and profitability) need to be highlighted and promoted to farmers. They must see the practical application of CPD and how it can benefit them on the farm or in their lives.
- Need to demonstrate to farmers how improved practices can reduce the time/labour input on farms, and therefore engaging in CPD events/activities can be a real benefit. CPD activities/events could specifically focus on bringing about practice change on farms. Farmers need to see tangible benefits in order for them to participate in training. Farmers need to think about what CPD could return to them within their own business and how it can benefit them.
- Farmers are busy so in order for them to take time out to engage in CPD activities, they need to see the value in the activities. However, by doing so, they have the opportunity to step back and reflect on their farm business and look at where changes can be made and learning from others applied to their own situations.
- A well-organised and professional system of CPD would encourage participation by farmers as it would provide an opportunity to build a portfolio of training and skills which are complementary and additive (even in diverse areas such as hoof care, finance and grass measurement).
- Tax incentives for transfer of assets to farmers could recognise CPD as one of the criteria for gaining a tax reduction.
- CPD must appeal and meet the needs of those with different farm enterprises, scales, ages and involvement (full-time and part-time farmers).
- Efforts to convince farmers about CPD should focus initially on the younger cohort and then on the middle age group who are likely to be more open and receptive to training. Then the focus can move onto the harder to reach groups. Young farmers can take the lead in the roll-out of CPD and by engaging with CPD activities/events, they can help to convince older farmers to engage.
- Employers need to recognise the presence of both formal training and CPD completion in the rates of pay and the terms and conditions available.
- CPD needs to be innovative and exciting in design and delivery in order to attract participation however, if it is boring, mundane and routine (as some current provision is perceived), then farmers will not participate.
- There are three main ways which can encourage farmers to take action: regulation; incentivisation; and market demands. Regulation should be seen as the last resource and therefore should not be forced upon farmers/those working in farming.

There was a belief among some stakeholders in the industry that the time is right for the introduction of CPD and that a proportion of farmers would be interested and willing to engage in CPD. An example of this is the Plunkett Institute where farmers are willing to engage in training in order to maintain their involvement in co-op boards.

It is suggested by industry stakeholders that it is difficult to judge the exact level of demand for CPD among farmers and those working in farming until a system of CPD is in place. Many farmers may not know what CPD is and how it could apply to them. At the outset, it is important for those coordinating the introduction and delivery of CPD that they can provide farmers and the industry with 'a picture' of what CPD in farming might 'look like'. Once farmers engage in CPD, then they are likely to realise the potential of CPD for themselves and others. Farmers themselves will be the best ones to create awareness, promote the concept and encourage other farmers to get involved in CPD. It is also important that when farmers attend CPD events/activities that they see others 'like themselves' attending events.

### 6.9 Industry Buy-in Into CPD Concept

The industry stakeholders provided a range of views on achieving buy-in from the wider agri-industry:

- Active involvement of the agri industry is critical to the success of CPD among farmers in terms of both driving the engagement through recognition of CPD training but also passive encouragement by promoting and highlighting the benefits of CPD. The payback to the agri-sector is more informed and educated farmers and farm workers leading to more productivity and innovation. A wide stakeholder buy-in will also demonstrate to farmers that the industry believes that CPD is worthwhile and beneficial.
- The development of CPD in farming should be undertaken in partnership with all the relevant stakeholders including individual farmers, farmer representative/lobby groups, existing training providers, Government and particularly the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the co-operative agricultural sector. Industry stakeholders could be involved in the design and development of CPD training modules and materials to maintain the relevance to them and to maintain their interest in the concept of CPD. CPD could address areas important to the industry such as efficiency, sustainability and compliance.
- A system of CPD must benefit farmers individually and the wider industry in order to get broad buy-in. There is a need to foster and encourage a culture where CPD is valued both by the wider industry and farmers themselves. In order to succeed CPD must not be perceived as relating to enforcement, regulation or compliance. Industry champions could drive and promote CPD among the agri-sector and among farmers and those working in farming.
- Individual organisations need to explore how specifically they could support the concept of CPD. Suggestions have been made that additional payments could be made on product prices for those that engage in CPD.
- A system of CPD has the potential to bring together all the various strands of informal training that are available to farmers, whether related to compliance (sprayer, health and safety), sustainability (Bord Bia or cooperative related), farm management (grass measurement and monitoring), discussion groups or general information/advice. Most farmers attend/engage with at least one of these types of events/activities and CPD could monitor, record and track engagement for each farmer. There is a need for collaboration and cooperation between a wide range of organisations who are involved in the delivery of training to farmers.
- The wider agri-industry have a role in driving the engagement in CPD by encouraging farmers to participate by recognising CPD completion/points/credit in various activities and by generally promoting the concept and encouraging farmers to engage with events/activities.

### 6.10 Suggestions for Utilisation/Recognition of CPD

Some of the main suggestions made by survey respondents and industry stakeholders for how CPD could be recognised/ utilised include:

- Possible inclusion in the eligibility for EU payments and/or top-ups in payments, agricultural grants/ programmes/measures and informing farmers on the requirements of these schemes and programmes.
- Recognition by financial institutions when seeking finance – possibly facilitating access to finance, lower interest rates/better financial terms for those with CPD completed.
- Assisting in the recruitment/sourcing of potential employees.
- Recognition within quality assurance/sustainability programmes; Discounts on future training/CPD events/ activities (reduced price for regular participants).

- Reduction in the cost of farm insurance.
- Recognition in relevant and appropriate agricultural taxation measures.
- Acknowledged in the agreement/negotiation of wage levels for employees.
- Employers facilitating those working in farming to engage in CPD activities.
- Part of selection criteria for host farmers for student placement.
- Discounts on purchases of farm inputs.

The main organisations which respondents would like to see recognising CPD include: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (71.2%); Bord Bia (67.3%); Teagasc (59.7%); Financial Institutions (55.3%); and Insurance companies (53.5%) (Figure 9).

### Organisations Which Respondents Would Like to Recognise CPD Points/Credits (n=226)

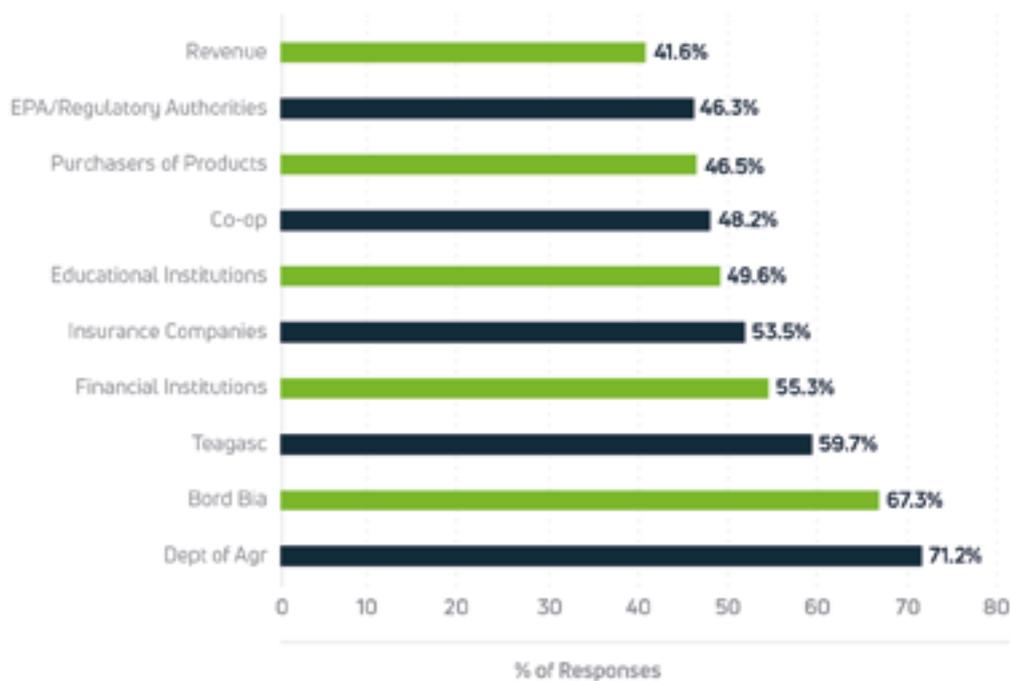


Figure 9: Views of Survey Respondents on the Potential Organisations Which Could Potentially Recognise CPD Points/Credits

### 6.11 Concerns About the Introduction of a System of CPD

One in five (22.2%) respondents are concerned about the introduction of a system of CPD in farming (Figure 10).

#### Level of Concern About Introduction of CPD (n=226)

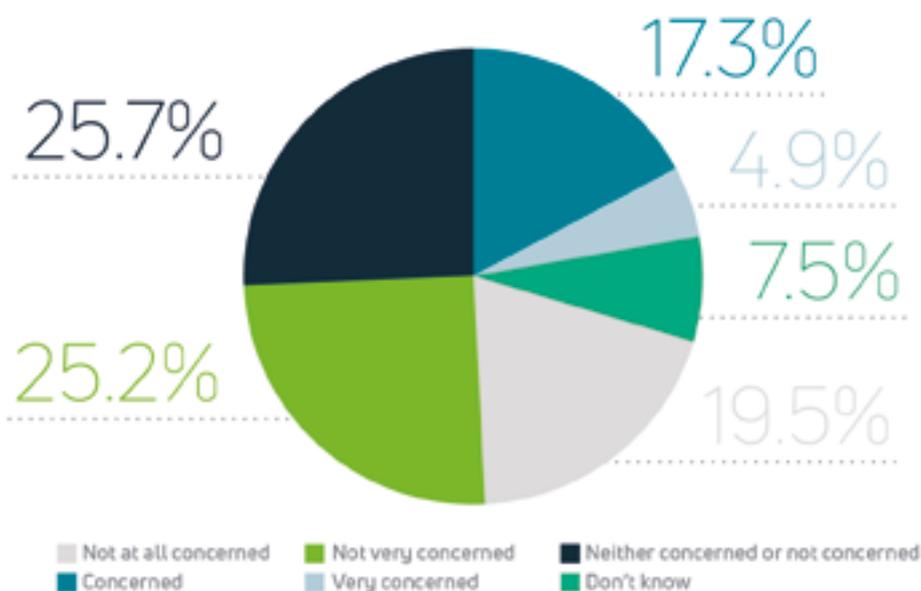


Figure 10: Concerns of Survey Respondents About the Introduction of a CPD System for Farmers/Those Working in Farming (n=226)

The main concerns about CPD identified by respondents include:

- Increase in bureaucracy/paperwork/red tape – overload of certification, delivery and recording.
- Fear that CPD could become compulsory/requirement for payments and therefore farmers could be forced into engaging in CPD.
- Potentially low uptake/lack of interest among farmers.
- Linking with EU payments and therefore forcing compliance on farmers.
- Demand on time which is already scarce to undertake CPD, particularly if CPD involves a number of activities/ events which may be undertaken.
- It might favour certain farmers or enterprises more than others.
- Lack of resources for CPD may impact on the extent to which it can be delivered.
- CPD could become a 'money making industry' at the expense of participating farmers.
- A proliferation of training activities with variable standards and quality.
- The tangible benefits may be small for the effort and time committed.
- CPD could become a 'tick box' exercise with limited benefit.
- Non-participation could involve punishment for those farmers not engaging in CPD.

Many industry stakeholders believe that there are no concerns or negative aspects to CPD as the engagement in events/activities can only be positive for the individual farmers and the wider industry. However, there are concerns about the extent to which farmers will embrace and engage with CPD. These concerns also relate to the fact that there 'is one chance to get it right', if farmers get a poor initial perception of CPD, then it will be very difficult to develop the interest in it. There is also a concern that CPD would become a 'tick-box exercise' which would not do it justice and give farmers the wrong impression. Quality of the programmes and standard of delivery are critically important for the success of CPD.

### Other concerns identified include:

- CPD could be expensive in terms of the management of CPD completion/credits and the programmes delivered. Farmers are currently slow to engage in training and if the cost of training increases as a result of CPD, that could further discourage participation.
- CPD could be perceived as adding to the bureaucratic burden on farms. The recording of CPD completion/credits and the potential association with payments/schemes/grants could be forcing another layer of compliance on farmers.
- Lessons could be learned for the delivery of CPD from the recent experience of the Knowledge Transfer groups. The aim of these groups is considered very worthwhile but the programme is perceived as being bureaucratic and restrictive for farmers in terms of the actions undertaken.
- One of the biggest challenges facing CPD is the fact in general only a minority of farmers engage in advisory/information activities/events, 'one third regularly attend events/activities, one third never attend anything and the other one third occasionally attend things'. There is a reluctance from non-engaging farmers to step outside their comfort zone.
- Farmers may not be able to engage in CPD due to the pressures on their time – they are time poor, too busy to get involved in CPD events/activities. Poor labour efficiency may also impact on the time available to attend training and shorter CPD type events/activities could allow farmers to better fit CPD training into their schedules. A wide range of CPD events/activities would allow farmers the opportunity to select suitable programmes.
- There is a lack of coordination and duplication across a range of providers in the current delivery of CPD type activities/events. The range of courses currently available are not structured into a progressive and additive programme of CPD. Coops among others are providing a significant level of training currently but it typically is independent and unconnected with other training. A centralised system of CPD could also have the potential to identify the emerging needs and respond with appropriate training programmes/courses/events.
- Farmers who are interested in training may find it difficult to determine the training which is most suited to them and the level at which they should engage in training e.g. for IT training, uncertain where they need to start. In order to address this, there is a need to provide guidance on courses, training and coordinate the different levels and delivery. There is a need to assess and compare different courses/activities and indicate a level or standard.
- Poor quality of courses and facilitators and insufficient quality control to ensure standards are maintained.
- Age profile of farmers means in practice many farmers may not engage with CPD simply because they are older.
- Access to IT and broadband could be an issue which impacts on the level of engagement with CPD.
- Cost of participation in events/activities/training must not be prohibitive.
- Industry may be slow to recognise CPD achievements.
- Multiplicity of delivering organisations and duplication may create confusion among farmers.

### 6.12 Perception of CPD

In order to gauge the perception of CPD, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with several statements relating to CPD. The keys findings include:

- 76% agree that CPD could improve safe practices on farm.
- 74.8% agree that CPD could improve health and well-being.
- 69.1% agree that CPD could lead to more defined career pathways and opportunities.
- 64.1% agree that CPD adds to farmers social license to operate.
- 59.3% agree that CPD could make farming more desirable for new entrants.
- 52.3% agree that CPD could contribute to increased participation in co-ops and farm organisations.
- 40.3% agree that CPD could help to contribute to addressing the labour shortages in farming (Figure 11).

### Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to CPD (n=226)

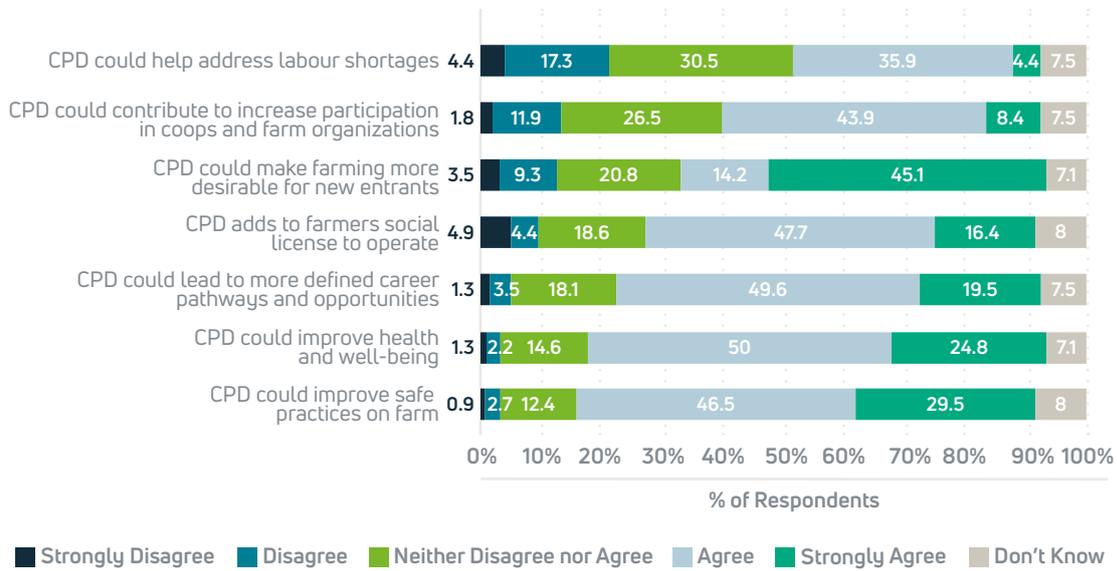


Figure 11: Extent of Agreement With Statements Relating to CPD for Farmers/Those Working in Farming by Survey Respondents (n=226)

### 6.13 Registration and Payment for CPD

Two-thirds (67.3%) of respondents<sup>19</sup> say that they are likely to register for CPD points/credits if available while only one in ten (8.8%) say that they would not (Figure 12).

#### Likely to Register for CPD Points/Credits (n=226)

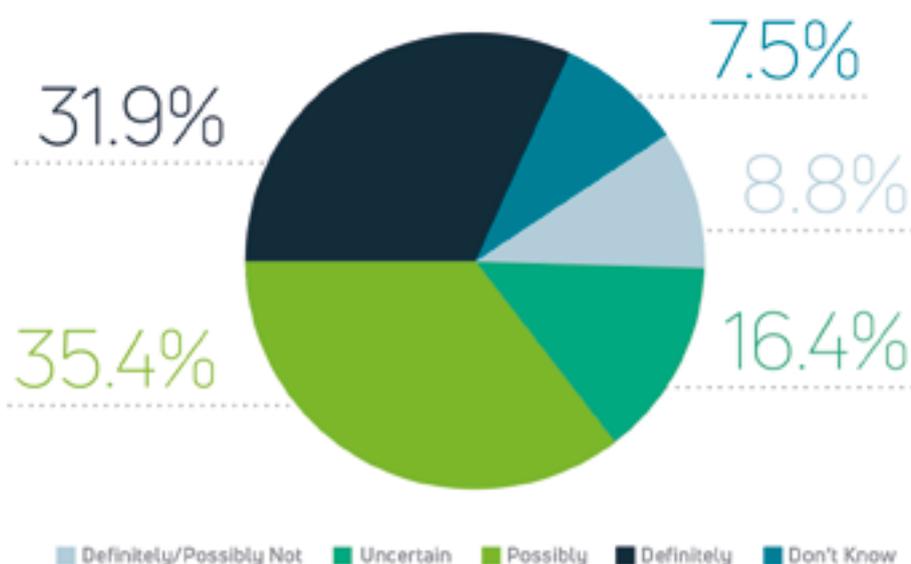


Figure 12: Extent to Which Survey Respondents are Likely to Register for CPD Points/Credits

Some of the main comments made by survey respondents on registering for points/credits include:

- Recognition by organisations would act as good incentive to collect points/credits.
- If perceived as valuable for farmers, they will register.
- Courses need to be relevant and provided in suitable times and locations.
- There would have to be a financial reward in order to encourage registration.
- Depends on the courses available.
- Don't require points/credits in order to participate in training.
- Should be an automated online system, not too onerous to record.
- Needs to be easily accessible and cost effective.
- If it seems like box ticking exercise, then farmers may not be interested.
- No reason not to register.

<sup>19</sup> Important to remember that survey sample has a high proportion of younger dairy farmers.

Twice as many respondents<sup>20</sup> indicate that they would be willing to pay an annual subscription to manage CPD points/credits than those who would not (47.3% compared to 23%) (Figure 13).

**Willing to Pay Annual Subscription for CPD (n=226)**

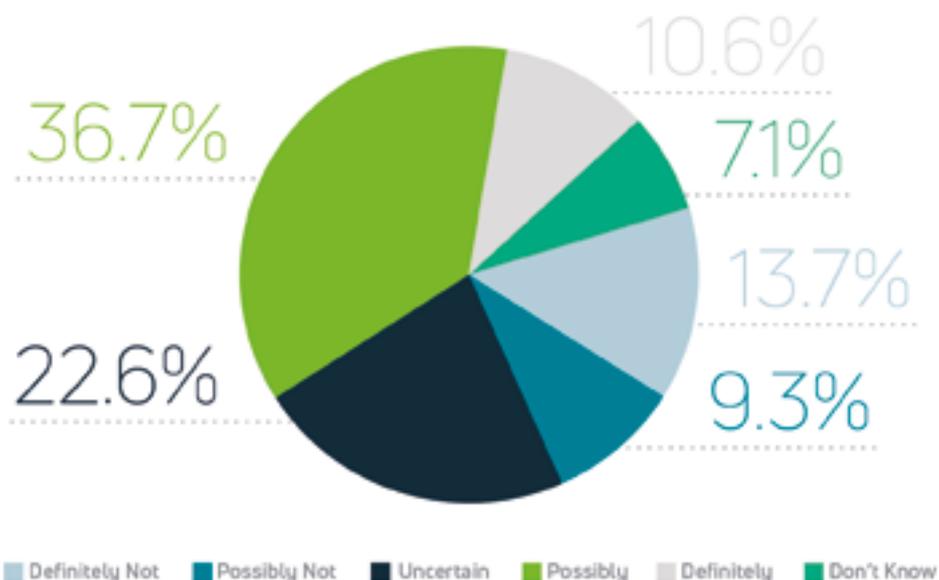


Figure 13: Willingness of Survey Respondents to Pay an Annual Subscription to Manage CPD Points/Credits

The main comments made by respondents on paying an annual subscription to manage CPD points/credits are presented in Table 5.

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If worthwhile and beneficial, then would pay fee</li> <li>● Only willing to pay if standard is high</li> <li>● Fees need to be controlled so that they are not excessive</li> <li>● Depends on who is running the CPD</li> <li>● Depends on level of participation and engagement</li> <li>● Should be possible to manage online with low cost</li> <li>● Willing to pay once the fee is reasonable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Another layer of administration which farmers should not have to pay for</li> <li>● Should be free, as it is in other professions</li> <li>● Farmers do not have the income to pay of it</li> <li>● Not willing to pay for administration</li> <li>● Cost should be covered by farm organisations</li> <li>● Government should cover cost</li> <li>● Should be funded by CAP</li> <li>● Should be funded by industry and not farmers</li> </ul>

Table 5: Main Comments Made by Respondents on Paying an Annual Subscription to Manage CPD Points/Credits

<sup>20</sup> Important to remember that survey sample has a high proportion of younger dairy farmers.

### 6.14 Structuring of CPD

Some of the suggestions made by survey respondents regarding the structuring of CPD include:

- Seeking funding under CAP for the implementation of CPD.
- Should be implemented through Macra na Feirme or independent body.
- Linked into direct payments (discussion for and against this).
- Must be voluntary while others suggested that it must be compulsory in order to drive participation in CPD.
- Target young farmers initially and build the engagement in CPD in that way.
- Build the engagement of other industry stakeholders and convince them to get involved in the process.
- There should be a range of entry points into the CPD system so that those with little or no prior experience and those with consider experience can enter at levels appropriate to their experience/learning.
- Maximise the carrot and minimise the stick approach.

#### Industry stakeholders provided suggestions on the structuring of CPD including:

- Delivery of agricultural programmes in very often aimed at getting the leading farmers to engage in a new programme or activity. However, this approach only reaches a small proportion of farmers and CPD needs to reach more farmers, many who do not typically get involved in training and advisory/information activities.
- The need to achieve a minimum level of engagement/points/credits each year (as in other industries) could be perceived by individuals as a burden on them. Currently there is no mechanism for those who are engaging in ongoing CPD type training to record their achievement/attendance.
- Self-declaration and online recording of events attended/activities undertaken provides an option which is, easy to do and places the responsibility on the individual to record and maintain.
- A credits/points system may not be best suited to farming but a CPD points system of some sort, does have the advantage of tracking the level of participation in training. With or without the presence of a points system, there is a need to maintain a database of training completed over time. The system of recording of CPD needs to be as efficient as possible in order to minimise the financial cost and to ensure the system is easy to use.

- One organisation needs to take control of the management and coordination of the CPD in order to ensure the delivery of a full programme of programmes/courses/activities, by a range of providers with coordinated outcomes and recording of these outcomes. This organisation should coordinate the provision, delivery, monitoring and also coordinate the statements of completion/accomplishment at the end of programmes.
- The delivery of CPD activities/events to farmers/those working in farming needs to be innovative, high quality and appealing. Farmers need to feel that they will miss something in terms of learning or experience if they don't engage with CPD. CPD events/activities need to be delivered by experienced trainers/facilitators who are skilled in the delivery of adult learning programmes. Some facilitators/deliverers/trainers may need upskilling in order to deliver a 'top-class' programme. In order to appeal to the wider farming audience, a broad suite of CPD events/activities will be required so that farmers not only have several options about how they engage with CPD (online, seminars, workshops, on-farm, etc.) but also a broad range of relevant topics. A large suite of activities/events/topics provides those interested in CPD with a wide choice from which to select areas of interest to them.

### 6.15 Conclusions From Research and Consultation Findings

The research survey, open submissions and interviews with industry stakeholders provide a wide range of views on CPD. Some of the main conclusions of relevance to the development of a CPD framework in farming are presented in this section

#### Engagement in Training:

- Farmers are currently engaging in training for compliance with regulations and skills acquisition purposes.
- There is potential to improve the quality of training, cost, appropriateness to needs of farmers and availability (location/times etc).
- It is evident that when farmers engage in training, they are looking for information, skills which could lead to changes in practices, improved efficiency, financial benefits and improvements in lifestyle, health and well-being.
- There is a preference for accredited training as it is viewed as being of a better standard and more accepted by the wider industry.

**Need for CPD**

- CPD is viewed as having the potential to provide an opportunity for farmers/those working in farming to acquire worthwhile training/knowledge and to have a benchmark to compare themselves against.
- There is a concern about CPD being made compulsory or linked to EU payments.
- Farmers who do not engage with advisory services or rarely attend information events, are unlikely to engage with CPD and will need particular focus to get them (or a proportion of them to engage).
- CPD has the potential of giving participants recognition for the learning/information events which they engage in which they can use to benefit their own business and/or career.
- CPD is required in order to equip farmers/those working in farming with the skills to adapt to a changing farming environment.
- Opportunity to pitch training at different levels so that the needs of different groups (owners, managers, technicians, operatives) are catered for.

**The benefits of CPD**

The benefits of CPD to farming/those working in farming are wide ranging, impacting on the business and the individual. The specific benefits depend on each individual's circumstances, their stage in their career/business development, their extent of engagement with CPD and the willingness to apply their learning to their own situation. Those benefits include:

- Generally, more informed, knowledgeable and skilled farming sector which has potential to lead to improved, efficiency, productivity and profitability.
- Facilitating employers in selection of employees and employees to demonstrate their skills to potential employees.
- Specifically benefiting health and safety by providing guidance on best practice.
- Opportunities to engage with others in the industry which can have both farm business and social/personal benefits.
- Potential to promote farming as a worthwhile career option.
- Opportunity to create a more professional, vibrant, knowledgeable and skilled industry.

**Encouraging Farmer Participation in CPD**

- While the benefits of participation in CPD are numerous, they are not obvious to all farmers. Therefore, achieving wide buy-in from farmers/those working in farming will be challenging. The concept of engaging in an ongoing programme of training/upskilling while not new is one that many farmers are not familiar with.
- There is no consensus on whether CPD should be linked to EU/national payments, programmes and schemes. Those in favour of a link with EU payments see the potential for engagement with CPD to form part of the eligibility criteria for payments and possibly the definition of an 'active farmer'. As a result, such a linkage could generate a large-scale uptake in CPD. However, there is another view that making CPD mandatory could tarnish the perception of CPD and result in farmers engaging in CPD because 'they have to' rather than because 'they want to'.
- The benefits of CPD need to be promoted to farmers particularly in the areas of efficiency, productivity, profitability and lifestyle.
- A well organised system of CPD which offers a portfolio of activities/events which are complementary, and additive could encourage participation among farmers/those working in farming and participants will potentially provide the strongest endorsement and promotion of CPD.
- CPD must appeal and meet the needs of those with different farm enterprises, scales, age and involvement (full/part-time).
- CPD needs to be innovative and exciting in design and delivery so that it is perceived as something 'new and exciting' rather than 'more of the same'.

**Industry Buy-in to CPD**

- All relevant agri-stakeholders need to be engaged in the process of developing and implementing CPD as buy-in from the wider agri-industry is critical to the success of CPD in farming.
- Industry champions could help to drive the promotion of the concept of CPD.
- Organisations need to consider how they could recognise and reward those who are engaging in CPD.

### Concerns About CPD

- The primary concern regarding CPD is that it could increase the bureaucratic burden on farmers/those working in farming and that the system of recording could be complicated.
- There was also a fear that CPD could become mandatory (and/or linked to EU payments) and that farmers could be forced to comply rather than deciding for themselves whether to engage in CPD or not.
- Concern that an industry wide system of CPD could try to appeal to all and as a result become a 'tick-box' exercise with little real benefit to participants.
- There was a concern that CPD might not achieve sufficient buy-in to become an enduring process – fear that it could run for a short-period but could ultimately fail due to lack of numbers participating in events/activities. A low level of buy-in could also impact on the extent of offering available – might not be a wide suite of events/activities available and therefore have limited appeal.
- Farmers/those working in farming may be confused by the range of events/activities available and may not be able to determine what is most suited to their needs and of the most potential benefit to them.

### Structuring of CPD

- Need to reach out to those farmers who typically do not engage in training, advisory/information events/activities.
- Delivery and content of CPD needs to be of high quality which may require upskilling for those delivering events/activities.
- Need a wide range of different events/activities covering an extensive array of topics in order to provide sufficient options to appeal to as many farmers/those working in farming as possible.
- The typical approach of providing credits/points to those engaging in CPD needs to be carefully considered as to its suitability for farming/those working in farming.
- There is a need for broad industry involvement but one organisation/entity to lead on the development and roll-out of CPD.

## 7. Proposed Framework for CPD in Farming

A proposed framework for CPD in farming is presented in this section. The proposal has been informed by the research findings and learnings from the desk research. In the context of the development and implementation of a CPD structure there will be a requirement for a coordinating body to manage and administer such as system. Suggestions for the roles and tasks of such a coordinating body are provided at the end of this section.

### 7.1 Voluntary Engagement

The introduction of CPD for farmers and those working in farming should involve voluntary participation (at least initially). While making CPD mandatory could ensure a greater uptake among farmers, it could potentially damage the overall perception of CPD and result in farmers engaging in CPD because they 'have to' rather than because 'they want to'. CPD is essentially about personal and skills development and this cannot be forced upon people. In the longer term, as the concept of CPD in farming gains acceptance and popularity, CPD could be considered to form part of the eligibility criteria for payments/programmes/schemes/supports.

### 7.2 Registered Farmer or Farm Operator

CPD is focused on the personal and skills development of the individuals who engage in it. There is a need to formally recognise engagement in CPD in an identifiable manner. In other professions this involves individuals maintaining their professional status (e.g. chartered accountant) or membership of an institute. This approach may not be ideal in a farming context, but another format may be worth considering such as a 'Registered Farmer or Farm Operative'. A 'Registered Farmer or Farm Operative' is an individual who agrees to sign up to the register and engage in CPD activities in order to maintain their annual membership. In doing so, it is anticipated that 'Registered Farmer or Farm Operative' would benefit from being so but those who do not register are not penalised relative to their current situation.

The register would include:

- A set of standards and code of conduct which must be adhered to.
- Members signing up to a system of CPD to maintain their membership over time.
- Voluntary participation (at least initially).

### 7.3 Credits or Certificate of Completion

The allocating of credits for specific types of CPD activities is the most typical approach to the recording of CPD. Credits can be based on points for activities or the number of hours of contact/engagement time. For farmers, CPD is often recorded in terms of records/certificates of accomplishment/completion. Two options should be considered for the roll-out of CPD in farming (with option 1 possibly being time-limited for an introductory period).

#### Option 1: Record of Attendance/Certificate of Completion

In this approach, when participants engage in and complete an approved CPD event/activity, they receive a certificate of attendance/completion. The certificate may be presented in hard copy form directly to the farmer at the event or subsequent to it. However, ideally all records should be processed in an electronic format and available for sharing in an electronic format or printed if necessary. All records are maintained over time and can be accessed as required by participants or by other relevant agencies with the permission of the participant (e.g. farmer agrees for information to be shared with Bord Bia or milk processor or other).

Ideally this approach should be time-limited with the intention of migrating participants onto a credit-based system over time (e.g. 3-5 year period). It could also be considered as CPD Base Level which allows farmers to phase into the system.

#### Option 2: CPD Credits

Participants engage in and complete an approved CPD event/activity and receive the credits allocated to that event. Credits are processed electronically and available for reference/sharing electronically. All records are maintained over time and can be accessed as required by participants or by other relevant agencies with the permission of the participant (e.g. farmer agrees for information to be shared with Bord Bia or milk processor or other). If a CPD system for farming is to be introduced, it would be recommended that the ambition would be to achieve such a credit based approach in the medium term.

### 7.4 Allocation of Credits

If a credit system is adopted, then a framework for events/activities and the allocation of the relevant number of credits allocated will need to be developed. The credits allocated will depend on the nature of the event/activity and the extent of engagement by participants e.g. low level of credits allocated for attending a discussion group meeting, medium level for attending a national conference/seminar and high level for undertaking intensive training/education course.

Events/activities will be submitted to the coordinating body for approval and allocation of credits in advance of delivery. Participants will be informed in advance of the number of credits available. Where events/activities do not have approval or credits allocated, participants can submit evidence of attendance and request an allocation of credits for them (from the coordinating body).

Taking account of the different roles within farming and aiming to ensure that CPD appeals to all, two levels of CPD could be offered aimed at: owner/managers; and technicians/operatives. Technicians/operatives could be required to obtain a lower level of credits since they may have less scope to attend other events/activities and due to their role as technicians/operatives may not be able to benefit from or implement certain elements of CPD (e.g. management training etc.).

In an attendance/completion-based system, participants should be required to complete a minimum number of activities/events each year in order to maintain their registration.

The determination of the number of annual credits required can be decided at a later stage in the roll-out process but a possible example of is provided for illustrative purposes.



**Participants could be required to maintain a two-year rolling average of 200 credits (100 per year). A minimum of 75 credits should be obtained in each year. In the first year of registration for a points system, participants will receive an allocation of 75 credits to get them started on the process and in recognition of their willingness to engage in a process of CPD. Participants will have until the end of year two to achieve a further 125 credits and thereafter must maintain the rolling average of 200 credits over a two-year period. Operatives could be required to maintain a minimum two-year rolling average of 100 credits (50 per year) with a minimum of 35 obtained each year. If the target number of credits are not achieved, registration is suspended until the target is achieved again.**

A practical example of achieving 100 credits in one year is presented in Table 6.

Aspect	Credits
Discussion group meetings – 10 attended in year (2 credits per meeting)	20
Subscription of farming publications (IFJ, Today's Farm, Irish Farmers Monthly etc)	5
Contract with Teagasc	5
Attendance at National Dairy Conference	25
Attendance at Irish Grassland Association Conference	25
Participation in Grass Measurement Training Course	5
Attendance at Cooperative Sustainable Farming Walk	5
Attendance at Animal Health Ireland Workshop	5
Attendance at Farm taxation seminar	5

Table 6: Example of Achieving CPD Credits in Practice

### 7.5 Recording of Credits/Attendance

The recording of credits/attendance would ultimately be the responsibility of the participant but facilitated in doing so by event/activity organisers and the CPD coordinating body.

The recording should be undertaken using the most appropriate technology and should at a minimum involve a: central CPD database; user-friendly website; and App. The design and launching of these systems will be a priority for the introduction of CPD. An example of a comprehensive technology-based solution from the construction industry in Netherlands is provided in Appendix 2.

Participants should be provided with a unique identifier code when they first register. This code remains with the individual whether their registration is active or lapsed/inactive and can be used if they subsequently reactivate at some stage in the future. This code will be the basis for their login to the system and events/activities. Registered participants could also be provided with a bar-coded swipe card which could be utilised as an identifier for events/activities.

At each event/activity participants should be required to sign in (by hand or electronically) and the records of the attendance maintained and submitted to the coordinating body by the organisers. Following completion, participants should be provided with an event/activity identifier code which they can use to cross reference their allocation of credits or utilise to update their record by submitting the details to the coordinator.

Participants can access their details online or by way of the App or website at any time. Automated email/text message updates could provide participants at appropriate intervals with an update on their current credit status.

### 7.6 Types of CPD Events/activities

The exact nature of the CPD events/activities which could be approved under the system is considerable and it is not possible to be totally definitive at this stage of the process. The events/activities should include both formal and informal elements. In addition, to be holistic, consideration should be given to the inclusion of life/social elements (e.g. leadership role in organisation, first aid training) to a small extent. An indicative list includes:

- Subscription to relevant agricultural publications (print and/or online).
- Membership of relevant agricultural organisations.
- Contracts with Teagasc and/or approved Agricultural Consultant.
- Attendance at discussion group meetings.
- Attendance at farm walk/demonstration events.
- Attendance at national/regional events/open days.
- Attendance at conferences/seminars/forums.
- Participation and attendance at Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine information/training events.
- Participation in Agricultural training programmes.
- Participation in Cooperative/other agricultural organisation training/information events.
- Participation in practical skills training course.

### 7.7 CPD Deliverers

It is anticipated that a significant element of the CPD events/activities will be delivered by a range of independent bodies (including Macra na Feirme, Other Farm Organisations, Teagasc, Agricultural Consultants, Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, Cooperatives, Farm Relief Service, Educational Institutions, private training organisations, among many others). These would register their services and programmes on the CPD system. The coordinating body could become involved in the delivery of activities/events if necessary but this will not be its primary role.

### 7.8 Provision of Events/Activities

A large range of events/activities is critical for the success of CPD. As such the CPD programme of events/activities should:

- Be pitched at different levels (those with low level of experience to those with high level of experience; those with lower literacy/numeracy skills and those with average/standard levels).
- Include offerings for the range of farm enterprises and scale of operations.
- Be organised at a range of times throughout the year.
- Be provided in a range of locations across the country.
- Address a broad range of topics/issues relevant to the needs of farmers/those working in farming.
- Have the potential for additive and progressive events/activities for those who have previously engaged.
- Include different approaches – on-farm, in-class, workshops discussions, blended learning, online, conferences, seminars, discussion groups etc.
- Include innovation in delivery techniques.
- Be innovative in the type of new activities/events organised.
- Address emerging skills and knowledge gaps.

### 7.9 Grading of CPD Events/Activities

Activities/events should be graded according to the level of prior knowledge/experience of participants required to gain the maximum learning from each activity/event. This approach will assist potential participants in identifying the most appropriate events/activities which are suited to their needs. Grading could also assist participants in identifying options for progression/follow-on, as well as prior learning which should be undertaken before engaging in a particular programme.

### 7.10 Approval of Deliverers/Events/Activities

The coordinating body should develop a process for the approval of both CPD deliverers and individual events/activities. This process would include an assessment guide and online submission system. Both delivering organisations and specific events/activities should require approval. However, for instance Teagasc Discussion Groups could be submitted at organisational level rather than at individual level. An appropriate system should be developed to facilitate the process of application for and approval of events/activities/deliverers.

When participants attend a non-approved event/activity, they should have the opportunity to submit details of the event/activity for the possible allocation of credits.

### 7.11 Monitoring of Quality of Deliverers/Events/Activities

An important role of the coordinating body will be the monitoring of quality of programmes delivered in terms of quality of delivery, quality of content, approach to delivery etc. A process for monitoring quality and appropriate auditing of deliverers/events/activities should be developed. A rigid approval process should ensure that the monitoring of quality is not a difficult or demanding task. A feedback system could be developed for participants which is completed following completion of an event/activity (where feedback mechanisms are already in place for events/activities, care should be taken to avoid duplication). Such a quality assurance function would not supersede existing quality assurance systems in place by the provider for QQI accredited programmes.

### 7.12 Promotion of Concept/Events/Activities

A critical role for coordinating body and all stakeholders is the promotion of the concept of CPD to farmers, highlighting the benefits and encouraging participation. The coordinating body can lead the promotion but needs the support and cooperation of all other stakeholders. Promotion should be undertaken using both traditional and social media approaches and include case studies and testimonials from participants and industry. Existing providers who are signed up to the CPD system can utilise this as an additional promotion tool and message when promoting their activities.

The individual events/activities can be promoted directly to registered participants by way of the CPD website and App. In addition, participants can personally select the extent of event/activity notifications which they wish to receive directly by e-mail/text message.

### 7.13 Industry Buy-in

The success of CPD depends on the engagement of farmers and those working in farming and the buy-in from the wider industry in terms of recognising those with CPD and giving them credit for this. Credit/recognition could be given in several ways including eligibility for programmes/schemes, acknowledgement in recruitment and payment, discounts on inputs, bonuses on products etc. The coordinating body should seek to encourage industry buy-in and acceptance of the concept of CPD in farming. Industry buy-in could also include the development and implementation of CPD systems for those working in the wider agri-industry where not already in place. Therefore, farmers/those working in farming and those engaging with them/supporting them in the industry would be engaging in ongoing personal and skills development.

### 7.14 Cost of CPD

Participants will assess the cost of participating in CPD in several ways including: cost of events/activities (training/conferences etc); opportunity cost of participating (time off to participate); and annual CPD registration costs. Providers need to pitch the cost of events/activities at a level which appeals to potential participants. The opportunity cost will be influenced by the value potential participants place on the events/activities, the quality of the offering and the benefits derived from participating. The CPD registration cost will be a new element for farmers/those working in farming. Currently participants only pay for events/activities (many of which are subsidised). Therefore, based on the experience from other examples, a typical annual registration cost would be in the region of €30-50 per individual. This fee would cover the registration of all activities/events, informing the participants on upcoming events/activities and managing the system overall.

The initial establishment of a CPD system will also have the cost of the development of the recording system and appropriate technology (database, website, App etc.). Establishment funding will be required and will need to be sourced from: participants; industry; Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; and other relevant sources e.g. Skillnet or similar. Sourcing of potential funding under the Rural Development Programme should be explored for the establishment of the CPD.

### 7.15 CPD Advisory Group

The coordinating body should be supported by an advisory Group which is representative of the wider agri-industry. The role of the advisory Group will essentially be to provide strategic direction, guidance on the development and implementation of CPD, support and encourage farmer and industry buy-in.

### 7.16 CPD Coordinating Body

The initiation, roll-out and establishment of a system of CPD in agriculture requires the buy-in from farmers/those working in farming and the wider agri-industry at all levels but requires one organisation/body to lead and coordinate those activities. The characteristics of the coordinating body include:

- Independent or level of independence if part of an existing organisation.
- Willing to engage with and be guided by an industry advisory body.
- Knowledge of farmers/those working in farming, ability to understand their needs and engage with them.
- Experience of working with a range of stakeholders.
- Knowledge and experience of training, education programmes and knowledge transfer events/activities.
- Competence and ability to coordinate the delivery of a programme of events/activities and system of recording engagement.
- Credibility in the eyes of farmers, those working in farming and the agricultural industry.

The main roles of the coordinating body include:

- Coordinating all aspects of the CPD management and recording.
- Establishment of standards for delivery of CPD activities/events.
- Establish guidelines for farmers/those working in farming for participation in CPD.
- Provide guidelines for delivery of events/activities.
- Manage the development and creation of appropriate online recording systems.
- Oversee the recording of participation (credits and/or certificate of completion).
- Develop a system for approving events/activities and oversee approval process.
- Monitor delivery and quality of events/activities.
- Promote awareness and encourage participation among farmers/those working in farming.
- Foster links with industry and encourage engagement with CPD.
- Explore options for the funding of the system of CPD.
- Implement and enforce standards at all levels in the process.
- Seek to engage the hard to reach/less likely to participate cohorts of farmers/farm workers.



The next step in the process is to engage in an industry-wide discussion on how the framework can be developed and implemented.

## CONCLUSION

The research has highlighted a need for a system of CPD for farmers/those working in farming and potential benefits of such a system of CPD. There is general agreement that such a system is needed and broad acceptance that the time is now right to implement such a system. However, it will be challenging to gain widespread acceptance among the farming population and ultimately engagement with CPD. In order to succeed CPD needs the support of farmers, those working in farming and the wider industry.

A framework for CPD in farming, informed by the research process is proposed in this report. It is accepted that as the concept is developed further, elements within the framework may require change but it provides a starting point for the foundations of a system of CPD in farming.

The next step in the process is to engage in an industry-wide discussion on how the framework can be developed and implemented. This will require an exploration of all elements of the framework but initially it will be most important to consider the establishment of an advisory group to lead the development of the framework. Macra Agricultural Skillnet have commissioned this research with the support of Skillnet Ireland. Macra Agricultural Skillnet will establish an advisory group which would have the remit of developing the CPD framework proposed in this report. This advisory group would require voluntary input from industry stakeholders and should set a time limited period for the exploration of the framework.

# Appendix One



## Macra Agricultural Skillnet - CPD in Agriculture Survey - January 2019

**1. What is your current occupational status in farming? (select all that apply)**

- Farming own land independently (owned and/or rented/leased)       Working in non-agricultural related job (full or part time)  
 Farming in partnership/collaborative arrangement       Working in the home/carer (full or part time)  
 Working on family farm (full or part time)       Agricultural student (full or part time)  
 Working on other farm (full or part time)       Non-agricultural student (full or part time)  
 Working in agricultural related job (full or part time)       Unemployed  
 Other

**2. If farming, what is your MAIN farm enterprise? (select one only)**

- Dairy       Beef - drystock       Tillage       Other  
 Beef - suckling       Sheep       Mixed farming       Not farming

**3. If farming, what is your main farm enterprise? (select one only)**

- 30 ha or less       31-50 ha       51-75 ha       76-100ha       100ha or more

**4. Are you?**

- Female  
 Male

**5. What age category are you in?**

- Up to 25 years       31-35 years       41-50 years       60+ years  
 26-30 years       36-40 years       51-60 years

**6. To what extent are you currently involved in the following organisations?**

	Actively Involved	Low Level Involvement	Member in Name Only	Not Involved
Macra na Feirme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
IFA/ICMSA/ ICSA	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Agricultural Cooperative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Agricultural Organisation/ Association	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community/Sports/ Charity Group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**7. What level of formal agricultural education and training have you completed?**

- No formal agricultural education/training
- Level 5/6 - Cert in Agriculture/Green Cert
- Level 7 - Diploma
- Level 8+ - Degree or higher
- Short courses
- Currently participating in an Agricultural Course

**8. In the past 5 years, have you participated in any of the following training courses? (select all that apply)**

- GLAS/AEOS Training
  - Macra na Feirme/IFA Skillnet Course
  - Cooperative Related Course
  - Practical training course (AI/Hoofcare/Sprayer)
  - Farm Health & Safety Course
  - Farm Management Course (Financial/Grassland/Time etc)
  - Staff/People Management Course
  - Other Course
- If other, please specify:*
- \_\_\_\_\_

**9. In your view, how adequate are the ongoing training courses available for farmers/those working in farming? (excluding formal Level 5, 6, 7 or 8 courses - Cert in Agr, Diploma etc)**

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor Very	Poor	Don't Know
In terms of availability/location/timing of training	<input type="radio"/>					
In terms of suitability of training to your needs	<input type="radio"/>					
In terms of quality of training	<input type="radio"/>					
In terms of cost of training	<input type="radio"/>					

**10. When you are undertaking a training course in agriculture, do you have a preference for accredited or non-accredited training?**

- Accredited Training (nationally recognised)
- Non-Accredited Training (possibly not recognised beyond those delivering the training)
- No preference
- Never check whether accredited or non-accredited

Please comment on your preference for accredited or non-accredited training courses

**11. Please rank (1-5) your preferred method of delivery for training courses. (1 being most preferred, 5 least preferred)**

Small interactive workshop	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Online/internet	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Blended (online combined with face-to-face)	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Conference/seminar style	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Learning from other farmers/peers/mentors	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>		

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the ongoing process of recording, maintaining and enhancing knowledge, skills and experience (formally and informally) related to your career/profession beyond any initial formal training/education. In farming this could include among other things, the participation in short courses or attendance at appropriate information sharing events (e.g. conferences, meetings, open days etc). In a formal CPD system, points/credits are allocated to each event/course/training attended.

**12. When you participate in training/courses, how do you measure the implementation of the learning from that training?**  
(please select all that apply)

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Change in practices    | <input type="radio"/> Financial changes                    | <input type="radio"/> Peer/other farmer evaluation of learning |
| <input type="radio"/> Efficiency changes     | <input type="radio"/> Lifestyle, health & well-being gains | <input type="radio"/> Don't measure the implementation         |
| <input type="radio"/> Change in productivity | <input type="radio"/> Self evaluation of learning          | <input type="radio"/> Other                                    |

If other, please specify:

**13. Is there a need for a system in farming that recognises participation in ongoing and continuing education/training/upskilling (CPD)?**

- Yes     No     Possibly

Please comment on your answer:

**14. To what extent do you think that a CPD system in farming could help to formally record/measure the skill/training/knowledge level of farmers/those working in farming?**

- Definitely not     Possibly not     Uncertain     Possibly     Definitely     Don't Know

Please comment on your answer:

**15. To what extent do you believe that a CPD system could benefit Irish farmers in general and you specifically?**

	Some benefit	Not much benefit	Neither beneficial nor not beneficial	Some benefit	Significant benefit
Irish Farmers in General	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Those Working in Farming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p><b>16. How could farmers/those working in farming be encouraged to buy-into the concept of CPD for themselves?</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><b>17. How do you think CPD training /points/credits could be utilised by farmers?</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
---	---

18. Do you think that a formal CPD system could be of benefit, if you/others were:						
	Definitely not	Possibly not	Uncertain	Possibly	Definitely	N/A
Looking for a job as a farm employee / manager?	<input type="radio"/>					
Looking to employ a farm employee / manager (identify the right person)?	<input type="radio"/>					
Considering entering a collaborative farming arrangement [e.g. partnership] (identify the right person)?	<input type="radio"/>					
Negotiating finance / loan for the farm business?	<input type="radio"/>					
Participating in Bord Bia or similar assurance programmes?	<input type="radio"/>					
Participating in Dept of Agriculture programmes /schemes?	<input type="radio"/>					

**19. What organisations would you like to recognise CPD points/credits (please select all that apply)?**

Bord Bia     
  Financial Institutions     
  Purchasers of Products [e.g. milk processors, meat factories, supermarkets]

Co-ops     
  Insurance Companies     
  EPA/Regulatory Authorities

Revenue     
  Department of Agriculture     
  Other

Teagasc     
  Educational Institutions     
 If other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**20. Would you have any concerns about the introduction of a CPD system for farmers/those working in farming?**

Not at all concerned   
  Not very concerned   
  Neither concerned or not concerned   
  Concerned   
  Very concerned

Please comment on your specific concerns:

**21. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to CPD for farmers/those working in farming?**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A system of CPD could help to address the current labour shortages in farming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participation in CPD could contribute to increased participation on Coop boards and in farm organisations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participation in CPD could improve safe practices on farms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participation in CPD could improve farmers health and well-being	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A system of CPD could make farming a more desirable profession for new entrants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A system of CPD could lead to more defined career pathways and opportunities for progression in farming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participation in CPD adds to a farmer's 'social licence to operate'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**22. How likely would you be to register and collect CPD points/credits at relevant events/training? (if CPD was available)**

- Definitely not     
 Possibly not     
 Uncertain     
 Possibly     
 Definitely

Please comment on your response:

**23. Would you be willing to pay a small annual subscription to an organisation to manage your CPD points/credits? (if CPD was available)**

- Definitely not     
 Possibly not     
 Uncertain     
 Possibly     
 Definitely

Please comment on your response:

**24. Have you any further comments on the possible introduction of a CPD system for farmers/those working in farming?**

**Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey questionnaire**

# Appendix Two



### Appendix 2: Netherlands Case Study Construction CPD System

Construction workers are similar to farmers in many cases in that they typically may only have a secondary education or equivalent Level 6 (craft) qualification. CPD is not formally organised for construction workers but is well established within the professional roles within construction.

Across Europe work is ongoing to develop CPD structures for construction workers and the Netherlands has made significant strides in this regard. A website and mobile application have been developed where users can:

- a) Create a profile and identify their existing skills/qualifications;
- b) Identify specific training/courses in relevant areas;
- c) Connect directly with existing CPD/course providers to apply for/take relevant CPD;
- d) Where relevant, directly access online resources and associated CPD materials; and
- e) Enable notifications so that they are informed of CPD opportunities which emerge which are relevant to them.

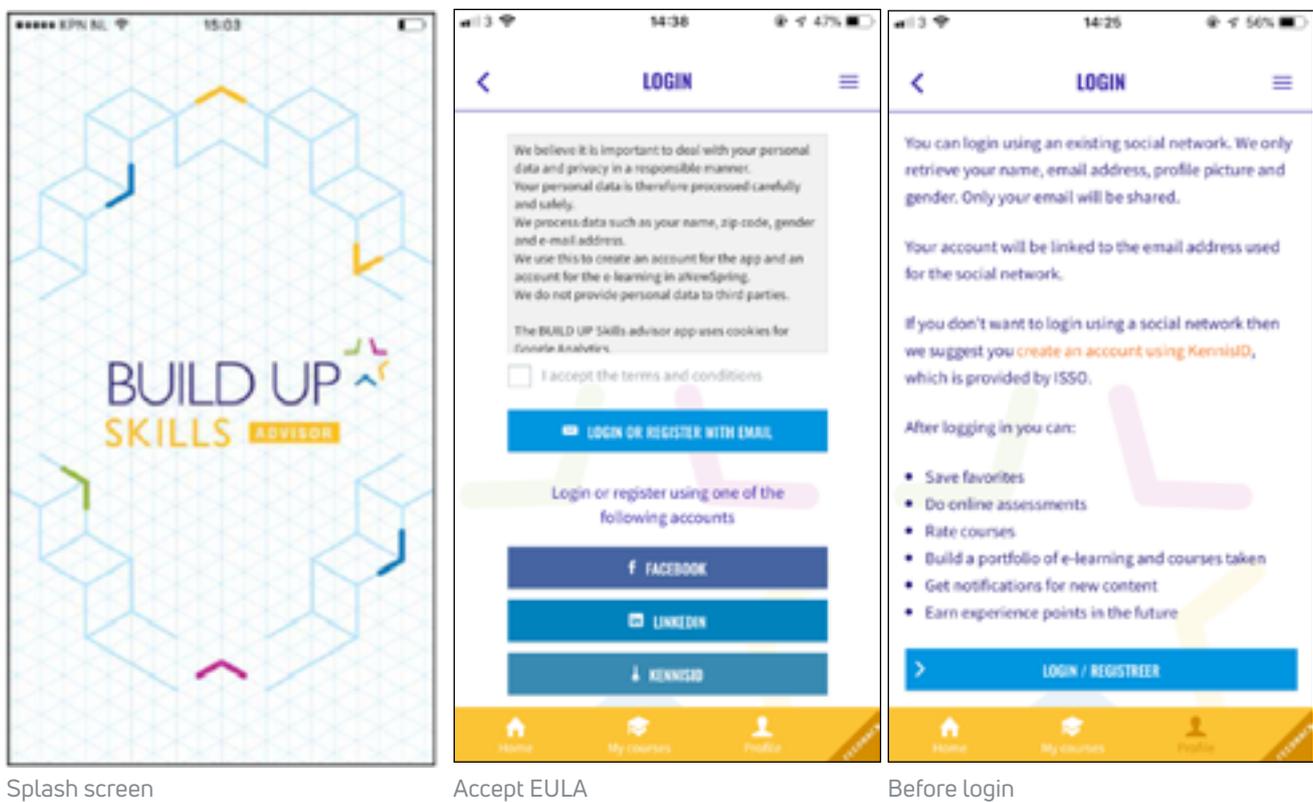


Figure 14. Netherland Build Up CPD Mobile Application

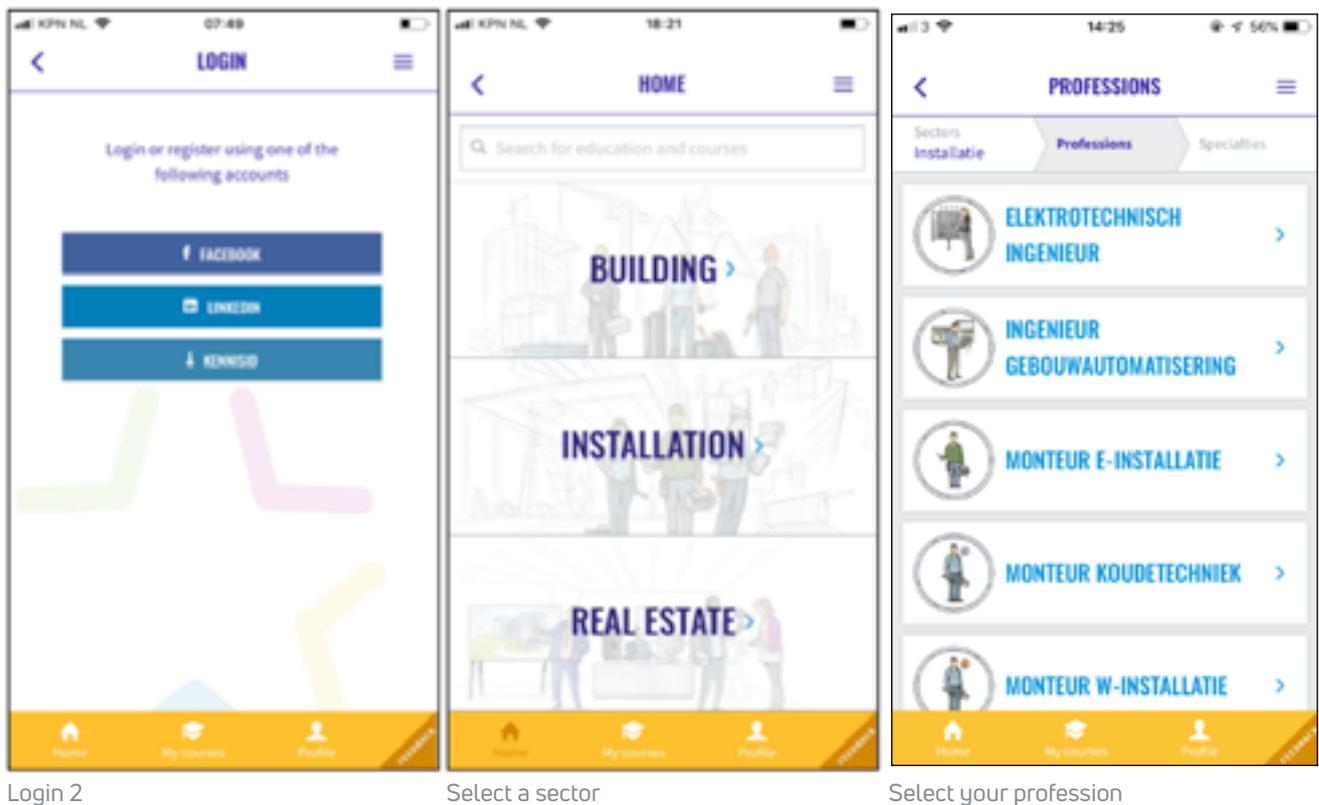


Figure 14. Netherland Build Up CPD Mobile Application

The system developed in the Netherlands has proven that:

- a) IT solutions can assist in the development of tools and resources to support CPD in specific sectors;
- b) The use of IT and smart data sharing solutions can allow the users of the system to directly access CPD opportunities; and
- c) CPD providers gain benefit from having direct contact with potential attendees or end-users.

From discussions with the CPD system developers they noted that there should be no technical barrier to the development of such as system for the agricultural sector.



### About Macra Agricultural Skillnet

Macra Agricultural Skillnet was established in 2015 and is an enterprise-led learning network that supports the further education and upskilling of farmers and those working in agriculture. The objective of this national network is to enhance farm productivity, efficiency and sustainability through the provision of relevant, practical training to young farmers and others employed in the wider agricultural sector.

The network addresses both technical and non-technical skills needs of its members, and develops new innovative programmes to meet the needs of SMEs within the agriculture sector including its young beef farmer sustainability programme.

[macra.ie/skillnet](http://macra.ie/skillnet)





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**Macra na Feirme**

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An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

