



Topic		Engage advisory services / consultants to improve farm management
Technical Efficiency 	Socio-Economic Resilience 	Background Dairy farming is a complex enterprise which encompasses fields such as animal health, nutrition, grass and crop agronomy / management, HR, machinery, environmental compliance, business planning etc. It is almost impossible to have expertise in all these areas. This is where advisory services and specialist consultants can help.

How does the strategy work?

- There is a wide range of options available, and the farmer can pick those which best suit them.
- Many countries have state funded advisory services (such as Teagasc in Ireland). Other countries have little or no such advisory services.
- A very effective form of advisory extension is a facilitated discussion group. These generally comprise of around 12-15 farmers operating similar farming systems.
- The group will typically meet on a monthly basis on a member's farm and discuss topical issues depending on the time of year and the needs of the host farmer.
- On occasion, a technical specialist might be brought in to discuss a specific topic. The group structure allows the cost of engaging this specialist to be shared.
- Alternatively, farmers may wish to engage consultants and technical specialists directly to cover a range of issues such as:
 - Farm business planning;
 - Animal health;
 - Nutrition;
 - Design of new facilities / infrastructure.

Positive features

- Allows for an unbiased view of the farm business.
- Can help prepare plans to present to financial institutions and regulators.
- Gives the farmer confidence in their decision making and enables them to progress faster.

Be careful, especially on these points

1. Make sure you engage reputable advisors.
2. Ask for recommendations from leading farmers and other industry professionals.
3. Agree fees in advance.

Equipment involved? Investment?

- Equipment is not necessary but to get the most out of a consultant you should have good quality farm data readily available. So having good herd management and accounting software will help.
- Costs can vary greatly. Some state advisory services are free and others involve a subscription. Using a discussion group format can reduce the cost.
- Some specialist advisors can charge around €600+ a day.

Specific advice

Do as much preparatory work as possible in advance of the meeting with the advisor. It will help you make best use of their time if you have all the relevant data available.

Assessment of method



Quote of the farmer:

“ My local discussion group has been invaluable in the development of my farm business”