NDA Ireland

AKIS Organisation - Finland

Agricultural schools → **Farmers**
- Farmers association (Maitoyrittäjät)
- Farmers Union (MTK)

Technical advice
- Rural Advisory Service Proagria
- Dairies (Valio cooperative)
- Breeding company (Faba)

Health and sanitary advice
- Finnish Food Safety Authority
- Animal Health society (ETT)

Research and developement
- **Natural Resources Insitute Finland (Luke)**
- University of Helsinki

→ Initial training
→ Advice / Continuing training
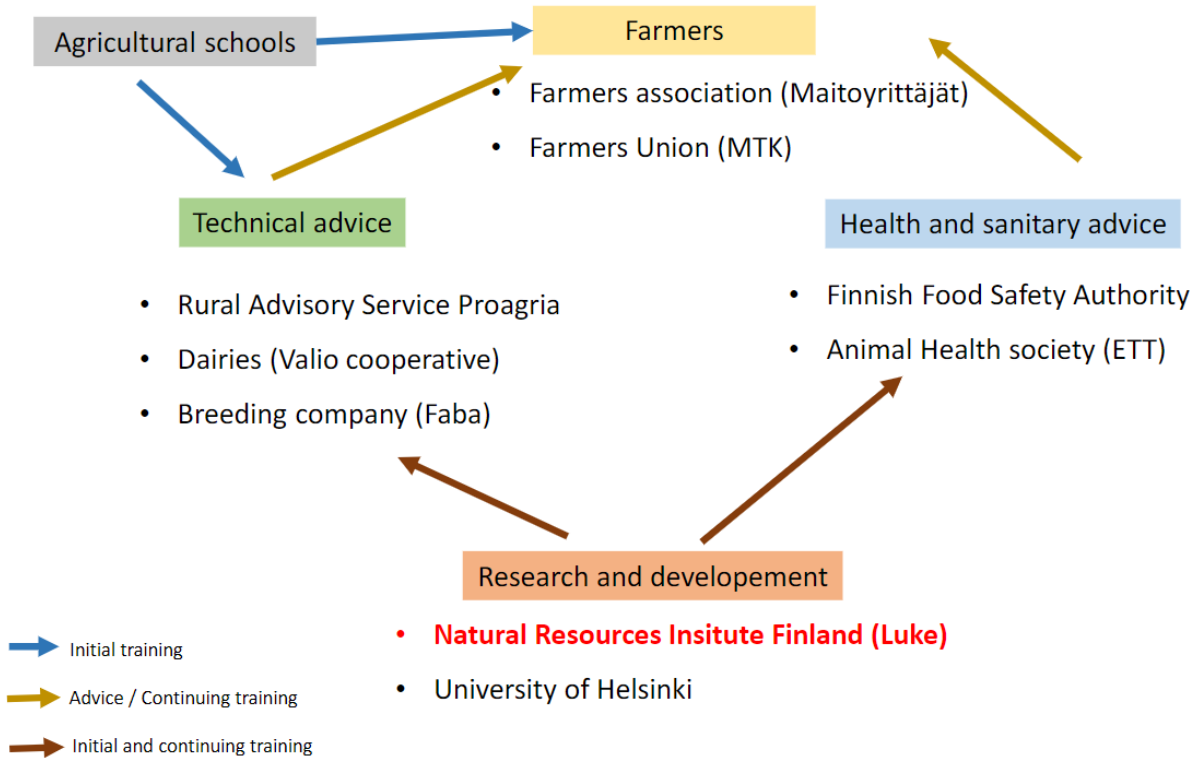→ Initial and continuing training

Figure 22. Dairy Agricultural Knowledge & Information System (AKIS) in Ireland

Ireland has a national dairy AKIS that consists of 17 members (see Figure 23):
- 10 pilot farms (detailed below)
- 7 advisor institutions: Natasha Browne, Teagasc (Research); Kevin Downing, ICBF (Enterprises); Grainne Hurley, Teagasc (Advisory); Shane O'Donnell, Dairygold (Dairy Industry); Sean McCarthy, Kerry (Dairy Industry); Joris Somers, Glanbia (Dairy Industry); Francis Kearney, Vista Milk (Research).
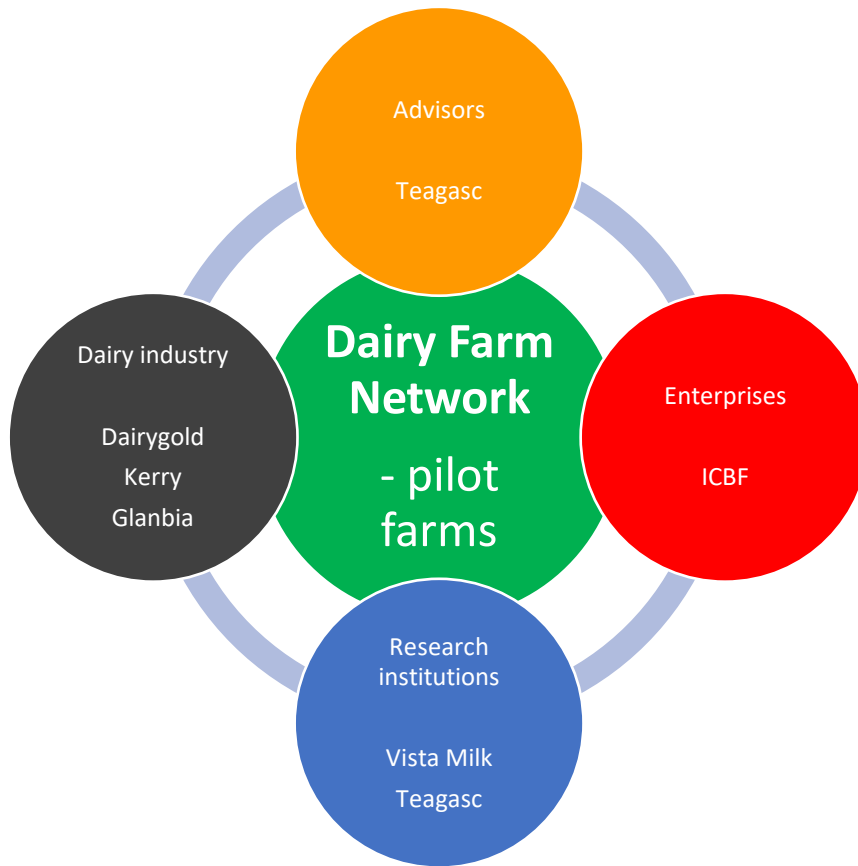
Figure 23. The Irish dairy AKIS consists of 10 pilot farms and 7 non-farmer institutions each with their own expertise.

Below, each member will be described in more detail.

Pilot farms

The 10 pilot farms are spread across Ireland and are depicted in Figure 24.
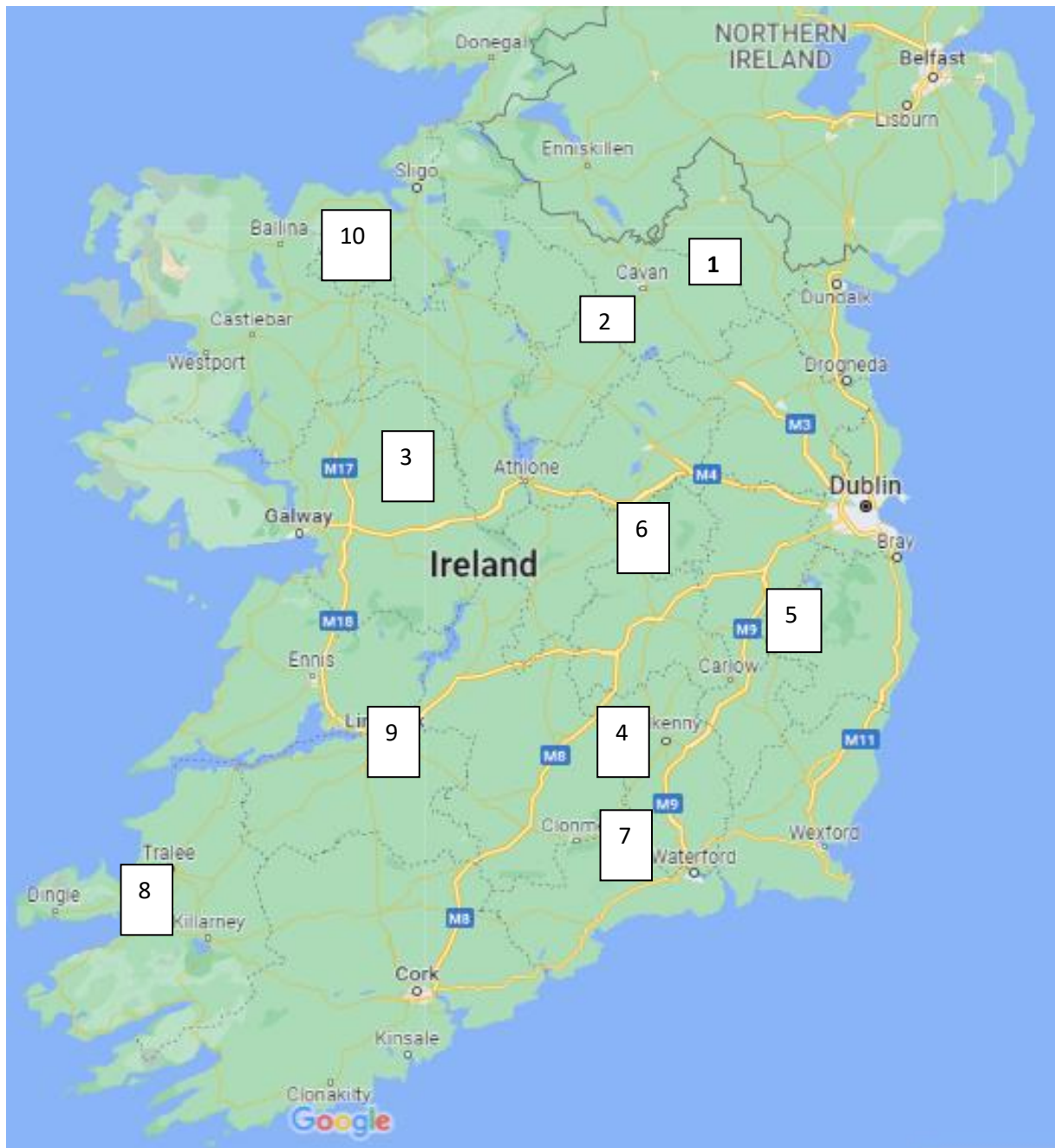

Figure 24. Map of Ireland showing the location of the pilot farms throughout the country.

1. David Brady Tierlahood, Stradone, Co. Cavan
    − Volume of milk production:
      700,000 kg per year
    − Dairy cows:
      100
    − Reason to include this farm:
      This farmer is operating on heavier soils in a more difficult part of the country where grazing cows can be challenging particularly in spring and autumn.

2. Killian Brennan, Kilcogy, via Longford, Co. Cavan
   - Volume of milk production:
     700,000 kg per year
   - Dairy cows:
     116
   - Reason to include this farm:
     This farmer is also farming on heavier soils in a more difficult part of the country where grazing cows can be challenging particularly in spring and autumn. He operates a high input high output system typical of the region.
3. Niall Callanan, Riverville, Craughwell, Co. Galway
   - Volume of milk production:
     1,130,000 kg per year
   - Dairy cows:
     220
   - Reason to include this farm:
     Larger scale farm operating in the western part of the country. A low input, low output system of milk production in operation on the farm.
4. Bryan Daniels, Raheenarren, Kilmoganny, Co. Kilkenny
   - Volume of milk production:
     1,662,000 kg per year
   - Dairy cows:
     300
   - Reason to include this farm:
     High genetic merit herd of dairy cows producing AI sires for national use. Large scale herd grazing on an elevated farm (300 metres above sea level). Trying to incorporate white and red clover into the grazing swards.
5. Philip Donohoe, Ballyellen, via Goresbridge, Co. Kilkenny
   - Volume of milk production:
     1,070,000 kg per year
   - Dairy cows:
     170
   - Reason to include this farm:
     Philip is running a high stocking rate (3 dairy cows per hectare on the 'milking platform'), high genetic merit dairy herd on a very dry farm. While grassland management is excellent, grass yield is limited by summer drought.
6. David Fennelly, Tinnakill, Portarlington, Co. Laois
   - Volume of milk production:
     1,434,000 kg per year
   - Dairy cows:
     230
   - Reason to include this farm:
     A large scale dairy enterprise operated by a father and son team, David and his father Tom, in the midlands of Ireland. A high production herd of cows with approximately 1t of meal fed per head. Trying to establish multi species swards on the farm.
7. Steven Fitzgerald, Graigue, Aglish, Cappoquin, Co. Waterford
   - Volume of milk production:
     1,023,000 kg per year

- Dairy cows:
  157
- Reason to include this farm:
  Steven is a rapidly expanding dairy farmer who wishes to remain as a grass-based milk producer in the years ahead. His stocking rate on the milking platform is relatively low at 1.6 cows per hectare but he plans to increase this in the years ahead.

8. Eoghan McCarthy, Callinafercy, Milltown, Co. Kerry
   - Volume of milk production:
     915,000 kg per year
   - Dairy cows:
     140
   - Reason to include this farm:
     Eoghan is representative of grass based dairy farming in the southwestern part of Ireland. His farm is at sea level making grazing the cows challenging in spring and autumn.

9. Dermot OConnor, Lisbane, Shanagolden, Co. Limerick
   - Volume of milk production:
     1,314,000 kg per year
   - Dairy cows:
     214
   - Reason to include this farm:
     Dermot is farming in the 'Golden Vale', the most productive region of the country to produce milk from a grass-based system. He operates a larger than average herd size on an intensive system of milk production.

10. Sean O'Donnell, Behybeg, Ballina, Co. Mayo
    - Volume of milk production:
      1,100,000 kg per year
    - Dairy cows:
      200
    - Reason to include this farm:
      Sean's farm type is reflective of many such operations in the west of Ireland, an area of more challenging soils for grass-based milk production. He operates a low input, grass-based system of milk production.

Non-farmer stakeholders
Enterprises:

1. Kevin Downing, ICBF
   Kevin works with the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF). The organisation manages the national cattle breeding database. It is responsible for genetic valuations and accelerating genetic gain in both dairy and beef cattle in Ireland. His role as HerdPlus manager involves organising delivery of online tools and reports to farmers to enable them to make better breeding decisions. He adds value to the R4D project by providing guidance on genetic aspects of grass-based dairying.

Advisors:

1. Dr. Grainne Hurley, Teagasc
   Grainne works as a dairy farmer group facilitator with Teagasc in the Carbery Joint Development Programme. Working with approximately 20 groups and 300 farmers, she has a unique insight into the challenges facing grass-based dairying in Ireland.

Researchers:

1. Dr. Natasha Browne, Teagasc, Moorepark
   Natasha works as a dairy technologist at Teagasc's dairy research facility in Moorepark focusing on dairy sustainability assessments. She also works as leader of Work Package 2 for the R4D project. She adds value to the project through her expertise in dairy cow welfare.
2. Dr. Francis Kearney, Vista Milk
   Francis works as general manager of the Vista Milk SFI Research Centre at Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork. The centre works collaboratively with Agri-Food and information communications technology, research institutes and leading Irish/multinational food and ICT companies. He adds value to the R4D project by providing guidance on new technologies and challenges facing pasture-based dairying.

Dairy industry:

1. Shane O'Donnell, Dairygold
   Shane works as an officer in the supply chain and milk advisory department of Dairygold Food Ingredients. In his role he interfaces with dairy farmers on a daily basis. He adds value to the R4D project through his knowledge of the day-to-day challenges facing dairy farmers operating pasture based dairy systems of milk production.
2. Sean McCarthy, Kerry
   Sean is services manager at Kerry Agribusiness. He manages the services offered to Kerry Agribusiness milk suppliers to improve the viability of their farm businesses and secure a supply of quality milk for manufacturing. Similar to Shane, he adds value to the R4D project from his knowledge of the challenges facing dairy farmers.
3. Joris Somers, Glanbia
   Joris works as animal health and hygiene manager at Glanbia Ireland. Qualified as a veterinary surgeon, he brings a wealth of experience and expertise in the area of dairy cattle health to the R4D project.

Facilitation methods

What have we done?

Sessions with the Pilot Farmers and with the NDA have been conducted. In each session we discussed resilience, needs and possible solutions to the needs identified. Within the needs and solutions, we focused on three main areas:

1. Socio-economic resilience;
2. Technical resilience;
3. Environmental/animal welfare/societal resilience.

Subsequently reports from the sessions held were collated and a report prepared for use by R4D.

What was easy?

We had no difficulty in attracting participants for the Pilot Farmer and NDA groups. The topic of resilience is a very real issue for pastoral dairying and R4D offers an opportunity to explore the issue for participants in greater detail.

What was difficult?

Similar to the experience in other countries, COVID-19 situation made it difficult to bring groups together. The 'lockdown' in Ireland has had a significant impact on the opportunities available for face-to-face interaction.