

DARD Business Strategy 2002



Foreword

by the Minister for Agriculture
and Rural Development



I am delighted to publish my Department's Business Strategy for 2002/3. We face a very exciting year, during which we will be opening up a number of new areas of work, and I can single out only a few of these. But I would emphasise that underpinning the new initiatives is a consistent commitment to carrying out a range of ongoing regulatory, diagnostic and administrative tasks which are essential to the well-being of Northern Ireland society.

I received the Report of the Vision Exercise in October 2001, and I am pleased that the Report has commanded widespread support within the Agri-Food Sector and more generally. This year, we will be beginning the process of implementation. I have already announced a number of early initiatives, but the main focus of attention will be on the Action Plan which I intend to publish in June. Shortly afterwards I will be taking delivery of further research on the potential contribution which early retirement and new entry schemes might make to restructuring our farming industry. In addition, I have commissioned a Working Group to examine the idea in the Vision Report of a single overarching Food Body. My Department and I are committed to responding positively to the new direction for the industry developed by the Vision Group.

The major area of new policy development facing the Department this year is, however, the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. It is now 2 years since the reforms in Agenda 2000, and it is right that they should be examined carefully. We expect to see in June the European Commission's proposals on the Mid-term Review, and it seems likely that there will be major discussions to be taken forward in conjunction with the Northern Ireland industry on how the Common Agricultural Policy can be reformed further to accommodate the enlargement of the European Union, and to facilitate the progress of the farming industry throughout Europe away from dependence on output related subsidies to produce safe and nutritious food and to manage the land in a way which enhances the wellbeing of today's and future generations. As the debate deepens, we can expect to face difficult choices around the policies in respect of individual sectors and the future of mechanisms such as quotas and modulation.

I continue to have considerable sympathy for the beef industry, and I will be seeking an easement of the beef export ban. In the short-term, I would like to see a relaxation of the Date Based Export Scheme Rules, which would encourage more local firms back into the exporting market. In the longer term, I look to open markets again fully to our high quality products.

Animal disease will remain one of our top priorities. The containment of last year's Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak was a tribute to the co-operation that existed between the industry, the general public and Government. But it has left the industry and Government with a legacy of slippage in the control of other diseases. In particular, it has left us with a continuing build-up of Tuberculosis and Brucellosis in the animal population. That in turn has led to a continuation in the rise of compensation payments. Against that background, I have commissioned radical evaluations of our policies in these two areas, and I would hope to be consulting on these very shortly. I will continue to work with my counterpart in the South to seek to deliver an All-Island Animal Health Policy recognising the valuable and positive co-operation that we extended to one another during the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak, and acknowledging the practical benefits that further collaboration can generate.

The Department's remit goes wider than the agri-food industry, of course. In the case of fisheries I have already indicated my intention to commission a major review of the industry, which will include a quinquennial review of the Fishery Harbour Authority. Similarly, for the first time in 30 years, a devolved administration is undertaking an evaluation of forestry policy, and I would expect to be consulting on that evaluation shortly also.

Agriculture remains a very significant employer and generator of economic development in rural areas. But rural communities have a range of needs and a variety of activities can contribute to rural economic regeneration. This year, we are embarking on a new range of rural development measures, seeking to implement in particular the rural development strategy. We will work with a number of partner organisations to continue to develop the capacity of rural communities to help themselves towards a better future. A key aspect of the Department's role in support of rural communities generally is our new Rural Proofing Initiative to encourage fairness in the delivery of high quality public services.

It is my sincere hope that all those interested in the future of rural society in Northern Ireland will find actions in this business strategy which will help to ensure a more inclusive, more prosperous and more productive economy for us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bríd Rodgers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

BRÍD RODGERS
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

Preface

by the Permanent Secretary
for Agriculture and Rural Development



In her foreword, the Minister has highlighted the Department's priorities for the coming year. We are committed to delivering on those priorities. But this will be a year of unprecedented change, and will present a unique opportunity for all those involved in the agriculture and agri-food sectors; it will also be particularly challenging for we who work in the Department itself. It is unthinkable that in the midst of all this change, the Department itself will remain unchanged.

Over the past couple of years, we have implemented the reforms set out in Agenda 2000. That has required the development and application of new skills by staff, but now we face the mid-term review and further reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. That will require the best efforts of our policy people, but it also holds out the prospect of a further emphasis on agri-environment measures, and an enhanced range of staff intensive measures requiring expert advice.

Similarly, we have made very good progress with our accountability and Corporate Governance agenda, including the launch of our Counter Fraud Strategy. But the year ahead sees a requirement for that Strategy to be implemented, to provide tangible evidence of this Department's zero tolerance for fraud. Ways of funding the activities of the Department have become more complex, sometimes involving working through others, and our accountability frameworks will be tested over the next number of months.

Like all large organisations, over the past few years we have been experimenting with e-Business. An increasing number of our payments are handled electronically, improving convenience, speed and security for both the Department and the public. APHIS has served us well, providing comprehensive recording of animal movements, and justifying a distinctive case in respect of Northern Ireland's BSE status. We have launched the Rural Portal, offering benchmarking and self-learning material to farmers directly in their own farmhouses, or at a range of access points. Now, we have to take a more strategic approach, focussed on meeting the Executive's e-Business targets and indeed going further, addressing how we organise to meet the needs of our customers.

The Minister has already instigated a review of the education and research and development carried out in respect of agriculture and food science by the Department. In addition, we can expect the outcome of the review of the handling of the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak. And there are numerous reviews and policy evaluations which will impel us towards change.

As the Minister records, the debate on the future of the Northern Ireland agri-food sector has created a new strategic direction, and that will present a new challenge for the Department. We too will have to adapt our strategy, our structures and our processes to reflect not just the new agenda for this industry, but the new expectations under the Devolution settlement.

This presents us with a major opportunity to address what type of Department Northern Ireland wants us to be, what agenda we should have, and what services we should offer. This promises to be an exciting and challenging year for all of us in the Department.

PETER SMALL
Permanent Secretary

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The Agri-Food Industry



Agriculture in Northern Ireland

The agricultural industry (including forestry and fishing) accounts for approximately 2.5% of Gross Value Added (GVA) and 5% of employment in Northern Ireland. If the output from food and timber processing and input supply to the agricultural industry are included, the combined agri-food and forestry sector accounts for over 5% of GVA and 9% of employment, generating approximately 15% of the manufacturing sector's total external sales. The food processing sector provides a valuable source of employment in rural areas and accounts for some 19,000 jobs throughout the region. However, in common with other developed and developing countries, the contribution of agriculture and its related industries to the regional economy has been declining in relative terms.

Northern Ireland agriculture is largely a grass-based industry. Over 90% of farms own some grazing livestock and this sector accounts for approximately 65% of gross agricultural output with intensive sectors such as pigs, eggs and poultry accounting for just 16%. However, given the dependence of the intensive sectors on imported feedstuffs, their contribution to the industry's added value is more modest, accounting for around 8% of aggregate gross margin.

Northern Ireland agriculture is characterised by owner-occupied family farms with almost 70% of the agricultural area in Less Favoured Areas (LFA) and 70% of farms having all or most of their area in an LFA. Although the average area of farms in the LFA is broadly the same as that in lowland farms, the average business size (in terms of European Size Units) is less than two-thirds of that of lowland farms with 56% of LFA farms not large enough to provide full-time employment for one person.

For the main agricultural commodities, the market is regulated under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and expenditure is incurred primarily by the Intervention Board with DARD acting as a paying agent. Measures operated under the CAP are partly or fully funded from the EU budget.



Forestry in Northern Ireland

Forests are under-represented compared with European averages and cover only 6% of the total land area in Northern Ireland compared with a European Union average of 35%. Forests are mainly State-owned coniferous plantations established since 1945. Current forestry policy in Northern Ireland is the sustainable management of existing woods and forests and the steady expansion of tree cover to increase the many diverse benefits that forests provide. Privately owned woodlands tend to be small, averaging less than 5 ha and are closely associated with farming. The forestry sector has a turnover of about £38m per year based on Northern Ireland grown timber.

While relatively small, the forest area produces social and environmental benefits throughout the region. With 2 million visits to State-owned forests per annum, they are an important means of access to the countryside and make a significant contribution to the ecology and landscape of Northern Ireland, providing food and shelter for a range of species adapted to woodland conditions.

Since the "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, sustainable development has been an international commitment. In relation to forestry management this means the sensitive and balanced management of forests to protect their health, vigour, productive and regenerative capacity, and their ability to produce a variety of economic, environmental and social benefits for present and future generations. Sustainability in management and development will therefore be the one strategic goal which underpins all the work of the Forest Service for the foreseeable future.

A new forest policy for Northern Ireland is being prepared.



Sea Fisheries in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Sea Fisheries Industry is based mainly in the three fishing ports of Ardglass, Kilkeel, and Portavogie. At the end of 2001 the fishing fleet comprised some 177 fishing vessels over 10meters in length and 172 vessels 10meters and under in length.

The Northern Ireland fishing fleet depends mainly on fishing opportunities in the Irish Sea and North Channel and is the main UK fishery interest in the Irish Sea. The estimated value of fish landed by Northern Ireland vessels in Northern Ireland and ports elsewhere in 2001 was £25.6 million, which is around 4.5% of the total landings of the UK fleet of £569.3 million.

1,846 people, both-full time and part-time, are employed in the industry: 798 in the catching sector, 878 in processing and marketing, and 170 in other areas including harbours, boat repairs and chandlery supply.

There are around 34 companies in the processing and marketing sector with an estimated gross turnover of £75million. Great Britain is the main market outlet accounting for about 50% of the production. The home market accounts for about 20% of sales with the remainder sold in other EU countries and further afield.

The Aquaculture sector employs around 170 people, both full-time and part-time. Trout and salmon production from licensed farms is valued at around £3.3 million per annum and shellfish production is valued at over £1 million per annum.



Rural Development



At the last census, just under 688,000 people (i.e. 43.6% of the population) lived in the rural* areas of Northern Ireland. Rural communities are very important to the overall economy and society of Northern Ireland, and it is important that their development is supported.

The Northern Ireland Executive Committee's Programme for Government recognises the importance of rural society and that the rural economy has been neglected in the past. The Programme for Government contains commitments to **regenerate rural areas**, particularly the most disadvantaged and **sustain rural life and the countryside** for the future.

The rural population is younger than the Northern Ireland average and also there are fewer people in the over 65 age bracket. Because the rural population is younger and growing comparatively more quickly, the demand for jobs will increase more quickly in rural areas.

Overall economic activity rates in rural areas are slightly lower than the Northern Ireland average. The difference is more marked for rural women, due to fewer women in rural areas taking jobs outside the home than in urban areas.

The tourism industry of Northern Ireland's rural areas has not developed as much as in similar areas in the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales because of the past thirty years of unrest in the region. The countryside, combined with a rich historic and cultural heritage and the renowned hospitality of the people, is regarded as a major resource and because of the conflict the tourism potential of rural areas has remained largely untapped.

The Department's Rural Development Programme subscribes to the view that **"people locally are best placed to identify their needs and decide on the best solutions."** The Department actively encourages and supports the participation of local people in both the delivery of the programme (in particular through local partnership structures) and in implementing projects.

** For the purposes of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme, rural areas are defined as all parts of Northern Ireland outside the Belfast metropolitan area, the city of Derry/Londonderry and towns of populations greater than 5,000.*



Challenges faced by the Agri-Food Industry



The adjustments required to meet the challenges of further reform of the CAP to accommodate eastward enlargement of the EU and a new WTO agreement will require a response from the agri-food industry. This will require improved competitiveness and even greater attention to environmental, food safety and animal welfare concerns which are now high on the public agenda. The sector will come under increasing pressure to find an appropriate balance between the need to retain and improve its global competitiveness and the wider demand for increased standards of animal welfare and conservation and enhancement of the region's rich natural heritage. In this context, it will need to address the issue of the transparency of links between claims of a "clean green" image and agricultural production practices.

An increased appreciation of the benefits of working together across the community divide within Northern Ireland and on a North – South basis on the island of Ireland has the potential to be translated into positive action. There is now a window of opportunity and the challenge is to exploit this for the benefit of rural communities and the agri-food industry.

The Information Age provides a further opportunity to reduce isolation of rural communities and to assist the rural economy to become more competitive. Information and Communications Technology is particularly suited to supporting the development of the skills of people in small and medium-sized businesses and strengthening the economies of the more remote rural areas which have traditionally experienced disadvantage because of their physical location.

Against this background, the main challenges can be summarised as:

- the need for a recovery plan for the industry following Foot and Mouth disease and for a review of the Department's handling of the outbreak;
- develop, in the aftermath of Foot and Mouth Disease, an effective animal health strategy for the island of Ireland;
- the need to adapt to further changes in the CAP;
- the need to maintain and develop the infrastructure and regulatory framework to support a sustainable sea fishing industry;
- the need to develop the marketing of products by encouraging co-operation and collaboration along the whole food chain and by improving the structure and efficiency of the processing sector;
- the need to maintain a balance between the drive for increasing competitiveness and the demand for conservation and enhancement of the region's natural resources and heritage, including maintaining the family farm structure of the Less Favoured Areas;
- the need to introduce measures to reduce the levels of point source and diffuse pollution from agricultural sources to promote an improvement in the water quality of rivers and lakes;
- the need to develop the capacity of those in rural areas to take advantage of changing employment needs and opportunities and to provide rural people with the skills, advice and financial assistance they need to plan a full role in the development of their areas;
- the need to increase employment opportunities for those living in rural areas;
- the need to improve economic, environmental and social conditions in some rural communities;
- the need to diversify, develop and strengthen new or alternative sectors of the rural economy and to increase the contribution which tourism makes to the rural economy; and
- the need to respond positively to new structures of Government, developing positive North/South and East/West relationships.



Challenges faced by Rural Society



Agriculture and, to a lesser degree, its ancillary industries have been going through a period of considerable pressure in recent years because of:

- the impact of sterling's appreciation against the euro which has led to a significant fall in producer returns;
- a downturn in international agricultural commodity market prices in the late 1990s;
- the onset of the BSE crisis in March 1996, which still adversely affects producer returns despite the limited lifting of the export ban on United Kingdom beef.

These factors combined to produce a sharp reduction in aggregate agricultural income in the late 1990s, albeit from the historically high level reached in 1995. Total income from farming fell by 70% in real terms between 1995 and 1999, taking it to its lowest real level since 1986. Income has since improved by 7% in real terms in 2000 and by 61% in 2001, taking it back to its average real level in the early 1990s.

The reduction in incomes in the second half of the 1990s affected virtually all of the farming enterprises in Northern Ireland. On average, lowland cattle and sheep farms returned negative net farm incomes in each of the past five years, and LFA cattle and sheep, general cropping, pigs and poultry and mixed farms incurred losses in 1999/00. In 2000/01, net farm incomes have improved on all farm types other than cereals, though for both cereals and lowland cattle and sheep farms incomes were negative. The low level of income has had the knock-on effect of restricting the capacity of the farming sector to invest capital in its businesses directly or through part funding of grant-aided capital investment.

While progress has been made in improving the economic performance of the food-processing sector, the essential issue is whether the industry is able to meet the challenges and exploit the opportunities that lie ahead. There remains an over-reliance on commodity type products. This type of production will continue to be significant but progress along the

value-added chain requires to be accelerated. The sector continues to suffer from scale related difficulties which have inhibited cost competitiveness and access to markets. This has also been a barrier to investment in product and processing innovation and in the development of human resources. The sector also faces increasing demands to attain the highest standards of quality and food safety.

Relatively few people working in the agri-food industry have vocational qualifications appropriate to their responsibilities in employment. The problem is particularly acute at the higher levels associated with management. This deficiency restricts the ability of owners, managers and workers to respond to changing demands. Against this background, disadvantaged rural areas exhibit more extreme problems - economic activity rates in disadvantaged rural areas are lower than the Northern Ireland average and this difference is particularly marked for women in rural areas.

Community divisions have a considerable impact on economic and social activity in rural areas and a high percentage of the rural population lives in single identity communities. Studies on the impact of 30 years of violence have revealed increasing polarisation in the composition of and relationships within rural communities. This has led to a strengthening of the perceptions of isolation and vulnerability and an entrenchment of attitudes, which has promoted segregation in commerce, leisure and friendships. Prior to the emergence of more peaceful conditions, avoidance had become a key characteristic in community relations, attitudes and patterns of behaviour.

The tourism industry in Northern Ireland's rural areas is underdeveloped as a consequence of the conflict in the region. The industry contributes only around 1½ % of GDP in Northern Ireland compared to between 6% and 7% in Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland which are comparable in terms of landscape, climate and culture.

The fishing industry has been going through a difficult period with, for example, reductions in fish quotas and closures of traditional fishing grounds because of cod recovery plans. The effect of these has not only been to decrease incomes to fishermen but also to impact adversely in socio-economic terms on those communities such as Portavogie, Ardglass and Kilkeel which have a dependence on fishing.



The DARD Role

Aim, Strategic Priorities and Desired Outcomes

The Department's aim is:

To promote sustainable economic growth and the development of the countryside in Northern Ireland by assisting the competitive development of the agri-food, fishing and forestry sectors, being both proactive and responsive to the needs of consumers for safe and wholesome food, the welfare of animals and the conservation and enhancement of the environment.

In pursuit of this aim, the Department's Strategic Priorities and Desired Outcomes are:

Priority 1: To improve the economic performance of the agri-food, fishing and forestry sectors.

Desired Outcomes:

- Adaptation of the agri-food, fishing and forestry sectors to cope with changing market forces;
- Improvement in efficiency and quality in the agri-food, fishing and forestry sectors.

Priority 2: To protect the public, animals and property.

Desired Outcomes:

- The food chain within DARD's remit is as safe as possible;
- The welfare of animals is safeguarded;
- The risk of flooding is reduced.

Priority 3: To conserve and enhance the rural environment.

Desired Outcomes:

- Damage to the rural and marine environments is reduced;
- The amenity value of the rural and marine environments is increased.

Priority 4: To strengthen the economy and social infrastructure of disadvantaged rural areas.

Desired Outcomes:

- The differential in economic performance between disadvantaged rural areas and other rural areas is reduced;
- Social disadvantage is reduced compared with other rural areas.

Internal Management Priority: To make efficient use of all resources available to the Department.

Desired Outcomes:

The Department exhibits business excellence in pursuing its goals.

The Department's remit is essentially an economic one, concerned with the success of all sectors of the NI agri-food industry. However, economic activity must also take full account of the wider interests of the community. There is a need to balance an efficient and sustainable agri-food industry with the conservation and enhancement of the countryside and the marine environment and to stimulate and react to consumer demands for safe and wholesome food produced in an ethical manner, with proper regard for animal welfare.

DARD is responsible for the administration of the National economic support for the agriculture industry in Northern Ireland and the implementation of EU policies, including price support and the payment of production subsidies to farmers.

In addition DARD is responsible for all other aspects of the development of agriculture including education, research, analytical and diagnostic work and special support measures, as well as rural development, sea fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, land drainage and flood defences. The Department's role includes helping to ensure the economic and social well-being of rural communities.

The DARD Strategy

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is not only concerned with those engaged in the agri-food industry – it has a broader remit to strengthen the economy and social infrastructure of rural areas with a particular emphasis on disadvantage. It also has a responsibility to conserve and enhance the rural environment through the promotion of environmentally responsible management of agri-food, fishing, forestry and drainage activities. The Department has a diverse portfolio. The agri-food sector includes farming, fishing and food processing and the rural economy embraces all these and forestry.

The Department works co-operatively with a wide range of partners. It is committed to strengthening its relationship with the Irish authorities through the Foyle Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission and the North South Ministerial Council. It has regular contact with the United Kingdom government and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales at Ministerial and official level.

The delivery of the DARD Aim is not entirely within the Department's gift. Factors such as the response of the agri-food industry, climate, image, remoteness etc. circumscribe the Department's opportunities. The policy framework is set in Brussels or London and is often the source of radical change to, or departure from, established corporate goals.

A further factor which affects the Department's business is the extent to which full delivery of its Aims depends on collaboration and co-operation with other Departments and agencies. Examples can be seen in the close work with the Food Standards Agency on food safety and zoonotic diseases; with DETI and InvestNI on support to the agri-food industry; with DOE on pollution control and environmental matters; with the Department of Employment and Learning and the universities on education and research and development.

The Departmental vision outlined below will be adapted as necessary in the light of the Minister's response to the Report of the Vision Steering Group, taking account of the views put forward by stakeholders during the consultation period.

The Department's vision for agriculture and rural development is for:

- a more efficient and competitive agri-food sector, better able to meet the needs of all those in the food chain, from producer to consumer;
- the retention of Northern Ireland's image as an extensive, environmentally-friendly farming region;
- a healthy and diverse economic and social environment where the quality of life is enhanced by quality of opportunity;
- an animal population whose health standards are such that NI producers have the maximum opportunities to penetrate overseas markets with their animals and animal products;
- a rural population that possesses the knowledge, skills and experience it requires to cope with changes in the rural economy and rural society and to take advantage of new opportunities as they arise;
- a more diversified and buoyant rural economy with increased opportunities for activities on - and off - farm;
- a rural society which is able to generate new ideas and opportunities;
- rural areas which are able to make a contribution to the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of Northern Ireland as a whole;
- a sea fishing industry which competes successfully internationally and provides sustainable employment in traditional fisheries dependent areas;
- a Department which co-operates on North/South and East/West axes to ensure that Northern Ireland interest groups are treated as favourably as their counterparts elsewhere; and
- a well-managed network of rivers and watercourses to provide appropriate drainage and enhance rural areas.

In pursuit of this vision, the Department is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good community relations, protecting human rights and meeting the objectives of the Executive Committee's New Targeting Social Need Policy. The Department is also committed to modernising the provision of its services and improving efficiency and effectiveness. In discharging its responsibilities, the Department will work in partnership with others in the public, private and voluntary community sectors, as appropriate.

Delivering the Strategy

Organisational Structure

The Head of the Department is its Permanent Secretary. Reporting to him directly are five senior officials responsible, respectively, for Food, Farming and Environmental Policy, Central Services, Fisheries and Rural Development, the Science Service, the Veterinary Service and the Agri-Food Development Service. Each of these senior officials is responsible for a number of Senior Management Units (SMUs) and together form the Departmental Management Board. The Chief Executives of the Rivers Agency and Forest Service, each of which is a single SMU, also report to the Permanent Secretary. SMUs are the core business units of the Department and under these are brigaded all the Department's activities.

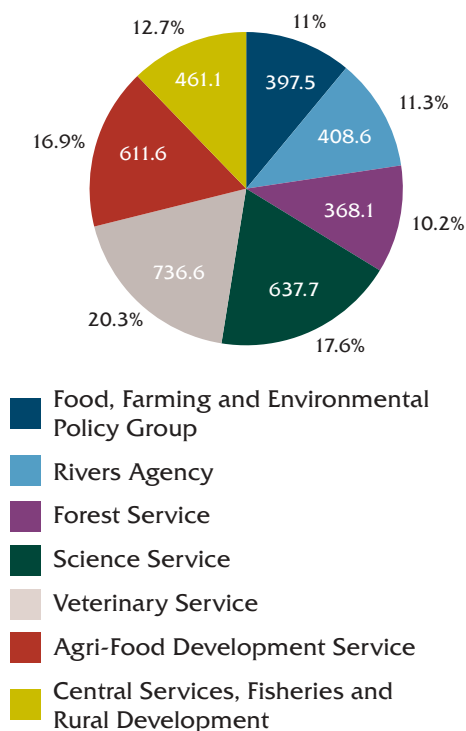
An organisation chart for the Department is shown at the Appendix.

Resources

The Department's resources are managed in 2 blocks – **agriculture and rural development** and **forestry, rivers and fisheries**. Under Resource Accounting conventions, each block gives rise to a resource requirement and each budget is managed to deliver an objective and associated targets (see the Public Service Agreement on page 23 and Service Delivery Agreement on page 26-49).

The Table on page 50 details the Departmental Expenditure Limit and Annually Managed Expenditure Allocations for 2002/03.

The estimated Departmental Running Costs for 2002/03, including the Department's education function, are £113 million. Some 83% of this relates to staff salaries and wages. Staff numbers, excluding casual employees, have been reduced from 5,179 in 1980 to 3,962 in 1990 to 3,621 at 1 April 2002. Staff distribution, including staff engaged in agency services, according to main business areas is indicated in the chart below:



Human Resource Strategy

High on the Department's internal management agenda is a review of its current Human Resource Strategy.

The current strategy was developed several years ago following on from the then NICS Human Resource Strategy. This has recently been reviewed to ensure it facilitates the provision of motivated staff with the skills and abilities to make a full and relevant contribution in a fast changing environment. A new high level NICS Human Resource Strategy has been drawn up for the period 2002-05. This concentrates on the 4 key themes of resourcing, learning, inclusion/diversity and leadership. The strategy will be supported by a detailed Human Resource Action Plan which will set targets to ensure HR policies and practices are taken forward in a coherent and detailed way across all Departments in the NICS.

Once the overall action plan is completed this Department will review its strategy to ensure it fits with the corporate NICS one and that it enables the Department to deliver its specific business objectives. This strategy will also be informed by the recent survey of the Department's staff.

In line with the NICS-wide strategy resourcing will be a major action area. Training and development will focus on management training, the equality agenda and the competencies needed to deliver the Department's business. Investors in People reaccreditation will be sought and the Department will continue to pursue a culture of continuous improvement through the use of the Business Excellence Model. Its diversity agenda will be further progressed and action taken to reduce absenteeism.

E-Business

In recent months NICS Departments, including DARD, have engaged consultants to develop E-Business Strategies. The E-Business Strategies and subsequent Implementation Plans, which are under development, are aimed at identifying business projects which can be developed or engineered so that delivery is by electronic means and meets the targets set by the Prime Minister in October 1997 (revised March 2000) that 25% of all key services would be capable of electronic delivery by 2002 and 100% by 2005. These targets were endorsed by the Executive in June 2001.

Public Service Agreement

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Executive Committee has published its Programme for Government setting out in detail the Executive's plans and priorities for 2002/03 and beyond. The Programme for Government (PFG) is supplemented by a Public Service Agreement and Service Delivery Agreement agreed with each Northern Ireland Department.

The Public Service Agreement (PSA) sets out how a Department will carry out its responsibilities under the Programme for Government (PFG) and within the resources allocated by the Assembly.

DARD PSA

The DARD Public Service Agreement defines the key targets that the Department has planned to achieve over the period 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2003.

In delivering its Aim and Objectives, and in pursuing the targets presented below, the Department is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good community relations, protecting human rights and meeting the objectives of the

Executive Committee's New Targeting Social Need policy. In particular the Department will implement its Equality Scheme as approved by the Equality Commission and its New TSN Action Plan and these form an integral part of this PSA. The Department is also committed to modernising the provision of its services and improving efficiency and effectiveness. In discharging its responsibilities, the Department will work in partnership with others in the public, private and voluntary and community sectors, as appropriate.

Aim

To promote sustainable economic growth and the development of the countryside in Northern Ireland by assisting the competitive development of the agri-food, fishing and forestry sectors and being both proactive and responsive to the needs of consumers for safe and wholesome food, the welfare of animals and the conservation and enhancement of the environment.

Objective	Budget £m 2002/03	Targets	PfG References
Objective 1 To promote sustainable development of the agri-food industry and the countryside and stimulate the economic and social revitalisation of disadvantaged rural areas.	DEL Resource 151.3 DEL Capital 16.6 Peace Prog 9.2 AME 157.7*	1.1 Within the constraints of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and National policy in relation to agriculture, encourage improvements in production efficiency, quality and marketing in the agri-food industry by implementing measures set out in the Action Plan derived from the exercise to develop a Vision for the future of the agri-food sector. 1.2 Achieve the relaxation of beef export restrictions as soon as possible in the 2002/03 financial year. 1.3 Maintain farming activity in the Less Favoured Area (LFA) and bring about the environmental improvements envisaged in the Northern Ireland Rural Development Regulation Plan. Success will be measured by the numbers engaged in farming in the LFA and uptake of the three agri-environment schemes. 1.4 During 2002/03 and subsequently, keep Northern Ireland free of Foot and Mouth Disease. 1.5 During 2002/03, improve economic performance and social development of rural areas by meeting Rural Development Programme targets.	5.10 Sub Priority 8 5.10 Sub Priority 8 5.11 Sub Priority 9 5.10 Sub Priority 8 2.10 Sub Priority 8
Objective 2 To reduce the risk to life and property from flooding, promote sustainable development of the sea fishing industry and maintain, protect and expand forests in a sustainable way.	DEL Resource 21.9 DEL Capital 14.0 Peace Prog 0.2 AME 1.2	2.1 During 2002/03, secure an enhanced economic and environmental benefit by extending the area of woodland in Northern Ireland by 700 hectares and continuing to manage existing woodlands in a sustainable way. 2.2 During 2002/03, secure a reduced risk of flooding to 1,250 Housing Equivalents. 2.3 During 2002/03, enhance the viability of the NI sea fishing and aquaculture industries as measured by progress towards a self-sustaining Cod Spawning Stock Biomass in the Irish Sea and the value of fish landed by NI vessels per >10m licensed fishing vessel.	5.11 Sub Priority 9 5.11 Sub Priority 9 5.10 Sub Priority 8

* AME figure relates to Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding only.

Service Delivery Agreement

Introduction

The Department's Public Service Agreement (PSA) was endorsed by the Assembly in December 2001 as part of the Programme for Government. This Service Delivery Agreement sets out for the Assembly and the public how the Department will deliver the objectives and targets set out in its Public Service Agreement, objectives and targets that in turn are designed to support the Executive's priorities in the Programme for Government.

While our Public Service Agreement establishes what this Department is working to achieve, the Service Delivery Agreement enables us to set out how we will achieve the objectives and outcomes we have identified as important.



Structure

The Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) is divided into two main sections. The first section, Delivering targets – achieving results, sets out the Department's main objectives and targets as published in the Public Service Agreement (PSA) for 2002/03. It also provides detailed information on the actions that the Department will take in the course of 2002/03 to ensure that these objectives and targets are achieved and contains performance targets to support those actions. The aim of this section is to show clearly how the Department's activities will contribute to the achievement of each of its PSA targets and highlight the improvements in service delivery and performance that the Department intends to deliver.

The second section, Raising Service Standards, recognises that success in delivering progress on objectives and targets requires a focus not just on the specific actions that are needed in any particular area but on a broader range of issues.

These are:

- Improving the service we provide to our customers;
- Securing effectiveness and value for money in our policies and programmes;
- Modernising government; and
- Improving business performance.

The actions and targets set out in this SDA are designed to reflect our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations; protecting human rights; and targeting social need.



Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

Objective A

To promote sustainable development of the agri-food industry and the countryside and stimulate the economic and social revitalisation of disadvantaged rural areas.

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
PSA Target 1 Within the constraints of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and National policy in relation to agriculture, encourage improvements in production efficiency, quality and marketing in the agri-food industry by implementing measures set out in the Action Plan derived from the exercise to develop a Vision for the future of the agri-food sector. Success will be measured by changes in the share of UK and EU output for the major commodities. ¹	Food, Farming & Environmental Policy Group (FFEPG): Co-ordinate the implementation of the Action Plan developed as a result of the Vision Exercise. <hr/> Develop and administer policies to maintain or improve the sustainable economic performance of the agri-food industry. Conduct on-farm inspections. Approve grant and subsidy applications and process claims in line with scheme regulations. Complete a review of the consultant's report on the future of the seed potato industry and put to public consultation to enable a Ministerial decision to be taken.	DEL Resource £25.0m DEL Capital £4.8m AME* £146.0m	Announce an Action Plan by 30 June 2002. <hr/> During 2002/03, process all eligible livestock subsidy and other grant payments to farmers within published timescales. Support 20 projects leading to the protection of 500 existing jobs and the creation of 150 new jobs within a budget of £4m for Processing and Marketing Grants. Conduct at least the minimum number of on farm inspections in compliance with EC Regulation 2419/01 Article 24. By 31 March 2003, put in place revised arrangements for the marketing of seed potatoes.

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
	Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment on the allocation of milk quotas.		By 31 March 2003, complete and implement recommendations arising from an Equality Impact Assessment on the allocation of milk quotas.
	Develop and administer policies to protect public and animal health and welfare.		By 31 March 2003, have at least 15% of all NI purebred sheep farmers registered in the voluntary NI sheep genotyping scheme.
	Process animal disease compensation payments to eligible applicants.		Issue payments within 12 working days of date of kill for tuberculosis, brucellosis and other animal disease compensation.
	Make payments to Private Veterinary Practitioners.		
	Progress the recommendations and public consultation responses arising from the review of Higher Education and Research and Development in agriculture and food science.		During 2002/03, evaluate the report (due March 2002) of the review and develop and implement an action plan as appropriate.
	Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment on Research and Education Policy.		By 31 March 2003, complete and implement recommendations arising from an Equality Impact Assessment on Research and Education Policy.

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
	Agri-Food Development Service Facilitate the delivery of Lifelong Learning competence development programmes and the provision of technical support to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the AFDS Strategic Priorities for Competence Development Implement the DARD Countryside Management Strategy and ensure adoption of best practice as identified in Codes of Good Agricultural Practice. Enhance the capability of the farming community to contribute to the rural economy. 	DEL Resource £27.4m DEL Capital £3.2m Peace Prog. £5.2m (Resource)	<p>By 31 March 2003, have 2,130^B businesses with active People /Competence Development Plans linked to identified business needs (2,170 at 31/3/2002).</p> <p>During 2002/03 have 4580 people participate in approved strategic initiatives, compared to 4450 in 2001/02 (Initiatives are the process through which technology transfer to the agri-food industry is managed).</p> <p>During 2002/03 demonstrate 100 systems / products / processes to facilitate technology transfer to the agri-food industry compared to 90 in 2001/02.</p> <p>By 31 March 2003, have 800 businesses with active People/Competence Development Plans linked to identified environmental improvements compared with 400 at 31 March 2002.</p>
	Implement the Beef Quality Initiative through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of competences of producers in animal breeding and husbandry issues affecting beef quality. Preparation and implementation of herd breeding and management plans. Adoption and implementation of herd recording and assessment programmes. 		<p>By 31 March 2003 have 1,400 beef producers with the competences to develop a Herd Breeding and Management Plan (this competence development will be initiated this year).</p>

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
	Manage the implementation of agri-food PEACE II Programme measures.		By 31 March 2003, have 300 farmers or members of farming families securing alternative income or business benefits from Peace II measures (this programme will be initiated this year).
	Implement Government Policy through inspection, enforcement, licensing, certification and guidance relating to agriculture, horticulture and food.		Carry out at least 26,000 inspections for agri-food scheme and statutory compliance compared with 20,000 in 2001/02.
	Develop the competences and values of people through their participation in Higher and Further Education programmes relevant to the agri-food industry and rural communities.		During 2002/03, have 240 students achieve a vocational qualification at NVQ II or equivalent compared with 160 in 2001/02.
			During 2002/03, have 150 students achieve a vocational qualification at NVQ III or equivalent compared with 120 in 2001/02.
			During 2002/03, have 160 ⁹ students achieve a vocational qualification at NVQ IV or above or equivalent compared with 180 in 01/02.
	Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment considering the admission criteria for People Development through Higher and Further Education courses.		By 31 March 2003, complete and implement recommendations arising from an Equality Impact Assessment of the admission criteria for People Development through Higher and Further Education courses.

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
	<p>Develop the competences and values of people through their participation in Lifelong Learning competence development programmes including short courses relevant to the agri-food industry and rural communities.</p> <p>Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment considering Lifelong Learning through short courses and Lifelong Learning to ensure competitiveness and sustainability.</p>		<p>During 2002/03 have 12,130 people complete short course programmes compared with 6,000 in 2001/02.</p> <p>During 2002/03, have 3,375 people obtain validated qualifications through short courses compared with 3,060 in 2001/02.</p> <p>By 31 March 2003, complete and implement recommendations arising from an Equality Impact Assessment of Lifelong Learning through short courses and Lifelong Learning to ensure competitiveness and sustainability.</p>

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
	Veterinary Service: Apply and enforce public health, animal health and welfare legislation through the prevention/control/ eradication of epizootic/enzootic/ zoonotic diseases by conducting animal inspections/tests.	DEL Resource £23.7m DEL Capital £0.5m	<p>During 2002/03, test approximately 1,230,000 cattle for Brucellosis with the objective of reducing the number of herd outbreaks to 50 per annum by 31 March 2005 (current incidence 200 per annum).</p> <p>During 2002/03, test approximately 2,200,000 cattle for Tuberculosis with the objective of reducing the number of reactors to less than 9,000 per annum by 31 March 2005 (current incidence 11,000 per annum).</p>
	Carry out meat inspection in compliance with national and international standards.		During 2002/03, meet all food safety inspection targets agreed with the Food Standards Agency.
	Implement a programme of inspection, sampling, enforcement, licensing and guidance in relation to food safety.		
	Implement animal registration, identification and movement controls.		During 2002/03, meet all animal registration, identification and movement requirements in accordance with EC Reg. 1760/00.
	Promote and maintain acceptable welfare standards through inspection.		<p>During 2002/03 carry out welfare checks of animals:</p> <p>on-farm (700 random visits and all complaints investigated – estimated 350);</p> <p>in licensed welfare establishments (200 premises);</p> <p>during transport (all vehicles at ports - estimated at 1500, and 300 elsewhere); in abattoir lairages (all animals inspected at ante-mortem);</p> <p>during stunning/slaughter in abattoirs (10,000 daily checks).</p>

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
	Science Service Conduct analytical and diagnostic testing.	DEL Resource £31.8m	Complete at least 90% of statutory plant, animal and animal products tests within published timescales.
	Conduct research and development	DEL Capital £5.3m	During 2002/03 have 175 papers accepted for publication in refereed journals.
	Provide teaching and support for the School of Agriculture and Food Science of the Queen's University of Belfast (QUB)		During 2002/03, have 41 students achieving Primary Degrees thus maintaining the same proportion of enrolled students qualifying in 2000/01 (62) and 2001/02 (48). During 2002/03, make 27 Post Graduate awards.

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
PSA Target 2 Achieve the relaxation of beef export restrictions as soon as possible in the 2002/03 financial year.	<p><i>Actions to be carried out by each of the following three service providers to enable achievement of the two associated performance targets:</i></p> <p>FFEFG: Develop and administer policies to maintain or improve the sustainable economic performance of the agri-food industry.</p> <p>Determine, administer and advise on policies to protect public and animal health.</p> <p>Science Service: Assist in the formulation and implementation of Departmental policies by conducting research and development, providing specialist analytical and surveillance regimes and expert advice.</p> <p>Veterinary Service: Investigate all BSE suspects and carry out all sampling required by the EU.</p>	<p>DEL Resource £1.6m</p> <p>DEL Resource £0.4m DEL Capital £1.0m</p> <p>DEL Resource £1.0m</p>	<p>By 31/3/03, have the beef export ban relaxed sufficiently to allow the Department to facilitate the industry to meet its target of exporting a minimum of 15,000 tonnes of NI beef per annum (from the current zero baseline).</p> <p>During 2002/03, sample for BSE and scrapie those cattle and sheep that are required to be tested under TSE legislation (currently estimated at 55k samples per year).</p>

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
PSA Target 3 Maintain farming activity in the Less Favoured Area (LFA) and bring about the environmental improvements envisaged in the Northern Ireland Rural Development Regulation Plan. Success will be measured by the numbers engaged in Farming in the LFA and uptake of the three agri-environment schemes. ²	<p><i>Actions to be carried out by each of the following two service providers to enable achievement of the five associated performance targets:</i></p> <p>FFEPG: Develop and administer policies to conserve and enhance the rural environment, including biodiversity.</p> <p>Operate LFA support scheme and make payments accordingly; approve environmental scheme applications and process claims in line with regulations.</p> <p>Introduce New TSN considerations into the development of environmental schemes.</p> <p>Agri-Food Development Service: Implement a programme of audits, management plan development, inspections and guidance in relation to agri-environment schemes.</p> <p>Provide appropriate training through courses run throughout Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>DEL Resource £25.4m</p> <p>DEL Capital £1.8m AME* £11.7m</p> <p>DEL Resource £1.6m</p>	<p>By 31 March 2003, have 180 participants (74 at 31/3/02) in the Organic Farming Scheme farming 5,000 hectares.</p> <p>By 31 March 2003, have 750 new participants (762 at 31/3/02) in the Countryside Management Scheme, bringing the total farmed to 40,000 hectares.</p> <p>By 31 March 2003, have 200 participants in the New Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme farming 6,000 hectares.</p> <p>By 31 March 2003, have 550 farm businesses adopting nutrient management plans.</p> <p>By 31 March 2003, have assisted 1,500 farm businesses with the costs of new or improved facilities for collection and storage of farm waste.</p> <p>Process 2003 LFACA payments in accordance with the timetable to be published in Autumn 2002.</p> <p>Process ESA payments within 12 weeks of receipt of a valid claim</p> <p>During 2002/03, provide 4,000 business development training places and 4,000 environmental training places for Less Favoured Area (LFA) farmers compared with a provision of 1,500 for each programme in 2001/02.</p>

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
PSA Target 4 During 2002/03, and subsequently, keep Northern Ireland free of Foot and Mouth Disease.	The Veterinary Service: Throughout 2002/03, maintain full inspection cover at all ports and airports.	DEL Resource £1.6m	Undertake 100% import checks on consignments of cattle, sheep and pigs imported through ports and airports for slaughter or for production and breeding. (Estimate: 4,500 cattle; 450 sheep; 1,250 pigs).

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
PSA Target 5 During 2002/03, improve economic performance and social development of rural areas by meeting Rural Development Programme targets.	Rural Development Division: Under the new Rural Development Programme, target disadvantage (in line with New TSN) and continue to give priority to projects, programmes and strategies which address identified needs aimed at equalising economic and social opportunities across rural areas. By 30 September 2002, ensure initial implementation of all aspects of the Rural Development Programme 2001-2006 and promote comprehensive and integrated action towards the sustainable and equitable development of disadvantaged rural areas (in line with New TSN). Manage the implementation of PEACE II Programme measures.	DEL Resource £11.8m Peace Prog. £4.0m (Resource)	By 30 June 2002, approve 5 Natural Resource Rural Tourism (NRRT) strategies; By 30 September 2002, invite applications for NRRT projects in each of the 5 target areas; By 31 August 2002, agree 3 sectoral programmes; By 31 July 2002, have 12 LEADER local action groups operational and invite applications for projects; By 30 June 2002, select and make offers for 10 local regeneration projects.

Total Objective A Budget:

DEL RESOURCE	£151.3m
DEL CAPITAL	£16.6m
PEACE PROG.	£9.2m
AME*	£157.7m
AME**	£8.4m

* Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding only.

** Non Cash Items (Resources)

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

Objective B

To reduce the risk to life and property from flooding, promote sustainable development of the sea fishing industry and maintain, protect and expand forests in a sustainable way.

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
PSA Target 6 During 2002/03, secure an enhanced economic and environmental benefit by extending the area of woodland in Northern Ireland by 700 hectares and continuing to manage existing woodlands in a sustainable way. ³	The Forest Service: Carry out public sector planting/re-planting. Encourage the extension of the area of woodland by the private sector. Process applications and claims for assistance under the planting schemes.	DEL Resource £6.1m DEL Capital £1.2m AME* £1.2m	During 2002/03, establish 650ha ⁷ of new plantations. Pay out grants of £2.1m to encourage the extension of the area of woodland. During 2002/03, replant 700ha of land following harvesting. During 2002/03, refertilise 1900ha of nutrient deficient plantations. During 2002/03, pay 90% of Woodland Grant Scheme and Farm Woodland Premium Scheme claims within 8 weeks of receipt of a properly completed claim form. During 2002/03, retain certification under the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme. During 2002/03, produce 380,000m ³ of timber for sale to the wood processing sector. During 2002/03, achieve 440,000 paying visitors to forests.
	Continue to manage woodlands sustainably.		
	Promote access to and use of forests for recreational purposes.		

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
PSA Target 7 During 2002/03, secure a reduced risk of flooding to 1,250 Housing Equivalents. ⁴	<p>The Rivers Agency: Identify and assess flooding risks.</p> <p>Implement a programme of prioritised works to minimise flooding risks.</p> <p>Carry out maintenance works on both urban and rural open watercourses (the majority being rural therefore impacting upon agricultural land)</p>	<p>DEL Resource £13.3m</p> <p>DEL Capital £9.2m</p>	<p>By 31 March 2003, construct or refurbish 540 metres of urban flood defences;</p> <p>By 31 March 2003, replace or refurbish 1.527 km of dangerous culverts;</p> <p>By 31 March 2003, complete identified maintenance works on 1230 of the 1510 designated open watercourses included in the Notice of Annual Maintenance as part of a 6 year scheduled maintenance programme.</p>

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
PSA Target 8 During 2002/03, enhance the viability of the NI sea fishing and aquaculture industries as measured by progress towards a self-sustaining Cod Spawning Stock Biomass in the Irish Sea and the value of fish landed by NI vessels per >10m licensed fishing vessel. ⁵	Fisheries Division: Participate at European level in efforts to ensure the recovery of Irish Sea cod. <hr/> Conserve and protect sea fisheries. <hr/> Promote sustainable development of aquaculture through regulation and enforcement. <hr/> Meet EU fish health requirements and enhance Northern Ireland's fish health status. <hr/> Implement the EU Common Fisheries Policy and UK fisheries policies.	DEL Resource £2.5m DEL Capital £3.6m Peace Prog. £0.2m (Resource)	By November 2002 review progress of the Irish Sea Cod Recovery Plan which aims to increase the cod stock biomass from a scientific minimum sustainable limit of 6,000 tonnes to a precautionary level of 10,000 tonnes by 2005. <hr/> During 2002/03 carry out 95 patrol days at sea including 150 boardings of >10m fishing vessels to ensure compliance with the conservation regulations at sea. During 2002/03 carry out 5% check of all >10m vessel landings to ensure compliance with the minimum size regulations and EU grading and labelling requirements. <hr/> During 2002/03 broaden the species base of 9 by an additional one "Abalone" species, increase production of shellfish and fin fish and create 20 Full Time Equivalent jobs. ⁶ <hr/> During 2002/03 conduct 60 fish health inspections and check fish farm compliance with licence conditions in order to maintain Northern Ireland's fish health status as a disease free area. <hr/> During 2002/03 consult and participate in the Review of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Section 1 Delivering targets-achieving results

PSA Target	Spending Area and Actions	Budget £k	Performance Targets
	Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment considering Sea Fisheries Policy and Sea Fisheries Enforcement and Conservation.		By 31 March 2003, complete and implement recommendations arising from an Equality Impact Assessment of Sea Fisheries Policy and Sea Fisheries Enforcement and Conservation.
	Assist in the development of an efficient commercial fisheries sector.		During 2002/03, assist the NI Fishery Harbour Authority in finding a solution to the problem of the disposal of contaminated sediment from the three fishery harbours, principally Kilkeel.
	Work with the Irish Authorities to support the operation of the Loughs Agency of the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission.		During 2002/03 develop and launch four fisheries-related schemes ¹⁰ under the N Ireland Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity.
	Manage the implementation of PEACE II Programme measures.		During 2002/03 introduce the Foyle, Carlingford and Fisheries Bill to enhance the FCILC's functions in line with the North/South Co-operation (Implementation) Bodies (NI) Order 1999 and provide support to NSMC quarterly sectoral meetings.
Total Objective B Budget:			
	DEL RESOURCE	£21.9m	
	DEL CAPITAL	£14.0m	
	PEACE PROG.	£0.2m	
	AME*	£1.2m	
	AME**	£51.2m	
* Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding only.			
** Non Cash Items (Resources)			

Section 2 Raising Service Standards

Key Area	Actions	Performance Targets
Customer Service including: Strategy for consulting with customers.	Over the course of the year the Department will continue to consult extensively with its customers on a range of policy issues. During the course of the year the Department will review its external Communications Strategy, focussing on strengthening relationships with external stakeholders.	Complete a review of the Department's external Communications Strategy by 31 March 2003.
Plans to meet the needs of customers.	During the 2002/03 year the Department will examine how effectively it exchanges information with its customers and, in dialogue with a cross section of customers in the agri-food, forestry and fisheries sectors and the wider rural community, will consider whether different methods of communication and consultation might improve accountability and openness.	Complete a customer survey by 31 March 2003.
Plans to promote equality of opportunity and good relations to ensure the fair and inclusive delivery of services.	Implement plans to promote equality of opportunity and good relations to ensure fair and inclusive delivery of services including Equality Impact Assessments on policies, admission criteria for courses and development programmes and staff training.	<p>Inform and improve Departmental decision making in respect of equality-related issues through the implementation of a comprehensive equality training programme and, specifically by 31 March 2003, train key DARD staff in the ranges EOII to Staff Officer and analogous grades to conduct Equality Impact Assessments.</p> <p>By 31 March 2003, develop an informal network of contacts with representatives of the Section 75 groups.</p>
Arrangements and plans for delivering services in a joined up way.	Develop arrangements and plans for delivering services in a joined up way, including co-operation with other Departments, to improve the service to customers.	<p>Internal target – over the course of the year hold regular senior staff meetings and regular Departmental Management Board meetings to ensure a consistent and joined-up approach to the delivery of services.</p> <p>External target - over the course of the year continue to contribute to a variety of inter-Departmental Groups on a wide range of policy areas and to disseminate relevant information from these groups throughout the Department.</p>

Section 2 Raising Service Standards

Key Area	Actions	Performance Targets
<i>Arrangements and plans for delivering services in a joined up way (continued).</i>	Consult end-users and stakeholders to identify and prioritise potential services and develop three major applications including the use of on-line learning.	
	Develop and implement a scaleable and secure infrastructure which supports a range of on-line information services and applications that meets the needs and demands of farmers and growers. Pilot the use of the Government Gateway to provide authenticated and secure access to on-line DARD services.	
	Promote and publicise the Farmers Portal and equip farmers with the appropriate competences to encourage them to use the service.	Provide, by 31/3/03, a farmer's portal which provides access to a wide range of information and interactive on-line services that generates 0.5 million hits per month with 2,000 registered users.
	Support the Inter-Departmental Steering Group on Rural Proofing to ensure that all relevant Executive policies take account of the particular needs of rural areas.	During 2002/03, as directed by the Minister, organise and co-ordinate regular Working Group meetings. During 2002/03, as directed by the Working Group, co-ordinate the timely development of guidance notes, advice and support materials for use by NICS Departments.
	Wherever possible, fully integrate New TSN Objectives into all aspects of the Department's business and include in the Department's Business Strategy. For example, in consultation with other Departments and the community and voluntary sector, the Department will continue to implement and further develop its community and voluntary sector strategy. Furthermore the Department will continue to involve its partners on the Rural Development Steering Group in the delivery of the new Rural Development Programme.	As directed by the Working Group, commission research and statistical analysis to support the work of the Group. Include in the criteria for assessment of future applications under the Countryside Management Scheme a weighting system relating to the location of applicants living in Disadvantaged Areas.

Section 2 Raising Service Standards

Key Area	Actions	Performance Targets
Securing effectiveness and value for money including: Improvements the Department expects to achieve through the use of business improvement tools.	<p>The Departmental Management Board has committed all business units to conducting self-assessments using the EFQM Excellence Model as a means to develop and implement improvement action plans. The improvements envisaged through use of this business improvement tool relate to areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and consistency of purpose; • People development, involvement and satisfaction; • Customer focus; • Supplier partnerships; • Processes and measurement; • Continuous improvement and innovation; • Public responsibility; • Results orientation. 	<p>By 31 December 2002, complete a self-assessment programme in DARD based on the EFQM Excellence Model (a more rigorous evidenced based approach than the first programme).</p> <p>During 2002/03, implement Improvement Action Plans arising from the self- assessment programme.</p>
Programme of periodic reviews of business areas to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of services	<p>The Department's Business Support Division provides a management consultancy service to assist business units in meeting their objectives and to support management in improving the quality and value for money of Departmental services.</p> <p>Direct management consultancy support is provided in areas such as examination of organisational structures, reviews of work processes and systems, grading and loading of posts. The onus rests with individual business units to commission such reviews.</p>	<p>During 2002/03, undertake reviews as requested by DARD business areas.</p> <p>Establish a Service Level Agreement to be used in individual cases, as they arise, as a means of committing Business Support Division to providing a service to a required standard within an agreed timeframe.</p>

Section 2 Raising Service Standards

Key Area	Actions	Performance Targets
Targets set for improving VFM and efficiency in main programmes.	<p>Operational Business Plans for 2002/03 include the requirement for individual business areas to identify the means by which efficiency savings or gains will be generated during the course of the year.</p> <p>Quinquennial Reviews are carried out as appropriate in respect of the Department's Executive Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies.</p> <p>A rolling programme of Internal Audit reviews will continue to include an evaluation of controls in place to ensure value for money and efficiency in procedures.</p>	<p>Departmental business areas (Senior Management Units) to demonstrate the means by which efficiency savings or gains of 3% will be delivered.</p> <p>Report the outcome of Quinquennial Reviews in respect of the Rivers Agency and the Northern Ireland Fisheries Harbour Authority (NIFHA).</p> <p>Complete the programme of Internal Audit reviews approved for 2002/03 by the DARD Audit Committee.</p>
Measures to tackle fraud.	<p>An anti fraud policy statement was drawn up in 1997 and revised in 1999. This was issued on a personal basis to each individual member of staff and incorporates guidance on the definition of fraud, Departmental/Line Managers'/Staff responsibilities, and reporting, investigative and remedial procedures.</p> <p>All staff have been reminded of their individual responsibility to act with propriety in all their dealings and to report details immediately if they suspect that a fraud has been committed or see any suspicious acts or events.</p> <p>The statement, to be updated in 2002 to incorporate the development of the NICS "whistle blowing" policy, is set in the context of the development of risk management as part of Corporate Governance in the Department.</p>	<p>During 2002/03, update the anti fraud policy statement, include fraud response plan and incorporate relevant employee protection measures in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Order.</p> <p>Reissue statement to all staff on an individual basis and circulate to key partners and stakeholders.</p>

Section 2 Raising Service Standards

Key Area	Actions	Performance Targets
<i>Measures to tackle fraud (continued).</i>	In addition, the Department published, in March 2002, a Counter Fraud Strategy.	<p>During 2002/03, Departmental Fraud Forum to manage implementation of Counter Fraud Strategy to ensure that year 2 targets are achieved.</p> <p>Keep Counter Fraud Strategy under regular review and update with new targets as appropriate.</p> <p>Meet the 2002/03 targets set in the Counter Fraud Strategy. Some of the key targets are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy review programme to be devised following legislative reviews of fines and penalties for illegal movements and on identification of sheep and pigs;• Publish prosecution policies and ensure they are equally applied;• Review key departmental systems to ensure they contain counter fraud measures;• Make proposals for systems to identify sheep and pigs;• Create a pro-active IT role by use of data interrogation software to identify high risk areas and to map actions that could conceal fraud;• Review systems for referrals for investigation and establish protocols;• Conduct a review of fines and penalties in respect of illegal movements. <p>Undertake a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the Department's corporate fraud risks to quantify the levels of risk and enable effective targeting of resources to address these risks.</p>

Section 2 Raising Service Standards

Key Area	Actions	Performance Targets
Electronic Government including: Targets for identifying services capable of being delivered electronically.	Identify services that are capable of being delivered electronically.	Deliver 25% of DARD key services electronically by 31/12/02.
Targets for actual take up of electronic services.	Develop DARD capacity to deliver E Government measured by actual take-up of electronic services.	Achieve 100% capability to deliver key services electronically by 2005.
Policy effectiveness including:		
Details of policy evaluation programme for 2002/03.	Conduct a minimum of 2 policy evaluations per annum.	During 2002/03 Policy Evaluations will be carried out as follows: The NI Commercial Horticulture Sectors; The Fisheries sector, including an evaluation of NI's Sea Fisheries Policies and the quinquennial review of the NI Fishery Harbour Authority; The handling of Foot and Mouth Disease; The quinquennial review of the Rivers Agency; DARD input to the UK-wide policy review of the Agenda 2000 Reforms. Research & Development, Education and Technology Transfer Strategies.
Arrangements for promoting equality of opportunity and good relations at all stages of the policy development process.	Review the policy on the arrangements in place for promoting equality of opportunity and good relations and the need to take account of New TSN at all stages of the policy development process.	By 30/6/02 complete the first annual review of progress made in implementing the procedures set out in the Department's Equality Scheme and in complying with the Statutory duties. This review will take into account the Department's New TSN obligations.

Section 2 Raising Service Standards

Key Area	Actions	Performance Targets
Arrangements for taking account of New TSN at all stages of the policy development process.	The Department's commitment to New TSN continues to ensure that DARD resources are, where possible, directed where they are most needed and that consideration of New TSN issues features prominently in the decision-making process. A two –year action plan has been prepared and will shortly be published. Progress against targets in the plan will be monitored on a regular basis.	Provide awareness training to key DARD staff by 30 September 2002.
Arrangements for ensuring that human rights implications of policies have been properly assessed to ensure compliance with the Human Rights Act 1998.	Assess the Human Rights implications of a proposed policy to ensure compatibility with the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.	All new legislation must comply with the Human Rights Act and a statement of compliance with the Act must be signed before legislation is made.

Technical Notes

- 1 Major Northern Ireland agricultural commodities' shares of UK and EU output values :

Commodity (see Note 1)	NI share of UK output (2000)	NI share of EU output (1998)
Cattle & calves	16.5	1.76
Milk	12.7	1.16
Poultry	7.6	1.47
Sheep	8.5	n/a
Pigs	6.4	0.49
Cereals	1.1	0.11

- Notes: 1. These commodities account for 88.5% of the total output value of NI agricultural commodities.
 2. Sources - NI: Statistical Review of NI Agriculture 2000, Table 2.6
 UK: Agriculture in the UK 2000, Tables 5.1 and 5.13 - 5.17
 EU: Agriculture - Statistical Yearbook 2000, Table 6.3
 3. EU output values converted at average sterling/euro exchange rate for 1998
 £1 = 1.4887 euros
 (Economic Trends No. 575, Oct 2001, Table T64)

- 2 Total agricultural labour force in the Less Favoured Area (LFA):
 June 1998 39,910; June 1999 38,840; June 2000 37,917; June 2001 37,083

Uptake of the agri-environment schemes :

	31/3/00	31/3/01	31/3/02	31/3/03
ESAs:				
Old	4,523	4,523	4,393	4,300
New	0	0	19	200
Total	4,523	4,523	4,412	4,500
Countryside Management Scheme (CMS)	0	0	535	1,285
Organic Farming Scheme (OFS)	21	63	74	180

- 3 There are 60792 hectares of afforested land managed by the Department. The total area of woodland, including the private sector, is approximately 83,000 hectares.

- 4 The concept of Housing Equivalents (HEs) provides a common base for the measurement of the improved level of flood protection provided as a result of flood defence schemes undertaken by the Agency. The method uses conversion factors to express various elements of land use in terms of Housing Equivalents and is compatible with methodology developed and used by the Environment Agency which undertakes flood defence work in England and Wales.

The number of HEs which benefit from reduced risk of flooding in any particular year depends on the types of schemes undertaken and will not necessarily show a year-on-year increase. However, there will be a cumulative increase over time as indicated by the years 1996/97 to 1999/00 :

YEAR	ANNUAL TOTAL (HE)	CUM TOTAL
1996/97	2266	2266
1997/98	1785	4051
1998/99	3329	7380
1999/00	2950	10330

- 5 Irish Sea Cod Spawning Stock Biomass:

1998	1999	2000 (provisional)
5,710 tonnes	6,905 tonnes	4,381 tonnes

Value of fish landed into Northern Ireland by Northern Ireland vessels (£'000's):

1998	1999	2000
19,511	21,548	16,612

- 6 In 2000 there were 155 full/part-time jobs in Aquaculture increasing to 168 in 2001. It is hoped that this can be increased by a further 20 to 188 in 2002/03.
- 7 In 2001/2002, the Forest Service is likely to exceed its target of 700 hectares of new planting, by bringing forward land intended for planting next year. Consequently, the target for 2002/03 has been reduced by 50 hectares.

- 8 Development Plans are documents agreed with individual agri-food businesses which define objectives for business/technical improvements and detail the agreed competence development to be undertaken to facilitate this change. They normally last between 3-5 years. At this stage it is anticipated that in 02/03, slightly fewer new plans will be agreed than came to completion in 01/02, resulting in a small net decrease in the number of active Developmental Plans.

As the Beef Quality Initiative has not yet been approved, the implications of its implementation on the number of active People Development Plans agreed with farm businesses has not been included in next year's targets. However, if the initiative is approved, an overall increase in the number of active plans may be anticipated.

- 9 The UK agri-food industry in general has experienced significant difficulty for some time in recruiting new entrants. A reducing unemployment rate and the relative attractiveness of "new industries" to young people has exacerbated this effect. DARD Colleges have been successful in limiting the effect on recruitment figures and are participating in a UK wide Forum to focus on this issue and to develop and implement steps to try and improve young people's attitudes towards the agri-food sector.
- 10 It is anticipated that the 4 schemes currently being developed under the FIFG measure of the BSP will be introduced by mid-year. The schemes will cover:
- Marketing and Quality Onboard Fishing Vessels;
 - Small Scale and Coastal Fishing Grants;
 - Safety Equipment; and
 - Collective Actions by Members of the Industry.

Public Expenditure Plans 2002/03

Spending Area	Resource Budget	Capital Budget	Total
Agri-Food Development Service	24.9	2.4	27.3
Science Service	27.9	5.2	33.1
Veterinary Service	23.6	-	23.6
Food and Farm Policy	49.7	4.4	54.1
Rural Development	9.0	-	9.0
Rivers Agency	12.4	9.0	21.4
Fisheries	1.4	3.6	5.0
Forest Service Agency	5.2	1.0	6.2
Foyle, Carlingford & Irish Lights Commission	0.9	-	0.9
EU Structural Funds	2.6	-	2.6
Central Administration	14.8	3.4	18.2
Executive Programme Funds	0.8	1.6	2.4
TOTAL DEPARTMENTAL DEL	173.2	30.6	203.8
Peace Programme	8.0	-	8.0

Appendix

Organisation Chart

Brid Rodgers
Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development

Peter Small
Permanent Secretary

Tony McCusker
Head of Food, Farming & Environmental Policy Group

Food, Farming & Environmental Policy Group

- Environmental Policy
-
- Food Policy
-
- Farm Policy
-
- Grants & Subsidies
-
- Animal Health & Welfare
-
- Vision Exercise Implementation
-
- Economics, Statistics and Policy Co-ordination
-
- Research and Education Policy

Roy McClenaghan
Chief Agricultural Officer

Agri-Food Development Service

People development:-

- Higher & Further Education Courses
-
- Lifelong learning through short courses
-
- Lifelong learning to enhance competitiveness
-
- Lifelong learning to develop environmentally responsible farming & rural enterprise

Additional programmes:-

- Policy implementation
-
- Policy support

Pat Toal
Principal Establishment & Finance Officer

Central Services, Fisheries & Rural Development

- Personnel
-
- Finance
-
- Internal Audit
-
- I T
-
- Office Services
-
- Estate Management
-
- Staff Training & Development
-
- Business Support
-
- Media Services
-
- Co-ordination
-
- Fisheries
-
- Rural Development

Prof. Cecil McMurray
Chief Scientific Officer

Science Service

- Statutory Testing and Diagnostics
-
- Research and Development
-
- Tertiary education
-
- Specialist advice

Dr Bob McCracken
Chief Veterinary Officer

Veterinary Service

- Advice and Statutory Functions relating to Animal Health
-
- Disease Prevention and Control
-
- Animal Welfare
-
- Trade
-
- Meat hygiene

Malcolm Beatty*
Chief Executive Forest Service

- Forestry Policy and Development
-
- Woodland Grants
-
- Timber Production
-
- Recreation

John Hagan*
Chief Executive Rivers Agency

- Flood Defence & Drainage Policy
-
- River and Sea Defence Works
-
- Arterial Drainage Maintenance
-
- Advisory and Enforcement

* The Agency Chief Executives also liaise with the Principal Establishment and Finance Officer who has responsibility for the oversight of the performance of the Executive Agencies.

