

1st Annual Report

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL (REAP)

**Covering the period 1st September 2005
– 31st March 2007**

**Department of Agriculture and Rural
Development**

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1. Introduction

This report covers the period from the inception of the Research and Education Advisory Panel (REAP) on 1st September 2005 to the 31st March 2007. Whilst there is no formal requirement for REAP to publish an annual report, REAP has decided that this report would be a useful medium by which to maintain transparency and inform stakeholders of the work of the Panel. DARD will conduct its own review of the work of REAP before the end of the Panel's fourth year of operation (2009).

REAP was established in response to one of the recommendations of the O'Hare Report in order to provide independent advice to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) on research and education. In doing so it considers such issues as DARD research priorities, the extent of the required education and training programme for the industry and progress on achievement of DARD education, research and technology transfer targets.

REAP currently comprises a chairman and eleven independent experts; five with scientific or education expertise; one with economics expertise; and five with expertise allied to the main pillars of the DARD Strategic Plan¹. REAP held its inaugural meeting in October 2005 and to date has held ten meetings. At the request of DARD, the work of REAP to date has focussed on the draft DARD Research & Development (R&D) strategy.

This report, submitted papers, and minutes to REAP meetings are available on the REAP pages of the DARD website and on request from the REAP secretariat, details of which are included at **Annex 1**.

2. Membership and Terms of Reference

Successful candidates are identified through public, formal appointment processes monitored by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (OCPA NI), with the DARD Minister making the final decision. The Chair of REAP is appointed for a four year period, with Members serving for either 2 or 3 years. The periods of appointment are staggered to ensure continuity, and each period of appointment is renewable, subject to certain conditions. The Chair of REAP completes an annual performance report for each member, with the Chair's performance review completed by DARD. REAP biographies are attached at **Annex 2**.

Additional Membership

When the public appointments process was administered to establish REAP in 2005 the "Economist expert" position was left vacant due to a suitable candidate not being identified. REAP considered that the appointment of an

¹ When REAP was established members' knowledge and experience was assessed against the themes underpinning the DARD Business Strategy 2004/05; since then DARD has published the DARD Strategic Plan 2006-2011, which provides the context within which REAP advice is now provided.

economist expert was essential to enable it to provide effective policy advice to DARD.

On 1st September 2006 an appointments process to recruit an economist expert was advertised in a number of publications and on several websites, including that of the Agricultural Economics Society. DARD also undertook a number of measures to ensure that suitable candidates from sections of society currently under-represented in the Department's advisory groups were made aware of the vacant post. The process was monitored by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA NI).

The successful candidate, Dr Andrew Moxey, was appointed on 1st December 2006. His biography can be viewed, alongside those of the other REAP members, at **Annex 2**.

Terms of Reference

The REAP Terms of Reference are included at **Annex 3**. The original REAP Terms of Reference stated that REAP should consult with stakeholders. REAP took the view that formal consultations on DARD's emerging strategies should be carried out by DARD and that the REAP role in respect of consultations of this type should be one of an independent commentator. This proposal was put to DARD and agreement to such an approach was ultimately received from the Minister, David Cairns MP, who accepted that these changes be made to the REAP terms of reference. REAP has therefore been providing advice and support to DARD's formal consultations as an independent commentator and members have acted as observers at meetings as agreed with DARD.

3. Administration

Sponsor Branch

The REAP sponsor within DARD is the Research and Education Policy Branch (REPB), which managed the establishment of REAP and continues to be responsible for the REAP budget. A Staff Officer from DARD provides secretarial support. To underline REAP's independence it has been agreed that future secretarial support will be provided from a DARD branch other than the sponsoring branch. Officials representing DARD, most frequently from Policy and Economics Division, are often invited to attend REAP meetings.

Training

In November 2005 the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) delivered a training course to REAP. The purpose of the training was to familiarise members with the roles and responsibilities of those serving as Board members on public bodies, and included a presentation, group exercises, and a discussion on conflicts of interest. Future additions to REAP will undergo similar familiarisation training.

REAP has also received a number of presentations to better understand issues facing the NI rural sector, details of which are included at “REAP Meetings” (p5-6).

Budget

For the period 1st October 2005- 31st March 2006 the cost of administering REAP, not including staffing costs sourced under normal DARD running costs, was approximately £28,000.

The budget for REAP for the financial year 2006-07 (1st April to 31st March) was £70,000. For this period the cost of administering REAP, not including staffing costs sourced under normal DARD running costs, was approximately £26,000.

The main costs were Chair and Members’ attendance fees, travel expenses, conference facilities, and hospitality. The budget is also sourced to fund the advertising of public appointments to the Panel. (Note: As the 2006-07 REAP budget was secured to cover the cost of REAP public consultation (which was later removed as a REAP responsibility), DARD paid for the pre-consultation stage of the R&D strategy from the REAP budget).

Hospitality Received

All appointees to REAP are expected to decline gifts and hospitality where possible, although in instances where members consider it ungracious to decline they should declare details of this to the sponsor branch. The REAP secretariat maintains a register to record gifts and hospitality received by members.

Conflicts of Interest

REAP members must declare any personal or business interests which may, or may be reasonably perceived to, influence their judgement when performing their duties. This information is updated regularly and is available upon request.

Freedom of Information

REAP is subject to Freedom of Information requirements. There were no FOI requests made during this reporting period.

Publicity

There were no REAP press releases issued during the reporting period covered in this paper. No public meetings or formal consultations¹ were held

¹ *Paragraph on “Terms of reference” (p.3) refers.

during this reporting period. DARD is responsible for publicising and advertising appointments to REAP.

Website

REAP has pages on the DARD website where biographical information on Members can be viewed alongside papers submitted to DARD and minutes to REAP meetings.

The REAP panel has experienced disappointing delays in the development of its web pages, which are maintained by DARD officials. These delays have resulted in REAP minutes and papers being made available by that medium only since December 2006.

REAP is conscious that its web pages continue to be difficult to locate on the DARD website and that this potentially reduces REAP's transparency. It is the panel's intention that this be corrected in the near future.

4. REAP Meetings

During the reporting period the following meetings were held:

- 11th & 12th October 2005
- 21st & 22nd November 2005
- 24th January 2006
- 7th March 2006
- 4th May 2006
- 1st June 2006
- 10th July 2006
- 3rd October 2006
- 12th December 2006
- 21st February 2007

Minutes to the meetings are published on the REAP pages of the DARD website: www.dardni.gov.uk

Attendance

A minimum attendance of 50% of members plus 1, including at least 1 representative from each of the business strategy and specialist categories, is required for a REAP meeting to take place. An attendance record for REAP is attached at **Annex 4**.

Guest speakers

REAP has had a number of briefings at its meetings throughout the reporting period, which have enabled REAP to gain a greater understanding of the issues facing the NI rural sector. These have been arranged both by invitation

from REAP and on request by the guest organisation(s). The table below lists guests that have provided formal presentations to REAP.

Date	Organisation
21 st Nov 2005	Food Strategy Implementation Partnership (FSIP)
24 th Jan 2006	DARD (Strategic Planning Process)
7 th Mar 2006	DEFRA (Research Quality Assurance)
7 th Mar 2006	DARD (Impact of Trade Liberalisation)
4 th May 2006	RSPB
4 th May 2006	FSIP
4 th May 2006	DARD (R&D Strategy)
12 th Dec 2006	Agrisearch
21 st Feb 2007	Omagh College

5. REAP Business

REAP Start-up challenges

At its inception REAP was asked by DARD to concentrate on providing advice leading to the development of a DARD research strategy, to the initial exclusion of advice on an education strategy. Whilst the panel takes the view that the matters are related, as requested, the majority of REAP's discussions with DARD have been in respect of scientific research policy development.

The work of REAP to date has been limited by the DARD capacity to develop scientific research policy and to act as the specifier of research needs over the past 12 months. REAP anticipates that this situation will improve.

REAP's role began at approximately the same time as AFBI was being established. This had a major impact on REAP's ability to perform its role for two main reasons. Firstly, DARD resources were fully focussed on the creation of AFBI possibly to the detriment of scientific research policy development. Secondly, the resources transferred to AFBI included those personnel with the expertise to act as an expert customer in providing advice and specifying research needs to DARD.

REAP therefore found itself initially in the position of having few fully developed policy proposals on which to comment and no DARD "expert customer" with which to engage.

Initial REAP advice was therefore directed towards:

- Establishing the need for adequate strategic resources within DARD and in particular a Departmental Scientific Adviser
- Developing protocols between REAP and DARD to avoid REAP becoming over involved in DARD functions
- Providing DARD with ad hoc advice on specific DARD papers in preparation for more detailed policy development

- Assisting DARD deliver an effective R&D consultation process

Departmental Scientific Adviser

At present DARD does not have a Departmental Scientific Adviser¹ (DSA), and REAP perceives this to be a weakness which has created difficulties for DARD in identifying its R&D priorities. REAP advised on the importance of the role and on the experience and competences that that person should possess, and the grade at which the DSA should be employed by DARD (REAP Papers 1 & 2).

The REAP advice is that the DSA would be able to assist in establishing the required science information and quality assurance systems in DARD, and contextualise the work of DARD with that being conducted by other Departments, private organisations, and national and international research institutions. The DSA would also improve the ability of DARD to contribute effectively to cross-cutting issues such as the environment, economic development and social policy, and assist in streamlining the available budget to achieve relevant research objectives.

REAP is satisfied that DARD has taken steps to address this advice and expects visible progress in the near future.

Protocols

The working relationship between REAP and DARD has been the subject of much discussion within REAP and with DARD during the course of this reporting period. The REAP Terms of Reference guide the relationship, however several areas were identified for improvement that would ensure REAP could fulfil its role of providing independent, expert advice to DARD.

Consultations

An amendment was made to the REAP terms of reference to reflect the change in the REAP role in stakeholder consultation. The purpose of this change was to reinforce REAP's independence of DARD processes including consultations.

Policy Advice

The role of REAP in the drafting stages of DARD R&D and Education strategies was clarified. DARD agreed that REAP should have the opportunity to provide input at key stages of the strategy process, which includes REAP recommendations, whether or not accepted by DARD, being submitted to the Minister alongside proposed strategy papers. The revised process was presented to DARD at the REAP meeting of 10th July 2006, and agreed by the Minister shortly after. (The revised process can be viewed at **Annex 6**)

¹ In some REAP papers and minutes the DSA is also referred to as 'Departmental Scientific Officer (DSO)'.

DARD/ REAP communications

Communications between DARD and REAP on key issues were subject to revision during this reporting period. REAP took the view that requests for advice were inadequately detailed (REAP Paper 3), and made a number of proposals to DARD, which included that:

- where REAP advice is requested DARD should provide discussion papers in advance of the REAP meeting where it will be discussed;
- the papers should provide the background to the topic, a brief discussion of the issue, propose various options for action with some discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of each option, and recommendations;
- papers would be presented orally to REAP by the appropriate DARD official. There would then follow a discussion and REAP would formulate its advice.

REAP is pleased that DARD has responded positively to this, with DARD subsequently providing an update on the R&D strategy process at the REAP meeting of 21st February 2007 along these lines.

Ad hoc advice

Over the course of the reporting period REAP submitted a number of papers to the DARD Deputy Secretary, mainly addressing the proposed DARD Research and Development strategy. The REAP papers provided a critical analysis of the key issues and approach of the draft strategy and highlighted areas that DARD would need to consider in creating a further draft of the R&D strategy.

Besides identifying issues that might need to be addressed by research, REAP made comments (REAP Paper 1) on the need for quality assurance, peer review, periodic reviews of the main research organisations supplying DARD with science, and the need for a clear research commissioning process with adequate controls and checks on the progress of research. Much of this work would fall to the new Departmental Scientific Adviser.

An ongoing constraint on providing advice to DARD has been the absence of reliable information on current DARD research priorities or specific projects funded by DARD, now carried out by AFBI. This has emphasised the need for better control of the research commissioning process.

As outlined above, the working relationship between DARD (Research and Education Policy Branch) and REAP has taken considerable time to develop. The difficulties in reaching a satisfactory working relationship are, perhaps, understandable given the novelty of the advisory panel.

DARD R&D consultation

In spite of the difficulties referred to in the above paragraphs DARD conducted a series of formal consultation meetings with stakeholders on the proposed R&D strategy. REAP observers were present at the meetings and reported an independent view of the meetings back to REAP. When DARD officials presented a summary of the key findings of the stakeholder consultation to REAP at its meeting of February 2007, REAP was able to concur that the findings were representative of the views of stakeholders. At the time of writing this report, DARD is in the process of creating a scoping paper, which will represent the integration of the consultation findings with the wider strategic issues. REAP will have the opportunity to discuss and provide comments on this shortly, which should provide DARD with a stronger foundation when drafting the actual R&D strategy paper.

REAP is satisfied that the revised protocols, in which REAP act as an observer and 'critical friend' during the consultation process and provide timely advice during the drafting process (as referred to in 'Protocols' (p.7-8)), has provided a logical framework for the creation of the R&D strategy.

6. Summary of future actions

The following is a brief outline REAP programme of work for this calendar year (2007), which mirrors a provisional sequence of events for DARD in developing its research and education strategies. The dates and content of meetings may be subject to change. In fulfilling its wider role REAP may consider holding additional meetings to those listed.

Potential meetings

- Late Spring- REAP to receive an R&D scoping paper, and provide advice prior to DARD creating a draft paper.
- June 2007- REAP to receive draft papers from DARD on contract commissioning and quality assurance, and a scoping paper on the DARD Education Strategy. Agree and submit advice to DARD.
- October 2007- REAP to receive draft DARD Education Strategy to REAP for comment in advance of public consultation.
- December 2007- REAP to receive a finalised DARD Education Strategy

Annex 1 REAP contact details

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[www,dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)**

Annex 2 REAP Biographies

Chair

Dr Alan Lennon lives near Ballynahinch. He has a BSc and PhD in Engineering and Materials Science from QUB. Dr Lennon spent most of his early professional career in engineering, general management and business firstly at ICI and then at Munster Simms. He has also been Director of Business Support Division in the Training and Employment Agency. For the past 7 years Dr Lennon has been Chairman of the NI Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, the advisory body to the Education Minister on all aspects of examinations, assessments and the curriculum. He is also a Board Member of Business in the Community and an elected Companion of the UK Chartered Management Institute.

Members

Dr John Sherlock lives in Buckinghamshire. He has a BSc in chemistry and PhD in electrochemistry. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Institute of Food Science and Technology, and is a registered Chartered Scientist. Dr Sherlock has a long career in MAFF/Defra. His early work focused on food safety. More recently, he was Head of Defra's Agriculture, Environment and Food Technology Division, where he was responsible for agriculture and food research management, science policy formulation and knowledge transfer. One of his key tasks was to set up the Defra Research Priorities Group.

Prof John Hooker lives in Aberdeenshire. He has a BSc. in biology and environmental science and a PhD. in plant microbe interactions. Prof Hooker's previous positions include teaching and research at The University of Glamorgan and The Scottish Agricultural College and scientific advisor and Head of Research Management Unit at the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department. He is currently Professor and Head of the Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences at Manchester Metropolitan University. Prof Hooker is a member of the Natural Environment

Research Council's (NERC's) Science and Innovation Strategy Board and a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London.

Prof Roderick Blackshaw lives in Devon. From 2003, he has been Professor of Agricultural Zoology at the University of Plymouth. Before that he was Dean of the University's Faculty of Land, Food and Leisure and spent 15 years in the then DANI Science Service. Prof Blackshaw is a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society and of the Winston Churchill Trust. He is a member of the Sustainable Arable LINK Programme Management Committee and of the Defra Arable Crops Peer Review Panel. He chairs the Teignbridge Strategic Partnership and is a member of the Devon Strategic Partnership. He is also an Advisory Board Member for Wren, a registered charity.

Mrs Janet Wilson lives in Killinchy. She has an honours degree in geography. Her family background is in organic dairy farming, and she previously worked for the NI Forest Service. Mrs Wilson has 15 years' experience with the RSPB in environmental education, where she currently holds the position of Education Manager. In 1997, she received the award of UK Millennium Fellow for a research project on Komodo Dragons in Indonesia.

Prof Bertus Rima lives in Belfast. He has a primary degree in biological chemical engineering, a Masters in microbiology and a PhD in bacterial/bacteriophage genetics. He has 30 years' experience of teaching and research in all aspects of virology and since 1993, has held a Chair in molecular biology at QUB. Prof Rima is a Fellow of the Institute of Biology, a member of the Royal Irish Academy and a Council Member of the Society for General Microbiology.

Mr John Gilliland lives in Londonderry, where he manages a 300 hectare arable and willow estate and is Chairman of a local R&D company, Rural Generation (NI) Ltd. Mr Gilliland is a former president of the Ulster Farmers'

Union (2002-2004), a Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Societies of the UK and, in 2004, was awarded an OBE for services to the environment for his work on willow biomass and bioremediation of sewage sludge. He is also a former member of the Northern Ireland Food Strategy Group appointed by DARD and Invest NI.

Dr Sally Shortall lives in Belfast. She is considered one of the leading international sociologists in rural research and has published on topics including Public Attitudes to the Countryside, Occupational Health and Safety on Farms, Social Exclusion and Gender Proofing CAP Reform. She has been a social policy analyst to the Irish Government at the National Economic and Social Council Dublin and an evaluation expert on EU rural research programmes. She is currently the Director of the Gibson Institute for Land, Food and Environment at Queen's University Belfast.

Mr Lewis Cunningham lives in Dromore. He graduated in agriculture, has a Masters In Business Administration and is also a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing. Mr Cunningham has 16 years' experience in the agri-food industry, most recently the potato sector as Managing Director of Wilson's Country.

Mr Colin Coffey lives in Bangor. He graduated in Chemistry and is a Chartered Director. Mr Coffey has long experience in the agri-food industry, especially in the meat, dairy and animal feed sectors and is currently self-employed.

Mr Bernard McKay is a suckler cow and sheep farmer from Cushendun, Co. Antrim. He studied agriculture at Queen's University, Belfast and has recently obtained an MSc in Environmental Management from the University of Ulster, Coleraine. He was a trainer on the DARD Good Farming Practice programme and was recently appointed as a DARD Agri-Environmental Skills Instructor. He is involved with the delivery of various PEACE II programmes to farmers,

including 1.6 (Training for Farmers), 1.7 (obtaining Alternative Employment) and 1.9 (Investment in Agricultural Holdings). Together with a partner, he has recently formed McK Consultancy which specialises in rural development and agri-environmental projects.

Dr Andrew Moxey lives in Edinburgh. He studied Agricultural Economics at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, obtaining a 1st class honours degree and a PhD. He has worked extensively as an academic specialising in agricultural and agri-environment policy analysis, and has managed a diverse portfolio of projects as a Senior Economist for the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department. He has now established a career as a self-employed freelance economist specialising in applied rural policy analysis.

All media enquiries to DARD Press Office, Tel: 028 9052 4619.

Annex 3 REAP Terms of Reference

Purpose

The DARD Research and Education Advisory Panel's role is to provide on-going strategic advice to DARD on education, research and development (R&D) and knowledge transfer policy.

Make-up

The Panel will consist of an independent Chairman and eleven members, five with scientific or education expertise, one with economic expertise and five with knowledge of one or more of the four pillars underpinning the DARD Business Strategy 2004/05, namely competitiveness of the agri-food sector, maintaining and improving animal, fish and plant health standards; operating in an environmentally sensitive way and contributing to the development of the rural economy and society as a whole. There will be certain core competencies for all members. These are set out in the role and person specifications for the Chairperson and member posts.

Detail

REAP will provide advice to DARD. The Department will take account of the advice received and DARD's overall aims and objectives, and will provide draft education, R&D and knowledge transfer strategies to the Minister for approval. In addition, REAP should be prepared to receive unsolicited representations from stakeholders and accede to ad hoc meetings with them, where appropriate.

The Panel is expected to consider and provide advice on such strategic issues as:

- Scope for horizon scanning in light of the needs of the sector and rural communities;
- Research needs over the short, medium and long term of agri-food, agri-environment, animal health & welfare, fisheries & forestry sectors and rural communities;
- Priorities in the light of the competing demands for the total budget available across all DARD funded R&D;
- Knowledge transfer of relevant local, national and international research;
- The level and extent of the required education and training programme for the sector and rural communities;
- Progress on achievement of education, R&D and knowledge transfer targets.

Time Commitment and Secretariat

DARD will provide the Secretariat. The Panel is expected to meet at least four times a year.

Annex 4 Attendance at Meetings

Meeting Name	Oct. 05	Nov. 05	Jan. 06	Mar. 06	May 06	June 06	July 06	Oct. 06	Dec. 06	Feb. 07
Dr Lennon (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Dr Shortall	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prof. Blackshaw	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prof. Rima	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mr Cunningham	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Mr McKay	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mrs Wilson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X
Dr Sherlock	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Mr Gilliland OBE	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
Mr Coffey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓
Prof. Hooker	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dr Moxey	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓

Annex 5 REAP Submitted Papers

REAP has submitted several papers to DARD during this reporting period, with each one published on the REAP pages of the DARD website.

REAP Paper 1: Submitted to DARD June 15th 2006

REAP Paper 2: Submitted to DARD October 30th 2006

REAP Paper 3: Submitted to DARD 13th December 2006

Annex 6 Revised drafting process

1. REAP advise DARD on consultation process/questions/approach etc...
2. DARD consult stakeholders (use expert help). (REAP participate as observers).
3. DARD plus expert help synthesise feedback to inform strategy production.
4. REAP comment on use of synthesis and raw data.
5. DARD write strategy (with expert help if necessary) informed by consultation.
6. REAP comment on draft strategy.
7. DARD accept or reject REAP comments.
8. Final strategy plus REAP outstanding issues to Minister.
9. Final strategy version published by DARD for consultation.