

# North-South Co-operation on Agriculture and Food including forestry and rural development

## A Mapping Study

by Ciarán Ó Maoláin 5 April 2000

---

This mapping study was drawn up in early 2000 to inform the discussions of the Centre for Cross Border Studies' specialist [Study Group](#) on existing co-operation, and the scope for further co-operation, between organisations in the two Irish jurisdictions around agriculture, rural development and the food industry. The mapping study, based primarily on a brief period of desk research, does not pretend to be a definitive document: it is a *tour d'horizon* seeking to identify the main issues and the principal agencies. **Although the final draft of the mapping study was presented at the Study Group meeting on 6 April 2000, the Centre is willing to incorporate any additional information, especially factual corrections, notified to it before publication of the Study Group report.**

The aim of the mapping study, and indeed the whole remit of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, is to inform the work of policy makers over the coming years. What follows deals therefore with structures, organisations and processes, rather than with the situation of particular sectors at the present juncture. This should not be taken as indicating any lack of concern on our part about current conditions, North and South, where it is widely recognised that farming is in crisis. The Northern Department of Agriculture and Rural Development calculates that farm income fell by 22 per cent (from £91 million to £70 million) between 1998 and 1999; the total income from farming has fallen by 79% in five years. An emergency UK-wide aid package announced in late March is unlikely to bring the North more than £20 million, providing limited relief for the livestock and dairy sectors but with nothing for the arable sector. In the South, beef farmers have taken dramatic measures to secure increased prices from the meat industry. The state of the pig sector, on both sides of the border, can fairly be described as desperate. The absence of detailed reference to such issues in the following document is a regrettable necessity to keep the study to a manageable size.

Contacts, exchanges of information, harmonisation, joint activities and other forms of co-operation occur at a number of levels: between the respective government departments, through a new North-South implementation body (the future of which is uncertain), between public-sector and semi-state agencies and among the various producer organisations and commercial interests.

---

## GOVERNMENTAL

- *administrative structures*
- *scope for co-operation*
- *ministerial meetings*
- *departmental contacts*
- *European Union matters*

## Administrative structures

The government departments with lead roles in respect of agriculture and food are broadly similar in the two jurisdictions—the [Department of Agriculture and Rural Development](#) (DARD, formerly DANI) in the North and the [Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development](#) (usually abbreviated to DAF) in the South. Several other departments have lesser roles. (Click [here](#) for further details of departmental responsibilities.) Both lead departments have administrative, policy and regulatory roles in respect of agricultural education, advice and research, rural development, agricultural production, animal and plant health, and food industries.

The main areas of divergence include:

- in relation to the North, the overarching role of the UK [Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food](#) (MAFF) in negotiating and implementing UK-wide and EU agriculture and food schemes;
- responsibility for forestry and fisheries, which remains with the agriculture department in the North, but in the South has been transferred to the [Department of the Marine and Natural Resources](#) (DMNR). (Forestry is covered below; fisheries are not.)

## Scope for co-operation

A [paper](#) presented by the two governments to the Multi-Party Talks in London in January 1998 summarised north-south co-operation to date in agriculture. In relation to animal and plant health, there was room for expanding the co-operation that there had been on bovine disease including [BSE](#), on illegal trade in bovine animals and their products, and on the protection of veterinary and plant health status. Other areas identified as having potential to increase co-operation were rural development; agricultural research, training and advisory services; the development of the bloodstock industry, and co-operation in relation to [CAP reform](#).

This agenda for co-operation, while certainly valid, would appear to be unnecessarily narrow. There are many other areas where co-operation might benefit both sides; those mentioned to us by officials of the two lead departments (in addition to those mentioned in the scoping paper, such as bovine TB) include the pig industry, organic and ethical farming, Ireland branding and quality-based food promotions, LEADER and other EU programmes, forestry and related industries, agricultural waste (particularly, in the border areas, spent mushroom compost and chicken litter), and the horticultural sector, particularly soft fruit. The [CCBS Study Group on Agriculture](#) will examine the possibilities for co-operation in more detail than is possible in this preliminary document.

## Ministerial meetings

### *Ministerial meetings under direct rule*

In Dublin in October 1997 the Republic's Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Joe Walsh TD, met Lord Dubs, then Minister for Agriculture for Northern Ireland. This was the first meeting between ministers responsible for Agriculture in both parts of Ireland since the changes of government in the UK and Ireland. The ministers discussed a

number of issues of common concern relating to agriculture, food and rural development. Cross-border co-operation on a range of animal health issues was reviewed, as were the various programmes for cross-border co-operation in rural development. The ministers also discussed [EU matters](#).

There were no subsequent formal meetings by the ministers until the creation of the Northern Ireland Executive, although occasional informal contacts occurred, for example on the margins of EU meetings. EU gatherings more often provide opportunities for meetings on an East-West basis, i.e. between the respective ministers from the Republic and the UK, but we are not aware of any East-West consultations in this context on matters of special North-South significance.

### *North-South ministerial meetings*

In December 1999 Minister Walsh met Bríd Rodgers, then Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of Northern Ireland, on her first visit to the Republic as Minister. The two Ministers agreed to intensify existing co-operation between their two Departments and to establish a formal framework to make that co-operation more effective in the future. While this framework would cover all existing areas of co-operation, the two Ministers agreed specifically that the configuration of pig processing capacity on the island as a whole and the scope for co-operation in research would be accorded a high priority. We are not aware of any concrete initiatives in either of those areas since the meeting.

A further North-South meeting was to take place in the North in March 2000. At the time of writing the suspension of the Northern Ireland Executive made it difficult to clarify the intentions of the respective Departments. It seemed likely that in the event of the Executive's revival, rather than move to create any new agency or bilateral secretariat, the Southern Department would create a small specialist section to cover all North-South agriculture issues. It was not possible to establish whether the Northern Department would reciprocate.

## Departmental contacts

There are at present no formal structures for contacts between the lead departments in the two jurisdictions, but the Northern Department states that its senior officials "have had excellent relationships with their counterparts in the Republic" for many years. Informal contacts appear to be rare at the operational level and infrequent among civil servants of middle or higher rank. This includes visits to each other's workplaces and meetings in the context of conferences or seminars mainly organised by non-governmental bodies. For example, the Chief Veterinary Officers of each jurisdiction meet once a year, and at lower levels there are ad-hoc contacts, usually on issues specific to border areas. Training programmes often have some cross border participation but they are not jointly planned. At this stage of our research it is not possible to assess the extent to which such contacts, which appear to deal mainly with technical rather than strategic matters, influence policy. There may be scope for promoting harmonisation and mutual understanding through, for example, government-sponsored seminars, active encouragement of bilateral contacts, co-ordination of training or short-term exchanges of personnel.

Devolution and the setting up of the North/South Ministerial Council and the Implementation Bodies provided an opportunity to structure the relationship between the two Departments. However the suspension of the Assembly and the NSMC has meant that for the present contacts will continue to be informal, dealing with matters of mutual interest and concern. These were defined by the Northern Department as including the CAP, animal and plant health (including research), EU matters (SSPPR and INTERREG current and future programmes), rural development, and aquaculture and marine matters.

It might have been expected that cross border co-operation would be particularly welcome in relation to animal health, in that diseases do not respect political frontiers. Both jurisdictions face similar problems in relation to [BSE](#), bovine TB, brucellosis and pig diseases, for example, but there has been no structured contact at operational level between the veterinary services and other relevant agencies. In emergencies, for example foot-and-mouth disease control exercises, co-operation is good. In relation to BSE, North and South responded quite differently, with the North concentrating on the development of tracking systems and technical procedures while the most visible response in the South was high-profile policing of the border to keep out Northern cattle.

## European Union matters

The single European market has, of course, been a major factor in determining the development of the agricultural and food sectors in Ireland, North and South. EU programmes, principally the Common Agricultural Policy but including other lines of funding, have generally worked to create conditions favourable to North-South co-operation, but it is fair to say that their potential has not been fully realised, with only a small proportion of funding going to transnational initiatives. The loss of Objective 1 status, formerly enjoyed by both parts of the island, presents a new challenge, but the similar structure of farming in both jurisdictions, and its importance to export earnings, means that North and South have much more in common than, for example, the North and England.

### *Agenda 2000 and CAP reform*

Producer groups on both sides of the border have indicated that the [Agenda 2000 reform](#) of the European Union is likely to be the main determinant of the nature and scope of North-South co-operation. The changes planned for 2000-2006 will not only enlarge the Union, substantially altering market conditions, but will include specific measures on agriculture aimed at stimulating competitiveness, protecting the environment, ensuring a fair income for farmers and simplifying the legislative framework. In relation to Irish farmers the reforms will impact particularly on the market regimes for beef, milk and cereals. Support to farmers under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), currently accounting for around 40 per cent of the EU budget, will be affected by new measures such as the SAPARD programme for transitional aid to farmers in the applicant states.

At the last pre-devolution formal meeting between the Northern and Southern agriculture ministers in October 1997, Lord Dubs and Mr Walsh undertook to consult closely on how best the EU proposals under Agenda 2000 for an intensified rural development policy could be operated by the two governments for the advancement of rural communities in Northern Ireland and in the border counties of the Republic. The ministers also exchanged views on the Agenda 2000 proposals and agreed to maintain close contact as the debate at EU level progressed.

A [paper](#) presented to the Multi-Party Talks in London in January 1998 said that there were plans to establish closer ties between the Northern and Southern agriculture ministries in the run-up to the next review of the CAP, citing a common aim to protect beef and sheep sectors. However a Democratic Dialogue [report](#) (1999) points out that, barring a reform of the EU itself, EU-level co-operation is essentially an East-West rather than a North-South issue:

The [British-Irish] agreement refers ('strand two', §17) to arrangements being made to ensure the views of the NSMC [North-South Ministerial Council] "are taken into account and represented appropriately at relevant EU meetings". But of course the union is based on the member-states, so whatever 'views' the NSMC might have could, as things stand, only be conveyed to meetings of the

Council of Ministers, for example, via the representatives of the UK or the Republic. This would be likely, in practice, to mean the governments in Dublin and London coming to a policy agreement to express a common view.

## *LEADER II*

With the [LEADER II](#) rural development funding line coming to an end, and no clear view of how the transnational dimensions of the new programme, [LEADER+](#), will translate into action, the most that can usefully be said about the North-South dimension of LEADER to date is that there has been no *systematic* co-ordination. This was not for any lack of commitment to the principles of networking and complementarity, and a number of the local groups administering the funding were particularly active in fostering links across the border.

There were, however, significant differences in the structures North and South: typically the Southern LEADER companies or "local action groups" (LAGs) covered one or two counties and had budgets of £3-4M, while in the North the companies were based on the much smaller local government districts and had budgets of around £800,000. The companies were established at different intervals and each drew up their own funding criteria, so that some would support work that others would not. While representatives from local LEADER groups frequently attended meetings in the other jurisdiction, North and South functioned as separate entities for LEADER II with the result that, for example, Northern farmers were grant-aided to move into small-scale soft fruit production in competition with farmers in the Southern counties who enjoyed the advantages of a better climate and an established market. Separate networks were established for the LEADER companies in the North and the South, and while there were very frequent contacts at officer level the networks have not, as yet, held any joint events.

Despite the lack of a strategic direction, border-area LEADER companies supported a number of cross border projects. These were generally fairly small-scale initiatives, for example developing the beekeeping industry in Cavan, Monaghan and Armagh, creating a rural community tourism initiative in the Down-Louth-Armagh-Monaghan area, and funding work on an archaeological guide to the same eastern border region. Strong links developed between the three North Derry local action groups and the Inishowen group in Donegal. Occasionally support went beyond the border counties, as in the case of a craft fair organised jointly by Kilkenny and Armagh. Some 16 LEADER companies on both sides of the border contributed towards the production of a food guide, and that included a cross border conference. LEADER also works through partnerships—"other collective bodies", or OCBs—some of which have cross border elements in their work; see, for example, [Family Farm Development](#) and [Rural Development Services](#). In the Republic, however, the two LEADER OCBs were active only within the jurisdiction and exclusively in the tourism field (hence outside the scope of this paper).

The LEADER+ preliminary documentation indicates that there will be specific support for transnational initiatives and networking, and it is likely that this will give an impetus to border region and other North-South collaboration in Ireland.

## *INTERREG*

The EU funding programme for cross border collaboration, INTERREG II, has funded a number of initiatives in agriculture and rural development.

See below for INTERREG funding of [Agrilink](#). Local projects supported by INTERREG have included tourism and cultural facilities in rural areas, such as the Ti Chullain and Slieve Gullion centres. The respective departments of agriculture have funded projects in each jurisdiction under the Community Economic Development measure of INTERREG, and the three cross border local authority networks, ICBAN, the North West Region Cross-Border Group and the

East Border Region Ltd, have been working on plans to access INTERREG monies for rural development co-operation, thus far without success.

Within the food industry, INTERREG funding was secured in 1998 for an initiative by [NIFDA](#), LEDU (now [Invest NI](#)) and the [IDB](#) in association with Tesco to help Northern Ireland companies meet the quality standards required by the major supermarket chains. So far as we have been able to establish the programme had no cross border dimension other than indirectly, by increasing the capacity of suppliers to do business with multiples in the South.

### *EUSSPPR*

The [European Union Special Support Programme](#) for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland (EUSSPPR, or SSP) has supported a large number of mainly small-scale projects with a cross border dimension. Examples of those in the agriculture and food areas are mentioned [below](#). The [Rural Development Council](#), as one of its Intermediary Funding Bodies, disbursed STG£2.6M to rural organisations in 1999. The SSP has also funded projects involving rural development [networks](#).

### *Relocation of EU institutions*

In September 1997 the European Union [Food and Veterinary Office](#) (FVO), part of DG XXIV ([Consumer Protection Directorate](#)), relocated to Ireland from Brussels. The Commission planned to have 200 jobs in Ireland by the end of 1999, mainly in a new office complex at Grange, Co. Meath. The FVO's activities include inspection visits to industrial and commercial premises in member states (around 200 per year, including in 1999 two [BSE](#)-related missions to Northern Ireland) to assess compliance with the requirements of Community legislation in the food and veterinary area.

No EU agencies are located in Northern Ireland.

---

## **AGRIFOOD PRODUCTION**

- *producer organisations*
- *industry links*
- *forestry*
- *mushroom sector*
- *veterinary, animal and plant health and stockbreeding matters*
- *the BSE issue*
- *food safety*
- *other food industry regulation*

### **Producer organisations**

#### *The co-operative sector*



The [Ulster Agricultural Organisation Society](#) (UAOS) and the much larger [Irish Co-operative Organisation Society](#) (ICOS) have established a north-south secretariat, training courses for co-operative directors and managers are run jointly, and a north-south co-operative development officer has been appointed. Both societies are members of [COGECA](#), the EU confederation of agricultural co-operative organisations (ICOS directly, and the UAOS via the Federation of Agricultural Co-operatives (UK) Ltd).

A round of mergers in the Southern co-operative sector in the 1990s was accompanied by a substantial penetration of Northern Ireland and British markets by businesses such as Dairygold, Golden Vale and Glanbia. [Lakeland Dairies](#), the Republic's fifth-largest dairy co-op with a turnover in excess of £150m, is based in Cavan and operates in Northern Ireland through a wholly-owned subsidiary, Lakeland Dairies (NI) Ltd. Town of Monaghan Co-op has become one of the biggest players in Northern Ireland, taking 8 per cent of the milk pool, and Donegal Creameries also have a significant presence.

### *Irish Farmers' Association*

The [Irish Farmer's Association](#) (IFA), based in Dublin, is the largest farmers' organisation in Ireland with 85,000 members in 925 branches, and a staff of 50. The organisation was temporarily disrupted in January 2000 by a dispute with the meat processing industry, which led to its being fined IR£500,000 for supporting farmers' pickets of meat plants in a (successful) campaign to secure higher prices for beef. The [Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association](#) announced plans for similar action in the North.

The IFA's contacts with Northern organisations mainly involve the larger Northern body, the Ulster Farmers' Union, which has enjoyed cordial relations since it was represented at the founding conference of the National Farmers' Association (the IFA's predecessor) in 1955. Bilateral meetings at presidential or senior officer level take place two or three times a year. In July 1999, for example, the two bodies held day-long talks at UFU Headquarters in Belfast. The IFA said there were "many issues of common concern facing farmers on both sides of the border and broad agreement on maximum cross border co-operation to deal with these issues". Matters discussed included implementation of the CAP reform decisions, allocation of the national envelope in the beef sector, a co-ordinated approach on TB and brucellosis, and slaughter issues which were to be the subject of further cross border talks involving the unions and the relevant authorities.

There is also frequent contact on sectoral issues between lower-ranking officials, but no commitment to extending into joint programme activity. It has been suggested that an impediment to the further development of North-South work by the IFA is that as a national membership organisation the IFA may find it difficult to promote initiatives which benefit farmers in the six Southern border counties while excluding farmers with similar circumstances away from the border. The IFA denies that this amounts to a barrier, but acknowledges the need for "sensitivity"; this has not prevented the IFA supporting calls for increased milk quotas in the border counties and Northern Ireland. As an example of co-operation that benefited farmers throughout the island, it points to the IFA proposal, supported by the UFU in the CAP Reform 1 negotiations, that led to the "deseasonalisation" (winter beef) premium, whereby farmers in *both* parts of the island (but not in Britain) receive a supplement if bullock slaughters in *either* Irish jurisdiction rise above a certain percentage of the annual figure during the autumn. The IFA expresses its willingness to support other moves at EU level to treat the island of Ireland as a unit for agricultural purposes, in view of the similarity between the two jurisdictions and the substantial differences with, in particular, English and Welsh agriculture. It points to the recent moves by Southern-owned farm-related businesses into the Northern processing sector as a trend that is likely to work in favour of an all-island approach. The IFA and UFU participate in East-West meetings with the [National Farmers' Union](#) (NFU) and the Scottish Farmer' Union (SFU), and in European forums. The IFA and the UFU have usually taken similar positions, albeit independently, on EU, GATT and WTO matters affecting the farming industry.

### *Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU)*

The [Ulster Farmers' Union](#) has traditionally represented the larger farming enterprises in Northern Ireland, and for various reasons that has meant that it has been perceived as representing Unionist farmers—a perception that the Union deeply resents, in view of its studied neutrality on non-farming matters and the fact that it has members from the minority community. It should also be noted that the UFU has a positive attitude to mutually beneficial cross border co-operation. Indeed, it was said during the 1999 Dáil debate on the British-Irish Agreement Bill that the UFU had, for years, usually been closer to the Republic's position in EU negotiations than it had been to that of the British Minister for Agriculture. The UFU's perception of a common interest with the Republic, as representing producer regions rather than consumer society of Great Britain, underlay its expression of disappointment at the suspension of the Northern Executive in February 2000. While there may have been some disquiet within the UFU at the decision of its then leadership to participate in the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin in 1995, making a joint presentation with the IFA, the UFU has always stressed that its position on co-operation has been informed by the need to enhance competitiveness and efficiency, and to protect the future of family farming in an era of globalisation.

The UFU's contacts with the IFA are mainly in the context of what it describes as "parallel rather than joint work" on matters of common interest. Meetings at senior officer level, sometimes also involving ministers, happen two or three times a year, and the commodity specialists in the UFU are in frequent conversation with their IFA opposite numbers. There are occasional joint conferences and seminars on specific issues such as mushroom farming, animal health and so on, but co-operation at a strategic or policy level is hampered by the fact that North and South are competitors in many markets. Both unions collaborated some years ago in a QUB-UCD research project on low-income farms. The UFU cites its involvement in [Family Farm Development Ltd](#) as the most significant North-South element of its work, and it sees potential for further development of that model.

### *Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association (NIAPA)*

The [Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association](#) represents mainly small farmers, and although like the UFU it refrains from partisan comment on constitutional issues it is perceived as having a mainly Nationalist membership. Like the UFU, NIAPA participates in [Family Farm Development Ltd](#), but it appears to have a more enthusiastic approach to the concept of cross border collaboration on wider agricultural policy and commodity issues. Just as the UFU relates on a cross border basis to the IFA, NIAPA's nearest equivalent in the South is the ICMSA, the smaller of the two main unions. The ICMSA and NIAPA have a formal North-South consultative structure and are in frequent contact. However NIAPA also meets from time to time with the IFA and other bodies, and in principle it is committed to working with any Southern organisation, and with farmers' organisations elsewhere, on matters of common concern.

### *Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA)*

The [Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association](#) (ICMSA) represents about 40,000 farmers. It has had strong links for many years with NIAPA, with which it has launched a north-south forum to promote the interests of farm families in all parts of Ireland. The forum, which meets three or four times a year at executive-to-executive and council-to-council level, deals with the larger policy issues while commodity committees of the ICMSA and NIAPA are in constant contact on specific matters. The recent 50th anniversary meeting of the ICMSA was attended by a senior NIAPA delegation and was also to have been attended by both agriculture ministers, had Ms Rodgers retained office. The ICMSA and NIAPA are committed to working to ensure a consistent approach on policy matters but it is accepted that there will be differences on some matters given that the members are competing in the marketplace.



### *Irish Cattle Traders' & Stock Owners' Association (ICSA)*

One of the smaller farm unions, but also one of the oldest, the [ICSA](#) (formerly the Irish Cattlemen & Stockmen's Association) represents many of the 100,000 farmers in the beef and sheep sectors. It has in recent years been in contact with NIAPA on matters of mutual interest. The chairperson of NIAPA addressed the last ICSA annual general meeting on the potential for cross border collaboration and the two organisations continue to exchange information and ideas. The ICSA, which was in decline for a number of years, has recently started to expand its membership. The ICSA is mainly concerned with moving the beef and sheep sectors away from reliance on EU headage payments into a regime of area-based payments concentrating on high quality, and it favours the development of a national or island-wide branding system along the lines of the Kerrygold brand in the dairy sector. In relation to rural development, ICSA wants increased support for off-farm income generation projects and it is interested in the potential of INTERREG and cross border LEADER programmes for its members in border counties.

### *The pig industry*

Conditions for pig producers have been very difficult in recent years on both sides of the border. This is a sector where there is general recognition of the need for improved North-South co-operation, and some important initiatives are under way.

There is a substantial South-North trade in pigs for slaughter, although in recent years this has been disrupted by plant closures. There is some North-South flow but we understand that of late this has been at lower levels, presumably due to currency fluctuations and the fact that money is lost on each pig regardless of how far it is transported.

The hard-hit Northern producers have been examining the co-operative model long since adopted in the South, and in 1999 established a co-op, Ulster Pig Producers, which has yet to have a major impact but is likely to be boosted in the near future by a government grant for an intensive marketing programme. The Ulster Farmers' Union, which supported the formation of the co-op, is encouraging it to link up with Southern co-ops; the UFU and IFA commodity experts are in frequent contact, as are the animal health experts from both organisations who have been working with the respective Departments to improve co-operation on pig disease eradication programmes.

The two Departments are currently preparing for a joint strategic assessment of the pig production and processing industries in Ireland as a whole. This exercise, currently out to tender, will be supported by a cross border advisory committee involving the two Departments, producers, processors, the IDB and the IDA.

### *Social and cultural links*

There are occasional contacts and exchange visits at branch-to-branch level between the [Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster](#) (YFCU) and the equivalent organisation, [Macra na Feirme](#), in the Republic. Macra employs one full-time officer in Donegal, funded under the EUSSPPR, to foster cross border links. Macra's New Opportunities for Women (NOW) programme, which seeks to examine and address the barriers to the participation of women at decision making levels in rural development, has a Queen's University academic as chair of its advisory committee; she has also participated in Macra's Women in Agriculture Network. Most of Macra's activities have a 26-county focus and while it is involved in a transnational project on rural women, its six partners are in France, Sicily, Spain and Portugal.

Macra and the YFCU are members of [CEJA](#), the European Council of Young Farmers. However CEJA contacts between the two organisations occur only in Brussels; they do not arrange exchanges with each other under the Council's [PEJA](#) programme.

## Industry links

### *Cross Border Co-operation in Agri-business*

A three-year Doctoral project has been completed at the [Centre for Peace and Development Studies](#), University of Limerick, with funding from Golden Vale plc. It studied the degree of co-operation between farmers on either side of the political border in Ireland and the extent to which a developing peace process and a closer union with Europe are likely to effect such co-operation in the future.

### *Meat export trade groups*

The [Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association](#) (NIMEA) has no formal links with its Southern counterpart organisations, but has contact with [Bord Bia](#) and the [Irish Meat Association](#) (IMA) through their common membership of a European network, the [UECBV](#) (European Livestock and Meat Trading Union).

### *Livestock markets*

The [Northern Ireland Livestock Auctioneers Association](#) (NILAA) and its members have contact with the Southern market groups, the [Irish Co-operative Organisation Society Ltd](#) (ICOS) and [Associated Livestock Marts](#), both informally and through an EU network, the [AEMB](#) (European Association of Livestock Markets). There is very little North-South trade in live animals but a considerable South-North trade.

## Forestry

This might be thought to be a particularly attractive area for cross-border co-operation in that in both jurisdictions the relevant government departments (Agriculture in the North, Natural Resources in the South) have a strategic role, with broadly similar objectives in terms of reafforestation (the island being one of the least wooded parts of Europe) and commercial development, and both operate through specialist agencies. Northern Ireland forestry is managed independently of Great Britain.

Over the past 15 years or so there has been a considerable divergence between North and South, with much greater success in securing new planting in the South while the North has struggled to meet fairly modest annual targets. The reasons for this are not simply to do with grant regimes, but with other agricultural and social issues: the Republic has provided small farmers with incentives for retirement, which have resulted in less economic farmland becoming available for forestry, and it is also suggested that in the North the decades of conflict have led to cultural difficulties with "giving up" farmland. There are also substantial differences in terms of consumption: the North has a strong timber importing infrastructure, and up to half of the timber sawn in the North is grown in the South. There is a very strong demand for timber in the South's construction industry, but currency and interest rate differentials have made it difficult for the North to sell to the South.

### *The Forest Service (Republic of Ireland)*

In the Republic the [Forest Service](#), part of the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, acts for the Minister in promoting and overseeing all forestry activity within the

State. Specifically it is responsible for national forest policy, the promotion of private forestry, the administration of planting and other forestry grant schemes, compatibility between planting and the environment, forestry training, forest protection, control of felling and the promotion of research in forestry and forest produce. The chief objective of the Forest Service is to foster the efficient and sustainable development of forestry through a number of State and EU grant aid measures directed at the forest agricultural sector.

### *Coillte Teo.*

The Forestry Act, 1988 provided for the establishment of [Coillte Teoranta](#) (The Irish Forestry Board Limited) and the Act specifies the extent of its operations. Coillte, founded in 1989, is a private limited company, owned by the Minister but operating on a commercial basis. It works through Coillte Forests, which handles the acquisition and management of land and the production and sale of timber; Coillte Enterprises, which manages non-core business such as Christmas tree sales; Coillte Consult Ltd, an international forestry consultancy; and other services such as library, education and information, and forest parks.

### *The Forest Service (Northern Ireland)*

In the North the Forest Service is a “next steps agency” under the Department of Agriculture. The Service is responsible for the implementation of government forestry policy within Northern Ireland. It does not have a commercial arm on the Coillte model but offers its timber for sale by tender.

### *North-South co-operation*

Contacts between the Forest Services, Coillte and the respective Departments are quite frequent, perhaps weekly in relation to operational matters (plant health and pest control), with at least annual meetings at the top level. The Northern Service is active in facilitating North-South links mainly in relation to research. INTERREG-funded projects include a continuous yield modelling exercise where the Forestry Service (NI) and Coillte collect data which is processed at Queen’s University. The Service is also involved in a pine weevil management project for which a University of Ulster researcher is attached to NUI Maynooth. The island of Ireland is treated by the EU as one zone in relation to plant health protection, so that, for example, the discovery of an insect pest in one jurisdiction is immediately communicated to the other and the response is co-ordinated. The Northern Forest Service is currently looking at ways to increase cross border co-operation and is in discussion with COFORD (see below).

### *Forestry research*

Forestry research provides an unusual case of European Union mechanisms acting to frustrate, rather than foster, cross border co-operation. [COFORD](#), the Republic’s National Council for Forest Research and Development, plans, develops and co-ordinates research programmes to secure long-term viability for the forestry industry and to optimise social and cultural developments associated with forestry. It channels EU funding (formerly obtained through the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, but now Agenda 2000 monies obtained through the DMNR) to over 70 research projects. The levels of aid typically run at 50 per cent for projects sponsored commercially, e.g. by Coillte, and at 60-100% for university-based work. There are some 35 centres in the Republic of Ireland engaged in forestry research, and four in Northern Ireland (two Department of Agriculture centres and two in the University of Ulster). There is a long tradition of transnational co-operation in forestry research. The Northern Ireland-based projects complement work being done in the Republic, in areas such as genetics and plant breeding, forest biomass for energy, nursery practice, forest nutrition, crop spacing and thinning, forest ecology, pest management and the timber industry. Given the large number of research centres COFORD invites research

proposals on a competitive basis. For the 1994-97 funding round it accepted applications from Northern Ireland, and three [University of Ulster](#) (UU) projects were awarded grants. It subsequently emerged that, under strict EU regulations governing grant aid to Objective 1 regions, COFORD was not authorised to spend outside the Republic's jurisdiction. The Irish government agreed to cover the additional expenditure in Northern Ireland for 1994-97, but COFORD is no longer able to assist Northern projects directly. There are, however, informal efforts to co-ordinate research on a North-South basis, and UU has been helped by COFORD in planning applications for another EU initiative (COST) involving assistance by at least two member states to non-member states. COFORD lobbies at EU level on matters of interest to researchers in both jurisdictions, and it supports developing links between, for example, UU and NUI Maynooth.

### *The Royal Forestry Society (RFS)*

There is already one body with cross-border membership engaged in education in forestry issues. The [Royal Forestry Society](#), based at Tring in England, is an educational charity with 4,500 members. It promotes the conservation and expansion of tree resources through good forestry management. It has a Regional Division in Northern Ireland and members in the Republic of Ireland (and in some 20 other countries).

## Mushroom sector

Fresh mushrooms, a tiny sector until the 1980s, have become the Republic's most important edible horticulture export, with three key companies having between them a UK market share of approximately 50 per cent of retail sales. The sector developed due to a generous EU funding regime with 50 per cent capital grants, grants and subsidies for marketing, employees, electricity, storage, processing, composting, handling and roads for smallholdings. UK producers, with a less supportive regime, went into decline in the early 1990s and six of the eight biggest mushroom firms in Britain were bought up by Irish firms at that time. At present the sector accounts for about 9,000 jobs on 900 farms in the South, as compared to around 300 growers in the North. The Northern industry, also export-oriented, is experiencing particular difficulties at present, mainly related to the strength of sterling.

In both parts of the island there are difficulties in attracting and retaining workers. Another problem limiting growth of the industry is the issue of spent mushroom compost, with around 400,000 tons having to be disposed of per year. Alternatives to land disposal being explored North and South include recycling, conversion of compost to energy, and use of compost as a growing medium. A further environmental issue is the industry's use of vast quantities of plastic.

The [International Fund for Ireland](#) (IFI), with industry support, has funded a co-operative research strategy for the mushroom industry in both parts of the island. The [Mushroom Research and Technology Services Group](#) at the [National Agricultural & Veterinary Biotechnology Centre](#) (NAVBC), [University College Dublin](#), mushroom researchers in [Queen's University Belfast](#) and the North's Department of Agriculture research centre at Loughgall, have come together under the auspices of the Centre for Innovation in Biotechnology (CIB) to run a Mushroom Demonstration Project. This seeks to enhance the competitiveness of the mushroom export business throughout the island, by an integrated programme of applied biological research and development and technology transfer to industry. The aim is to improve quality and supply by minimising the impact of weed moulds and fungal pathogens, and developing of diagnostic technology; the work on pathogens also involves another component of the NAVBC, the [Plant Biotechnology Research Group](#). The IFI project organised a "Profit from Science" cross border conference to disseminate research findings to growers,

in conjunction with the Irish Mushroom Grower's Association (IMGA, a member of the [Irish Farmers' Association](#)) and the [UFU](#).

## Veterinary, animal health and stockbreeding matters

### *Veterinary services*

We have referred [above](#) to co-operation at official level between the respective Departments. There are limited contacts between the professional bodies; for example, conferences of the [Irish Veterinary Officers Association](#) (VOA), which represents veterinary officers in the Republic, have had individual participation by Northern veterinary officers. The March 2000 VOA conference is to be addressed by several DARD officials and by an official of the North-South Food Safety Promotion Board. The lack of a direct equivalent of the VOA in the North limits the opportunities for exchange; Northern VOs belong to the Northern Ireland Veterinary Association, the NI branch of the British Veterinary Association, or (if they have entered the Service from private practice) the British Small Animal Veterinary Association Northern Ireland Region or the Association of Private Veterinary Surgeons (NI). As a result of informal contacts in the working environment, there are social and sporting contacts among the VOs in both jurisdictions.

There are also links between the various associations for vets in private practice, which are beyond the remit of this study.

### *Dairy farms code of practice*

The [Northern Ireland Animal Welfare and Quality Assurance Code of Practice](#) was produced and is supported by DANI, the UFU, NIAPA, United Dairy Farmers Ltd and the Northern Ireland Dairy Association, together with three Northern Ireland co-ops and two in the Republic (Donegal Co-op and Town of Monaghan Co-op).

### *Livestock improvement*

The Livestock Breeding Division of the Republic's Department of Agriculture is responsible for the development of sheep, goat and pig production through breed improvement policies, and for the greyhound, thoroughbred and sport horse sectors. It provides support to breed improvement societies and regulates the Artificial Insemination (AI) industry. The Division told us that it recognises the Northern Department's approval system for semen collection centres and for commercial AI operators doing business in the South; the Northern Department said that was reciprocated in the North, on the basis of EU legislation rather than any bilateral agreement. However the vast majority of the import trade in semen in both jurisdictions involves North American and British suppliers, and we have been advised that it has, in practice, been very difficult to extend AI operations across the border. The Northern co-operative AI Services has apparently not been allowed to deliver an insemination service in the South, obliging it to create a joint venture with the Southern firm Eurogene, although AI Services' subsidiary, AI Services Ireland Ltd, has been allowed to sell semen in the South.

Most of the Southern Division's work has no substantial contact with Northern Ireland but it oversees the statutory body for the greyhound sector, [Bord na gCon](#), which has at least one Northern Ireland member (appointed in 1999) on its board. The very first board, appointed in 1958, also had a member from the North. The greyhound sector has also been the focus of East-West co-operation: the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and its British counterpart, the RSPCA, have jointly campaigned around alleged cruelty to Irish-bred dogs in Spain.

A number of sectoral and breed improvement societies have cross border membership, such as:

### *Cattle breed societies*

Breed societies play an important role in the conservation of genetic resources and the improvement of cattle breeds by registering and supplying data on quality, organising shows and promoting networking among breeders; many are also involved in a range of commercial activities. The Irish Holstein Friesian Association (IHFA) was formed to represent 3,500 breeders in the Republic of the cattle breed that constitutes the vast majority of the national dairy herd. It appears to have merged with [Holstein UK & Ireland](#) (formerly, and sometimes referred to as, the Holstein Friesian Society of Great Britain and Ireland), a breed society based in England (14,500 members including approximately 1,000 in Northern Ireland, where it has subsumed an NI Holstein Breeders' Club and an NI Holstein Friesian Breeders' Club). Holstein UK & Ireland exchanges registration data and milk records with the Centralised Irish Milk Records Association Ltd and United Dairy Farmers (Northern Ireland), and provides registration services to the IHFA and several other breed societies. Thus the Holstein breeders have a cross border relationship, but it would be excessive to describe it as an island-wide body.

The Leitrim-based [Irish Angus Cattle Society Ltd](#) has always been organised on an island-wide basis, even when its secretariat was provided by the Republic's Department of Agriculture (until 1999). However the Northern membership is less than 5 per cent of the total, i.e. 10 to 15 individuals. Of the other breed societies, the following have members on both sides of the border: the [Irish Aberdeen Angus Association](#) (although the Scotland-based [Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society](#) also has members in Northern Ireland and we have found a reference to a NI Aberdeen Angus Society), the [Irish Hereford Breed Society Ltd](#) ("not too many at all" in the North, where there is also a NI Hereford Breeders' Association), the [Meuse Rhine Issel Cattle Society](#), the [Romagnola Cattle Society](#) (which has about six members in the North and only two in the South), the [Irish Rare Breeds Society](#) (about 14 Northern and 56 Southern members), the [Galloway Cattle Society of Great Britain & Ireland](#) and the [Shorthorn Society of Great Britain and Ireland](#) (although there is a, possibly separate, Ulster Shorthorn Breeders' Association).

The Scotland-based [Ayrshire Cattle Society of Great Britain & Ireland](#) is organised in 23 Regions, including, as two Regions, the Ulster Ayrshire Cattle Club and the [Irish Ayrshire Cattle Society](#). Both the [Jersey Cattle Society of Ireland](#) and the [Ulster Jersey Cattle Club](#) are area clubs of the England-based [Jersey Cattle Society of the United Kingdom](#).

The following have members only in the South: the [Belgian Blue Cattle Society of Ireland](#) (a Belgian Blue Club, affiliated to the [British Belgian Blue Society](#), operates in the North), the [Irish Aubrac Cattle Breed Society](#) (much bigger than the British society, which has no members in Northern Ireland), the [Irish Charolais Cattle Breed Society Ltd](#) ([British Charolais Cattle Society](#) operates in the North), the 800-member [Irish Simmental Cattle Society Ltd](#) ([British Simmental Cattle Society](#) has 163 members in the North), and the [Irish Limousin Cattle Society Ltd](#) (the [British Limousin Cattle Society](#) has a [Northern Ireland Club](#)). The [Piedmontese Cattle Society](#) operates in the South and the NI Piedmontese Club in the North.

No information on cross border membership was available in time for this study for the [Kerry Cattle Society of Ireland](#), the [Irish Blonde d'Acquitaine Breed Co-operative Ltd](#) (but the [British Blonde Society](#) has a [Northern Ireland Club](#)), the [Montbeliarde Cattle Society of Ireland Ltd](#), the [Irish Parthenaise Cattle Breed Society](#) and the [Saler Cattle Breeding Society](#) (which may or may not be the same as the Salers Cattle Society in the North). The Irish Moiled Cattle Society exists in the North but we have not found a reference to it in the South.

### *Irish Quality Sheep Group*



The Irish Quality Sheep Group (IQSG) is a cross-border linkage initiative between the NI Texel Sheep Breeders' Club and the South's [Irish Texel Sheep Society](#). The group's focus is on the overall improvement of lamb quality through better communication and exchange of experience between producers North and South. The group has sought to use high performance pedigree rams to improve the quality of lamb in Ireland. This has involved the establishment of a sire reference scheme, improved grading systems and improved traceability and accountability.

### *Other sheep societies*

The situation with sheep breed societies is much the same as for cattle; that is, there are a small number of island-wide societies (only one or two that we know of), and many Republic-only societies with Northern Ireland having autonomous societies or Clubs affiliated to the British breed society. Even where there are separate organisations, contacts are frequent; farmers from the North attend Southern sales to buy new bloodlines, and vice versa, and officials of one group may be called on as show judges by the sister body on the other side.

We have not been able to research cross border membership or co-operation in sheep breed societies in any depth, but we believe that the following listing shows firstly the all-Ireland groups known to us, secondly, the Southern societies and corresponding Northern Clubs of UK societies, thirdly, the Northern-only groups and finally the Southern-only groups:

The [Belclare Sheep Breed Society](#) has 28 members in the South and currently only one in the North. We are advised that the NI Hampshire Down Sheep Breeders' Club has recently become an all-Ireland society.

There is a [Charollais Sheep Breed Society](#) based in Wexford and a Charollais Sheep Society in the North. The [Ile de France Sheep Breed Society](#), based in Kilkenny, appears to be separate from the North's Ile-de France Sheep Breeders Society. There is a Beltex Sheep Breed Society in the South, and a separate NI Beltex Sheep Breeders Club; an [Irish Rouge de L'Ouest Sheep Association](#) and a NI Rouge de L'Ouest Club affiliated to the British society; a [Suffolk Sheep Breed Society](#) and a Suffolk Sheep Society NI Branch.

Organisations which appear to be active in Northern Ireland only include: Castlewella Ram Breeders, Clun Forest Sheep Breeders Society, East Down Suffolk Club, Kerry Hill Flock Sheep Society, NI Blue Faced Leicester Sheep Breeders' Club, NI Dorset Horn and Poll Sheep Breeders' Club, North Country Cheviot Sheep Association, Ulster Ram Breeders' Association (Blackface) and the Ulster Ram Breeders' Association (Border Leicester).

Societies which we know to be active in the South, but which do not appear to have Northern connections, are the [Berrichon du Cher Sheep Breed Society](#), [Bleu du Maine Sheep Breed Society](#), [Galway Sheep Breed Society](#), [Vendéen Sheep Breed Society](#) and [Wicklow Cheviot Sheep Association](#).

### *Pig breed societies*

Given the depressed state of the pig sector at present, the breed societies could be forgiven for a certain lack of enthusiasm for networking. In fact, with half the North's farmers having gone out of business since 1998, the formerly separate Northern societies for Landrace and Large White breeders had so few remaining members that they have recently amalgamated as the NI Pig Breeders Association, and they link into the [British Pig Association](#) for registration purposes, having no formal links of any kind with the Southern breeders. The Pig Testing Station at Antrim and the Teagasc centre at Moorepark work quite independently, although there is no practical reason why genetic testing could not be done either in a single all-island centre or on a co-operative or competitive basis across the border. The Moorepark centre has conducted one all-Ireland trial of semen quality, involving only two Northern

breeders, but the Northern centre has in its six years of existence done no business with the South, and in fact holds no information about Southern breeders or breed societies.

### *Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders' Association (BIBBA)*

[BIBBA](#) is a membership organisation concerned with "the conservation, restoration, study, selection and improvement of native and near native honeybees of Britain and Ireland". Although the honey industry is not of great economic importance it has seen a degree of cross border co-operation, including a LEADER-funded programme for the border counties.

## The BSE issue

In one key agricultural sector, beef production, there was a particular reason in the 1990s for the Republic and the UK to shy away from co-operation that would have significantly benefited Northern Ireland: the EU ban on UK beef exports, prompted by the BSE crisis. Although it was often mooted that the North was suffering in being "lumped in" with Great Britain which had a much higher incidence of the disease than either the North or the Republic, two important factors weighed against the British and Irish governments formulating a joint approach to the EU to have the North treated on the same terms as the Republic. From the Republic's point of view, its lower incidence allowed it to escape a ban and so gave it a competitive advantage over UK, including NI, beef exporters; in fact Northern firms were obliged to buy in Southern beef to fulfil export contracts. Meanwhile, from London, any move to have a lower-incidence region excluded from the UK statistics would only have made the figures look worse for the remaining areas. Even after the ban on Northern beef was lifted in June 1998 considerable ground had been lost in export markets, particularly in the Netherlands.

Although there have been many more recorded cases north of the border, the present position is that Northern Ireland has a lower incidence than the Republic: confirmed cases in the North peaked at nearly 500 in 1993 but were down to just 9 in 1999 (in 1.7m cattle), while the Republic registered its highest-ever figure, 91 cases, in 1999 (from 7m head). There were moves during the brief initial tenure of Bríd Rodgers as Northern agriculture minister to secure the support of the other UK agriculture ministers to ask the EU and the [Office International des Epizooties](#) (OIE, the World Organisation for Animal Health) to declare Northern Ireland a low-incidence area, a status already enjoyed by the Republic. The Dublin government has indicated that it would not, at present, take any position for or against such an application, but in any event the issue is unlikely to be pursued as vigorously while the devolved administration remains suspended.

## The horse industry

Horse breeding is an example of an agricultural sector where North-South links are particularly strong. Many of the main organisations operate on a cross border basis.

The Kildare-based [Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association](#) (ITBA) is the representative body of the thoroughbred breeding industry throughout the 32 counties. It is also concerned with promoting racing sponsorship and for education and social programmes.

Two ITBA initiatives have had a particularly significant impact on the horse industry North and South. The association brought about the establishment of the [Irish European Breeders' Fund](#), an island-wide entity that sponsors racing (mainly of two-year-olds) from a voluntary

levy on breeders. Secondly, the [Irish Equine Centre](#) was created in 1984 as a research laboratory on equine diseases, following an outbreak of Contagious Equine Metritis in 1978. The Centre is only of only half a dozen in the world. Its objective is to protect the Irish horse industry and in particular its export capability—some 86 per cent of all the thoroughbred yearlings that are produced in Ireland are exported. The Centre provides a referral diagnostic service, research and education for the veterinary profession and for the horse industry. At present the Centre's work is almost entirely with the Southern end of the industry, but it is very keen to extend to the North the overnight diagnostic service available to Southern veterinarians. The difficulty is funding; while the Centre will soon be supported by a compulsory levy on foals born in the Republic, the participation of Northern breeders will only be voluntary unless parallel legislation is introduced, and there appear to be no plans to do so.

The [Irish Horse Board](#) (IHB) is a co-operative society with 8,000 members and a board of 13 directors—10 representing five regions of the Republic and three appointed by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The objectives of the board are to promote the Irish Sport Horse, to maintain the Irish Sport Horse Studbook, to operate schemes to improve quality and to promote equestrian tourism and equestrian education. The IHB website includes information on sellers of sports horses and ponies, but features only one supplier in Northern Ireland. The [Northern Ireland Horse Board](#) (NIHB) is also a co-operative, formed in 1996, with over 1,200 members. It provides a registration service, acts as the liaison point for Northern breeders in relation to the IHB's Irish Sport Horse Stud Book, and assists in INTERREG-funded grant schemes. Membership is open only to Northern Ireland residents and the NIHB advises that "residents in the Republic of Ireland should join the Irish Horse Board". The NIHB website does not feature any information about the South other than a link to the IHB site.

The studbook of the [Irish Draught Horse Society](#), based in Kildare, is maintained on behalf of the society by the Irish Horse Board and the Northern Ireland Horse Board.

The pattern with other horse organisations is mixed; some have an island-wide membership, including the [Irish Pony Society](#) (which has about a third of its 1,100 members in the North), the [Irish Piebald & Skewbald Association](#) (20-30 in the North from 150 in total) and the [Connemara Pony Breeders Society](#). Sometimes (as with Dressage Ireland) there is a [Northern Region](#) or section; in the [Association of Irish Riding Clubs Ltd](#) Northern Ireland is only part of a North Eastern Region. Others operate in only one jurisdiction, including the [Northern Ireland Shetland Pony Group](#) and the [NI Working Hunter Association](#).

There are only two academic centres for equine studies in Ireland, and there is room for increased co-operation. The [University of Limerick](#) established the [International Equine Institute](#) in 1993. The Institute seeks to support the industry through training, research and the provision of information and technical services. It offers Certificate, Diploma and BSc courses in equine science. The only centre in Northern Ireland offering similar qualifications is [Enniskillen College of Agriculture](#), whose Equine Enterprise division has units for Breeding, Equitation and Racing. Some 40 per cent of the Enniskillen students are from the Republic. The Limerick Institute told us that it is seeking to develop links with Enniskillen which could lead to student exchanges, co-operation via distance learning approaches, and perhaps eventually a joint degree programme; however Enniskillen told us that it has no major plans to extend its current informal contacts with a number of Southern institutions.

## Food safety

*Shared emphasis on consumer protection*

The designation of food safety as a priority area for cross border implementation work was at least partly a reflection of the trend in the UK, Ireland and elsewhere to transfer the control of food safety away from agriculture-oriented bodies to consumer-oriented ones. This in turn resulted from consumer, hence electoral, concerns over successive “food scares” involving [BSE](#)/New Variant CJD, salmonella in chickens and eggs, multi-drug resistant salmonellas, *E coli* 0157, antibiotic residue in meat and so on. At the EU level, food safety has been moved into the [Consumer Protection Directorate](#), DG XXIV, and during 1999 new independent food agencies were created in the Republic of Ireland and in the UK. Those bodies, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and the Food Standards Agency, remain in existence, as do the various enforcement agencies in Northern Ireland, and all are discussed below. There is likely to be extensive East-West and North-South co-operation and information exchange among those bodies.

However, the most advanced form of cross border co-operation is the establishment of institutions with an island-wide remit. During 1999 substantially identical legislation in the two jurisdictions gave effect to the UK-Irish agreement of 8 March 1999 to establish six bodies “under and in furtherance of Article 2 of the British-Irish Agreement [of 10 April 1998]”, including “an implementation body for food safety, to be known as The Food Safety Promotion Board”.

#### *Food Safety Promotion Board (FSPB)*

Annex 2 of the March 1999 agreement defined the functions of The Food Safety Promotion Board in six areas, as follows: promotion of food safety, research into food safety, communication of food alerts, surveillance of food borne diseases, promotion of scientific co-operation and linkages between laboratories, and developing of cost-effective facilities for specialised laboratory testing. (Its functions are defined in more detail [here](#).)

Drawing on the scientific expertise available to the food safety regimes in both jurisdictions, the Board would issue reports on relevant issues and would provide independent assessment of the safety and hygiene of food produced, distributed or marketed in the island of Ireland. It was to have an Advisory Board of 8 to 12 members, appointed by the North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC). NSMC was also to appoint a Chief Executive, and an Advisory Committee including scientific experts and representatives of broader food safety interests. Like the other implementation bodies the Board “shall operate in accordance with the provisions of the Multi-Party Agreement, and shall in particular implement any decisions of [NSMC] on policies and actions relating to matters within the scope of the Body’s functions”. The functions and structure of the Board could be amended by an exchange of notes between the two governments.

The present position, while the devolved administration is suspended, is that the FSPB remains in existence and is working to put in place the structures and resources needed to implement its functions. However it is far from clear how or whether the body could proceed much further without a restoration of the NSMC.

#### *Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI)*

Established by an Act of 1998, and succeeding a Food Safety Advisory Board created in 1995, the [Food Safety Authority of Ireland](#) has as its primary purpose the protection of consumers. It came into existence on 1 January 1999 as a statutory, independent and science-based body, overseeing all functions relating to the regulation of the food industry. This includes traceability from ‘farm to fork’. The FSAI comes under the Department for Health and Children and currently has a board of five, advised by a 15-member Scientific Committee. It is envisaged that the FSAI will operate mainly through Service Contracts with existing agencies: the health boards for hygiene matters, the Department of Agriculture and Food for meat, egg, milk and plant safety matters, local authorities for licensing and so on.

The 1998 Act was amended by the 1999 Act establishing the FSPB, so that all the safety functions specified for the FSPB could be transferred by order of the Taoiseach from the FSAI at an appropriate time. The relevant order has not yet been made nor is it likely to be unless the new Northern institutions are restored and fully functioning. This would still leave the FSAI, and its contracted partners, with quite a wide range of responsibilities in enforcement, inspection and other areas. Given that the role of the FSPB could be expanded by bilateral agreement to encroach on the remaining areas of work of the FSAI, and for that matter the UK-wide FSA, it is not difficult to envisage the development of the FSPB over a number of years into a fully-fledged island-wide agency superseding the two national agencies.

As an example of informal North-South co-operation, it may be noted that soon after its creation the FSAI sought and received advice from the then Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland in the area of human resource management.

### *Northern Ireland food safety functions*

In Northern Ireland the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) formerly had lead responsibility within government for food safety, and that has now transferred to the new Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Enforcement of food safety legislation still falls largely to the Environmental Health Departments of District Councils and to the [Department of Agriculture and Rural Development](#) (DARD), which inherited from the previous Department of Agriculture (DANI) some responsibilities at the production end. Its Veterinary division has responsibility for meat hygiene, and the Food, Farming and Environmental Policy division is responsible for food policy issues. Both divisions have functions relating to animal health and welfare. At the time of writing (with the new institutions in suspension) it was not possible to establish the extent to which any food safety functions of Northern agencies might eventually be transferred to the cross border FSPB.

### *UK-wide food safety regulation*

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) was created by a 1999 Act of Parliament as a UK-wide body taking a strategic view of food safety and standards across the whole food chain. It is designed to be accountable through Health Ministers to the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly. While it is for the Northern Ireland Assembly to decide whether it wishes Northern Ireland to be part of the UK Agency or to make separate arrangements, it seems likely that the FSA will operate in the North along much the same lines as in Britain, but with a special duty (set out in the legislation) to avoid duplication of work with the cross-border FSPB. The process of recruiting a Director for a Northern Ireland Executive of the FSA was under way in February 2000. The Agency is likely to become operational in the spring of 2000.

## Other food industry regulation and development matters

### *An Bord Glas*

[An Bord Glas](#) (The Horticultural Development Board) is the state body established by the Republic's government to develop, promote and assist the production, marketing and consumption of horticultural produce. It implements plans for the overall development of horticulture; assists in promotion, marketing and feasibility studies; assists with quality monitoring; and promotes quality and hygiene in the industry. The 11-person Board appointed for An Bord Glas in December 1999, for a three-year period, has no Northern members (none, in fact, from any county north of Dublin). An Bord Glas has no current formal connections or joint programmes with any northern body, although there is occasional

liaison with the Department of Agriculture (DARD). An Bord Glas provides support for some industry bodies with an all-island focus, for example sponsoring an apple industry conference in Northern Ireland in February 2000. Its careers guidance function includes the provision of information about courses in Northern institutions such as Greenmount. The board is aware of the considerable potential for further co-operation on sectors important to both jurisdictions, such as mushrooms and potatoes, but since it is constituted to support producers within the state it is unlikely to extend its Northern links without a lead from the parent Department.

---

## EDUCATION

- *colleges and universities*
- *other education and training issues*
- *advice services*
- *research funding and co-ordination*

### Colleges and universities

From the information available to us it appears that there is almost no North-South flow of students at undergraduate level, with most Northern Ireland students in food and agriculture areas going to Queen's University or to the three colleges in the region. However a significant number of students from the South come to the North.

#### *The student funding regime*

There is no grant aid for students of agriculture and food subjects in Northern Ireland at undergraduate level. Prospective students from Northern Ireland and the Republic can qualify on the same basis (by means-testing) for a waiver of fees, and those resident in the UK can apply for student loans. At postgraduate level, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, rather than the Department of Further & Higher Education and Training, administers discretionary studentships in agriculture and related areas; only 16 are awarded per year, for study anywhere in Britain and Ireland, and of those about three per year are awarded to Northern students wishing to study in the South.

Students from the Republic wishing to study in Northern Ireland at National Diploma level have their tuition paid for but receive no maintenance grants or loans. Those on HND or degree programmes are required to pay for tuition and are ineligible for student loans, although they can apply to their Vocational Education Committee for a grant. At present about 100 students from the Republic study at [Greenmount College](#) and a smaller number at Enniskillen.

#### *Queen's University Belfast*

The School of Agriculture and Food Science at Queen's has six Departments and offers nine undergraduate and four Master's degrees. It does not hold information centrally on the numbers of students from the Republic but some estimates are given below.



About 10 per cent of the students in the Department of Agricultural and Food Economics come from the Republic. The Department is involved in once cross border research venture, the FAPRI economic analysis project led by Teagasc and also involving the University of Missouri.

The School also has a Department of Agricultural and Environmental Science, which is integrated with the [Science Service](#) of the DARD so that the academic staff hold joint appointment as civil servants, and are involved with government research programmes and policy advice. The Department is linked to the [Agricultural Research Institute of Northern Ireland](#) (ARINI) at Hillsborough, Co. Down.

### *University College Dublin (UCD)*

The [Faculty of Agriculture](#) at University College Dublin, established in 1926, has over 100 staff in five academic departments, and is the only university offering the Degree of Bachelor of Agricultural Science in the Republic of Ireland. It has 800 undergraduate and over 300 postgraduate students. Under the Erasmus/Socrates student exchange programme, the Faculty is linked to a number of European universities. It has over 70 current research projects, some conducted in collaboration with universities and research institutions in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and North America. Very few recent projects (mainly in the rural development field) have had a Northern Ireland dimension; there has been some comparative work on Northern and Southern farm investment. A very small proportion of students, at undergraduate level or postgraduate, are from Northern Ireland.

### *College links*

[Greenmount College of Agriculture and Horticulture](#), near Antrim, is one of the largest training organisations in the North with some 800 students (400 full-time), of whom 10 to 12 per cent are from the Republic. The college has a variety of cross border links. Its staff have participated in exchange visits with [Teagasc](#) (through [Agrilink](#) for Teagasc North Region, and independently with Teagasc South). The college has informal links with Ballyhaise Agricultural College and occasional contacts with other Southern colleges. Greenmount students often participate in work experience placements in the South and the college assists in arranging Northern placements for Southern students. [Irish Fertilizer Industries Ltd](#) is among commercial sponsors of college projects.

Student exchange visits have included a visit in September 1998 by Enniskillen College of Agriculture to Ballyhaise Agricultural College. Further contacts were planned between those two colleges and St Patrick's College, Monaghan.

## Other education and training issues

### *National training organisations*

[LANTRA](#), the UK's National Training Organisation for the land-based sector, recognises Greenmount College of Agriculture and Horticulture as a training provider in Northern Ireland. LANTRA has no links with training organisations in the Republic.

### *Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)*

A North-South Working Group on APL chaired by Greenmount's vice-principal, Eric Boyce, is currently addressing ways of formalising APL between the two jurisdictions to facilitate

students crossing the border, in particular those trained through the South's Farm Apprenticeships Board wishing to study for HNDs and other qualifications in the North.

### *Cross Border Professional Development Programme for the Agri-Food Industry*

A programme supported by [Agrilink](#), funded by INTERREG and running from October 1999 to April 2000 has brought together 20 organisations from both sides of the border. The programme aims to prepare the organisations to manage change and to enhance professional development by providing the opportunity for innovative interaction and exchange of experience. Organisations represented include the two Departments of Agriculture, Teagasc, the IFA, the UFU, Moy Park Ltd, Donegal Creameries plc, Goldcrop Ltd, Town of Monaghan Co-operative, Allied Irish Beef Processors Ltd, David Patton Ltd, Fane Valley Co-op Society Ltd, Pig Industry Genetics Company Ltd and Farm Fed Chickens.

## Advice services

### *Agri-Food Development (NI)*

The [Agri-Food Development Service](#) (AfDS), part of the Northern Department of Agriculture, employs some 500 civil servants mainly in three operational divisions. The [Agriculture and Horticulture Service](#) embraces the education and training functions related to agriculture, horticulture and equine studies with centres at Greenmount and Enniskillen Colleges as well as the technology, pigs and business development work based at Greenmount. The [Agriculture Development Service](#) has staff located throughout Northern Ireland. This service has responsibility for the development of the competences of the people in the industry through the provision of technological and business development support to individual farm businesses. The service also has responsibility for the development of environmentally responsible farming, supporting the development of rural communities through participation in farm based rural development and diversification projects and providing technical support to the Department for the implementation of grants and other on-farm support schemes. This service currently enforces health and safety legislation on farms. The [Food Service](#) employs over 80 qualified food technologists/scientists and combines the food education, training and technology development functions based at Loughry College—The Food Centre, Cookstown, with the market development, quality assurance and promotional work of the Agri-food Development Service, centred at Dundonald House.

### *Agriculture Development Service*

The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland formerly employed advisory staff through a Farm Advisory Service, later re-named the Farm Development Service, and subsequently integrated into the Technology and Business Development Division of Greenmount College. Now part of the AfDS, the Service has two operational outreaches: the Agriculture Development Advisers and the Rural Enterprise Advisers, attached to Greenmount but employed by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, in local offices throughout Northern Ireland.

The Agriculture Development Advisers work with Development Groups of farmers in particular sectors and cross border visits are occasionally arranged; statistics are not available but it appears to average one to three visits per Adviser per year. Recent examples are the South Antrim Beef Development Group which visited The Grange Research Centre, Navan, Co. Meath, and commercial farms in the area; the Co. Fermanagh Development Group visited a Co. Meath dairy farm; the North Down Grassland Management Team visited farms in Co. Westmeath, and later made a two-centre visit to farms in Castlederg, Co. Tyrone, and

Castlefin in Co. Donegal; and a Tipperary visit organised jointly by DANI and Teagasc for the Strabane Grass Development Group and Donegal Dairymis Group. These visits are sometimes conducted in co-operation with Teagasc and some have received commercial sponsorship from Southern firms, for example from the *Irish Farmers' Journal*.

There are 13 Rural Enterprise Advisers located throughout Northern Ireland whose remit is to support farmers considering diversification. The Advisers have no formal North-South links and it appears to be rare for their work, which is mainly with individual farmers, to have any cross border dimension.

### *Teagasc*

[Teagasc](#), the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority, provides integrated research, advisory and training services for the agriculture and food industry, and employs over 1,500 people at 120 locations throughout the Republic.

- Research services are delivered by 200 scientists at eight dedicated centres covering food processing, dairying, beef, sheep, arable crops, horticulture, environmental protection, economics and rural development.
- 550 local advisers and regional specialists located at 100 centres provide independent advice to farmers and rural dwellers.
- Training for young entrants, adult farmers, rural entrepreneurs and the food industry is provided by 200 teachers at 15 colleges, 50 local training centres and research centres.

Teagasc is a semi-state organisation established under legislation enacted by the Irish government. Its 11-member Board is appointed by the Minister for Agriculture and Food and has representatives from the farming organisations, the food industry, the universities, the Department of Agriculture and Food and Teagasc staff. As a client-based organisation Teagasc operates in partnership with all sectors of the agriculture and food industry and with rural development agencies. It has developed close alliances with research, advisory and training agencies throughout the world and is seeking to expand its international contacts. It has, for example, recently signed a bilateral agreement on agriculture, food and rural development research with the Spanish National Food and Agricultural Research Institute involving 13 projects of which half are in the food area, especially food quality and safety. Other areas include animal health, rural development, agri-food modelling and research. In this context it may be surprising that Teagasc has no formal North-South co-operation agreements, but it states that it has extensive informal links, notably with Queen's University. These include contacts on economic analysis and environmental issues, exchanges of postgraduate students, and the participation of a Queen's representative in Teagasc's FAPRI project, an economic analysis institute also involving the University of Missouri.

### *Teagasc research and training centres*

The research activities of Teagasc are partly conducted through specialist food and agricultural research centres although economics and rural development research is based at the Dublin headquarters. The [National Food Centre](#), in Dublin, provides a range of technical and marketing support services to the food industry (except dairy products): research, consultancy and training, product and process development and analytical services. The [Dairy Products Research Centre](#), Moorepark, Co. Cork, provides consultancy, product and process development, specialised training and analytical services to the food industry. Dairy and pig production research is also based at Moorepark. Sheep research is conducted at Teagasc's [Athenry Research Centre](#), Co. Galway, which is also the location of Teagasc's [Rural Development Centre](#). Beef research, including beef production, animal health and welfare, and animal reproduction, is based at the [Grange Research Centre](#), Co. Meath; this is also the location of Teagasc North's Regional Advisory and Training Centre. Environment research,

including land use and soil analysis, is based at the [Johnstown Castle Research Centre](#), Wexford. Horticulture and farm forestry is the focus of the [Kinsealy Research Centre](#), Dublin. Crops production, engineering, protection and breeding are researched at the [Oak Park Research Centre](#), Carlow. Teagasc South's Regional Advisory and Training Centre is at [Kildalton College](#), Piltown, Co. Kilkenny.

We have not been able to establish the full extent of Northern contacts and co-operation by the individual Teagasc centres but each of those with which we discussed the matter indicated that there is no strategic approach and that the matter is left to individual researchers and specialists.

#### *Northern research centres*

The [Agricultural Research Institute of Northern Ireland](#) (ARINI) is based in Hillsborough and provides large scale facilities for agricultural and environmental research and teaching. It is linked with both the Department of Agriculture and the School of Agriculture and Food Science at The Queen's University of Belfast. Most of its research projects are of a technical nature relating to livestock and crop production and management. Those projects that involve staff from other institutions generally feature Greenmount College of Agriculture and Horticulture; there are occasional projects involving staff members from Southern centres, including a study on dairy cows run jointly with University College Dublin. Funding agencies include the Northern Ireland Agricultural Research and Development Council, the UK Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Northern Ireland agriculture department, the Milk Development Council, the Northern Ireland Pig Producer Research Levy, Belfast-based feed manufacturers John Thompson & Sons Ltd and the Dublin-based Irish Fertilizer Industries Ltd.

## Research funding and co-ordination

As far as we have been able to ascertain there is no co-ordinated North-South approach to funding research for the food and agriculture industries, at global or sector levels. There are, however, mechanisms that have the potential to develop such an approach, in addition to the obvious method of improved bilateral communication between research centres and development agencies, and the informal networking that is characteristic of all academic research communities.

In the Republic, the Office of Science and Technology, part of the [Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment](#), is responsible for the development, promotion and co-ordination of science, technology and innovation policy. The Office has responsibility for implementing the Research and Development (R&D) Sub-Programme of the Operational Programme for Industry, one measure of which (administered by Forbairt) includes a programme to assist researchers in the Republic to establish new international research collaborations, and to support international agreements on industrial science and technology. The Office is also involved in various relevant EU programmes: the European Research Framework Programme, COST (Co-operation in the Field of Scientific and Technical Research) and others. The Office has already been involved in promoting North-South co-operation via annual lectures and the IFI-funded Radian Scheme supporting R&D by companies in the border area.

Agrilink, mentioned below, could also serve as a model for North-South research co-operation, having been created as a joint initiative of Agricultural Science Association (ASA) and the Northern Ireland Institute of Agricultural Science (NIAS).

---

## PROMOTION AND MARKETING

- *branding, marketing and promotion*
- *north-south trade in food and agricultural products*

### Branding, marketing and promotion

#### *An Bord Bia*

An Bord Bia, The Irish Food Board, is the agency with strategic responsibility for food and drink promotion, seeking to develop export markets for Irish food and drink companies. It was established by a 1994 act and brought together the former CBF (Coras Beostoic agus Feola—the Irish Meat and Livestock Board) and the food promotion activities of the Irish Trade Board (Enterprise Ireland). It also assumed responsibility for the export promotion of edible horticulture from An Bord Glas, the Irish Horticultural Development Board. Bord Bia provides presentations on the Irish food and drink industry, strategic market information services, a database on Irish food and drink companies, and a supplier introductory service. It has representative offices in London, Düsseldorf, Paris, Moscow, Madrid and Milan. In December 1997 a Northern businessman (with interests in the South), William O’Kane of O’Kane Poultry Ltd, Ballymena, was appointed as an ordinary member of the Board for a period of three years. He remains the only Northern member of the Board; a former Permanent Secretary of the NI Department of Agriculture, Bill Hodges, had served on the CBF board in the mid-70s. In January 2000 Bord Bia confirmed that it was “in discussions with our counterparts in Northern Ireland with regard to cross-border initiatives for the food industry”.

#### *Irish Dairy Board*

The Irish Dairy Board, owner of the Kerrygold brand, is the central export marketing arm of the Irish dairy industry. It has subsidiary marketing and distribution companies in the USA, UK, Belgium, Holland and Germany. The Board is an established supplier of industrial milk products and has an unparalleled reputation worldwide in marketing ingredients to major food corporations. The Board is Ireland’s largest exporter, with a sales turnover approaching US\$2 billion.

#### *Livestock & Meat Commission*

The Livestock & Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) was set up in 1967 to advise the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture about the meat and sheepmeat industries (excluding milk, milk products and fleece wool), and to provide other services to Northern Ireland producers, processors, customers and consumers, including a carcase classification service for beef and sheep. The LMC provides market information to producers and processors, represents the sector in home and export promotion, operates a Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIFQAS) and develops marketing initiatives.

The LMC states that “we have been, are currently and will continue to co-operate” with An Bord Bia, the Republic’s Department of Agriculture, and Donegal Meats, a commercial operation to which the LMC provides a classification service for lambs.

#### *Northern Ireland Food & Drink Association*

The [Northern Ireland Food & Drink Association Ltd](#) (NIFDA) is a voluntary organisation providing services to represent, enhance, promote, inform, educate and develop its member businesses (over 170 companies representing over 85 per cent of the region's food-manufacturing industry). NIFDA's role is to enter into partnerships with existing providers, associations and companies to assist in improving the competitiveness of the industry. It seeks to promote "one voice" across the industry on such matters as food and drink sector strategy, legislation, manpower and training, technology and innovation, marketing and promotion, and research and development. NIFDA has no current formal links with bodies in the Republic but it is in the early stages of planning a joint initiative, probably with An Bord Bia.

#### *The FEED initiative*

The Ulster Business School (Northern Ireland Small Business Institute) delivered a training programme, the Food Export and Enterprise Development (FEED) initiative, to six Northern and six Southern small food-sector companies in 1994-98. The initiative was jointly funded by the [International Fund for Ireland](#), LEDU (now [Invest NI](#)) and Forbairt (now [Enterprise Ireland](#)). There are no plans to revive the initiative and so far as we have been able to ascertain none of the three funding bodies is currently involved in any North-South project in the food sector.

## North-South trade in food and agricultural products

It was not possible in the time available for this study to research the extent of, and trends in, North-South trade in food and agricultural products. It is well known that Southern companies have expanded to a considerable degree into the North, both in terms of sales and in manufacturing. This is particularly the case in the dairy sector. An example is Golden Vale, based in Co Cork, which has in recent years increased its presence in Northern Ireland to the extent that it now accounts for nearly half its Irish activities. In 1999 Golden Vale announced an investment of £13.8 million by its subsidiary Rye Valley Foods Ltd, in a project to manufacture a new range of frozen prepared foods. The investment is expected to provide 130 new jobs in Enniskillen over the next three years.

---

## DEVELOPMENT

- *cross border networking*
- *cross border projects*
- *rural development*

## Cross border networking

### *AgriLink*

[AgriLink](#) is a linkage between the Agricultural Science Association (ASA) and the Northern Ireland Institute of Agricultural Science (NIIAS). ASA and NIIAS are professional bodies



whose aims are to further the mutual interests of members and to promote professional standards of service in the agriculture industry. Members work in a wide range of disciplines. Agrilink was established as part of the [Co-operation Ireland](#) Cross Border Linkage Initiative in 1994 and obtained funding under INTERREG II (Sub Programme-Regional Development, Measure Economic Development) for the Agrilink Sectoral study in 1996. The chair of Agrilink rotates between the ASA and NIIAS and Co-operation Ireland provides its secretariat. Agrilink aims "to promote and support common objectives of ASA and NIIAS and through co-operation, facilitate the professional development of members by innovative interaction and exchange of experience, providing a model of professional co-operation which may be extended throughout Ireland, North and South, the EU and beyond". Its key objectives are:

- To promote and encourage active co-operation between the members of NIIAS and ASA which will facilitate the professional development of the members.
- To provide a forum for representation by members of NIIAS and ASA in areas of mutual interest.
- To promote the interchange of information and ideas between professionals in the agriculture, food, forestry and rural enterprise sectors and facilitate the development of these sectors in Ireland, North and South.
- To build a sustainable model of professional co-operative endeavour which can be extended to other organisations.

The organisation's activities have included a May 1999 working visit to Brussels for about 25 members; a two-day visit to Northern Ireland in October 1998 by the Chief Agricultural Officers of Teagasc North Region, including a visit to Loughry College; and, in 1999-2000, a 10-month professional development programme for the agri-food industry funded by INTERREG and targeted at organisations located in Northern Ireland and the six border counties. An Agrilink sub-committee has been set up to monitor, promote and facilitate North/South professional exchanges. A Standing Task Force of ASA and NIIAS members has been established to examine and make recommendations on areas of common interest, including Agenda 2000, Eco-farming and cross-border institutions.

## Cross border projects

In the time available for the mapping study it has not been possible to quantify or gather information on all the small-scale rural development projects with a cross border dimension. We give below examples of several development projects in the agriculture, food and rural development areas where (a) cross border working is central to the purpose, (b) the projects have a primarily economic justification and (c) the value of the project exceeds £100,000. In relation to smaller initiatives, our impression is that in a very large number of projects cross border contacts have been limited to information-gathering visits with no organic links being created.

### *Donegal Farm Relief Services/Rural Development Services*

During the 1980s a group of East Donegal farmers, supported by Teagasc, Macra na Feirme, Donegal Creameries and the IFA, formed Donegal Farm Relief Services Co-op, which initially concentrated on providing relief labour for local dairy farms. Demand for its services began to grow and extended across the border into Tyrone. In the mid-1990s, by which time the co-operative had diversified into provision of skilled services (hoofcare, pregnancy scanning, and environmental services including fencing and forestry), the group decided to move formally into the Northern market, creating a subsidiary company, Rural Development Services Ltd, in partnership with the UFU and NIAPA. The Northern company received LEADER funding. The two operations remain in business with a turnover in the region of £1M per year, and they

are now offering a Rural Recruitment Service aimed at assisting rural dwellers to find employment on and off farms.

#### *EQUOIVA*

A Sport Horse Breeding Initiative at Castle Irvine, Fermanagh, received an EUSPPR grant of £2.4M through DANI; the project has contact with Southern breeders but some 80 per cent of its work is on the Northern side.

#### *Natural Dairies/Ballyrashane linkup*

A Business Co-operation Initiative between Natural Dairies Ltd, a processing dairy based at Convoys in Donegal, and Ballyrashane Co-operative near Coleraine received £243,000 of EUSPPR funding via Co-operation North. This was for joint activities in product development, quality control, review of management systems, sales and marketing.

#### *North West Foods*

Concordia EU Ltd received an EUSPPR grant of £228,000 through Co-operation North to establish a company, North West Foods, engaging in marketing and distribution.

#### *Euro/Bar*

Eurostock Meat Marketing Ltd of Newry and Barford Meats Ltd, Monaghan, received an EUSPPR grant of £206,000 in order to "enhance their competitiveness and develop an economic corridor between Northern and Southern Ireland".

#### *Childcare*

Pre-School Playgroup Associations (NIPPA and IPPA) have been jointly funded by the EU INTERREG Programme to develop and deliver a cross-border rural childcare project aimed at improving the range, level and quality of day care opportunities for young children. The project is funded through and monitored by the Department of Agriculture in the North and the Department of Enterprise and Employment in the South.

#### *BallyClo Cross-Border Suckler Initiative*

BallyClo Suckler Calf Initiative was launched in 1998 by the Ballyhaise Development Association, Co. Cavan, and Clogher Valley Rural Centre, Co. Tyrone, to secure and enhance the viability of around 400 small/low income suckler farms through a breeding programme, financial assistance, farmer training, group marketing and community development. The overall vision of the project is to regenerate the rural areas in the Clogher Valley and mid-Cavan areas on either side of the Cavan/Tyrone border. It seeks to:

- encourage and sustaining private enterprise in rural areas
- assist the economic and social revival of the disadvantaged indigenous population
- develop strong cross-border links between the marginalised areas of mid Cavan and South Tyrone
- improve the education and confidence level of people living in rural areas and so enable them to develop the skills and finances necessary to maintain their existing agriculture base.

BallyClo has an initial three-year budget of £4.8m, supported by Measure 3.1, Cross Border Business and Cultural Links of the EU Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

(administered by Co-operation Ireland), the Agriculture Measure of the EU INTERREG II Programme administered by the respective Departments of Agriculture, and participating farmers. Up to end-1998 265 suckler and dairy farmers were approved by BallyClo for grant assistance, mainly for replacement stock, farmer training and marketing of weanlings. It is anticipated that farm incomes will increase as a result of improvement of the quality of the foundation breeding stock and the use of a breeding programme to produce quality continental calves. The focal point of the BallyClo Initiative is its fully integrated training programme, which in addition to tackling the problems of poor management, will also help strengthen the social/cultural linkages between both areas. Farm walks, training courses and conferences are held in both areas and a news bulletin is circulated.

## Rural development

See above for notes on the [LEADER](#) programme and the [EUSPPR](#), the main vehicles for EU funding in this area.

Although primarily concerned with rural community development rather than economic development, the two "national" networks, [Irish Rural Link](#) (IRL, in the Republic) and the [Rural Community Network](#) (RCN, in Northern Ireland) are involved in promoting the "social economy": many of their member organisations use small-scale employment-generating projects as a means of promoting community involvement and regeneration. Both networks have repeatedly stated their commitment to a cross border and international dimension to rural development (this indeed was the theme of the RCN annual meeting in 1999), and both were members of an abortive attempt at EU-level co-ordination, the Transnational European Rural Network (TERN). Both have subsequently maintained links with each other and with sister organisations in Britain and the European mainland. With funding from the EUSPPR, the two organisations established a Crossborder Networking Project that ran conferences and promoted exchanges among rural community groups. It did not create a network as such, but fostered a large number of bilateral and multilateral contacts between individual organisations and sub-regional networks. In 1999 it published a resource guide for cross border work and, although the project has now been scaled down, it is currently planning to create a database to facilitate cross border linkages. The RCN and the (Southern) [Combat Poverty Agency](#) (CPA) have each had a representative on the other's board.

There is no Southern equivalent of the [Rural Development Council](#) (RDC), an independent government-funded agency which is the main funding conduit for community-led economic development in rural Northern Ireland. The RDC has not established any joint programmes or projects with Southern partners. However it has good relations with Teagasc, the CPA and Area Development Management (ADM), each of which deals with aspects of the RDC agenda, and the RDC has participated in many cross border conferences and similar events. The RDC is enthusiastic about the potential for border region and North-South co-operation in both strategic and ground-level rural development work, and it would be keen to see a stronger cross border dimension to new EU programmes such as LEADER+. To date it has been unable to offer direct funding for cross border projects because of EU regulations governing the funding lines it administers, including SPARD, PLANET (a capacity-building programme) and the RDC's element of the Community-Based Actions line of the EUSPPR (on which the RDC co-operates with the Rural Community Network). However, many of the 600+ organisations which the RDC has funded since 1996 are in contact with, and a number are in networks or active partnerships with, similar organisations in the Republic. Border-region groups have been funded for socio-economic profiling and market research which takes in localities on the other side of the border, and the RDC is looking at ways to integrate its extensive Geographical Information System (GIS) database with Southern data providers.

### *Family Farm Development (FFD)*

The RDC is also represented on the board of Family Farm Development Ltd, funded under LEADER II as an "other collective body" being a partnership between the RDC, the UFU, NIAPA and the UAOS. The Northern agriculture department, although technically an observer, has played a major role in the management of FFD. The company, based in Carrickmore, Tyrone, has also received funding under the EUSSPPR. With support from INTERREG via the Training and Employment Agency in the North and Teagasc in the South, FFD has established a Young Farmers Enterprise Scheme employing a training officer to assist and mentor diversification enterprises in Fermanagh, Donegal, Cavan/Monaghan and Tyrone, and the company estimates the total value of North-South elements in its activities to date at about STG£1M (southern participation accounting for about 30 per cent of its training work). There have been discussions with [Teagasc](#) and others about further co-operation; FFD values its status as a co-operative venture with industry-wide backing in the North, and the fact that Teagasc likewise has representation on its board from the main farming organisations (IFA, ICOS, ICMSA etc.) makes it the likeliest candidate for future collaboration with FFD.

## IFI

The [International Fund for Ireland](#) (IFI) Rural Development Programme, working in conjunction with the two agriculture departments and the LEADER programme, "focuses on the most disadvantaged areas in the North and the border counties in the South and assists projects which will make a real economic impact on their region". The IFI has also been involved in a number of urban regeneration, workspace, fishery village and tourism-related projects outside the scope of this paper.

### *The Rural College*

A flagship project has been the creation of the [Rural College](#) in Draperstown, Co. Derry, to develop rural industry skills. To date the College has participated in a number of cross border ventures, including a "Farming for the Future" programme for the Cavan Partnership (dealing with the sustainability of family farming), training work for the Cavan-Monaghan LEADER company, work with Louth LEADER and other projects with Area Development Management, the [Combat Poverty Agency](#) and INTERREG.