

KT Masters in Agricultural Innovation Support (MAIS) Project Summary 2025

1. Project Title

Identification of Effective Demonstrations within Signpost Events and their Impact on Farmer Behaviour in Climate Action

2. Project Background

The Signpost programme is a multi-annual campaign to lead climate action by all Irish farmers. Events on demonstrations farms, targeted at encouraging climate action by the wider farming population, are an important KT mechanism of the Signpost advisory programme. A recent Walsh Scholar found that farmers attending Signpost events want to engage with more live demonstrations of technologies to reduce emissions and improve environmental sustainability.

The proposed study will evaluate a suite of 6-8 demonstrations at Signpost events, examining the impact of such demonstrations using a 2-pronged approach. Firstly, an assessment of farmer experience with the demonstrations will be conducted. Secondly, a follow up survey (6 to 12 months later) of the farmers who engaged with the demonstration will be carried out to identify what actions the farmer took on his/her farm. Both elements of the approach will provide insights, at different points in time into the farmers' position on the awareness-knowledge-skills-attitude "pathway" toward on-farm climate actions. This pathway is the foundation of all advisory/KT programmes. In addition, selected learning workshops/focus groups with programme advisors, farmers, and programme partners from different regions will be used to reflect on the research findings and assess how the implementation of these demonstrations at Signpost farm walks might be improved. As a result, this project will generate a suite of demonstrations, based on evidence of effectiveness, with clear guidelines on implementation that can be used at Signpost farm walks and discussion group meetings.

3. Project Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the project is to propose a suite of effective demonstrations of technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve environmental sustainability for use at Signpost farm walks and discussion groups. The proposed action research approach being taken is to evaluate the use of these demonstrations at farm events in the Signpost programme and understand their effect on farmer climate action behaviour.

Overall objectives:

1. To establish the effectiveness of demonstrations in engaging farmers at farm walks
2. To gain an insight into how live demonstrations at farm walks influence farmers' behaviour
3. To identify additional KT supports needed by advisors to implement these demonstrations at farm walks and discussion groups

4. To identify a suite of demonstrations of technologies which effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions for use at farm walks and discussion group meetings.

4. Suggestions for Methodology

The MAIS student, in collaboration with a team of advisors (5-6), would design, test/pilot, and assess a suite of demonstrations with a view to fine tuning them based on evidence of effectiveness.

Key elements of the mixed methodology for the project are:

1. Through a focus group of advisors, identify 6-8 live demonstrations on technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are currently being used across the country
2. Pilot these 6-8 demonstrations across a range of Signpost events and assess farmers' experience with the demonstrations
3. Implement a survey of the farmers who attended the events and engaged with the demonstrations 6 months after the event, to evaluate the actions a farmer took which are associated with the learning outcomes from the event
4. Carry out learning workshop(s) with a selection of programme advisors, farmers, and Signpost partners, based on the findings of the demonstration evaluations, to assess whether the delivery of the selected demonstrations need adjusting
5. Identify a suite of demonstrations that could be used across Teagasc to improve the effectiveness of the Signpost Programme.