

# CAFTA

RECORD

Spring 2005



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Cover Photo: Group minners of ASA UCD Mock interviews.

Front row: Therese O'Rourke (Careers Committee Chairperson), Sarah Phelan, Petrina Reilly, Edel Byrne

Back row: Tadhg Kelly, Agri Strategy - AIB (Sponsor) David Rath (ASA President), John Conroy, Patrick Browne



David Rath – the Business and Agri Strategy Manager with AIB is the 2004/2005 ASA President

## National Council

Admin & Finance	<b>John Dardis</b>
Marketing & Communications	<b>Mark Simpson</b>
Members' Services	<b>Terence Morrissey</b>
Graduate Services	<b>John O'Donovan</b>
Policy & Science	<b>James Fitzgerald</b>
Strategic Projects	<b>Dermot Ruane</b>
National Conference	<b>David Rath</b>

## The 2004/05 Council year is progressing well.

Council is keeping momentum on the good work to date on the Prescription Only Medicines issue, working closely with many of the other organisations that represent agricultural professionals. The issue is still live and ASA will continue to seek the most efficient and practical solution for the industry we serve.

Work is also ongoing on a number strategic developments. The committee structure (outlined below) that we adopted at the start of this term is working well, helping us maximise the use of our resources and allowing for a consistent and targeted approach to our objectives.

The attraction and retention of new members was identified as a key priority for the 04/05 Council and specifically, the Graduate Services Committee. As a result, we reviewed our 'benefits' to new graduates and decided that we needed to offer more relevant and tangible value to this audience. To this end, we ran a successful 'ASA Career Development Forum' for recent, and undergraduates which attracted close to 100 participants in November last and the feedback from this was very positive. In addition, ASA was very active in the Careers Day that agricultural students organised in UCD in February as part of which, ASA conducted its mock vacancy application and interview initiative. This initiative provided students with the opportunity to go through a simulated job recruitment process and the feedback was, again, very positive. This in tandem with our continued focus on our 'Job Services' initiative hosted on [www.asaireland.ie](http://www.asaireland.ie), helped encourage 78 new members to join ASA— Our thanks to the Graduate Services Committee and all others who assisted in these initiatives.

ASA 04/05 also identified members' professional development as a key focus for the year. Our effort in addressing this challenge has hinged around our work with NIIAS in securing funding for and

developing a web-based project 'Reskilling Professional Agriculturists Post Cap Reform'. Essentially, the initiative seeks to identify the reskilling needs through an online survey of agriculturists and having done to then develop a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme to address these needs. The survey is live and while a sample of agriculturists has been targeted, it is open to all to complete and I would urge all members to visit and complete (it takes c.15 minutes) the survey at [www.aurion.co.uk/clients/agrilink/default.asp](http://www.aurion.co.uk/clients/agrilink/default.asp) (click on PACE project).

As you know, significant effort has gone into a Strategic Review of the Association, its organisation and activities. Council 04/05 is committed to progressing its findings and recommendations as a matter of priority. In order to create momentum in their implementation, ASA will, during this term, be piloting a number of the review's recommendations in the immediate future. We have established a committee structure (see above) within Council that should maximise the use of our limited resources and allow for greater consistency and continuity in ASA Council effort.

Our 'Policy and Science Committee' has also been busy, following up on the POM issue while also engaging with the relevant bodies on various other issues – the coexistence of GMOs, Pesticide Use, Teagasc Education Review, etc.

Finally, please put the following dates in your diary for the ASA Annual Banquet & Conference, which will be held in Mount Wolseley Hotel & Country Club, Tullow, Co Carlow on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> of September respectively.

Visit [www.asaireland.ie](http://www.asaireland.ie) to keep up to date on ASA activities

David Rath President, ASA

## ASA Policy Activities

**The primary agricultural sector is undergoing a period of great change during 2005. The change in the CAP resulting in decoupling and a single payment to farmers has been described as the most significant change for farmers since Ireland joined the EEC in 1973. But there are other changes taking place that are of direct interest to ASA members and the part we will play in agriculture in Ireland in the future. The ASA policy committee has been very active on a number of these issues making submissions to government to ensure that our viewpoint is taken on board when decisions are being made.**

### Prescription only medicines

One of the major issues that is being pursued by the ASA – along with other organisations, is the issue of who can write prescription for animal medicines. There is a school of thought that suggests that prescriptions should only be written by vets – on a food safety basis. The ASA is well aware that if this were the case it would have implications for many of our members who are engaged by farmers to advise them on a range of animal husbandry issues and who are just as conscious of food safety issues. Of course it also has implications for costs at farm level and possible animal welfare issues also arise. We are also aware that in Northern Ireland the legislation does not restrict the writing of scripts to vets. The issue was taken up by John Grogan while he was President and he continues to devote significant time to pursuing the matter. He has organised a major lobbying initiative in which all ASA council members have been contacting politicians in order to make their views known and has co-operated with other bodies such as the Irish Pharmacists Unions and the IFA in order to achieve a successful outcome.

### Teagasc Review of training

The Research and Advisory body Teagasc is carrying out a review of their training activities and the ASA have made a submission to this review. Of course many of our members are engaged in training activities both in Teagasc and outside it – e.g. in the area of REPS training. Thus, it is an area of significant importance to our members. The ASA are of the view that one of the main factors in maintaining competitiveness of our agri-industrial sector is the level of skill and expertise of the farmers and others involved in the industry. On this basis we submit that there is a need to increase the time that farmers spend in training and that the training programmes must also be redesigned to increase modules on marketing and other issues. We also submitted that TEAGASC along with other partners like UCD must play a key role in the continued professional development of all graduates. This is required in order for graduates to cope with the rapid advances in the field of new science and technology.

to the Department of Agriculture and Food on the question of co-existence of Genetically Modified crops with conventional and organic farming.

In the submission the ASA recognises the potential of modern biotechnology and also welcomes the recently implemented Regulations on GM Food and Feed and Traceability and Labelling which will ultimately provide both protection and reassurance to the consumer, but also enable judgments based on thorough scientific evaluations.

It goes on to say that “The ASA have examined the detail of Commission Recommendation 2003/556/EC on the guidelines for the development of national strategies and best practices to ensure the coexistence of genetically modified crops with conventional and organic farming. The legislation developed to date provides for assurances of the safety of the GMO, it does not however, address the potential economic loss where admixture of GM and non-GM crops occurs, nor does it address the appropriate measures that can be taken to minimize admixture”.

From our point of view our particular interest focuses on the following aspects:

The impact of this technology has potential widespread consequences for a range of scientific fields including soil biology, plant pathology, plant physiology, environmental biology, ecosystems, animal physiology, animal health and welfare etc. We would therefore; point out that expertise in such fields is a prerequisite to the full understanding of GM technology. These are all disciplines in which our members have professional qualifications. In addition, if proper scientific advice is not provided to all parts of the chain the area of liability could become an unwelcome feature of GM production with consequences for the operator and also the advisor.

The ASA recognizes the area of training as critical in the operation of several cropping systems. The ASA feels that our members who operate as agricultural consultant/advisors have a critical role to play in the practical operation of the guidelines. We would ask the Department of Agriculture and Food to consult with the ASA on the development of guidelines. It is our submission that such training be mandatory for advisors, extension staff, farmers and operators such as contractors. As regards advisors and extension staff, we would be happy to engage in consultation with University College Dublin or another Higher Education Institute to provide appropriate training on Genetically Modified Organisms with particular emphasis on co-existence for the professional Agricultural graduates. In addition, it would be wise to include co-existence on the curriculum of both the Ag Science Degree and the Teagasc Green Cert such that young farmers are familiar with the requirements at an early stage. In order for production systems to coexist, operators must be fully understanding of the requirements to ensure that GM crops are cultivated in a manner unlikely to adversely affect other producers in the locality.

The ASA are also of the view that a facility should be provided to enable regular reviews of the guidelines to take account of increasing knowledge in the area. The ASA favour the establishment of a management committee to oversee the evolution of the guidelines which would draw on the expertise of professionals in UCD, Teagasc and the Department of Agriculture and Food. The submission also points out the importance of professional agriculturalists with the Department of Agriculture and Food plying a role in the implementation of effective measures.

## Genetically Modified Organisms.

This is a further issue which has been exercising the minds of ASA council members. It is an area which has generated much debate and sometimes interventions based on

emotion. We are clear in the ASA that decisions regarding GMO's and their use should be well grounded in science and this is the basis of a recent submission made by the ASA

# UCD Careers day 2005 – Mock Interviews

The careers day for the final year students of the Faculty of Agri-food and Environment was held recently and once again the ASA had an important input to the event in the form of the 'mock-interviews' for the students. This is also the primary event for recruitment of these students into the association. This year, ASA took a new approach to the event. Approximately a month before the event itself, the president and four council members addressed the students in UCD. In the address, an overview of the ASA was given followed by the revised format for the mock interviews. It was also at this address that the students were recruited into the association and ASA were delighted with the response – a total of 73 students joined, further boosting the associations membership. This year as part of the revised

format, the nine 'mock' jobs and the job application form were placed on the ASA website [www.asaireland.ie](http://www.asaireland.ie). The students thus applied for the jobs online. The jobs offered were similar to what is currently available in the industry. Also, as part of this revised format, the length of the mock interviews was extended to last up to 30 minutes – 20 minutes for the interview and 10 minutes for feedback. As part of the feedback, the students were given an assessment sheet that was completed by the interviewers. The interviewers were drawn from right across the agricultural industry, many of whom recruit regularly within the industry itself. ASA would like to sincerely thank all those interviewers who gave up a working day to help out voluntarily in the event. The number of students who applied to do a mock



*Edel Byrne one of the category winners at the recent UCD mock interviews*

interview was down from other years and this was disappointing. However, the quality of those who did do an interview was very good and many of the interviewers were impressed with a lot of the

candidates. Similar to previous years, a winner was selected from each of the interview panels and these were presented with a monetary prize which was generously sponsored by AIB.

## ASA Recruitment Service for Graduates

### What is it?

The ASA Recruitment Service for Graduates is a recent addition to the range of services that ASA are providing to its **members**. It has been designed to provide a service that is beneficial to both employers and potential employees. The Recruitment Service has been running for the past six months and judging by the response from users of this service it is proving successful. This service enables existing and potential employers of Agricultural Science graduates to target their employment vacancies to a highly qualified pool of professionals and at the same time provides easy access to graduates to information on jobs available in the industry.

### How does it work?

The ASA runs the Recruitment Service through its website [www.asaireland.ie](http://www.asaireland.ie) and an e-mail service. Existing and potential employers register their company details with the ASA and if there are any job vacancies arising within the company the ASA are informed. As this service is only available to ASA members a limited amount of information is detailed on the ASA website and members or potential ASA members can contact the ASA office for further details.

ASA will also e-mail comprehensive details of the position being offered to all **ASA members** on a weekly basis.

### ASA Members – E-mail Contacts

In order for all ASA Members to avail of this Recruitment Service it is essential that ASA have your e-mail address. Please contact the ASA office immediately to update your e-mail address so that you can get your first update on vacancies next week. Make use of this service, after all, it is designed to be used by you.

### Potential Employers

To date a significant number of employers, from Ireland and the U.K., in both agri-business and service sectors have registered and are currently participating in the programme. Response from employers who have used the ASA Recruitment Service as part of their recruitment process have cited their satisfaction at the level of interest expressed in their vacancies and the calibre of the applicants. However, in order to broaden this service ASA are continually seeking additional companies to present their vacancies through the ASA Recruitment Service. Unlike many other recruitment services offered to potential employers this service is currently being offered free of charge to all employers. If you, as an ASA member, are in a position to help expand the number of employers registered as users of the ASA Recruitment Service please contact the ASA office. Once registered, an employer can have their job vacancies listed on the ASA website immediately. For further information on the ASA Recruitment Service for Graduates contact Rebecca Daly at:

ASA Office  
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Bluebell, Dublin 12  
Tel. No. 01 4603682  
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# ASA Careers Forum



*Pictured at the ASA Careers Forum at the ambassador Hotel were David Rath, ASA President with speakers at ASA Career Development Forum, Mary Walsh, National Interviewing Counselling Agency; Kieran McDonnell, Gouldings Fertiliser; Tom Barry, Head of AIB Corporate Banking; and Jim Miley, Myhome.ie.*

The ASA organised a very successful careers forum at the Ambassador Hotel in Naas in November. The forum was targeted at undergraduates and new graduates who are seeking employment or indeed seeking to advance their career prospects. It was attended by over 90 people and in addition to a very enlightening talk by Mary

Walsh of The National Interview Counselling Agency on interview preparation. it also featured talks on their own achievements by some of the leading and most successful agricultural graduates in the country.

## Professional Agriculturalist Continuing Education [PACE]

This is an initiative under the auspices of Agrilink – the cross border body formed between NIAS and ASA, to establish the requirement for training under the new scenario in which Professional Agriculturalist will be working post the CAP reforms and the introduction of the Single Farm Payment. Many graduates may not be equipped to deal with the rapid changes and feel a need to re-skill if they are to make a meaningful contribution to the

re-structuring of agriculture which these reforms and legislative requirements have unleashed. Continuing personal development and lifelong learning will be the order of the day for the future. NIIAS and ASA, as the two main professional bodies representing agricultural graduates throughout Ireland, are conscious of the need to maintain professional standards and to provide support for graduates during this period of change.

The first part of the PACE initiative is the completion of an online questionnaire to identify the re-skilling needs of agricultural graduates working in N.Ireland and the Border counties. The results of the survey will be used to define training needs requirements for graduates and indeed to make an input into the types of courses made available to both undergraduates and post graduates. We ask all our members to take

a few minutes to complete the survey – which has been funded by INTERREG. Please take a few minutes to go to the PACE website [www.aurion.co.uk/clients/agrilink/default.asp](http://www.aurion.co.uk/clients/agrilink/default.asp) and complete. Note also that there is no requirement to be a member of the ASA to complete the survey. So if some of your colleagues are not members you could ask them also to make a contribution to the future training of agricultural graduates.

# Nutrient Management Planning

by Andy Dunne



*“Qualified agriculturalists have a vital role to play in ensuring efficient nutrient management leads to profitable agriculture”*

In the last 10 years or so Nutrient Management Planning (NMP) has become a fundamental farm management tool used by many agricultural science graduates on Irish farms. NMP has evolved to address the joint concerns of efficient and positive use of farm nutrients while at the same time minimising the negative environmental impact of poor nutrient handling and excessive nutrient application to crops.

In simple terms NMP is about optimising the nutrient or fertiliser value of farm by products such as FYM, slurry and Spent Mushroom Compost and

using these together with imported chemical and/or organic fertiliser to optimise agricultural production systems.

## Optimal Nutrient Use

Fundamental to NMP is the understanding that optimal rather than excessive amounts of nutrient material is used on crops at times when the nutrient can be used by those crops.

At a practical level NMP involves collecting and holding all farm nutrients (formerly considered wastes), applying these safely at or close to active crop growth, measuring

the available nutrient in the soil through soil analysis and, with knowledge of crop nutrient requirements, specifying an appropriate top up nutrient addition if this is required.

## Role of Ag. Graduates

Agricultural graduates are involved in NMP at many levels. At farm level graduates draw up individual farm nutrient management plans, graduates working in research establish best practice, crop nutrient requirements and examine nutrient pathways to plants and to ground water. Graduates working in the Department of Agriculture monitor nutrient plan standards in relation to Department schemes. Local authorities have become significant employers of agricultural graduates in recent years. Here, graduates are involved in implementing and monitoring local and national regulation in relation to land spreading of sewage sludges and other industrial by-products, the phosphate regulations and the Water Framework

Directive. Graduates also work for waste management companies preparing nutrient management plans for large land banks in receipt of industrial by-products.

## Complex Activities

NMP is highly complex work requiring detailed knowledge of modern agriculture and farming systems along with local, national and EU legislation. Through REPS, the various local authority by-laws, EPA licensing of intensive agriculture activities, the implementation of the Nitrates and other EU directives, the use of NMP will continue to increase into the future.

It is critical that the role of the agricultural graduate remains central in the implementation of NMP in Ireland. Some attempts have already been made on the one hand to ‘dumb down’ the agricultural graduates’ role on one hand and on the other, to hand the work to engineering graduates. As a professional body, ASA, and indeed individual agricultural graduates, must resist such retrograde moves.



*“Andy Dunne (above) runs a successful agri-environmental consultancy business in Portlaoise*

# Presentation to Joe Walsh

When Joe Walsh retired as Minister for Agriculture last September he was the longest serving Minister for Agriculture in Europe. One of his last official engagements was the opening of the ASA conference in Waterford. Indeed during his terms as Minister Joe performed many such openings speeches. ASA gesture of thanks to the Minister for his generosity towards the ASA and for his work on behalf of Irish Agriculture the ASA made a presentation to the Minister at the conference.



*Outgoing ASA President John Grogan makes a presentation to Minister Walsh to mark his retirement as Minister for Agriculture and Food*

## Thanks to Conference

### Sponsors

The ASA wish to thank all the sponsors of the 2004 conference. In particular we thank, **F.B.D.** conference sponsors, **ACCBank** golf outing, **Greenvale** conference lunch, **Kerry Group** conference proceedings, **Irish Farmers Journal** conference banquet.

## 63rd ASA Conference

ASA Annual Banquet & Conference, which will be held in Mount Wolseley Hotel & Country Club, Tullow, Co Carlow on Thursday 22nd and Friday 23rd of September. We look forward to seeing all our colleagues there for what always proves to be a very enjoyable event.

## ASA Travel Bursary

Do you have an inclination to travel? Would you like that travel to be subsidised? Maybe the ASA/AIB Travel Bursary could provide you with an opportunity to travel abroad to study some aspect of agriculture that interests you and at the same time make a contribution to the future development of Irish Agriculture. [See Back Page for Details]

## Golf 2005

Golfers should put the following dates in their diaries  
The Captains prize will be held at Tullamore Golf Club on Thursday 23rd June. Tee times can be reserved from 1st June by contacting John O' Rourke at 0506/46428 The Interservices outing is on Thursday 1st September again in Tullamore.  
The Presidents prize for 2005 will be held at Mount Wolseley in conjunction with the annual conference on 22nd September.

## ASA Bursary winner to look at 'Introducing White Clover into Irish Pastures'

Michael White from Thurles, Co Tipperary is the winner of the fourth ASA/ AIB Travel Bursary with his project 'Introducing White Clover into Irish Pastures'.

The adjudication committee of Michael Dowling, Prof Seamus Sheehy and Dr Jim O'Grady selected Michael's project on the basis of its potential contribution to efficient grassland management. Commenting on the announcement, Michael Dowling, from Bursary sponsors, AIB said "we are



At the announcement of AIB's sponsorship of the ASA Bursary 2005 are Terence Morrissey, ASA Council Member, Tadhg Buckley, AIB & Michael White, Teagasc Thurles, winner 2004 Bursary.

delighted to award this year's Bursary to Michael White and we look forward to the outcome of his investigations into this worthy and interesting

research area". Michael will visit Scotland to meet with experts at various agricultural colleagues and advisory staff as well as undertaking several dairy farm visits and his finished report

and findings will be made available on completion. This will, of course, complement other research being conducted in this area and will yield significant benefits for Irish grassland management.

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in publishing this issue of the ASA Record.



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has extensive information of interest to agricultural professionals

## €6,000 available in ASA/ AIB Travel Bursary

The ASA/ AIB Travel Bursary is run each year to support ASA members' proposals for travel to international locations to study a topic of relevance to their work area. Providing funding of up to €6,000, the Bursary is open to all ASA members, including post-graduate students, and considers applications covering any area of agricultural development.

Previous winners of the Bursary have won support to travel

to North American, Continental E.U. and UK destinations. Looking forward to this year's Bursary, David Rath, ASA President said "the Bursary provides a significant benefit to our members in addition to making a valuable contribution to the knowledge pool in Irish agriculture – we look forward to its continued success".

Further information can be obtained on the ASA Website at [www.asaireland.ie](http://www.asaireland.ie)