

ATCA

RECORD

Volume 63 : Issue 1

Spring 2003

Conference 2002

Pat Cahill elected president



Website launch
Focus on Hungary

Cahill takes over as President

Pat Cahill, Managing Director of Volac Feeds, took over as ASA President at the annual general meeting in September and will lead the association for the next 12 months.

Pat is a graduate of the class of 1979 and holds an MBA from the University of Limerick. He has been a member of the Council of ASA since 1996 and brings broad experience in the agri-food sector at home and abroad and huge energy and dedication to the presidency. He started his working career in

Avonmore Foods as a specialist adviser. In the mid-1980's, he spent two years on development work in Papua New Guinea on a Gorta project. He joined Volac Feeds in 1989 as a Business Manager, and was appointed Managing Director in 1999. A keen hurler and gaelic footballer, he has played club



Pat Cahill, ASA president

hurling and football in Tipperary. Pat now lives in Kilkenny with his wife Claver and their two daughters. We wish him well in his presidency.

The president writes...

ASA Objectives 2002 – 2003

My thanks to Sean Gaule for his excellent work with the Association over the past year. I will endeavour to represent the profession fully and competently over the coming period.

Council has set the following three objectives for the forthcoming year: The first two are driven by the constantly changing face of our agricultural and associated industries, one facet of which is the vast array of specialisation

being undertaken in the Faculty at Univeristy College Dublin (UCD). To align ourselves to these changes, we intend to carry out an extensive survey of graduate members, non-members and undergraduates to define and clarify the role of the ASA in professional representation.

We will use this survey and extensive collaboration with a cross section of active members to formulate a clear cut vision and

mission statement, enabling the Association define its agenda for the next decade.

The third objective is to build on the excellent foundation set by Sean Gaule and Dermot Ruane over the past two years in response to members' queries on accreditation/incorporation by the Association. Close links with the Agricultural faculty in UCD, our new involvement with CEDIA -the European umbrella body, and

consultations with other professional bodies, have demonstrated the requirement for an accreditation system. The trend towards lifelong learning, increased work mobility and the increasing specialisation in undergraduate studies are driving factors.

I look forward to the help and support of all members in achieving the objectives your council has set out for the year.

Pat Cahill

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Design	IFPMedia	Compiled on behalf of the ASA by		
Printing	Kilkenny People	IFP Media, 31 Deansgrange Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin	01 2893305	info@ifpmedia.com

13th IASTA Annual Conference

The 13th Annual Conference of the Irish Agricultural Science Teachers' Association was held in Darrara Agricultural College, Clonakilty on October the 18th and 19th. Over fifty teachers, including delegates, attended the two-day event from IASTA's five regional branches, along with a good turnout of members from the South Western Region, hosts of the conference. Willie Considine reports.

The Conference was opened by Joe Walsh TD, Minister for Agriculture and Food, and, in a very candid but good-humoured presentation, the Minister outlined some of the most important issues in agriculture. There were many excellent speakers and we have outlined a small taste of the topics below .

The Minister for Agriculture stresses the need for tracability and commends the role of Ag. Science teachers. Minister Walsh outlined that it was essential for market stability that "food scares" would be more rational and that there needs to be a much greater and deeper understanding of food production technologies

among the general public. To that end, he said he would give full support to IASTA in its efforts to increase the popularity of Agricultural Science as a subject in post-primary schools.

George Dennis, National Chairman of IASTA, urged the Minister for Education and Science to speedily complete and introduce a new syllabus for Leaving Cert Agricultural Science. He then went on to urge farmers to keep pride in their calling, to pass on their values to the young, to take pride in and label their produce and to always be conscious of how farmers are perceived by the wider community. He cited the need for



At the IASTA conference (from left): George Dennis, National Chair, IASTA; Minister Joe Walsh, TD; and Finbar O'Leary, Chairman IASTA, South West branch.

operators of farm machinery to give more consideration to motorists, in the interests of road safety.

70 percent of those from farming families said that they would farm the family farm if they were to inherit it. (2) 75 percent of students from a farming background said they had never discussed a farming career with their career guidance teacher and (3) 66 percent of the same students were unaware of the recent changes under which a University degree in Agriculture can now be obtained via the Agricultural Colleges. These were some of the facts found in a recent survey conducted by Agri Aware and the Irish Farmers Journal.

Mr. Kieran Calnan, CEO of South Western Services Co-op, Bandon, predicted that energy production from agricultural resources would be the big innovation over coming decades, and he urged that teachers should deal with this aspect and that the new agricultural science syllabus should have a section on this area. He also described how SWS had succeeded by identifying and exploiting non-mainstream, agricultural needs and developments, such as forestry, auctioneering, farm accountancy, animal treacability, etc.

IASTA would like to thank Mr. Harty, Principal of Darrara College, and his staff for a great welcome and a memorable conference.

A place for Ags in the future

Times are a changing in the world of agriculture - WTO talks, EU enlargement and genetically modified organisms all spell change for the way farmers will approach their business in the

future. Added to these macro scale issues, we have Commissioner Fischler's decoupling proposals, food safety and traceability, agri-environmental issues and a host of other questions which seem to be developing almost by the week. On top of these, the economic slowdown

has brought about a tightening of the public purse strings - this too is impacting on farmers and agriculturalists. A time of change is also a time of opportunity - that includes opportunities for professional agriculturalists. The ASA - your Association - is in there to ensure that the

positive contribution that 'Ags' can make to the future of Irish agriculture is acknowledged and allowed to develop. The ASA understands the need to ensure adequate use of resources, but will not accept that any professional service be supplied by non-professionals.

New Website

by Martin McConnell

The Agricultural Science Association's new website is available from the end of January 2003. ASA members with access to the internet will find the site at www.asaireland.ie. The site is intended to be a source of information for graduates in agricultural, horticultural, forestry, food and dairy sciences. To view the site: open your web browser (MS Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator, etc) and type the address of the ASA website in the address line; press enter on your keyboard and you will be taken directly to the website homepage.

The site has a variety of features designed to appeal to a wide

range of users. The features are listed in menu form and are easily accessed from the website home page. Features include:

- Details about ASA and how to join. Whom the organisation represents and the role it fulfills. It also lists council members and their contact details. Joining ASA could not be easier and, by accessing the website, there's a simple application form for those who wish to join ASA over the Internet.
- Information on member benefits – see the most up-to-date list of tangible benefits that accrue to members of the Association. As new benefits are negotiated, they will be added to the site.
- ASA activity updates. This part of the site gives updated details on ASA operational activities that

www.asaireland.ie

include regional seminars, a programme of social events, details on organised foreign study tours and, a whole host of other activities.

- Conference details. The papers from the 2001/2002 ASA conferences can be accessed on this part of the site.
- Bursary. The bursary provides a fantastic opportunity for ASA members to travel and study agriculture in another country. Kindly sponsored by AIB for the past two years, the bursary has attracted a large number of excellent applicants during that time. Details on the bursary for 2003 are available on the website and below.
- Links. This section lists a number of sites that may be of interest to ASA members. Simply by double clicking on the

site, you are interested in, you will gain direct access almost immediately.

- Contact details. ASA contact details – telephone numbers, Council Members, etc, are listed here.

Commenting on the website, ASA President, Pat Cahill, said: "Our new website is a significant step forward in the way we provide our members with relevant up-dated information on what is happening in the world of professional agriculture."

New information will be added to asaireland.ie on a continuous basis. And members will have the possibility to make fast contacts with HQ to put forward their own ideas. Make sure you check the site regularly to keep up-to-date.

Third Annual Bursary

by James Fitzgerald

This year is the third year of the ASA Travel Bursary, which is sponsored by AIB Bank. With funding of 6,500, it is a highly attractive Bursary which offers a unique opportunity to ASA members to travel anywhere in the world to explore and study a topic of relevance to their work. Projects which demonstrate a relevance to the future of the Agri-food and Rural Development sectors are of particular interest. This bursary is open to all fully paid up ASA members, with some experience in a professional capacity on the date of application.

Conditions

- A letter inviting applications was issued to all members in January. Final selection may involve an interview
- Joint applications may be submitted to a maximum of 6,500 expenditure.
- The maximum award is 6,500 and is primarily intended to cover travel/subsistence and associated costs. The bursary may be shared between applicants at the discretion of the adjudicating panel.
- The study visit cannot be carried out in conjunction with other business or awards.
- The proposed study must be carried out personally by the

successful applicant.

- Up to two thirds of the estimated costs will be paid in advance of travelling. The balance will be paid on the submission of a comprehensive report to the Adjudicators and the Council of the ASA.
- The winner will be chosen by a panel of leading figures in the industry.

How to Apply

An application form and a short submission (not exceeding 500 words), broadly describing your study topic should be sent, which should also include the following:

- An indication of the relevance of the topic to your work, the

association or the industry;

- Details of the locations to be visited and topics to be studied;
- Format and methodology to be employed (to include visits to institutions organisations, fora, exhibitions, personnel to be visited, etc.);
- Duration of the study tour with approximate dates;
- Estimates of travel and subsistence;
- If you are employed - an agreement from your employer to release you for the period.

Recipients will make a presentation on the study at an ASA seminar or conference.

ASA conference review

by Sean Gaule

The ASA annual congress, took place this year on 12th and 13th September, in City West Hotel, Dublin, and was another resounding success for the Association.

At a time when the Nice referendum was to the forefront of all national politics, the conference provided a timely opportunity to examine all of the issues involved.

Over 300 delegates listened to representatives from the EU, OECD, the International Research Centre, applicant countries and a few of our national experts debate the issues that face, not only the agriculture sector, but the broader population also. Minister Walsh performed the official opening of the conference and Professor Joe Mannion, UCD, gave the keynote address. In his welcome address to conference, the outgoing President, Sean Gaule, briefly outlined the ASA position in relation to some of the policy issues for discussion, including the Nice referendum, the role of science in education going forward, and the development of countries less fortunate than ourselves.

As the Nice treaty was particularly topical at the time, it was to this issue that most attention was devoted. Listening to the speakers from Germany and Holland gave us an insight into the viewpoint of our continental partners. Zoltan Somogyi from the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture explained why accession to the European Union was seen as hugely

important for Hungary.

One of the most stimulating speakers, and certainly a woman with clear vision of why enlargement was important, was Professor Brigid Laffan of the Department of Politics, UCD. An excellent speaker, Professor Laffan challenged us to understand how we have made a success of membership and insisted that we have played a part in the EU far in excess of our proportionate population. Regarding the assertion that Nice would create a super state, or that the EU might develop into a two-tier system dominated by the larger states, she exploded these myths with well reasoned and delivered arguments, leaving us in no doubt as to the effects a 'No' vote would have on our standing in the EU.

During the conference, it was also valuable to look beyond European concerns to the world at large as Agriculturists involved in many functions of food production. Tom Arnold, Chief Executive of Concern, told us that there are 800 million people in the world who do not have enough food to eat, and this situation could not be allowed to continue. To solve this huge problem will require tackling the issue not only at the level of food production, but also dealing with issues of conflict resolution, governance, HIV/AIDS and education.

In listening to the papers on



Conference speakers, from left: Niels Lindberg Madsen, Danish Agricultural Council; Michael Duffy, Chief Executive, Bord Bia; Mary Minch, EU Commission and Daniel Blanc, French Embassy, Sweden.



Conference speakers from left: Professor Patrick Cunningham, Trinity College; Professor John Ryan, Icarda, Syria and Jim Flanagan, Director, Teagasc.

Education, one can only be impressed at how the Faculty of Agriculture in UCD has developed and diversified its courses, making them attractive to the student and of continued value to the employer and to the economy. In a period of negative attitudes towards agriculture, the faculty has increased the interest in the study of agriculture and related fields. It might be noted that a fifth of all agricultural graduates over the past hundred years, graduated in the last ten years and that numbers are again up this year. This also challenges us in the ASA as to how we might best represent these young graduates, ensuring that we are an effective voice for the development of the Ag graduate.

Speakers also referred to the fact

that science is not always as well sold to the consumer and perhaps also to the politician as it might be, for example GMO research in Europe is for the most part in abeyance for over four years. This is contrary to scientific advice, due in the most part to public opinion being ill informed at best, or not being informed at all. Other regions will gain in technological advantage and competitiveness as a result; some companies have already left Europe. We in the ASA will have to address this issue going forward, whatever the varying viewpoints on the matter are.

Finally, my thanks to **Goulding Chemicals Ltd**, the overall Conference sponsor. Their contribution to the success of the conference is much appreciated.

Conference 2002

AGS come out to celebrate

by Sean Gaule and Bill Callanan

"Probably one of the finest gatherings of agriculturalists and friends ever", just one of the comments heard about this year's conference banquet, held in conjunction with the centenary of UCD's faculty of Agriculture. The venue was the Citywest Hotel on September 12, and we would just like to remind you with a collection of photographs taken

on the night, of some of the old acquaintances revisited. In keeping with the importance of the celebration, the decision was taken to make the event 'black tie' to mark it appropriately and, with a turnout of over 500, the celebration was certainly a success. The 'Big Jim Farrelly Band', whom many may remember from the social scene in Dublin around the 70s, provided the music on the night. The class of '62 also had their reunion. The banquet organisers want to thank all those who attended and they hope that all enjoyed the evening.



Left to right: Dermot Ruane, Dublin; Jim Ruane, banquet speaker; Jennifer Todd and Joe Ruane.



Pat Cahill ASA, John Malone, Seceratry General, Department of Agriculture, Joe Walsh, Minister for Agriculture and Food and Sean Gaule, President.



Left to right: Yvonne Slattery, Killenaule, Co. Tipperary; Brian O'Neill, Kilkenny with Seamus and Louise Goggin, Maynooth.



Left to right: Michael Conlon, Piltown, Co. Kilkenny; Attracta O'Driscoll, Limerick; Breda Minahan, Piltown and Fachtna O'Driscoll, former ASA President.



Conference speakers, from left: Michael Dowling, AIB Bank; Cesary Lusinski, Poland; Professor Brigid Laffan, UCD; Zoltan Somaogyi, Hungary and Gerry O'Hanlon, CSO.



Left to Right: Donal Whelton, Cork; Matt Kiely; Waterford; Conor Cleere, Waterford; Martin Fitzgerald, Limerick; Tadgh Buckley, Cork and Pat O'Meara, Dublin.

Of special note was the presentation of a commemorative piece of artwork commissioned by the ASA and presented to UCD. We were most fortunate to have Martina Galvin, fast becoming one of Ireland's leading artists, agree to the commission. Martina has exhibited recently in the Persian Gulf and in New York, and has also received notable acclaim for her work at EXPO 2000.

The piece is called 'Fragment of Nature' and is based on organic elements embedded in a resin (each representing an element of nature itself) and their use in agriculture. It is also of interest that Martina is well connected to the ag science world, in that her father is the retired

Department of Agriculture Inspector, Jeremiah Galvin, and her uncle is Gerrard Galvin, a well-known Teagasc advisor in Roscommon.

Also, to mark the occasion, a short film outlining one hundred years of agriculture and the contribution of the Faculty of Agriculture was produced. The film was scripted by John Keating and was presented by the well known agricultural journalist Joe Murray. Many thanks to both John and Joe.

A word of thanks also to the Banquet sponsors - **FBD Trust** and, indeed, to the many table sponsors at the banquet. These sponsorships played an important part in ensuring a successful and enjoyable night.



Pictured at the presentation by ASA of a plaque to mark the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the UCD Faculty of Agriculture, from left: Joe Walsh, Minister for Agriculture and Food; Sean Gaule, President ASA; Dr Caroline Hussey, Vice-President UCD and professor Joe Mannion, Dean Faculty of Agriculture.



At the conference banquet were: Christina Lombard, Mallow; Orla Dwyer, Clonmel; Julia Clark, Baileboro; Colm Scully, Dublin; Lisa Burke, Dublin; Eric Crowe, Dungarvan and Martina Walsh, Dungarvan.



Left to right: Gerry Gunning and Elaine Farrell, Dublin with Joe Hyland, Wexford.

How should an Ag dress for a ball...?

This serious question is exercising the minds of the social sub committee of ASA Council these days. A decision was made to make the 2002 banquet a black tie affair in view of the unusual nature of the occasion. It is generally

agreed that an enjoyable night was had by all and, indeed, the dress code added to the sense of occasion. But what to do for next year? If you have any view one way or the other, we would be delighted to hear from you. Comments to msasa@gofree.indigo.ie or to any council member please.

Enlargement

The new members of the European Union will be profiled in ASA Record: Hungary



A typical sight in the Hungarian countryside – vast areas devoid of animals or edgerows – no problems for machinery operators in tight corners.

The road to enlargement is on course again after the ratification of the Nice treaty in Ireland last year.

After completion, the European Union will constitute the largest economic bloc in the world, with over 500 million people and accounting for over 25 percent of global GDP. Expanding the EU will undoubtedly bring changes and there was much debate as we approached the referendum as to how these changes would affect us.

But what about the countries themselves? In early 2004, 10 countries will join and, over the next number of issues of the ASA Record, we will profile the applicant countries in brief. We hope you will enjoy this tour and we will commence with an overview of Hungary.

Hungary is located at the heart of Europe with Austria, Slovakia, Romania and Croatia as its immediate neighbours. In former

times, it was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire but, in more recent times, it was strongly under the influence of the Soviet Union as one of the Warsaw Pact countries. The people of Hungary seem to embrace the EU enlargement project with enthusiasm - but then, for the Hungarians, joining the EU is indeed a renewal of old relationships.

With a population of just over 10 million and an area of 93,030km², Hungary is 132 percent of the surface area of Ireland and 2.5 times larger in terms of population. Per capita GDP was 11,700 in the year 2000, a figure that is only 43 percent of the average GDP in Ireland.

Overall, agriculture plays a lesser role in the Hungarian economy than it does in Ireland. At current

values just 3.9 percent of GDP arises from agricultural production and 6 percent of the population is involved in agriculture. One notable feature, however, is the fertile nature of the soil. Over two thirds of the total area is arable and, with its fertile soil and favorable climate, this leads to the production of a wide range of products from cereals, vegetables and fruit to potatoes, as well as wine production.

The dismantling of the communist system has taken its toll in this country, with output from the agricultural sector diminishing between the years of 1991-1996. Nowadays, the agricultural sector is firmly in the hands of the private sector, with over 90 percent of the lands owned privately. However, in many cases, the structure and management of the farms has not changed significantly - with large scale units still accounting for a large part of production. Family farms as we know them in western Europe are gaining prominence, but land owners are often content to rent their land to the large companies that set up to manage farms after privatisation.

An issue that faces all the former Eastern block countries on joining the EU is the state of the food processing industries. Investments in the communist era were intended to supply commodities to mass markets - the result is that many of the plants are not readily adaptable for the competitive pressures in the fully fledged internal market of the EU. However, with greater market access, it can be expected that adjustments will be rapid.

Along with the products that we would be familiar with, wheat, barley, and sugar beet, Hungary

A word for would be visitors

Situated by the river Danube, Budapest is a truly historic city with wide boulevards, beautiful public buildings and attractive sights - it is well worth a visit. Flight time to Budapest is about 2.5 hours. Prices for accommodation range from 30/40 per night for the B&B type fare to 100+ per night for four star hotels. Day time temperatures can be as low as -10 degrees in winter and night-time temperatures as low as -25 degrees. During the summer, good levels of sunshine and temperatures in the mid 30's almost guarantee a rain-free break. Food and beer are excellent, while wine is plentiful, of good quality, and mainly very affordable.

is also a notable producer of rye, maize and sunflower. Hungarian salami is famous throughout Central and Eastern Europe and, after accession, we can expect to find it in the more adventurous delicatessens. On the horticultural end, apples are the largest crop but peas, onions and peppers are also commonly grown crops. One aspect of the agricultural scene that we would not be familiar with is the wild game management. During the 2001/2002 hunting year, over 100,000 deer were caught, along with 88,000 boar. Hare and pheasant are also common prey.

It would be difficult to make a comparison on the relative competitiveness of the agriculture sectors in Ireland and Hungary. The Hungarian farmers have the advantage of having operated in a relatively unsupported market for a number of years and also have the advantage of larger scale. On the other hand, the Irish sector has an advantage in terms of marketing ability and ongoing investments in that area.



Favourable conditions enable calf housing costs to be kept to the minimum. The photo shows the calf rearing section of a large farm outside Budapest.

Agrilink activities

November 2002

By Oliver Burke Agrilink Chairman

NIIAS members held their annual conference in November. For the past number of years, the venue has been the Seagoe Hotel in Portadown, Co. Armagh. It is now traditional that the Agrilink steering committee hold a meeting in the forenoon of the conference. On November 20 last, the following members met to discuss Agrilink activities.

These were (from ASA): Oliver Burke (outgoing chairman of Agrilink), Sean Gaule and Oliver Tierney, and, from NIIAS: Dan McCormick, Tom Morrow and Andrew Stewart (incoming chairman Agrilink).

The highlights

- The Agrilink response to the Agriculture Education and Research review initiated by Minister Brid Rogers. This was submitted after a consultative meeting of both NIIAS and ASA members in Ballyhaise Agricultural College in June.
- Joint ASA / NIIAS trip to Brussels in May with 23 people travelling.
- First cross-border, urban/rural activity at Enniskillen Agricultural College when primary school pupils from Bailieboro, Co. Cavan met primary school pupils from Enniskillen and shared activities for the day.



John Gogan, Pat Cahill, ASA President and Sean Gaule, Past President, ASA, at the NIIAS conference.

Agrilink Activities going forward into 2003

The main issue for Agrilink in 2003 is to source some funding for operations. Co-operation Ireland withdrew all funding and secretarial support in January 2002, as it deemed it should now be capable of being self-financing. An INTERREG 111A is being explored. Its expected that the Agriculture Education and Research review carried out and reported on in 2002 will be implemented in 2003. Agrilink hopes to be in a position to respond to this, possibly by written submission.

Accreditation of qualifications of members in ASA and NIIAS is seen as a growing need. With ASA now a member of the European organisation calls CEDIA, it is seen that Agrilink can play a linkage role between both parent organisations to help keep members informed of developments.

Agrilink, it was suggested, could play a useful role in growing membership (especially of ASA) in the border counties.

Suggestions from members of ASA

and NIIAS are always welcome.

The next meeting of Agrilink is planned for Wednesday, February 5, 2003, in Donegal. Andy Stewart will formally be

inaugurated as new chairman for a two-year term, until February 2005, after which the position will revert to ASA for the following two years.

Consultation on REPS with Minister Walsh

The Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) is recognised as having made an important contribution to the enhancement of the rural environment in recent years, as well as injecting some much needed cash into rural economies, and contributing to the EU ambition of reducing food surpluses. The Minister for Agriculture and Food, Joe Walsh, TD, has called for contributions from interested parties, with a view to making proposals to Brussels for changes

in the scheme during 2003. Ags play a prominent role in the implementation of the reps - preparing the agri-environmental plans for farmers and advising farmers on environmental issues. In addition, Ag graduates employed in the Department of Agriculture and Food are at the centre of ensuring compliance by farmers with their contracts. Based on the experience of ASA members with the scheme, the ASA is making a submission to the Minister to enhance the impact and benefits of the scheme.

A different CAP for a bigger EU

by James Campbell and Tom Morrow

EU enlargement and the mid-term review (MTR) of the Common Agricultural Policy were among the topics covered at the annual conference of the Northern Ireland Institute of Agricultural Science.

At the annual conference of the Northern Ireland Institute of Agricultural Science, local journalist, Richard Wright pointed out the likelihood of an east/west division in agriculture, rather than the north/south split which exists at present because some of the enlargement countries have a very underdeveloped sector. He highlighted an important safeguard clause in the accession agreements, whereby agricultural products, exported from new member states, must meet the EU standards for food safety and quality. This clause needs to be properly policed in order to avoid inferior quality products competing or upsetting existing markets. On the issue of the mid-term review, he feels that farmers should push for decisions to be taken prior to enlargement, as a deal among the existing 15 member states could be more beneficial than what might emerge from discussions among 25 countries.

Decoupling seen as an opportunity

The Chief Executive of the Livestock and Meat Commission(LMC) for N.I. David Rutledge, put it to the conference that reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy support mechanisms along the lines currently suggested in the mid-term review proposals could be very positive for the future sustainability of Northern Ireland beef and sheep meat marketing. He sees the proposals as a means of maintaining support while meeting the rules of the World Trade Organisation. Decoupling would focus production on market requirements and away from subsidies, and reduce bureaucracy.

The LMC also points out that the current subsidy system is leaving very little profit for even the best beef producers, and the majority of beef enterprises are very unprofitable. They see this as unsustainable, particularly as EU taxpayers are less willing to fund farm subsidies as enlargement of the EU takes place. He estimated that the present subsidies amount to Stg£230 per hectare but that, with modulation, this would reduce over time to Stg£175 per hectare. He argued that the payment should be allocated to the landowner on the basis that this would be similar to the current situation in which landowners who rent out their land benefit from the livestock premia system through conacre rent (the rent is their decoupled payment). Under a decoupled payment system, the LMC would envisage conacre rent falling to near zero. They would see this as an opportunity for the most efficient beef and sheep farmers to expand their businesses by leasing such land (preferably on a long term basis), as they will



NIIAS Chairman, Kenny White, with Conference speakers Peter Stewart, NFU Scotland; Broadcaster, Richard Wright; David Rutledge, LMC; Professor Bob Young, University of Missouri; and Norman Shaw.

need to minimise costs per animal produced. Entitlement to the decoupled payments could serve as a retirement scheme, allowing a 'dignified exit' from farming for those who wish to quit.

On modulation, which would cut the payments and redirect money to 'rural development', Mr Rutledge simply says that this funding should be much more readily available to farmers to help them deliver the public goods on environment, animal welfare and so on.

The conference was also addressed by Peter Stewart, Vice President of the Scottish National Farmers Union (SNFU), who said that his organisation wants to see reform of the CAP because farmers are against the wall. "There is no slack in the system," he said. But, he warned that cutting production does not automatically raise prices. He referred to the example of the pig sector, where one third of Scottish production has disappeared and been replaced by imported pig meat. "You can see your industry being exported," commented Peter Stewart.

On decoupling of support, Peter Stewart said that the switch from Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances paid per cow and per ewe to a system of flat payments per hectare in the Less Favoured Areas system had indicated some of the practical problems. It will be vital to get the

base figures right for decoupled payments, a lesson Scotland had learned from having an inadequate base area ever since the introduction of the current arable aid system. Then there is the potentially unfair advantage, which a person who receives a large decoupled payment could have, over an unsupported person. Can the supported person be banned from other farming enterprises where he/she would have an unfair advantage over the unsupported farmer?

Peter Stewart also anticipates all sorts of problems with leasing land at an economic rent if support payments are decoupled. He does not see a flat payment per hectare being fair, because land quality varies so much, even closely neighbouring land.

The SNFU Vice President said that a system of flexible national envelopes would be vital to enable regions to use their discretion in the design of a support system which would protect the beef industry. He warned that, if there is no link between support payments and extensive production of beef on the hills, there could be a switch to less costly systems of production.

He saw no problem with cross-compliance. He is all in favour of every farmer doing something good for the environment in return for the support payments received.

On modulation of payments, he is concerned about the real problems of getting these funds back onto farms.

Call for Interviewers... for UCD Careers Day

by Joe Daly

Over the past number of years, the Agricultural Science Association has conducted practice interviews for the final year students in the Faculty of Agriculture, in UCD. These events were organised with the co-operation of the careers committee, with a view to preparing students for a most important upcoming event - the job interview. The interviews are conducted, as part of the support of the Agricultural Science

Association for the undergraduates who often go on to become members of the Association.

From past experience, the students take the practice interviews very seriously, and put in a lot of preparation in both their level of knowledge and presentation, many presenting themselves in suits, as they would in a real interview situation.

It is a formal interview with the students required to fill a job application and give details of themselves and the job area they wish to be interviewed for. The first two-thirds of the interview is a formal questions-and-answers

format. The last one-third is a feedback session for the student - informing them on areas that they could improve or areas that are positive that the student needs to sell in an interview.

The level of knowledge, ability and enthusiasm of the young undergraduates always impresses the interviewers. These young graduates will face an even more diverse area of work now more than ever in the past, but this appears to be only a minor challenge after the good work put into the students by the Faculty of Agriculture staff.

In the past, up to 100 students per year took the opportunity to participate in the event, which is fully supported by the Faculty and its staff. Most graduates have experienced being interviewed for the first time - many are now prospective employers of graduates and experienced interviewers. We seek the assistance of volunteers for this one-day event, so that the success generated in the past can be continued. If you are interested in acting as an interviewer, please contact Rebecca at: 01 4603682 or msasa@gofree.indigo.ie.

Golfers - dates for your diary

The ASA Captain's Prize and the inter-services outings, which were organised by Michael Hassett for more than 40 years, are back on the golfing calendar for 2003. Unfortunately, Michael had to cancel them in 2002, due to a spell of ill health, but he is fighting fit again and the dates have been booked already for this year. The Captain for 2003 is Michael

McHugh, and his prize will be played for on Thursday, June 19, and the inter-services outing will be on Thursday, September 4.

Michael has a committee of local Ags to help out including the incoming President of Tullamore Golf Club, Bill O' Donovan, so we will be guaranteed a challenging course on both days. Michael is looking forward to meeting all his friends in Tullamore in 2003, so make sure you keep both dates free.

Cereal science opportunity

Kansas State University's (KSU) Department of Grain Science and Industry, which has world-renowned faculty and research, accepts post-graduate students from across the globe. Headed by an Irishman, Professor Brendan Donnelly, whose Ph. D. is from UCD, the Department is particularly interested in applications from appropriately qualified graduates with an interest in grain quality, grain storage and preservation, grain milling and processing; extrusion processing; feed processing and formulation; baking science; and cereal-based food and industrial products. Boasting the only academic programme of its kind, its

graduates are always in demand by the food, feed and allied industries in the USA and many go on to very successful careers in business.

While almost all of the faculty at KSU's Grain Science Department are involved in research and outreach, many have international reputations for excellence in basic and applied research. Professor Donnelly is this year's President of the American Association of Cereal Chemists (AACC).

Anyone interested in pursuing post-graduate studies in grain science at KSU should contact Professor Donnelly (bjd@wheat.ksu.edu) or Kathy Struve (kms@wheat.ksu.edu) by email.

Irish-born and educated Professor Brendan Donnelly heads the world-renowned Department of Grain Science at Kansas State University. He is interested in having an Irish graduate enter one of the Department's post-graduate programmes.



Paddy Horgan, ACC Bank (left) presenting the President's Cup to Michael McHugh, (right) at the City West Hotel. Also included is John Grogan, organiser of the President's prize and ASA Vice President.

Members benefit package

ASA is unique in bringing together professionals involved in every aspect of Irish life.

Our members are employed in government departments, research, advisory and consultancy work, universities, secondary schools and agricultural and horticultural colleges.

In the business sphere, we have members employed at all levels in the food and drinks industries, agri inputs, banking, taxation, stock broking, property sales, advertising, marketing, farming and rural organisations, public relations and journalism.

In addition to the professional and social benefits, ASA membership is superb value for money. Our Members' Benefits Package includes;

- Travel Insurance - costing just @59/family for unlimited travel.
- Automatic personal accident protection plan, including hospital benefit.
- 10 percent discount on Group Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme.
- @25 FBD voucher on home insurance.
- 20 percent discount on RAC fees.
- Free *Irish Farmers Monthly* magazine.
- 25 percent discount on Open Fairways golf and accommodation discount scheme.
- 50% reduction on annual conference fees and reduced fees on member development training programmes.

These benefits alone are worth many times the annual membership fee, and new deals are being continuously negotiated on behalf of members.

The ASA programme of activities includes;

- Representation and lobbying on behalf of graduates on key policy/work issues.
- Regional/county meetings and seminars on topics of relevance to the professional and personal interest of members.
- Urban Rural Week, run in association with the Irish National Teachers Organisation, involving farm visits for up to 20,000 school children.
- Career advice and mock interviews for final year UCD students.
- Joint activities with our sister organisation, Northern Ireland Institute of Agricultural Science (NIAS), under the Agrilink banner.
- The annual ASA Travel Bursary involving support of 6,500 for an overseas study tour by an ASA member.
- Quarterly magazine, the *ASA Record*.



Conference delegates, from left: Michael O'Sullivan, Teagasc Cahirciveen; Sean Leen, Teagasc Castleisland and John Carvill, Department of Agriculture and Food.

ASA acknowledges the generous support of

MERIAL Animal Health

in publishing this issue of the ASA Record.



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