

Project aim:

To develop a Continuing Professional Development online resource to enable professional agriculturalists to analyse their training needs, plan their development and record and reflect upon their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities.

Project background:

The Agrilink committee was established 10 years ago to foster closer cross-Border co-operation between members of the Northern Ireland Institute of Agricultural Science (NIIAS) and its sister organisation in the Irish Republic, the Agricultural Science Association (ASA). As a result of Common Agricultural Reform and the introduction of wide-ranging environmental legislation, agricultural graduates find themselves facing new challenges and demands on their expertise. Many feel ill-equipped to cope with the rapid changes. Continuing professional development and lifelong learning is the order of the day.

Professional Agriculturalist Continuing Education (PACE) CPD online:

The PACE online CPD resource is the first part of the initiative. It has been designed to help agricultural graduates in Ireland to assess their current training needs and prepare a meaningful plan for the year ahead. At a strategic level this facility allows training requirements and deficiencies to be highlighted with a view to providing a more co-ordinated and structured approach to development for young agriculturalists' CPD for the future.



Product Features:

The online CPD scheme provides a framework that formally recognises an individual's Continuing Professional Development.

The tool allows users to easily plan their training and development. Individual activities are recorded at each phase of the cycle – Analyse, Plan, Record and Reflect.

A separate Administration function allows the professional body to amend the scheme by adding new competencies, new approved training providers as well as uploading relevant News Items and additional resources.

Users have the ability to search and select CPD training programmes, activities and literature as part of their plan to acquire CPD points.

Importantly, a facility is provided to allow users to upload and maintain a portfolio of evidence for their formal CPD submission.

Benefits to the Agricultural bodies and their members:

The resource dramatically reduces the costs that have become associated with managing and monitoring CPD in an offline environment whilst providing a more productive and cost effective CPD Role within both organisations.

The resource acts as a central 'focal' point for the thousands of young agriculturalists who often lack access to CPD support and advice due to the nature of their job and their remote geographical location.

Mandatory CPD membership requirements for both organisations can be analysed with the use of the online monitoring, administration and reporting facility.

Both Agricultural Bodies (North and South) now have the facility to gather and act upon pertinent information collated in the form of online Training Needs Analysis questionnaires and e-mail communication.

The new online resource encourages greater cross border communication between the two Agriculturalist professional bodies and its members which has led to the potential for new 'shared' initiatives.