

# **disAbility in Farm Households**



AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



## Foreword

Recent information from the Census 2002 and a national survey conducted by the Teagasc National Farm Survey, indicates that disability affects a significant number of farm household members. Government through current and proposed legislation is in the process of developing both policy and practice to ensure that people with disability enjoy equality and full participation in society.

Teagasc in the delivery of its services wishes to ensure that persons with disability are accommodated to the fullest possible extent. Teagasc plan to continue to investigate what services and supports are required by farm families related to disability.

This booklet aims to inform the farming community about disability issues and to indicate how Teagasc services could be of assistance to farm households with a disabled member.



# disAbility in Farm Households

## Introduction

Disability is now receiving considerable attention at a legislative and policy level in Ireland. This aims to develop policy so that persons with disability can enjoy equality and full participation in society.

A 'Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities' reported to Government in 1996. A specific recommendation referring to the agricultural sector was made in this report. This refers to improving the health and safety record of the sector.

The definition of disability used by the Commission was 'children and adults who experience any restriction in their capacity to participate in economic, social or cultural life on account of physical, sensory, learning, mental health or emotional impairment'.

The Irish approach is strongly based on the 'social model' which has emerged internationally since the early 1990's. This approach emphasises providing the supports to optimise a person's ability to live a full life in the community and to remain in the workforce. Disability should be seen as a difference, not as an illness or impediment.

A National Disability Authority (NDA) was established in 1999 with the role of assisting government in the co-ordination and development of policy relating to persons with disabilities.

## disAbility in Farm Households



*Information on disability issues is provided through Citizens Information Offices throughout the country.*

People with Disabilities in Ireland (PwDI) is a national cross disability representative organisation funded by government to give a voice to all people with disabilities.

A national statutory agency, 'Comhairle' was established with responsibility for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy to members of the public on social services available. Comhairle has a particular remit to support people with disabilities. Information on disability issues is provided through Citizens Information Offices throughout the country.

The Census conducted in 2002, and a recent study conducted by Teagasc in association with the NDA and UCD has provided new information on the level and nature of disability in farm households.

Teagasc wishes to ensure that the services it provides fit within the National disability policy framework. It also wishes to establish appropriate links with other relevant agencies to ensure that the best possible service is provided to the farming community.

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## Extent of disAbility in Ireland

- The 2002 Census shows that over one in every 12 people in the country has a disability.
- Almost 324,000 people said they had a long lasting health problem or disability and 58% have more than one disability.
- The most commonly reported disabilities or longstanding health problems were chest or breathing problems, heart, blood pressure or circulation problems and back or neck problems.
- Just over 37% of all persons aged between 15 and 64 with a disability/health problem are in employment.
- 42% of disabled persons in employment stated that their condition restricted the amount of work they could do.
- Assistance was provided to 8,900 of the 108,600 persons in employment with a disability/health problem.
- Almost 22,000 persons with a disability/health problem not in employment would require assistance in order to work.



*42% of disabled persons in employment stated that their condition restricted the amount of work they could do.*

*Sources: CSO Census 2002 and QNHS Disability Modules 2002/2004*



*The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector has the highest proportion of workers with disability or health problems.*

### Extent of disAbility among farmers

- The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector has the highest proportion of workers with disability or health problems.
- Over 8% of this group reported disability/health problems.
- Over 20,000 farmers reported that they had a disability in the 2002 Census and the majority, over 13,000, were over 65 years of age.
- Of this group 61% were male and 39% were female.

### Did you know?

- Almost 149,000 persons aged 15 years and over provide regular unpaid personal help for a friend or family member with a long-term illness, health problem or disability. Carers were more prevalent in rural rather than urban areas.
- Women accounted for over 91,000 of the total and over half of them were in their forties or fifties.
- Almost 12,000 farmers indicated that they were carers. The majority provide 1-14 hours of regular unpaid help per week.

*Sources: CSO Census 2002 and QNHS Disability Modules 2002/2004*

# disAbility in Farm Households

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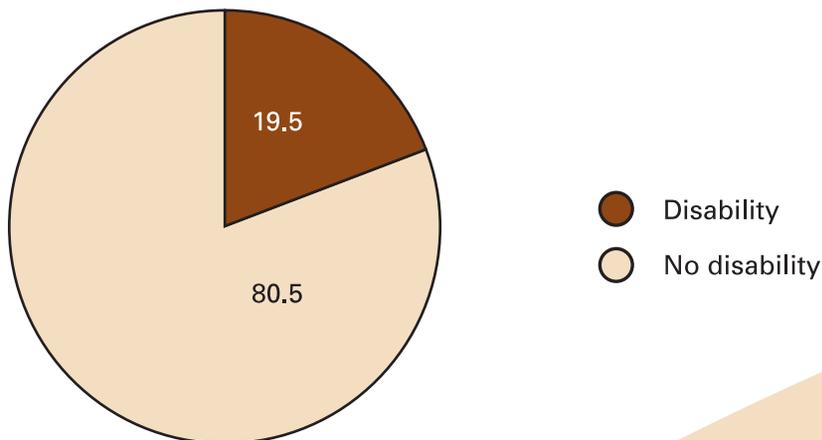
In 2001 Teagasc in association with the NDA and UCD conducted a study on the extent and impact of disability in farm households in Ireland. The type of disability was determined by the farm operator for all household members.

In farm households nationally, 19.5% reported the incidence of disability, just over 23,000 farms (figure 1). On these farms the majority had just one person with disability. Two or more persons reported a disability on 2.1% of farms.



*In 2001 Teagasc/UCD conducted a study on the extent and impact of disability in farm households in Ireland.*

**Figure 1: The percentage of farm households reporting disability.**



Source: Teagasc/NDA/UCD study

## disAbility in Farm Households

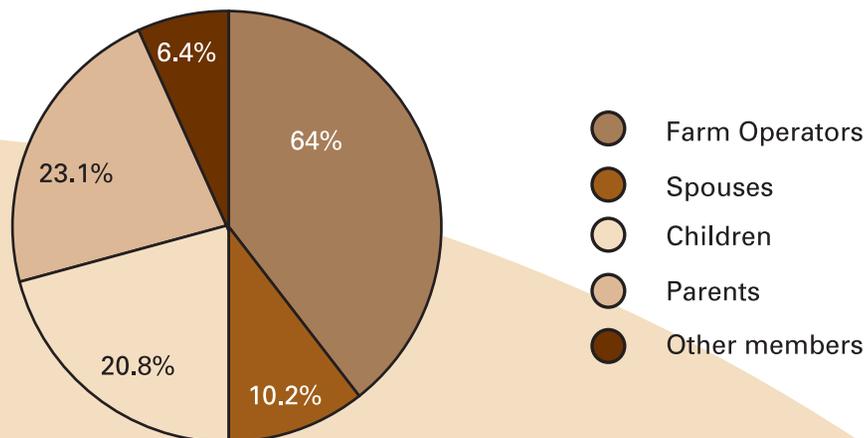


other household members with disability represented 6.4%.

While disability occurred among all categories of household members, the highest incidence, 39.5%, was reported for the farm operator, who was male in 94% of cases.

Sixty percent of the farm operators reporting disability were under 65 years of age. Among other farm household members parents with disability represented 23.1% (figure 2). Spouses with disability represented 10.2%, children represented 20.8% and other household members with disability represented 6.4%. Other household members were predominantly elderly household members.

**Figure 2: Distribution of disability among farm household members.**



Source: Teagasc/NDA/UCD study



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## Type of disAbility

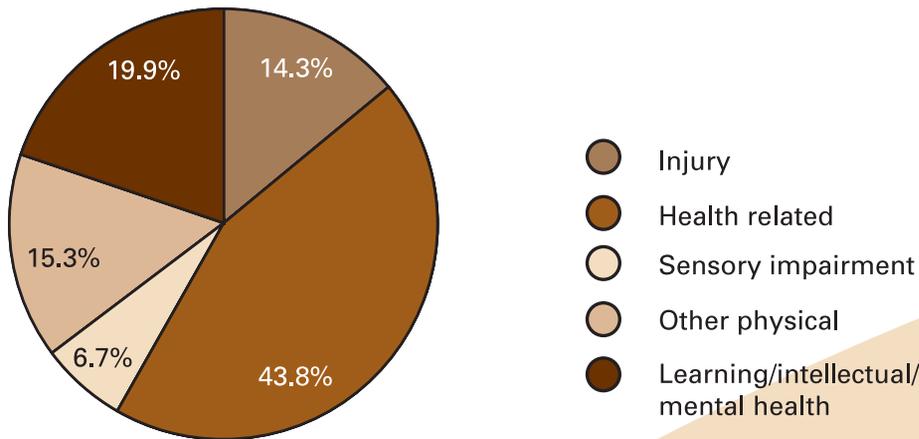
Regarding the type of disability, health related causes were the predominant type.

Among farm operators arthritis and cardiovascular conditions accounted for 73% of the health-related disabilities. Learning and intellectual disability was the predominant category of non-physical disability. This source was reported mainly for children. Physical disabilities were 81% of all disabilities while 19.9% were non-physical.



Among farm operators arthritis and cardiovascular conditions accounted for 73% of the health-related disabilities.

Figure 3: Type of disability among farm household members.



Source: Teagasc/NDA/UCD study



*Seventy five percent of those surveyed reported that the disability had an impact on the farm business.*

### Impact of disAbility on the farm business

Seventy five percent of those surveyed believed that the disability had a negative impact on the farm business. Where the farm operator reported disability, a negative impact on the farm business was indicated in 93% of cases. Analysis of the financial data available indicated that family farm income was lower by 15% on farms where the farm operator reported a disability. This income reduction was not found when a family member other than the farm operator had a disability.

The proportion of farm operators reporting a disability in intensive enterprises such as dairying or sheep was considerably lower than for all farms nationally.

Off-farm employment was considerably lower among both farm operators (13.7%) and spouses (23.5%) when the farm operator reported a disability. This compares to off-farm employment levels of 35% for both farm operators and spouses for farms not reporting disability.

On 41% of farms reporting disability, a household member working on the farm spends working time attending to the needs of the person with a disability.



## disAbility in Farm Households

### Health Profile of the Farmers

- The death rate for males in the 'farmers, relatives assisting and farm manager' category in the age category 15-64 is 5.5 per thousand per annum. This is higher than for most occupational groups. For example, the comparable rate for 'skilled manual workers' is 2.9.
- Male farmers, in the age category 15-64 have a higher Standard Mortality Ratio for a range of conditions than a number of other occupational groups. These conditions include: death due to injury and poisoning; diseases of the circulatory system; cancer; respiratory and digestive conditions.
- A study of health and safety practices among male farmers and other workers found the male farmers had a particularly negative health profile with 18% reporting regular dental checks; 26% practicing sun skin protection and 29% reporting taking regular exercise.
- Farmers (34.5%) were less likely to have an annual blood pressure check than homemakers (58.8%).
- Farming as an occupation accounts for approximately 30% of the all workplace deaths even though only 6.5 % of the workforce is employed in on-farm agricultural production. Over half of all farm deaths are associated with tractors or machinery. About 3,000 accidents causing injury occur in the sector each year, with the main causes being trips and falls (22.6%), livestock (26.9%) and machinery (19.4%).
- While farming as a way of life is associated with positive well being, the principal sources of occupational stress and depression are financial concerns; poor or unsafe working conditions and ill health or disability. Loneliness has been identified as a source of stress.

The profile of farmers knowledge, attitudes and behaviours regarding personal health, stress and occupational health and safety suggest that benefits can be gained by incorporating awareness raising measures into advisory and training programmes for farmers. The importance of such programmes is emphasised in the light of ongoing socio economic changes in the sector.



## Provision of Disability Related Services

Teagasc wishes to ensure that the services it provides in the areas of agricultural training, advice and research are available and geared to meet the needs of farm families with a disabled member and to target areas where disability can be prevented.

The preliminary research conducted suggests that farm families, particularly farm operators, are low users of disability related supports and services.

The concept of Disability Management has emerged internationally as the best practice approach in this area.

## Disability Management

Disability Management is the process of seeking to reduce the impact of disability to the fullest possible extent.

It consists of the following four main approaches:

- Prevention of disability ,where possible, by such means as implementation of safety measures
- Promotion of health and creating a healthy working environment

- Early Intervention. This involves putting in place immediate measures following the occurrence of disability to minimise its impact.
- Case Management. This is co-ordinating the return of the person into normal life and work activities to the fullest extent possible.

The Disability Management approach is being applied in companies to minimise the impact of employee disability. It can be applied to a self-employment sector such as agriculture also in an appropriate format.

A wide range of disciplines are needed to implement the Disability Management approach in the agricultural sector including those provided by Teagasc. To provide the best possible service to the farming community Teagasc wishes to link with other agencies providing disability related services.



# disAbility in Farm Households

## Teagasc Services

Teagasc provides services in the following areas which are related to applying the Disability Management approach in the farming sector.

### Training

- Provision of training in the land based sector,
- Inclusion of Health and Safety, and Promotion of Health in training courses.
  
- Provision of training to persons with disability, provided such training can be reasonably accommodated.

### Advice

- Provision of advice on farming systems to optimise farm household income where disability occurs.
- Provision of advice on farm facilities design, equipment use and use of work time
- Provision of advice on farm business management

### Research

- Identify and quantify disability issues
- Identify what services and supports are required.
- Disability related issues are considered in all projects, where relevant.

### Advocacy

Advocacy means representing the view or supporting a person with disability to secure their rights. Advocacy is a process of empowerment and can take many forms. Successful advocacy depends to a large extent on the integrity of the person or organisation acting as advocate. Standards development in the area of advocacy is currently being undertaken.

The key principles of successful advocacy are:

- Respect for the person and their choices.
- Independence – particularly of service providing agencies.
- Consistency, professionalism and confidentiality.

As Teagasc has a close working relationship with the farming community and provides a independent and confidential service it is in a position to act as advocate in areas within its remit and to facilitate farm families in contacting an advocacy service run by another agency.



## Case Studies

A wide range of disability can arise. Accordingly, each individual case must be considered based on the set of circumstances involved. The following case studies illustrate some of the situations which can arise and how Teagasc can be of practical assistance.

### Case Study 1

A dairy farmer became ill with depression. This required medical treatment including hospitalisation. With his doctor he identified overwork due to poor working conditions and related anxiety as a cause of his illness. On going medical treatment was required.

The farmer joined the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS), and the funding available allowed improvements in his facilities. He is a member of a very supportive discussion group which he finds extremely helpful. He takes breaks by going on tours and visits with his farmer colleagues. The farmer is well and happy with the changes he has made in recent years.

### Case Study 2

A family experienced a sudden crisis when the farm operator suffered a stroke and could not conduct the affairs of the farm business. Advice was given by Teagasc on immediate measures required regarding the running of the farm business. Advice was also given on longer term inheritance and farm business issues.

### Case Study 3

Advice was provided to a widowed farm operator with a literacy difficulty, regarding application for a medical card and completion of an Area Aid Application and other documentation related to running the farm business. The farmer was advised where to seek assistance regarding an application for a medical card.

### Case Study 4

A farmer suffered a disabling injury in a fall. Teagasc provided advice on how to adjust his farming systems to optimise his income following the injury. Other agencies provided assistance with mobility and adaptation of the farmers tractor and facilities to allow access and use of these.

### Case Study 5

A number of young persons who were wheelchair bound have completed the Teagasc Vocational Training Courses. Attendance at the course allowed the persons to gain the knowledge and skills necessary for land based occupations, and to gain eligibility for state grants and aids. The disabled persons and their class colleagues found their participation in training and associated social activities very motivating.

# disAbility in Farm Households

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**Richardson, N. (2004),** Getting inside men’s Health.

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### Further Information

#### Citizens Information Offices

Information on disability related issues can be obtained from Citizens Information Offices throughout the country. Consult your local Golden Pages for the nearest office. The Comhairle booklet 'Entitlements for people with disabilities' provides information on disability issues and has contact information for State and Voluntary agencies providing disability related services. This is available from Citizens Information Offices.

The Citizen Information Phone Service, which is Lo Call, is available as follows:  
Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 9.00pm  
Tel. 1890 777121

Disability related information is available on the following government funded website:  
[www.oasis.gov.ie](http://www.oasis.gov.ie)

#### People with Disabilities in Ireland

PwDI is the umbrella organisation which brings people together, locally and nationally, to work on common issues that effect all people with disabilities. Pwdl national office can be contacted as follows:

PwDI, National Office,  
Richmond Square,  
Morning Star Avenue,  
Dublin 7.  
Tel. 01 8721744  
Fax. 01 8721771  
E-mail: [info@pwdi.ie](mailto:info@pwdi.ie)  
Website: [www.pwdi.ie](http://www.pwdi.ie)



## disAbility in Farm Households

### Teagasc

Information on services provided by Teagasc can be obtained from its throughout the country. Contact information for Teagasc headquarters is as follows:

**Teagasc**  
**Oak Park**  
**Carlow**  
**Tel: 059 9170200**  
**Fax: 059 9182097**  
**Website: [www.teagasc.ie](http://www.teagasc.ie)**

Specific disability related queries should be referred to:

**John McNamara**  
**Teagasc**  
**Safety and Labour Organisation Specialist**  
**Kildalton College**  
**Piltown**  
**Co Kilkenny**  
**Tel: 051 644537**  
**Fax: 051 643446**  
**E-mail: [jmcnamara@kildalton.teagasc.ie](mailto:jmcnamara@kildalton.teagasc.ie)**  
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