

Delivering our Future, Valuing our Soils; an inclusive Public Private partnership delivering positive change in Ireland's soils.

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The Recession ten years ago refocused Politicians' minds that the Agriculture and Food Sector in Ireland was not a Sunset Sector. Both Dublin and Belfast subsequently published very ambitious strategies on how this Sector could regenerate the wider economy. In Belfast, an independent, inclusive, Expert Working Group was created to bring forward a Strategy which would deliver an increase in the Economy, an improvement in farm incomes, a reduction in the Sector's environmental footprint, and to do all three of these, simultaneously. This was the first time such a public private partnership vehicle was used in Ireland. From the start, it focused on empowering the people who needed to make the most behavioural change, by including over half of its members as active land managers, while still having strong representation from environmental NGOs and Government Policy. This paper focuses on the deliberations, the conclusions and outputs of this unique partnership, which, on the day of the publication of "Delivering our Future, Valuing our Soils," the process had already secured written buy in from both Industry and Environmental NGOs: the EU Commission: and subsequently, an 80% farmer participation rate in the first catchment pilot on improving soil and water quality.