



Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Strategic Plan 2006-2011



Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk

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Foreword from the Minister

I am pleased to present the Department's first 5 year Strategic Plan for the period 2006-2011. This is a new initiative by the Department and it sets out its long-term strategic direction over a period of time which will be particularly challenging for the agri-food industry and the wider rural community. The Plan will therefore play a key role in steering the policy direction for this Department in the coming years.

The Plan was the subject of a consultation process last autumn when a number of the Department's stakeholders from different backgrounds responded with many constructive suggestions as to how the strategy might be broadened and improved. I have considered these suggestions and where these enhance the Strategy and are practical in application I have reflected them in the final version that I have now published.

The Plan focuses upon a number of Goals which will address key issues and contribute to the achievement of the Department's Vision. These include the ability of the industry to be competitive in the market place; the desire to strengthen the social and economic infrastructure of rural areas; the need to enhance animal, fish and plant health and welfare; and the development of a more sustainable environment.

Finally the consistent theme that emerges from each of the earlier goals is the delivery of improved services to customers whilst at the same time balancing the requirements and needs of stakeholders.

The Strategic Plan provides a focus for the rest of the Business Planning Processes in the Department so that all business units and individual members of staff will more clearly see their roles and responsibilities in making a contribution to the achievement of the overall Departmental Vision. The success of the Plan will be dependent upon the ability to deliver and there will be a need for ongoing monitoring at all levels. In order to facilitate this process I would encourage ongoing feedback from stakeholders and recipients of the various services the Department provides.

In pursuance of the policies I therefore wish to ensure that there is maximum co-operation and partnership not only across Government departments and agencies but also with the industry and communities involved. If this can be nurtured and developed we will be in a better position to deal with the changes that lie ahead for us all.



Lord Rooker

Sustainable Development will be the overarching driver of change for the Department over the next 5 years. It will shape the context of our work, what we do and how we do it, whether it is in relation to the environment, the agri-food or fishing industry or rural development. It will also shape the activities of many of our clients, with Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reform reinforcing the requirement on farmers and fishermen to act in an environmentally sustainable and responsible way. The Department has a major contribution to make across the full range of its functions and this will be reflected in the emerging Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Within the overall context of sustainable development, there are a number of specific issues which will have a significant impact over the next five years and will determine how we operate and interact with stakeholders and customers.

The last few years have witnessed major reform in agriculture: the radical reform in 2005 of CAP has opened the way to a new future for farming. The decoupling of EU subsidy from production has freed farming to respond to the demands of the market place, its customers, the environment and local communities. Over the next few years this is likely to lead to restructuring and efficiency gains, higher standards of environmental protection and care for animal welfare. The new Single Payment Scheme should help to create a future in which sustainable land management is an essential ingredient of farming and food production. Also we cannot rule out further reform or changes flowing from economic and environmental pressures.

Market change will inevitably impact on our work: increased market competition, the growth of multiples and cheaper produce from other countries are all likely to affect the agri-food industry in the coming years. In addition the requirement for easily prepared and healthy food as well as organic products will influence the industry. Direct intervention in the market is not an option for Government rather, our role will be to assist the industry adapt to changes in the market place.

The Context

Agricultural Reform

Market Change

Changes in Rural Society and Farming Culture

Over the last 20 years the rural landscape has changed considerably as more commuters live in the countryside and travel longer distances to work in urban centres. This has increased pressure for improved transport networks, better schools, more shops, outlets, and restaurants, and there is an understandable expectation that these will be provided in the same numbers and to the same standard as in urban areas. At the same time, farming culture is changing, with fewer farms being economically sustainable, a consequent downward pressure on farming's level of employment. This is being offset not only by diversification out of traditional farming, but also by the growth of a stronger, more diverse rural economy.

We want to respond to these changes in a positive manner by developing and implementing appropriate agri/rural support plans ensuring that the countryside is accessible to all, and by articulating the comprehensive needs of rural communities throughout Government.

EU and global developments

Other developments that are likely to impact on rural communities include:

EU enlargement

- The enlargement of the EU community over the next few years will continue to have an impact not only on trade but also the distribution of EU structural funds and the Peace programme.

Globalisation of markets

- The World Trade Organisation (WTO) Doha Agenda – the Doha Ministerial Declaration commits the EU (and all other WTO participants) to comprehensive negotiations aimed at substantial improvements in market access; reductions in all forms of export subsidies and substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support. This move towards trade liberalisation will inevitably impact on Northern Ireland, as it will lead to increased competition from imports and a need to develop profitable exports which do not rely on subsidy.

- Environmental Regulations – EU environmental regulations, in particular the Nitrates Directive, Habitats Directive and the Water Framework Directive, could have a significant impact on primary production and necessitate structural adjustment.
- Climate change – emerging strategies to counter climate change and adapt to its effects will provide an increasing impetus for the exploitation of renewable energy sources, including biofuels. These present significant new business opportunities for farms seeking to diversify.
- Waste - demanding EU obligations to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste going to landfill up to 2020, the drive to recycle more under the various producer responsibility regulations and to reduce the environmental impact of waste management through strict controls on waste treatment and disposal will all impact on rural areas.
- Fisheries policy - the increasing global concern over the sustainability of fishing and the plight of key fish stocks will inevitably lead to further reform of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy and fisheries management. Through the implementation of international fisheries agreements and a reformed Common Fisheries Policy we shall reduce adverse impact and develop fisheries that are environmentally sustainable.

DARD has a key role in protecting against outbreaks of animal disease and emergencies in the food chain. Growing awareness of the potential risks has led to well developed plans, which are regularly tested. The Rivers Agency also plays a proactive role in flood emergency planning. External factors will continue to challenge preparations and this will impact on our work. DARD will be required to address the demands of the NI Civil Contingencies Framework by regularly reviewing its plans against guidance and best practice. We will ensure that we are able to deal with emergencies efficiently and effectively on the basis of risk assessment and by building resilience into Departmental plans.

Protecting against emergencies

Public Sector Reform

The Department faces a period of very significant public sector reform. The Department is committed to Better Regulation, greater efficiency and targeting resources for front line services. These commitments reflect the Government's efficiency and reform agenda, as taken forward through the recommendations in the Gershon Report¹, the Fit for Purpose Report², the Hampton Report³ and the CSR whilst other change will be motivated by the Department's desire to improve the service to our customers.

The published proposals arising from the Review of Public Administration envisage a new role for Local Government in the field of Rural Development. Further change will be motivated by how we position ourselves to facilitate improved service delivery in a spirit that reflects the principles set out in "A Shared Future" and the emerging Sustainable Development Strategy. In parallel with this the Department's draft Rural Policy proposes a new and more challenging regime of rural intervention and advocacy of the particular needs of rural communities within Government by the Department.

Our agenda, broadly held in common with that of other departments, is to enhance the way in which customers access our services. Customers will be able to contact us by telephone, e-mail or in person, confident that the majority of their requirements will be dealt with at the first point of call. All our channels of communication will be joined up seamlessly, so that electronic customer records will be updated instantly with new information however obtained. We will drive down service costs, especially in the so called back office areas of ICT, finance and personnel, by participating in setting up new shared service centres in partnership with other public bodies.

Realising the benefits of this investment will be key in helping us maximise the effective use of staff and enhance frontline delivery. Over the next 5 years DARD will ensure that the needs of customers are met in a more cost-effective, efficient and convenient manner.

¹ 'Releasing resources to the front line - Independent Review of Public Sector Efficiency', Sir Peter Gershon, July 2004

² 'Fit for Purpose - The Reform Agenda in the Northern Ireland Civil Service', October 2004

³ 'Reducing administrative burdens: effective inspection and enforcement', March 2005

A thriving and sustainable rural community and environment in Northern Ireland.

Our Vision

Our vision for Northern Ireland is a thriving and sustainable rural community and environment. To achieve that we want to see significant improvement in the competitiveness of the Northern Ireland agri-food industry. We want to help to develop its competence, to support its ability to expand sales, and to achieve a quality food product from Northern Ireland producers.

We also want to be a champion for animal health and welfare, but in doing so we must ensure that all those with an interest accept a share of the responsibility and cost for improving standards, and for protecting society from the effect of animal disease.

We have responsibility for forests, and we want to address the challenge of restoring and enhancing a profitable and sustainable forest industry to provide wood, to improve biodiversity and landscape, and to provide opportunities for access to the countryside.

We have responsibility for flood defence, and we want to reduce the risk of flooding from rivers and the sea.

It is our intention to promote and encourage a profitable and sustainable Northern Ireland fishing industry.

We want to be an advocate within Government for the needs of the wider rural community. As the trend continues for more people to live in the countryside and work in urban areas, subject to current planning policy, there will be an increasing level of demand for a higher share of distributed education, health and transport services.

In the delivery of all our services and in implementing our policies, we want to promote all aspects of equality and good relations. We also want to make a positive contribution towards the emerging Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy, and other government strategies impacting on the community as a whole.

Our Aim

To meet our vision, the Department aims to:

Put the customer first, build partnerships, value staff and be efficient, adaptable, responsive to change, and focused on making a difference.

This will involve supporting improved performance in the market by safeguarding animal, fish and plant health; by maintaining and investing in the environment; and by contributing to a successful rural economy and society.

Our Role

The Department's role will be in helping to promote access to and provision of services, contributing to a confident, rural community, assisting in maximising profits from existing and new farm enterprises and supporting farm based non- agri businesses and small rural businesses in the maintenance and creation of rural jobs.

We will proactively work in closer and more productive partnerships with other departments and stakeholders, and on finding ways to involve more external influences, in particular in helping determine our strategic direction in research and education. It follows from our Vision and from our Aim that we will be balancing continually the requirements of stakeholders, consumers and service users.

We will continue to develop our relationships with other departments to ensure that they take into account rural needs when developing their policies and procedures. We will be addressing important cross cutting policies in a way that signals our inclusive approach to reform.

Within the Department itself there are many challenges. We will become significantly smaller in numbers as we move towards 2011, but our workforce will be more diverse and more mobile. We will equip our staff to meet these challenges and ensure that our standards and business processes are robust and properly focused.

Internally, change management will focus on putting the front line first, on building capability and implementing efficiency plans, and on reducing the scale of corporate services.

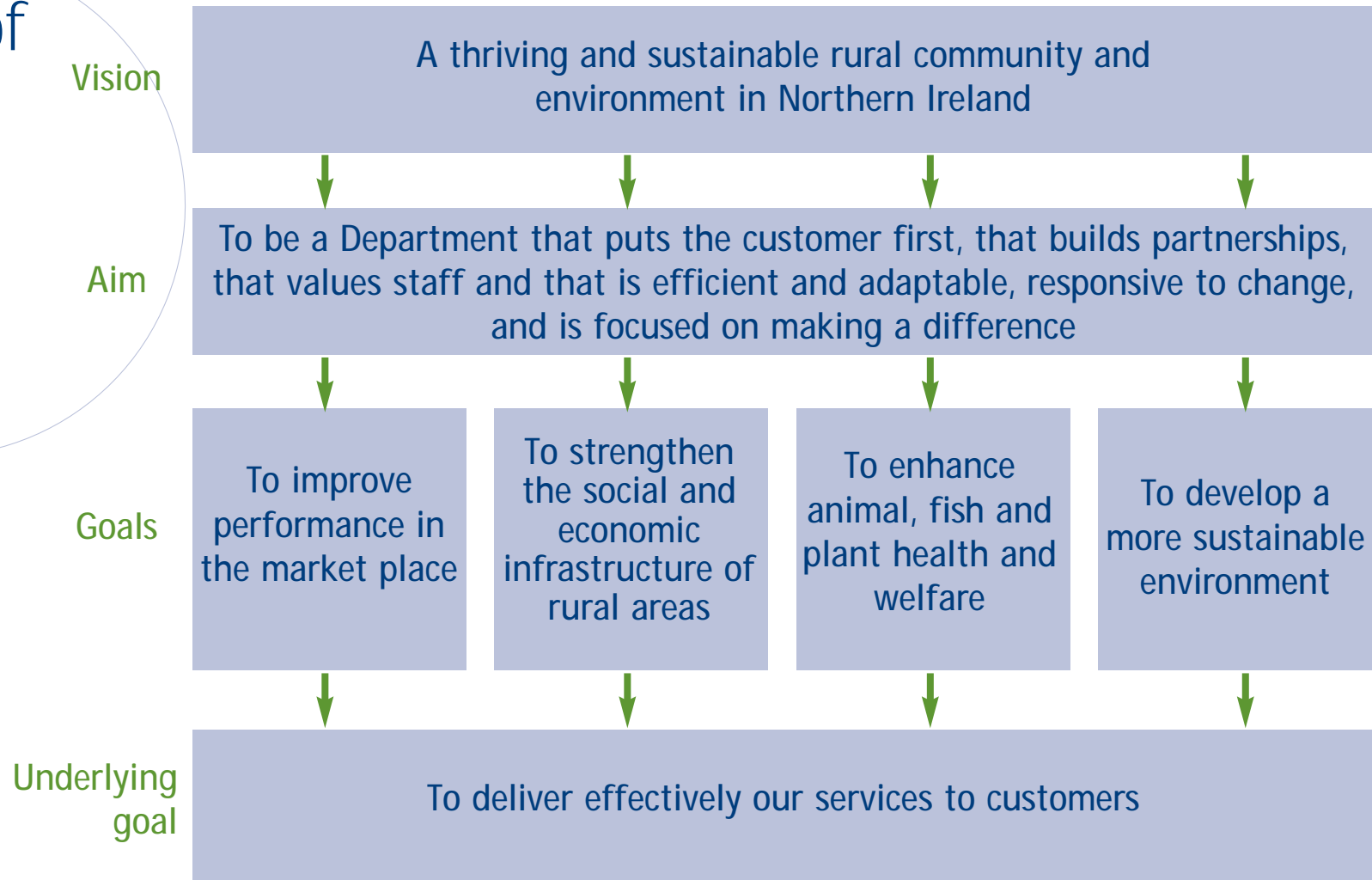
While the Department will continue as a major direct service provider, in future, more services will be delivered through partnerships with appropriate sharing of costs and risks.

We will become more efficient in delivering programmes and will provide more customer choice. Our workforce will continue to be committed to improving service to our customers and stakeholders.

Our work on the Equality Agenda, including section 75 obligations will continue to be developed. A detailed overview of our equality and rural proofing responsibilities is set out at Annex 5.



Overview of Strategy



Strategic Goals and Objectives

A key role of the Department will be (i) to equip NI farm businesses to adjust to greater trade liberalisation and (ii) to help realise the potential for the development of the food-production, processing, fishing, forestry, horticulture, equine and amenity and leisure sectors, making the most of quality local produce and market opportunities.

What success will look like?

1. Increased economic sustainability of all farm businesses.
2. Increased value added in the land and marine resource based economy.
3. Increased local and export demand for NI produce.

Strategic Objectives

1. Farm-gate sales and ancillary land based industries to be competitive in a reformed market.
2. A more competitive food processing industry.
3. A more competitive fishing industry.
4. A more competitive forestry industry.

Key actions

1. Deliver a targeted strategy for life-long learning.
2. Deliver a targeted strategy for R&D and technology transfer.
3. Implement the NI Fit for Market food strategy.
4. Deliver sectoral strategic plans and support in line with industry needs.
5. Deliver the Single Farm Payment.

Goal 1
To improve
performance in the
market place

Goal 2

To strengthen the social and economic infrastructure of rural areas

The Department will develop a comprehensive rural strategy, designed to build a diversified economic base and enhanced community facilities which take account of social need. This will form the basis for regeneration programmes to be delivered during 2007-2013 in partnership with local communities. The Department will act as a champion for the rural community in relation to public services, promoting a cohesive and equitable approach across departments.

What success will look like?

1. More sustainable rural businesses and jobs.
2. The proportion of farms with multiple sources of earned income will increase.
3. Sustainable projects that enhance the quality of life of local communities.
4. National PE resources to be committed to rural development.
5. Rural and fisheries dependent villages and communities in greatest need are strengthened and regenerated.
6. A strong community infrastructure.

Strategic Objectives

1. A joined up approach to rural policy.
2. A diversified rural economic base.
3. Better access to public services.
4. A partnership approach to delivery with strong community involvement.
5. Enhanced community facilities which take account of social need.



Key actions

1. Champion rural issues and the robust application of rural proofing and review its effectiveness.
2. Implement a new Rural Development Regulation Plan.
3. Support economic diversification opportunities, including rural tourism.
4. Develop a village renewal programme.
5. Further build the capacity of rural communities and the role of local partnerships.
6. Undertake research to underpin support for Rural Development policy.

The Department will work with key stakeholders to improve and protect animal, plant and fish health, and animal welfare standards, in support of the competitiveness of the farming sector and for the well being of animals and fish. It will promote the culture that prevention is better than cure.

What success will look like?

1. Absence or insignificant levels of animal diseases that are of important public health or economic consequence.
2. Absence or insignificant levels of fish or plant diseases of economic or environmental consequence.
3. Absence of trade restrictions due to disease (animal, fish or plant disease).
4. Free movement of animals within the island of Ireland.

Goal 3

To enhance animal,
fish and plant health
and welfare

Strategic Objectives

1. Complementary animal health and welfare strategies for NI and the island of Ireland.
2. Eradication or considerable reductions in the level of animal diseases that have significant public health or economic consequences.
3. Maintenance of low incidence of plant diseases of significant economic or environmental consequence.
4. Maintenance of low incidence of fish diseases in farmed stock that have significant economic consequence.
5. Enhanced attention to welfare.

Key actions

1. Deliver the NI and All Island Animal Health and Welfare Strategies.
2. Deliver an effective education communication strategy to promote biosecurity and the prevention of animal, fish and plant diseases.
3. Implement disease control to eradicate or reduce the level of serious endemic animal diseases.
4. Improve surveillance, and maintain robust preventative controls and contingency plans for preventing and controlling major epizootic animal, and fish diseases and plant pest and disease outbreaks.
5. Further develop animal traceability systems.
6. Develop Northern Ireland plant health strategy to take account of all-island issues.
7. Undertake research programmes to underpin animal, plant and fish health policy objectives.
8. Secure a greater sharing of the costs of animal health and welfare policies.
9. Update Animal Welfare legislation.

While lead policy responsibility for the environment in Northern Ireland rests with the Department of the Environment (DOE), DARD has a distinctive contribution to make by encouraging farming and fishing methods which are conducive to the conservation and enhancement of the rural and marine environments and undertaking flood defence works in an environmentally sustainable way. DARD is working increasingly closely with DOE on issues of common concern to achieve a joined-up approach which is effective in achieving environmental improvement and sustainability without imposing disproportionate costs.

What success will look like?

1. Increased biodiversity on farmland.
2. Enhanced landscape.
3. Improved water quality in rivers and lakes.
4. Reduced agri-food related pollution incidents.
5. Increased tree cover.
6. Reduced impact of river and coastal flooding incidents.
7. Recovery of the key marine species.
8. Increased contribution of agriculture to NI's renewable energy targets.

Strategic Objectives

1. Adoption by the agri-food sector of environmentally sustainable farming methods.
2. Compliance by the agri-food sector with EU environmental directives.
3. Further conversion of farmland to woodland and forest.
4. Reduced risks to life and property from flooding.

Goal 4

To develop a more sustainable environment

5. Sustainable management of fishing activity.
6. Increased exploitation of renewable energy opportunities.

Key actions

1. Deliver the environmental component of the NI Rural Development Regulation Plan, 2007-2013.
2. Collaborate with DOE on managing the implementation of environmental policies.
3. Deliver a new policy framework for forestry.
4. Deliver a new policy framework for river and coastal flood risk management.
5. Maintain contingency plans to deal with environmental threats.
6. Deliver education programmes on sustainable farming methods.
7. Undertake research programmes to support environmental policy.
8. Deliver a new strategic management framework for inshore fisheries.
9. Deliver an action plan on the exploitation of renewable energy opportunities.

Goal 5

To deliver effectively
our service to
customers

Across the public sector there is a drive for reform. The Department will play its part in that reform and the consistent theme which emerges from each of the earlier goals is the delivery of improved services to customers. By delivering better services to its customers the Department will achieve its Aim. The Department will work to defined standards for its services, reflecting its obligations to the taxpayer and other stakeholders as well as its aspirations to satisfy customers. It will empower staff with more sharply focused roles, tailored training and development, better ICT support, and enhanced personnel and finance systems. The NICS Customer Service Principles (Annex 4) will underpin the delivery of our services.

What success will look like?

1. Satisfied customers of DARD services.
2. Confident, customer orientated, appropriately skilled staff.
3. Accessible, timely, efficient processes.
4. Better informed Stakeholders.

Strategic Objectives

1. A customer focussed Department.
2. Well trained, highly informed staff.
3. Improved ICT, personnel, finance and records processes.
4. Improved communications with customers and stakeholders.

Key Actions

1. Implement defined customer service standards throughout the Department.
2. Offer customers multi-channel access to a range of services and develop an effective complaint handling procedure.
3. Deliver personnel processes which ensures that the Department resources, trains and rewards its staff to meet business needs.
4. Give managers the information and skills to control resources for service delivery more efficiently and effectively.
5. Deliver a Communications Strategy.



Corporate Governance – how DARD directs and controls its functions

1 Management Arrangements

a. Departmental Board

The strategic direction of the Department is driven by the Departmental Board (DB). This group is chaired by the Permanent Secretary and is composed of three Deputy Secretaries, the Chief Veterinary Officer and two Non-Executive Director. DB meets monthly to oversee the governance of the Department at a strategic level, set the corporate business agenda and ensure that the organisation delivers its strategic goals. The Board operates within the parameters of policy set by, and in consultation with, the Minister.

Supporting the Board are a Strategy Board and a Change Management Board the latter of which co-ordinates the substantial change programme across the Department.

b. Senior Civil Service Group

The Senior Civil Service Group (SCSG) comprising all the senior civil servants in the Department meets monthly in advance of DB, and focuses on strategy implementation across the Department and the associated risk register, with the emphasis on monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Department's business objectives and actively managing problems.

c. Project Management Boards

Major project work across the Department is managed through Project Management Boards and the application of project management principles and skills. These Boards comprise staff working in the area and representative senior staff. The Project Management Boards have responsibility for setting the timetable, allocating resources, driving work forward and reviewing priorities.

d. Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs)¹

The Permanent Secretary and Board ensure that there is a written agreement with each of DARD's ALBs. This sets out a clear definition of how the relationship should work. It includes information about performance targets, arrangements for reporting and consultation. This document is reviewed and updated periodically to ensure robust governance arrangements, safeguard propriety and regularity and promote high performance.

¹ The term 'Arm's Length Bodies' is taken to include the Department's executive agencies, NDPBs, public corporations and other bodies with a similar relationship e.g. PPP and PFI partners.

2. Business Planning

Business planning is taken forward at a number of different levels in the Department:

a. The Public Service Agreement

The DARD Public Service Agreement (PSA) covers what the Department will deliver in the period covered by the "Priorities and Budget" document. It sets out the key targets and outcomes that the Department will aim to achieve within the resources allocated in the Budget.

b. The Corporate Scorecard

The Department is moving to produce an overarching Corporate Scorecard that specifies the high-level objectives, measures and targets for DARD for the year ahead.

c. Group/Agency Business Plans

Each of the Department's four Groups and two Agencies is moving to use the Balanced Scorecard approach to produce annual Business Plans. These set out the key objectives and targets for the Group/Agency for the financial year ahead and link into the Corporate Scorecard. Divisional/Branch Business Plans provide the operational detail and allow staff to link into the work of the branch via their Personal Performance Agreements.(PPAs)

3. Accountability

a. Risk Management

Analysis of and response to risk is key to corporate governance. The Department has a comprehensive Corporate Risk Register (CRR) for the identification and management of risk. The CRR is updated quarterly and identifies any new risks and movements in risk rankings. DB has overall responsibility for the management of risks associated with the delivery of the Department's functions. The implications of a rise in risk rankings for corporate priorities are considered by DB and remedial action agreed. Risk registers are also produced and monitored at Group, Divisional and Branch level.



b. Stewardship Reports

Stewardship reports are signed off annually at Group, Division and Branch level to state that internal controls operated effectively over the last year and that risk was managed appropriately. Each report covers effective and efficient operations; the integrity and accuracy of management information; the safeguarding of assets; and compliance with laws and regulations.

c. Resource Accounts/Statement of Internal Control

The Department is required to submit an annual Departmental Resource Account to the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The Resource Accounts contain a Statement of Internal Control in which the Permanent Secretary, as Accounting Officer, provides Parliament and the public with an assurance that internal controls are in place and effective.

d. Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

The Corporate Governance and Audit Committee (CGAC) oversees, promotes and provides input to all activity associated with business risk, corporate governance and audit. CGAC contributes to the overall process for ensuring that an effective internal control system is maintained. It is chaired by a Non-Executive Director and comprises a range of senior staff.

The Way Ahead

This Strategic Plan focuses on the important themes for DARD for the next five years and the major areas of activity. Annual Group and Agency Business Plans will translate these strategic objectives into practical plans and will outline in more detail how we will pursue our corporate goals and objectives.

We will establish partnerships with other departments and stakeholders to ensure that we address important crosscutting issues such as equality, diversity and disadvantage and access to public services.

We have set ourselves a challenging five-year agenda. There may be new demands on our resources but we will ensure that we have the skills and the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, and where necessary, redeploy resources to meet emerging needs and pressures. We will monitor this plan regularly in consultation with our customers and stakeholders.

By delivering the objectives detailed in this Strategic Plan, we aim to provide our customers with improved services and our stakeholders with increased effectiveness and value for money.



Annex 1 - Resources

The Strategic Plan outlines a challenging programme of work for the next 5 years. Whilst it is all achievable based on current projected funding levels as outlined below, there is no guarantee that those levels are sustainable beyond the end of the budget period (2007/08). A Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) will be conducted during the period 2006-2007 and will set the position for the financial years 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11.

DARD Public Expenditure Plans 2006/07

Spending Area	Resource Budget	Capital Budget*	Total
	£m	£m	£m
Service Delivery Group	57.5	11.5	69.0
Rural Development ¹	7.1	6.5	13.6
Veterinary Service	29.0	0.7	29.7
Central Policy Group ²	90.2	42.0	132.2
Fisheries	4.0	3.6	7.6
N/S Body: Foyle, Carlingford & Irish Lights	1.8	-	1.8
Rivers Agency	15.3	7.0	22.3
Forest Service Agency	16.9	0.5	17.4
EU Community Initiatives ¹	3.1	1.5	4.6
TOTAL DEPARTMENTAL DEL	224.8	73.3	298.1
EU Peace Programme ¹	8.5	-	8.5

* Includes Capital Grants

DARD Public Expenditure Plans 2007/08

Spending Area	Resource Budget	Capital Budget*	Total
Service Delivery Group	57.1	11.5	68.6
Rural Development ¹	7.8	5.8	13.6
Veterinary Service	29.2	1.5	30.7
Central Policy Group ²	92.9	7.9	100.8
Fisheries	4.2	3.1	7.3
N/S Body: Foyle, Carlingford & Irish Lights	1.8	-	1.8
Rivers Agency	15.2	7.0	22.2
Forest Service Agency	17.1	0.5	17.6
EU Community Initiatives ¹	2.1	0.7	2.8
TOTAL DEPARTMENTAL DEL	227.6	38.0	265.6
EU Peace Programme	1.7	-	

* Includes Capital Grants

¹ The Department's rural development work is funded to December 2008, although the Natural Resource Rural Tourism Initiative and the Farm Families Programme, which are both funded under Peace, will finish in December 2006. Funding lines are through EU programmes but one element of the Peace programme has been mainstreamed with a small amount of money being carried forward to provide on-farm investment in 2006/07 and 2007/08.

² From April 2006, Science Service transfers to AFBI, reporting through Central Policy Group.

Efficiency Plan

The Department has a target to realise of total efficiencies of £21m by 2007/08, of which at least £10.5m will be resource releasing.

During 06/07 and 07/08 the Department's plans include continued improvement in procurement of goods and services practices, a reduction in staffing levels as a consequence of the introduction of Single Farm Payments to farmers, the cessation of non-essential Veterinary Service work at markets and meat plants, the automation of processes and the implementation of recommendations arising from major Departmental reviews.

Efficiency gains will be achieved through reviews of staffing structures, ICT, rationalisation of processes, absorbing additional workload without an increase in resource and cessation of lowest priority functions.

The Department is committed to achieve efficiency savings beyond the period of the current Efficiency Plan and will strive to maximise efficiency gains whilst continuing to deliver a high quality service to customers.



ANNEX 2 - DARD Public Service Agreement

Objective	Budget (£ million)	Planned Outcome for citizen	Key service Channel	Targets
To promote sustainable development of the agri-food industry and the countryside and stimulate the economic and social revitalisation of disadvantaged rural areas; reduce the risk to life and property from flooding; promote sustainable development of the sea fishing industry; and maintain, protect and expand forests in a sustainable way	2006/07 Current Expenditure 224.8 Investment 73.3	Competitive Agri-Food Industry	Central Policy Group Service Delivery Group Veterinary Service Group	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create conditions for the agricultural industry to achieve a 10.5% improvement in Total Factor Productivity (TFP) between calendar years 2001 and 2008. 2. Reduce the gap in agricultural Gross Value Added (GVA) per full time worker equivalent (measured as Annual Work Units) between Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole by 0.6 of a percentage point per annum between 2003 and 2008 i.e. from 34% in 2003 to 31% in 2008. 3. Create conditions to increase agricultural GVA per full-time worker equivalent (measured as Annual Work Units) from £14,800 (2000/2002 average) to £19,500 by 2008. 4. Create conditions to increase value added per full-time employee equivalent in the NI Food and Drinks processing sector from £22,400 (1999/2001 average) to £33,100 by 2008. 5. Reduce the level of serious animal disease by a reduction in Brucellosis outbreaks from 111 at 31 March 2005 to less than 35 at 31 March 2008 and the level of TB reactors from 13,219 at 31 March 2005 to less than 7,225 at 31 March 2008.
	2007/08 Current Expenditure 227.6 Investment 38.0	Improved Animal Health	Central Policy Group Veterinary Service	

Objective	Budget (£ million)	Planned Outcome for citizen	Key service Channel	Targets
		Sustainable Rural Economy	Service Delivery Group	6. By 31 March 2008, create a net increase of 1,000 Full Time Equivalent jobs in disadvantaged rural areas under the Rural Development Programme 2001-2006 (300 of which should be in the tourism sector).
		Improved water quality of NI rivers and lakes	Central Policy Group Service Delivery Group	7. By 31 December 2008, reduce nitrate and phosphate inputs to soil and waterways in accordance with the agreed action programme
		Protection from flooding	Rivers Agency	8. Increase the number of Housing Equivalents benefiting from a reduced risk of flooding from 18,050 at 31 March 2006 to 18,350 at 31 March 2008.
		More sustainable forests	Forest Service	9. Sustain the annual supply of timber, recreation and environmental services from existing forests at 2002-03 levels and secure a modest increase in combined public and private forest area by 1,000ha by 2008 at a rate of 500ha per year.

In addition the Department shares in the achievement of:

- The NICS reform targets: "Introducing a modern HR service for the NICS by 2008", "Implementing the Strategic Development Plan for rationalising the Government Office Estate (Workplace 2010)" and "Completing the migration of NI Departments to a Single Shared Centre by 2009 (Accounting Services Programme)".
- The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister's target: "To underpin improved public services by continuing to deliver the increase in public sector infrastructure investment, as set out in the long-term Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland".

ANNEX 3 - Business Planning

1. Robust and sensible business planning is crucial to DARD's success and the effective delivery of our policies. It is about ensuring that we know what the Department is going to do and how it is going to do it, and that it has the capability to deliver. It is widely recognised that business planning helps an organisation to understand the environment in which it works, and how to handle change. It helps an organisation to understand the nature of its customers and their expectations, how to recognise and control risk and build in contingencies, and how to allocate money, people, time and energy to achieve the planned results.
2. Business planning in DARD occurs at a number of different levels, each interdependent on the other. At the top level, the Strategic Plan provides the vision and direction for the Department for the next 5 years whilst below this are subsidiary plans which provide more detail about where DARD is going and how we are going to get there.

Business Planning Map



The Department is committed to using the Balanced Scorecard as a business planning and communications tool. The Corporate Scorecard specifies DARD objectives, measures, targets and indicators which are key to success for the next year. This cascades down to Group, Division, Branch and individual level so that all staff understand the wider picture, are clear about their role and responsibilities, and see how they contribute to the success of the Department. Some parts of the Department have already developed their own scorecards; others continue to use business plans; we expect to see all parts of the Department develop scorecards over the term of the Strategic Plan.

3. The Business Planning map also provides the framework for reviewing and reporting on performance which is crucial to the success of the organisation.

Business Planning - Review and Reporting



4. By adopting this approach to business planning and reporting will ensure that we successfully deliver our commitments to customers, stakeholders and staff as well as delivering on reform and efficiency. Ultimately it will allow the Department to achieve its vision to be a more professional and customer-focused organisation which has improved business processes and is ICT enabled.



ANNEX 4 - Customer Service Principles for the NICS

Standard 1 Publishing service standards

Each organisation will publish a set of customer service standards setting out the level of service its customers can expect. The standards should be challenging, relevant, measurable and meaningful and should be publicised widely. Each organisation's performance against the standards should be made available to customers.

Standard 2 Informing the Customer

Each organisation will provide clear and straightforward information about its services and those of related service providers in a variety of ways, including the Internet. The information will include a telephone enquiry number, text phone numbers and email addresses and should be timely, updated regularly, easily accessible, professional and in plain language. Where organisations require particular actions or information from customers or otherwise consider customers have certain responsibilities, they should explicitly state this.

Standard 3 Service Accessibility

Each organisation will make its services accessible to its customers by doing everything reasonably possible to make its services available to everyone including people with special needs and those whose first language is not English. Where it is necessary for customers to attend public service offices, organisations should ensure that their premises are clean, comfortable and welcoming.

Standard 4 Consulting with customers

Each organisation will consult with and will involve customers and potential customers about how its services will be delivered, the quality of service they have experienced and their level of expectation. They will consult in a variety of ways and use their views to improve the services provided. The results of consultation should be reported to customers together with plans for service improvement.

Standard 5 Polite and Helpful Staff

Each organisation will ensure that staff are polite and helpful and that appropriate training in customer care is provided when dealing directly with customers. Staff must be identifiable and the wearing of name badges where appropriate should be encouraged.

Standard 6 Seeing Callers

Each organisation will ensure that callers are seen without undue delay by setting a target for seeing callers with and without appointments. Callers should be informed of any likely delays. Procedures should be put in place to ensure that queuing systems are fair and flexible and that, where appropriate, waiting time information is provided.

Standard 7 Answering telephone calls

Each organisation will ensure that telephone calls are answered quickly. The name of the organisation and that of the person answering the call should be given and the person answering the call should be able to deal with the enquiry or arrange direct contact with an appropriate person who can.

Standard 8 Answering letters, faxes and emails

Each organisation will set targets for ensuring that letters, faxes and emails are answered quickly and clearly. Responses will include the name and address of the organisation and contact details. Unless a full and complete response is likely to be made within 10 working days, an acknowledgement should be sent within 2 working days which will give a target date for a full response. All correspondence, whether letter, fax or email should be clear and presentable.

Standard 9 Having a complaints procedure

Each organisation will have a complaints procedure – or procedures – for services provided which should include its policy on redress. They should be publicised through a variety of means, including on the Internet and should be clear and straightforward with an option for independent review. Each organisation will set and report on targets for dealing with complaints.

ANNEX 5 - Equality Overview

In delivering its Strategic Vision and Aim, the Department remains committed to promoting equality and good community relations. Section 75(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Department in carrying out all its functions relating to Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the following 9 groups of people: persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.

Section 75 (2) of the Act also requires the Department in carrying out its functions in Northern Ireland to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Department will act in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998 which incorporated the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention of Human Rights into domestic law.

In 2000 DARD's policies were reviewed when the Department drew up its Equality Scheme. At that stage a programme of Equality Impact Assessments was started. As new policies evolve or existing policies are developed they are screened in accordance with Equality Commission guidelines. An annual Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) programme is then established from that process. Responses to the various EQIA consultations to date have suggested that the various section 75 groups do not have any significant difficulty with the equality dimension of DARD policies.

Under current EU provisions Member States are required to gender mainstream policies and programmes which receive Structural Funds. The purpose of this is to improve the quality of public policy and through this to contribute to the development of a fairer society. This is an attempt to get below surface patterns and achieve a deeper level of understanding and awareness of the way in which structures and systems can unintentionally act in favour of one or other group. The EU recognises that gender mainstreaming is a longer-term strategy. It is therefore very likely that future EU programmes will continue to promote it - and may seek appropriate monitoring information to evaluate the outcomes of EU funding. DARD will continue to endeavour to uphold these objectives.

The Department recognises the value of working in partnership with others in the public, private and voluntary and community sectors. DARD is committed to engaging with rural groups on key agriculture and rural development issues. The Department has a number of specific mechanisms to assist in pursuing good practice in policy-making, with a priority being the inclusion of views from the agricultural and

rural sectors in the development of any policy. As a significant number of DARD policies impact on the agricultural and rural public, the Department has in place a well-developed network of formal and informal contacts with industry representatives through which proposals can be discussed e.g. the Rural Stakeholder Forum.

Partnership is one of the guiding principles of the Department's current Rural Development Programme, which will be in place until 2008. Partnership operates at a number of different levels – at local level with communities and project promoters; at sub-regional level with key local players assembled to deliver and implement local strategies, and at regional level with government agencies and other representative bodies. A new Rural Development Programme will be in place for 2007-2013, which will build on and enhance the partnership principle.

The Department is also a member of the Joint Government Voluntary and Community Sector Forum. It engages with the Voluntary and Community sector and departmental colleagues on all aspects of improving communication with the sector on policy development and finding ways of more fully including sector representatives in the policy making process.

The Department has its own Equality Steering Group, is a member of the NICS-wide Equality and Social Needs Steering Group and participates in all inter-departmental groups that assess further aspects of equality, such as the NI Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Strategy for Children and Young People, PSI on Older People, Sexual Orientation Action Plan, Gender Equality Strategy and the Single Equality Bill. Actions arising from these various strategies will form an integral part of the business planning process and information will be communicated to staff throughout DARD for assessment in the development of policy.

In addition to the specific considerations given to equality groups, DARD is also responsible for ensuring the needs of rural communities are taken into consideration across all government departments through the Rural Proofing process. The first Programme for Government outlined the commitment to Rural Proofing to 'ensure that the rural dimension is routinely considered as part of the making and implementation of policy.' The ethos of Rural Proofing is to ensure that the needs and special considerations of rural communities and areas are routinely and objectively considered as part of the policy development process. Each Department must apply the process of rural proofing to its own policies, advised and guided, as appropriate, by DARD. The Department will continue to provide advice to other government Departments as they roll out their policies across Northern Ireland and will reflect progress on rural proofing in an annual report. DARD must also ensure that its own policies reflect the breadth of the rural dimension.

ANNEX 6 - Glossary of Terms

AFBI	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
ALBs	Arm's Length Bodies
ARINI	Agricultural Research Institute of Northern Ireland
ASP	Accounting Services Programme
CAFRE	College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CGAC	Corporate Governance and Audit Committee
CSR	Customer Service Review
CRR	Corporate Risk Register
DARD	Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
DB	Departmental Board
DEL	Departmental Expenditure Limit
DFP	Department of Finance and Personnel
DOE	Department of the Environment
EDRMS	Electronic Document & Records Management System
eHR	Electronic Human Resources
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessment
EU	European Union

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
NDPB	Non Departmental Public Body
NI	Northern Ireland
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
N/S Body	North/South Body
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
PSA	Public Service Agreement
PSI	Promoting Social Inclusion
R&D	Research and Development
SCSG	Senior Civil Service Group
TB	Tuberculosis
TFP	Total Factor Productivity
UK	United Kingdom
WTO	World Trade Organisation



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