AgRenew

IRELAND SUMMIT

New Blood. Stronger Farming.

5th November, 2026

Killashee Hotel, Naas,
Co. Kildare

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Imeacht Gaolmhar | Associated Event

ICOS
Irish Cooperative Organisation Society

Golden Jubilee Trust



President's Welcome

On behalf of ICOS, I would like to welcome you to the Killashee Hotel and Spa, Nass Co Kildare for the Ag Renew Ireland Summit.

Generational renewal is essential to the long-term sustainability of Irish agriculture. According to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marie, only 4% of Irish farmers are under 35, while 37% are over 65. This highlights the urgency of accelerating farm succession and encouraging new entrants into the sector through traditional and non-traditional pathways.

Young people today face considerable barriers including high land prices, access to finance, and volatile farm incomes. Addressing these challenges will require a coordinated approach that combines supports for both young and older farmers, financial assistance, education, mentoring and succession planning.

Agricultural co-operatives have an important role to play in facilitating generational renewal and strengthening the future of Irish agriculture. Co-operatives can promote generational renewal within their own organisations by encouraging participation in governance, leadership and decision making.

I would like to thank our Conference partner, the Golden Jubilee Trust for their generous support, without their sponsorship it would not be possible to organise an event of this size and standing.

I would like to sincerely thank all our guest speakers and moderators for giving their time, insights and expertise.

We are also delighted that today's event is recognised as an associated event under the Irish Presidency of the EU.

Finally, I would like to thank each of you as both members of ICOS and invited guests for your attendance today and continued support of the co-operative movement in Ireland.

Edward Carr
ICOS President

Summit Timetable

10:00	Welcome by Edward Carr, ICOS President.
10:10	Opening address by Martin Heydon, T.D., Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.
10:25	Opening message by Christophe Hansen, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Food.
10:30	**Short Scene Setting Presentation by Ruth Fennell, Teagasc**
10:40	**Session 1: 'Ag Renew – bringing new blood and renewal into Irish agriculture'** • Frank O'Mara, Director, Teagasc • Karina Pierce, Dean of Agriculture and Head of the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science • Sean Molloy, CEO, Tirlán Co-operative Ltd • Ksenija Simovic, Principal Policy Advisor, Copa-Cogeca Chaired by Damien O'Reilly, ICOS, EU Affairs and Communications Executive
11:40	**Short Stories – Farmers in their own words (1st video).** • Gearoid Slattery, dairy farmer, Co Tipperary • David Hallissey, beef farmer, Co Kerry • Amanda Mooney, dairy farmer, Co Wicklow • Aisling Neville, dairy farmer, Co Westmeath
11:45	**Session 2: 'Ag Renew Young Farmer Panel – Generating new blood and stronger farming'** • Katarina Wolf. LRF Sweden • Ciara Ryan, Manager, Mid-Tipperary Livestock Mart • Cian Jobe, dairy farmer, Co Westmeath • Conor Wynne, dairy farmer, Co Kildare • Sean Lyons, dairy farmer, Co Mayo Chaired by Mary Delaney, Chair of Dairy Research Ireland
12:45	**Short Stories - Farmers in their own words (2nd video).**
12.50	**Introduction to afternoon workshops by ICOS.**
12:55	A message by Maria Walsh MEP, European Parliament Rapporteur on Generational Renewal.
1:00 - 1.45	**Lunch**

1:45	**Session 3: Breakout Workshops** • Workshop 1: Developing the right environment for both younger and older farmers through the RAISE EIP, chaired by Clare O'Keeffe, Succession Ireland. • Workshop 2: Co-operative Leadership in Generational Renewal and Gender Equality, chaired by Caroline O'Donovan, Barryroe Co-op. • Workshop 3: Shaping the national and EU policy discussion on Generational Renewal, chaired by Maria Dunne, DAFM.
2:45	**Session 4: Resumption of the Plenary Session** **Short stories – Farmers in their own words (3rd video).**
2:50	Raise EIP Graduation Event
3.10	**Reports by workshop rapporteurs** • Workshop 1: Ellen Hurley, Carbery Farm Succession Officer • Workshop 2: Paul O'Connell, Dairygold Co-op Farm Succession Manager • Workshop 3: Prof Brian Leonard, Assistant Professor in Generational Renewal and Rural Viability, UCD
3:30	**Short stories – Farmers in their own words (4th video).**
3:35	**Session 5: Ag Renew - What are the opportunities?** • Barry Cowen MEP, Member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development • Josephine O'Neill, President, Macra • Conor Hogan, Research Officer, People in Dairy Programme, Teagasc • Philip O'Connor, Head of Farm Support, IFAC Chaired by Damien O'Reilly, ICOS EU Affairs and Communications Executive
4:25	Key learnings and next steps by TJ Flanagan, ICOS CEO.
4:30	End of proceedings.

Speakers

Damien O'Reilly



Damien O'Reilly is the EU Affairs and Communications manager with ICOS based in Brussels where ICOS has had an office since 1973. He is currently the chair of the COGECA co-ordination committee which represents co-operatives across Europe. Before joining ICOS in 2022, Damien spent 24 years working as a broadcaster with RTE Radio 1. He presented Countrywide on Saturday morning and also worked across news, sport and current affairs which included working at three Olympic Games in Beijing, Rio and Tokyo. Damien is a joint founder of the European Network of Agricultural Journalists and is a former chair of the Guild of Agricultural Journalists of Ireland.

Martin Heydon



Martin Heydon is a Fine Gael Teachta Dála (T.D.) for the Kildare South constituency. He graduated from Kildalton Agricultural College and took over his family's suckler and tillage farm. He was elected as a councillor to Kildare County Council in 2009. In 2011, he was elected as a T.D. to represent the Kildare South constituency. He has served as a member of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture and was a member of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action He has also served on Oireachtas Committees on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural, and Gaeltacht Affairs, and Petitions. From 2016 to 2020, he served Chairman of the Fine Gael Parliamentary Party. In July 2020 he was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with special responsibility for Farm Safety, New Markert Development, and Research and Development. In January 2025, he was appointed as Minister for Agriculture, Food, and the Marine. Martin is a native of South Kildare and lives on his family farm with his wife and four children.

Ruth Fennell



Ruth Fennell is a Collaborative Farming Specialist with Teagasc, providing technical advice and support on farm partnerships, share farming, contract rearing, land leasing, and other collaborative models. She holds a Master's degree in Agricultural Science (Animal Science) from University College Dublin, and has extensive experience in various Teagasc advisory roles, primarily focused on the dairy sector.
Ruth organised Teagasc's "Generational Renewal Week" for the last two consecutive years and is passionate about supporting Generational Renewal and promoting collaboration models that enhance the long-term sustainability of Ireland's agricultural industry.

Karina Pierce



Professor Karina Pierce graduated with a BAgrSc in 2001 and completed her PhD in 2005, both from UCD. She was recently appointed as Dean of Agriculture & Head of the UCD School of Agriculture & Food Science. She was previously Director of External Relations and Programme Director for the BAgrSc Dairy Business Programme in the School of Agriculture and Food Science, UCD. Her research focus is on the sustainability of dairy production systems. Karina is a board member of Bord Bia and chairs the Meat and Livestock Subsidiary Board. She is a past President of the Agricultural Science Association and a former member of the Teagasc Authority. Karina is also a 2019 Nuffield Ireland Scholar and a former Board Member of Nuffield Ireland. Her Nuffield research focused on future-proofing the agri-food sector through robust research

Sean Molloy



Seán was appointed as Tirlán Chief Executive Officer in 2024. He leads the Co-op's global strategy, continuing to set the highest standards for food and nutrition through innovation, science and sustainability and is responsible for revenues of nearly €3 billion, exporting across 100 countries. Having previously held the role of Director of Strategy with Glanbia Ireland (now Tirlán), he was appointed to the position of Chief Agribusiness Growth Officer in 2018 and Chief Ingredients & Agri Officer in 2022. In these roles he had responsibility for leading Ireland's largest Agribusiness in addition to managing the development of Co-op's Irish milk pool. Seán joined Glanbia plc in 2006 having worked for eight years as a Strategy Consultant with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). He previously worked as a Corporate Development Executive with the Irish Dairy Board (now Ornua). From a farming background in Co. Offaly, Seán runs a mixed farm, mainly drystock. He is passionate for the well-being of Tirlán farm families. Seán is an Agricultural Science graduate from University College Dublin. Seán is an Executive Director on the Board of Tirlán.

Frank O'Mara



Prof. Frank O'Mara is the Director of Teagasc, Ireland's national agri-food research, advisory and education agency. He is an agricultural scientist and sustainable livestock systems specialist, with more than 30 years of experience in scientific and senior managerial capacities in agri-food research, education and development institutions. He has a comprehensive knowledge of national and international agri-food industries and sustainable farming, and a history of achievement in the initiation, development and application of new technology in the industry. He was President of the European Animal Task Force from 2020 to 2025 and is an ex officio member of Ireland's Climate Change Advisory Council.

Ksenija Simovic



Ksenija is a Principal Policy Adviser, covering trade and international aspects at Copa Cogeca, representing EU farmers and agri-cooperatives. Ksenija completed her BA degree in International Cooperation for Development at the University of Rome "La Sapienza" and continued her studies at University of Twente in The Netherlands, where she graduated with a MSc. in European Studies. During her master studies she developed a deep interest in European Union policy making, which was an additional asset to gain a scholarship from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a trilingual Diploma in Advanced European Studies at the European College of Parma Foundation. Prior to joining Copa Cogeca in 2016, Ksenija worked on accession negotiations of Serbia to the EU, completed the blue book traineeship at the European Commission's DG AGRI, working in the Geographical Indications Unit and spent a year working at the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in Parma. Since 2025, Ksenija also manages the work of the Women's Committee at Copa Cogeca, which aims to empower women in agriculture and rural areas by advocating for their needs. Aside from native Serbian, Ksenija is fluent in English, Italian, Spanish and French, with basic knowledge of Dutch.

Mary Deleney



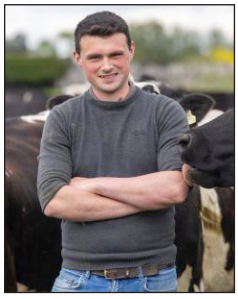
Mary Delaney is Chair of Dairy Research Ireland and a dairy farmer in Co. Kilkenny. She is a Non-Executive Director of Bord Bia and a board member of The Agricultural Trust. She has extensive experience across the Irish agri-food sector, having held senior commercial and strategic roles with Tirlán (formerly Glanbia Ireland) and the Irish Farmers Journal Group. A Nuffield Scholar and former President of the Agricultural Science Association, Mary has a strong interest in research and innovation, sustainable and profitable farming, and the future attractiveness of agriculture to the next generation.

Katharina Wolf



Katarina Wolf, 32, has served as Chair of LRF Ungdomen (The Federation of Young Farmers in Sweden) since 2024. She lives and works on a dairy farm in the south of Sweden, which she runs together with her two brothers, and she also manages her own forestry estate.
With a strong commitment to strengthening the position of the next generation of farmers, Katarina is dedicated to improving conditions for young people in the agricultural- and forestry sector. Her leadership focuses on advancing profitability, enhancing the attractiveness of the industry, and ensuring fair and competitive conditions for young entrepreneurs entering Swedish agriculture.

Conor Wynne



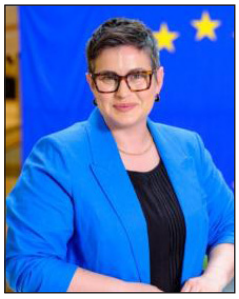
24 years old from Newbridge Co. Kildare, I do not come from a farm but always had a massive interest in farming. I left school at 16 and began working full time on farms, at 18 I started in Kildalton agriculture college completing my Green cert after that I moved on to complete my Level 7 Diploma in Professional Dairy Farm management in Moorepark Fermoy. At 22 I took lease of a farm I have been milking on since I left school, I am now running a Spring calving grass based dairy herd of 110 high EBI cows and also keeping all followers.

Cian Jobe



Cian Jobe is a dairy farmer originally from Co Longford. Growing up on a suckler farm, he developed a passion for dairying through relief milking before progressing through agricultural education, farm management and, more recently, farming in his own right. Since commencing his first lease on the Maxwell family farm in 2025, Cian has expanded the business to include a second leased dairy farm on the O'Rourke family farm and will begin milking there in 2027.

Maria Walsh



Originally elected in 2019, and re-elected in 2024, Maria Walsh is serving her second term as a Fine Gael MEP in the European Parliament. MEP Walsh represents the constituency of Midlands-North West which spans 15 counties across Ireland and is a member of the EPP Group in the European Parliament.

Maria sits on the European Parliament's Agricultural and Rural Development committee (AGRI) and the Women's Rights and Gender Equality committee (FEMM) as a full member, and is also a member of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) and Regional Development (REGI) committees. Her priorities include agriculture, regional development, women's rights, and mental health.

She is a voice for farmers across the Midlands-North West, for women and young girls, and for all those who need mental health support and services.

Maria's priorities on the agriculture committee include ensuring a fair deal for farm families in the upcoming CAP negotiations, breaking down barriers for female farmers, and securing incentives for much-needed young farmers to enter the sector.

Ellen Hurley



Ellen is the Farm Succession Officer in Carbery Group, where she leads the Shared Futures programme supporting farm families with succession, farm transfer and future planning. Having joined Carbery almost two years ago, she previously completed an MSc in Sustainable Development, Agri-Food, and Co-operatives at University College Cork. Ellen is passionate about supporting generational renewal in agriculture and helping farm families plan confidently for the future.

Paul O'Connell



Paul O'Connell is Milk Supply & Farm Succession Manager with Dairygold Co-Operative Society and leads the Dairygold Pathways Farm Succession Programme.

With over 38 years of experience in Dairygold across all divisions of the business, Paul has spent the last 14 years specialising in the Milk Supply Department.

His role focuses on supporting farming families with succession planning, generational renewal, family partnerships, farm transfers, collaborative farming arrangements and opportunities for young farmers and new entrants. Paul works closely with industry stakeholders such as the Land Mobility Service, the Teagasc GROdairy project and the ICOS RAISE Generational Renewal projects to promote and develop practical supports for farmers.

Dr Brian Leonard



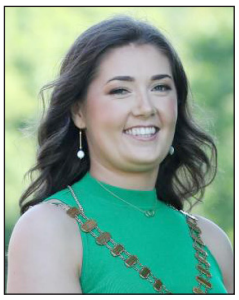
Brian Leonard is Assistant Professor in Generational Renewal and Rural Viability in the School of Agriculture & Food Science. His research interests include farm succession and inheritance, farm diversification, and rural development. Brian completed his PhD under the Teagasc Walsh Scholarship program at the Teagasc Rural Economy Research Centre Athenry and the University of Galway. Prior to this he was awarded an MA in Rural Sustainability and a BA in Geography/Sociology and Politics. Before joining UCD Dr Leonard worked as Atlantic Economic Corridor Officer at Galway County Council. He also worked as a post-doctoral researcher and on the Options for Farm Families program with Teagasc.

Clare O'Keeffe



Succession Ireland, founded by Clare O'Keeffe, supports farmers, farming families and the wider agricultural sector in navigating the human side of farm succession and intergenerational renewal. What began as a specialist mediation service has grown into a wider community of practitioners and educators supporting farm succession and business progression across Ireland. Clare established Succession Ireland to normalise difficult family conversations and bring the human dimension to farm succession and progression. A third-generation farmer, Clare's understanding of the value of open communication began during her studies at Kildalton Agricultural College. She holds a BA in Economics & Sociology from UCC, diplomas in Rural Isolation and Counselling Skills and Social & Community Studies, a Master's in Agricultural Science Extension & Innovation from UCD, and a Certificate in Land Law and Succession from SETU. Clare was the first woman elected to the regional committee of Dairygold Co-operative Society representing primary producers. In 2006, she was awarded a Nuffield Scholarship to research Succession on Family Farms: A Global Perspective, travelling across five continents to study succession practices. She subsequently trained in succession facilitation and planning in Australia and the USA, and is a certified mediator and member of the Mediators' Institute of Ireland. Clare co-designed and delivers CECRA training for advisors, mediators and facilitators, focusing on the soft skills required for challenging farm progression and succession conversations.

Josephine O'Neill



Josephine O'Neill is the National President of Macra, representing more than 16,000 young farmers and rural young people on the issues shaping their future and the future of rural Ireland. A native of Bennettsbridge, Co. Kilkenny, Josephine comes from a beef and tillage farm and has been an active member of Callan Macra for over 12 years. A qualified Home Economics and Irish teacher, Josephine is passionate about educating young people on food production, the importance of Irish agriculture, and the vital role farmers play in producing safe, sustainable, high-quality food.

Conor Hogan



Conor leads the People in Dairy Programme at Teagasc Moorepark, focusing on farm labour productivity, human resource management and generational renewal in Irish dairy farming. His work centres on creating attractive and productive farm workplaces and developing practical pathways for people to enter, progress and transition within the dairy sector. Conor has led the development GROdairy, a new Teagasc programme designed to support farm progression and generational renewal by mainstreaming collaborative farming models.

He is a 2026 Nuffield Ireland Scholar, with his study focused on future entry, progression and succession pathways for Irish dairy farms, and is also an Adjunct Lecturer at Cork University Business School, contributing to the UCC Agricultural Science degree programme.

Conor graduated from UCD with a BAgrSc in Dairy Business in 2018 and completed his PhD in dairy farm labour management and productivity in 2022.

Maria Dunne



Maria Dunne was appointed Assistant Secretary General in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in September 2024. She has responsibility for Agri-Food Sectoral Policy and Strategy Development. Previous roles in the Department include Head of Meat and Dairy Policy from 2017 to 2024 and Agricultural Counsellor at the Embassy of Ireland to the Russian Federation from 2013 to 2017. Prior to this she was based in the North South Ministerial Council in Armagh, Northern Ireland dealing with cross-border co-operation in trade and business. She has worked for the Civil Service since 1998 across a number of Departments, and has a BSc in Social Science (First Class Honours) and a Master's degree in public administration (First Class Honours).

Barry Cowen



Barry Cowen is a dedicated public servant with a long-standing commitment to representing the people of the Midlands and beyond. A native of county Offaly, Barry has over three decades of experience in public office, beginning as a local councillor and later serving as a member of Dáil Éireann from 2011 to 2024 where he represented the Laois-Offaly constituency. During his time in national politics, Barry held several prominent roles within Fianna Fáil, including key spokesperson and Programme for Government negotiating team positions, as well as serving as Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in 2020.

Ciara Ryan



Ciara Ryan is the Manager of Mid Tipperary Livestock Mart. Ciara grew up on a small beef and sheep farm outside Nenagh in Co. Tipperary. As an only child, she was out on the farm giving a hand from a young age. Ciara has a big grá for animals and the outdoors from an early age because of this. When it came to doing her leaving cert, Ciara decided to study Agricultural Science in UCD as she felt this would give her plenty of diverse opportunities to be involved in the industry in the future.

Caroline O'Donovan



Caroline O'Donovan is a dairy farmer from Ballinspittle, County Cork.

She has just completed a Diploma in Corporate Direction (Food Business) from the UCC/ICOS programme and graduated with an honours degree in Law (BCL) from UCC in 2003.

She has been a board member of Barryroe Co-op since 2022 and has established and run an annual Female Farming Seminar in Barryroe since being elected to the board.

Sean Lyons



Originally from Louisburgh, Co. Mayo, Sean completed his Leaving Certificate locally before studying at Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), graduating with a Level 8 degree in Agricultural Science. After working in Tipperary, he moved into agricultural advisory, gaining experience supporting farmers.

Alongside this, Sean worked in partnership with his father on their dairy, beef and sheep farm. At the beginning of 2026, Sean left his part-time agricultural advisory role to focus full-time on the family farming enterprise.

Philip O'Connor



Philip O'Connor is Head of Farm Support at ifac, a role he has held since 2018. With over two decades at the firm, Philip holds a BSc in Agriculture and an MBus, and specialises in farm business planning, farm financial management, and farm business development. He is the driving force behind ifac's annual Irish Farm Report.

Golden Jubilee Trust

PROPOSALS NOW WELCOME

Supporting co-operation, agriculture, sustainability and rural innovation across Ireland.



The Golden Jubilee Trust

A philanthropic trust since 1941. We support co-operative models to advance agriculture and strengthen rural communities across Ireland.

We invest in ideas that build stronger, sustainable and resilient rural communities.

CO-OPERATIVE INNOVATION

Fund research and practical co-operative projects.

RURAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Enhance wellbeing, cohesion and long-term resilience.

EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP

Build skills and leadership for a stronger future.

SUSTAINABILITY & RENEWABLE ENERGY

Support sustainability, clean energy, decarbonisation solutions.

APPLY NOW

Information & applications:
www.goldenjubileetrust.ie

The Golden Jubilee Trust continues to support developments and knowledge creation in the co-operative sector

"We aim to equip rural communities with the knowledge and supports they need to thrive,"

- Joe Collins, Chair



The Golden Jubilee Trust, the Irish organisation dedicated to promoting, developing and improving the co-operative movement and agriculture in Ireland, provides funding for a range of activity.

The Trust has a philanthropic mission to enhance co-operative models of business and social innovation, promote sustainable agricultural practices and support rural communities.

The programmes offer funding and support for initiatives including knowledge, education and training, rural community wellbeing and co-operative based projects in renewable energy and sustainability.

Joe Collins, Chair of The Golden Jubilee Trust said, *"As we promote the Trust's funding call, we are reaffirming our commitment to fostering innovation and sustainability, by supporting co-operative models that advance research, education and sustainability. We aim to encourage activities and developments that rural communities need to thrive by funding projects that will make a lasting impact through co-operation and social cohesion. Most recently, the Trust has supported research and initiatives focused on Irish agriculture and generational renewal and has also included support for FoodCloud's proposals to redistribute surplus food within rural communities."*

Minister for Agriculture, Martin Heydon TD, said, *"The Golden Jubilee Trust plays an important role in supporting sustainability and leadership within Ireland's co-operative and agricultural sectors. Its focus on education, leadership and community development promotes a shared ambition to build a resilient, climate-focused and future-ready farming sector. By investing in research, skills and practical solutions, the Trust is helping to empower rural communities to adapt, thrive and lead the transition to more sustainable agricultural models."*

The Golden Jubilee Trust is inviting proposals from organisations and individuals for grants in key areas that advance co-operative models and enhance community resilience. Projects may be research-based, such as in-depth analysis or feasibility studies, or practical, with specific objectives and measurable outcomes to be achieved.

Of particular interest are projects focused on:

Co-operative Innovation including research and practical projects that address emerging challenges, strengthen co-operatives and create sustainable economic and social value.

Strengthening Rural Community Resilience and wellbeing through local development, social cohesion and practical, community-led responses to economic, social and environmental challenges.

Promoting Education, Training and Leadership Development particularly for young farmers and women, to build leadership capacity and promote co-operative and sustainable practices.

Sustainability, Clean Energy and Decarbonisation initiatives including community-led projects, research to deliver environmental and economic benefits for rural communities and co-operatives.

About The Golden Jubilee Trust

Established in 1941, the Golden Jubilee Trust is a philanthropic trust committed to promoting co-operative models and improving the agricultural sector in Ireland. Through its funding initiatives, the Trust supports research, education and practical projects that benefit Irish society and the economy. By fostering sustainable development and community resilience, the Trust supports the future of agriculture and rural co-operatives in Ireland.

For more information on how to submit a proposal, **www.goldenjubileetrust.ie**

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