



**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

BSPO/3

GUIDELINES FOR RUNNING A BEEF AND SHEEP PRODUCER ORGANISATION

- **Annual membership fees**, rather than a one-off payment, should benefit POs when starting up. This makes the process of joining less onerous on members and minimises disruption of cash-flow.
- While DAFM does not require a members' minimum commitment of produce for recognition, DAFM strongly advises that the PO should request that members **contribute a minimum of 75%** of the cattle and sheep they dispose of annually to the PO. Feedback from existing groups has shown that this is essential for PO cohesion and the success of the group.
- **Marts** are already legal entities through their co-operative structure. Therefore, prospective POs should be aware where this infrastructure already exists and may consider capitalising upon it.
- A PO should consider appointing a person to fulfil **administrative, logistical and financial duties**. It may be worth hiring a dedicated employee for this role.
- **An AGM** is the best way to communicate information to members. An annual report issued at the AGM should help foster a sense of transparency among membership.
- POs should facilitate and encourage activities not directly related to sale of produce, such as **training, group farm visits and discussion groups**. These benefits can assist with incentivising loyalty and participation independently of market conditions.

- Activities other than production can be **outsourced**, but the PO will remain legally responsible for the activity and its conduct. Secretarial work, lairage or transport, for example, may be good candidates for outsourcing.
- **Transparency** and access to data for members will reinforce trust in the PO, so members should be able to access information on past prices, bonuses etc. achieved in order to compare to national prices. These could be distributed via a members-only website section, in an Annual Report or upon request. POs should also ensure up-to-date information is distributed promptly to members regarding optimum weight, spec, age etc.
- POs may discuss with a factory the feasibility of having **dedicated person to oversee kill days**. This can provide added value and trust for members and provide a direct link with factories to discuss issues regarding specification.
- Various approaches exist to **the PO/factory relationship**. Some groups will have an agreement with one particular factory, some target a range of factories whilst others centre their relationship around a particular brand or product type (breed, for example). Deciding on a clear strategy from the outset will make it easier for prospective members to evaluate the benefits of membership.
- **No 'one size fits all' approach exists** and the PO should tailor their activities according to the needs of their members and customers. They should also be conscious of the need to evolve, bearing changing market and industry conditions in mind.
- Recognition is open to all beef and sheep farmers and PO members who wish to **negotiate collectively** with slaughterhouses can avail of the protections afforded by Article 170 of Council Regulation 1308/2013.