



# Agricultural Meteorology Seminar - Discussion Summary

National Botanic Gardens  
Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015

The discussion element to the seminar had 4 sections to it:

- A. Group work related to the Joint Working Group on Applied Agricultural Meteorology (AGMET)
- B. Global agricultural meteorology activities
- C. Irish agricultural meteorology products
- D. Open discussion

## A. Group work related to the Joint Working Group on Applied Agricultural Meteorology (AGMET)

The room broke up into eight teams. Each took on the task of answering a particular question while also having the opportunity to potentially meet a new contact. The questions were related to the Joint Working Group on Applied Agricultural Meteorology (AGMET). Each group got the chance to give their opinions on what was asked and then the floor was open to further comment and discussion. Below is a summary of some of the discussion points that emerged.

### **Q1. What are the benefits of such a group?**

- Group members gain a greater understanding by communicating and networking
- Project efficiency – learning from the experience of others
- Education – not just members but the greater community
- Project potential – helping to find out who would be open to relevant collaborations
- Bringing disciplines together – the bigger picture
- Building momentum – assisting towards national goals
- Limits duplication of effort by learning what others are doing or have done in the area

### **Q2. What aims should this group have?**

- Ultimately to make recommendations on how meteorological information can be best utilised to help improve the Irish agricultural community
- This can be done through various targeted projects, examples of such include:
  - Better integrated climate and soil modelling
  - Improved grass and crop growth modelling
  - More localised forecasting products. e.g. Geolocated smart phone apps for weather forecasts and derived agricultural related products such as soil moisture, degree days and potential evapotranspiration

### Q3. How should objectives be determined & prioritised?

- Debate between defining objectives from group member's personal interests versus drawing from exiting national Agri-Food research priorities and organisational business plans
- The group must be flexible enough to incorporate ever changing objectives
- The potential availability and accuracy of the meteorological data streams will help limit and provide direction on what is possible at this time

### Q4. How could this group set targets and measure performance?

- Discussion around whether the group should measure its performance. Members contribute to the group which in turn benefits themselves as well as the wider agmet community. If there wasn't a performance benefit, members would have stopped contributing a long time ago and the group would have died out. It has been around for >30 years
- If performance was to be measured indices along the following lines could be considered:
  - Measure of increased PR, e.g. Numbers of members, website hits, social media followers
  - Number and weighting of related publications
  - Number and weighting of projects that the group contribute to

### Q5. How could this group remain sustainable?

- Many community members in the room had never heard of the AGMET group. Its PR must be raised for it to be sustainable. - newsletters, website, social media, emails
- Incorporate AGMET into 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> level education
- Possibly have formal farmer representation in the group
- Greater ties to the farming newspaper media
- Make the content on the AGMET website more current and relevant, such as:
  - Publications section
  - Include a bulletin board style forum for queries, events
  - Current project section
  - Proposed, desired project section
  - A metadata centre – what products, in particular meteorological products, are available in what formats over what periods and how to access them
- The ad-hoc volunteering structure of AGMET was discussed. Dedicated volunteers have produced very valuable outputs, but as always the case with volunteer supported groups, activities can slump if interests fall or key personal leave the community. This has been particularly evident when the Met Éireann post which traditionally convenes meetings has been vacant. There was a suggestion to potentially formalise the group in which heads of stakeholder members nominate a primary and support placeholder to the AGMET group. This would remove the group dependence on a single individual and help provide momentum and consistency across the groups objectives.

### Q6. Should the group be financed and if so how?

- General agreement that this group should not be financed by member organisations. The reasons for this include:
  - Loss of independence
  - If money contributions are uneven does this introduce a hierarchy into the group
  - If smaller organisations don't contribute does this limit their influence within the group
  - The overhead of the administration of collecting payments
- If funding is required a more sensible approach might be to seek research grants under a multidisciplinary group heading or otherwise

### Q7. How could existing outputs of this group be better used?

- Gather together all related AGMET material into a one stop shop for Irish agricultural meteorological
- User friendly for farmers as well as scientists and advisers
- Digitise previous AGMET publications / outputs where possible and make available via website

### Q8. Is there a need for such a group?

- Overwhelming agreement that yes there is
- As well as the benefits already listed it provides an all-Ireland forum for discussion
- Requires continued Met Éireann input to advise on new meteorological products, datasets and models
- Need to keep the content and projects of interest, nationally relevant and user friendly
- With robust infrastructure in place the group has the potential to become self-sufficient with limited reliability on individuals

## B. Global agricultural meteorology activities

There was a quick look at three globally available resources for the agricultural meteorology community

### **Commission for Agricultural Meteorology – (CagM)**

- The organisation was briefly introduced
- The four focus areas which are currently active were highlighted
- The role of Irish experts and nomination of same was discussed

For more information see [http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/wcp/agm/cagm/cagm\\_en.php](http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/wcp/agm/cagm/cagm_en.php)

### **The International Society for Agricultural Meteorology – (INSAM)**

- The organisation was briefly introduced
- The forum for engaging with the global agricultural community was highlighted
- This forum could be used for advertising PhD or Postdoc positions globally

For more information see <http://www.agrometeorology.org/>

### **World AgroMeteorological Information Service – (WAMIS)**

- The organisation was briefly introduced
- The website shows the type of agmet related products that many other countries around the world produce. Participants were encouraged to investigate these and approach Met Éireann if there is a particular agmet product that would suit their particular industry.

For more information see <http://www.wamis.org/>

## C. Irish agricultural meteorology products

In advance of the seminar a survey was circulated to participants to help determine meteorological priorities within the different branches of the agricultural community. It helped provide evidence on what was already known that some common products are of value to most but some specialised products while of little interest to most are essential to a few. The survey and detailed feedback comments also helped to provoke discussion and will assist in prioritising Met Éireann product development into the near future.

See *MÉ\_AgmetSeminar2015\_SurveyResults.pdf* for a summary of survey results and comments.

## D. Open Discussion

The discussion session ended with comments reiterating the need for an independent AGMET group initially run and maintained by major stakeholders but open to all with a vested interest in agricultural meteorology on the Island of Ireland. It was noted that it's important that there is value for individual members as well as the greater community, in order to ensure continued volunteering of time and effort. The seminar and the day ended highlighting that there is real potential to further assist the agricultural community in Ireland through the continued use of newer meteorological products and data streams, and that it is through communication and sharing of information that this can be achieved.

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