



The Fertilizer Association of Ireland

Topic: Acceptance speech of Jeremiah Murphy following presentation of Special Merit Award 2022

Date: 4th November 2022

It is with great pleasure that I accept this award from the FAI. It will have a prominent location on the mantel-piece. I note previous recipients like Matt Dempsey and Noel Culleton. I feel I am somewhat inadequate when listed alongside such distinguished people.

This is a relatively recent award and I am sure if it extended further back it would definitely include Dr Tom Gately one of the early authors of original green book back in 1971. It was much smaller edition than the present version but non the less very important in that era. I certainly used it in my early days as an information tool. Tom Gately was president of the FAI in 1991.

Since the FAI was founded back in 1968 (I promise I was not around that time) there has been many distinguished council members and Presidents. The first President was the famous Dr Tom Walsh and since then we have 47 including our present Dr Tim Sheil. The longest surviving members are MI Roche who was President back in 1977, Willie Murphy in 1979 and Pat McEnroe in 1980. I wish them all good health.

I was introduced to the FAI by Dr Jim Collins of Soils UCD when he was president in 1986. I was a young graduate at the time and doing my best to navigate the agricultural sector working for McDonoghs of Galway. I took the opportunity on offer as it seemed the right thing for me. The FAI promoted the economic use of fertiliser & Lime in producing quality food economically and thus adding to farmer profits. Those times the FAI had their Winter AGM, technical presentation followed by Annual dinner. Over the Summer they had a field outing followed by social golf. These times 40 to 50 attended the summer outing and golf. The FAI also did the IFJ publication in February which we still do today.

Our early meetings were in IAWS at 151 Thomas Street and our secretary was Patricia Muldowney of IAWS. The minutes were done up in a big book and were read out at our council meetings. Afterwards we reconvened down in Lynch's before disbanding to our various destinations closer to 9.00 pm. Not to be recommended now.

Lack of space became an issue in IAWS and we ventured down country firstly to Teagasc, Naas and later to Abbeyleix to our present location.





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Back in the 60's there was a big need and desire to promote agricultural production in Ireland. The use of fertiliser was promoted by government subsidy on Phosphorus, Potassium and Lime.

The P subsidy was introduced in 1958 and the K subsidy came in @ £4/T and later increased to £5 in 1962. These times there was 240 pence in the pound. A lime subsidy was earlier introduced in 1951 in association with the Sugar company to cover the transport cost.

Subsidies were removed in the 80's having achieved the objective of increased use of all three nutrients. I don't remember the removal of the K subsidy but I remember the removal of the P subsidy. On a Monday the Department of Agriculture called to our offices to register the cut-off point stock sales and deliveries. I remember a rush on deliveries the week leading up to the removal, The subsidy was somewhere between 50 to 60 pence per unit P. The Lime subsidy was removed in 1984 having broken the 1 million tonnes in sales the year of its removal. In 2021 it achieved a new record of 1.3 million tonnes, obviously farmers are aware of its benefits in improving the efficiency of other nutrients. Agriculture would benefit in getting that figure close to 2 million tonnes. Finbarr, our Department of Agriculture delegate on FAI council, any chance of getting some of these subsidies back? Fertiliser sales varied over the years largely associated with farm produce prices and the price of fertiliser. In 1975 it was 0.98 million tonnes, and going up to 1.7 million tonnes in 1985. In 1995 it hit a peak of 1.9 million tonnes before drifting back to 1.4 million tonnes in 2005 and the same figure in 2015. Last year figure was 1.6 million tonnes and expected to reduce in 2022 for price reasons.

Invariably I am associated with the FAI in some fashion since 1986. Agriculture benefited from EEC membership in 1973 and farmer's incomes greatly improved with the increased use of fertiliser. Life in rural Ireland greatly improved also. Enterprise profitability in descending order was Dairying, Sugar Beet, Tillage, Beef and sheep. That order has not changed since however now there is the notable absence of Sugar Beet.

The FAI's mission statement has not changed over the years and is as relevant today as back in the 70's, "Promotes the efficient use of fertilizer to produce quality food in an economical and sustainable manner". Environmental issues are now a pressing issue facing agriculture and the greater community. Farmers will not be found wanting in playing their part in a changing Ireland and continue to ensure that agriculture remains the most important industry across rural Ireland.

There are two issues the FAI Council need to address in the immediate future:





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1. For the 50th anniversary we made a major effort to locate all technical bulletins. We have over 40 collected. Presently the FAI are putting these up on the website. This is work in progress and needs to be completed.
2. The hard copies then need to be bound and possibly presented to a library. Otherwise, they will be lost. I take some blame as I had them in my position for a period.

Once again thanks for the award. I will treasure it.

Jeremiah Murphy

Jeremiah Murphy



Picture: Dr. Tim Shiel (President FAI), presents Jeremiah Murphy with the FAI Special Merit Award at the FAI Annual Dinner in November 2022

