

How to achieve systems innovation in the agri-food sector

Lessons from Ireland

In 2022, Climate-KIC and Ireland's Department of Food, Agriculture and the Marine joined forces to support national climate action in the agriculture and food sector. At the core of this partnership is the commitment to a systemic, transformative approach. But what do systemic change and innovation look like in practice?

Two years into the Deep Demonstration partnership, we are sharing some of the lessons we learned into how to drive systems change on the ground, that can help other practitioners get started – or move forward when they feel stuck.



4 recommendations to accelerate systems change



Entrepreneurial activity

Use knowledge and financial resources to drive greater innovation across value chains. Start with removing barriers, aligning entrepreneurial goals with climate and market opportunities, and testing new business models in local communities.



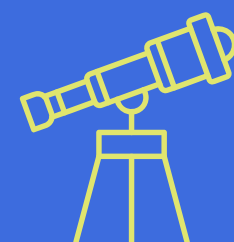
Community engagement

Engaging rural communities as innovators and climate action leaders can demonstrate what change looks like on a smaller, practical scale, building on Ireland's unique tradition of family-run and part-time farming culture.



Catalyst spaces

Focus on less-crowded opportunities that align with climate goals to achieve quick, visible successes. Small wins in these areas enable experimentation and build momentum for change.



Long-term resilience

Make the case for resilience and sustained investment. Short-term thinking and funding cycles hinder innovation and entrepreneurial action.

How to build an innovation space

Focusing on interventions is important, but to ensure we keep a systemic perspective and complement any gap in delivery, it's crucial to integrate and develop these three key levers of change.

-  **Governance and policy**
Translate insights into practical recommendations for policy, like how institutions and departments can better coordinate and share lessons, or how local approaches can translate to national scale.
-  **Narratives**
Focus on making the case for 'better living' alongside 'better farming' and 'better business'. This will help people keep motivated, and bring cultural and creative sectors along the journey.
-  **Technology**
Keep on top of research and new technologies across different sectors. They have the potential to strengthen, inspire, or shape innovation in the agri-food system.



3 areas for future opportunities

-  Systemic investment in net-zero land and agri-food practices
-  Rural infrastructure at the intersection of energy and agri-food
-  Local community demonstrations of new well-being and circularity models