

WP3.1 Field Day reports from Donegal, Ireland.

Dates: 26th June 2024, 26th July 2024 and 22nd August 2024.

Place: Killea, Co. Donegal, Ireland.

Participants: 53 people

Three field day trips were organised in Donegal in 2024. At all three field trips, the OatFrontiers project, its objectives, and the varieties grown was presented by the UCD leads Prof. Fiona Doohan and/or her collaborator Dr. Cathal McCabe. They explained the impact of breeding on crop performance and the importance oat crop improvement for increased oat production in the Northwest of Ireland. Each field trip was followed by question-and-answer sessions.

FIELD TRIP 1:

The first field trip was targeted at researchers across the food chain and was attended by the Irish government of Agriculture, Mr. Charlie McConalogue (Figure 1). The aim of this visit was to demonstrate to Irish researchers across the food chain the potential of oats in the Northwest and to highlight the OatFrontiers research to the government Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.



Figure 1: Field trip 1 – researchers and the Irish government Minister of Agriculture visit the OatFrontiers trials.

FIELD TRIP 2:

The second field trip hosted farmers from areas in the Northwest of Ireland where crop cultivation has declined, with the objective of demonstrating the potential of oats in their region (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Field trip 2 – trials prepared for farmer visit 1.

FIELD TRIP 3:

The third day trip was held for tillage farmers, farm advisers and other operators in the agricultural sector (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Field trip 3 – farmers, advisors and other operators at the oat field trial site.

FEEDBACK:

Overall, the main feedback from farmers and advisors was the need for short chain circular economics and more adapted varieties for the region and for Ireland. The key feedback from the first field trip was the need to exploit the potential of oats for niche markets. The main discussion point at the second field trip was the loss of cultivation expertise and lack of machinery within the western parts of the region and the main feedback was need for more crop expertise and associated facilities in the far western region. Attendees at the third field trip highlighted the need for more adapted varieties for the region and welcomed the potential of projects such as OatFrontiers to help in this regard.