



LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

2000

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

HIGHER AND ORDINARY LEVELS

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL/ORDINARY LEVEL

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to inform teachers of the performance of candidates in the Leaving Certificate Examination in Agricultural Economics at both Higher and Ordinary Levels. Taken together with the detailed marking scheme, which is already published, teachers should find it helpful in their work of guiding future examination candidates.

The Agricultural Economics examination at both Higher and Ordinary Level has two components:

- (i) School Assessment
- (ii) Written Examination

The School Assessment focuses on project work undertaken by candidates over the duration of their course of study. A maximum of 80 marks may be awarded to the candidates following an oral assessment and external monitoring of the candidates' work.

The Higher and Ordinary level candidates follow a common syllabus for the written examination and may be awarded a maximum of 320 marks.

The written examination consists of two parts. Part 1 comprises a total of twenty short response type questions. Candidates are required to answer fifteen questions and may be awarded a maximum of 120 marks. Part 11 comprises a total of six questions. Candidates are required to answer four questions and may be awarded a total of 200 marks.

The total number of candidates taking Agricultural Economics at Leaving Certificate Level has remained very much in line with previous years. Over 95% of candidates take the Higher Level examination.

320 candidates sat the examination in 2000, 302 at Higher Level and 18 at Ordinary Level. Comparative figures for previous years are illustrated below:

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total Candidates	286	302	267	280	327

2. ORDINARY LEVEL WRITTEN EXAMINATION

2.1. Performance of candidates:

The examination paper at Ordinary Level was very clear and offered a good choice of questions, however, the candidates taking the Ordinary Level examination performed poorly overall.

The percentage of candidates scoring a grade E or lower for the written examination at Ordinary Level, excluding the project component, was 55.56%. When both the written examination and the project component were taken into account, those scoring a grade E or lower was 38.9%. A significant number of candidates performed very poorly in both project and written examination at Ordinary Level.

The table below gives the breakdown of grades received by candidates in the Ordinary Level Examination:

2000 - Ordinary Level -18 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D 1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	0	0	0	0	5.6	0	5.6	16.7	0	16.7	11.1	27.8	11.1	5.6

2.2. Analysis of paper:

Ordinary Level Part 1 (120 marks)

The format of the written examination for Ordinary Level reflects the Higher Level written examination. Candidates were required to answer 15 short response type questions out of 20 questions. 18 candidates sat the examination at this level. The questions were seen as a fair test of the candidates at this level, yet a significant number did not attempt the required minimum number of questions.

Many candidates attempted less than 50% of Part 1 and most scored less than 50% of the total mark allocation for this part of the examination. This had an obvious impact on the final grade awarded. Questions 1,2,4,7,8,13,17,18,19 were the questions most frequently answered correctly.

Ordinary Level Part 11 (200 Marks)

Question 1

This question was attempted by 55% of candidates.

- (a) In general the answering was satisfactory
- (b), (c) Much of the answering here was poor, with little evidence that this topic had been adequately studied.

Question 2

This was a popular question attempted by 88% of candidates.

- (a) and (b) were generally well answered, however many candidates were unable to apply **Demand/Supply** analysis to the situations outlined.

Question 3

50% of candidates attempted this question. There was general confusion about labelling **Supply, Demand and Equilibrium Price** levels, with very few candidates achieving full marks. Many failed to answer part (iii) of the question.

Question 4

This question was answered by 75% of candidates.

Many candidates were unfamiliar with the calculations required resulting in very confused answers. Section (b) was generally well answered.

Question 5

This question proved to be the least popular with 40% of candidates attempting the question. The standard of answering was poor in most cases. Candidates made a reasonable attempt at part (b) offering many reasons even though only two were required.

Question 6

The question was attempted by 55% of candidates.

(a) In general the answering in this section was satisfactory.

(b) There was some confusion between the two **supply control** measures when giving the examples which were required.

3. HIGHER LEVEL WRITTEN EXAMINATION

3.1. Performance of candidates:

The examination paper at Higher Level was generally very well received. It was perceived as a well-balanced and well laid-out paper, which tested the candidates' knowledge of the subject, and gave candidates a fair test.

The candidates taking the Higher Level examination performed well overall. While a number of students performed poorly on the written examination, the addition of the project mark significantly improved the overall grade in the majority of cases. The percentage scoring a grade E or lower for the written examination at Higher Level, excluding the project component, was 30.46%. When both the written and project component were taken into account, 11.6% of candidates scored a grade E or lower.

It was evident from monitoring examination scripts that a significant number of candidates did not have the level of knowledge and understanding of the programme required by the syllabus.

The table below gives the breakdown of grades received by candidates in the Higher Level examination.

2000- Higher Level -302 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	4.6	6.3	5.6	6.0	5.3	8.9	11.6	7.3	10.9	8.9	12.9	9.9	1.7	0

3.2 Analysis of paper:

Higher Level Part 1 (120 marks)

This section of the examination, consisting of short response type questions, was well answered by the majority of candidates. 15 questions were required to be answered out of a possible 20 questions. The majority of candidates answered all 20 questions. Marks ranged from 12 marks to 120 marks, the average percentage score being 55%.

Question Nos. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, 19, 20 were well answered and generally presented no problems for candidates. The concept of "value added" in Question 4 caused some difficulty. Many candidates were unable to state two reasons for lower milk prices in Question 5.

Question 11 on demand-pull inflation and Question 16 on inelasticity were generally poorly answered. Some candidates had a poor understanding of basic economic concepts. A number of candidates had difficulty defining The Debt to Net Worth Ratio in Question 13. The distinction between "profitable" and "feasible" presented some difficulties.

Higher Level Part 11 (200 marks)

Question 1 Response Rate: 85% Average Mark: 50%

This question proved popular and was generally well answered.

- (i) The definition of **Gross Agricultural Output** did not present problems.
- (ii) Many candidates failed to distinguish between **Income arising in Agriculture** and **Family Farm Income**. A number of candidates answered the question in the context of an individual farm rather than the National Farm.
- (iii) Candidates had the correct answer, however, in many cases it was presented very poorly.
- (iv) Most candidates listed all factors of production.

Question 2 Response Rate: 45% Average Mark: 58%

This was not a very popular question, with responses varying from minimally competent to very good. The question required an analysis of a set of figures, which some candidates found quite challenging.

- (i) The majority of candidates was able to calculate Demand, but was unable to determine the **Annual shift in Demand**.
- (ii) This was generally interpreted well by the candidates.
- (iii) Not well answered. Answers were generally very vague.

Question 3 **Response Rate 15%** **Average Mark 24%**

This question was at the lower end of the scale in terms of popularity and scoring.

- (i) Very few candidates could explain the terms **Real Price Index** and **Farmers Terms of Trade**.
- (ii) Low marks were scored for this question, because of its linkage to part (i) of question.
- (iii) Answers to the last part of this question were generally weak and the majority of candidates failed to state two reasons.

Question 4 **Response Rate 90%** **Average Mark 64%**

This was the most popular question and many candidates achieved high marks.

- (i) In the definition of **Repayment Capacity**, many candidates failed to mention the deduction of living expenses from available income.
- (ii), (iii) and (iv) in general did not present problems.

Question 5 **Response Rate 85%** **Average Mark 56%**

(i), (ii) Candidates had a good understanding of price formation on the **EU and World Markets**.

The concept of **Free Trade**, which implies an autonomous price system, was not clearly understood in some cases as part (v) of the question indicated. Many candidates mentioned **Price Support** mechanisms rather than Income Supplements.

Question 6 **Response Rate 80%** **Average Mark 52%**

The standard of answering was very variable, ranging from 0 marks to 50 marks,

- (i) Vague, generalised treatment of the subject matter was prevalent here. Many candidates discussed how price changes cause shifts in **Demand and Supply** rather than the reverse.
- (ii) The **Supply and Demand** curves were drawn correctly in most cases, however greater care would have been required when recording on the diagram the price and price movements.
- (iii) There was an incorrect analysis of revenue changes because of unclear recording of prices in part (ii) in some cases.

4. PROJECT/PRACTICAL WORK

A broad range of projects was presented. They were generally of a high standard and in some cases excellent, with the better grades being awarded to projects with clearly identified aim(s) and with an analysis and evaluation of outcomes/conclusions.

The completion of Farm Accounts, based on the candidate's own farm, and its evaluation by comparison with National statistics was undertaken by many candidates. Research instruments such as case studies and questionnaires were used by a number of candidates to support the investigations undertaken. Candidates, who provided case studies or who carried out individual research through questionnaires, generally did very well.

Many projects were focused, however, some were very long and over descriptive. Candidates should note the Marking Criteria (Appendix 3) and the scale of project should reflect the marks available. The project accounts for 20% of the total examination (Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools).

In relation to project work the following should be noted:

- The Research Project selected should relate specifically to some aspect(s) of the syllabus.
- It should have a clear focus and should avoid being too descriptive.
- Candidates should consider why the research is being carried out, how it is to be conducted, and what methods should be employed to gather evidence.
- Candidates should analyse, evaluate and make recommendations based on their evidence.
- Sources used should be identified and referenced.

5. OVERALL GENERAL COMMENTS

The examination, especially at the Higher Level, demands an accurate knowledge of some concepts and theories of Economics and the ability to apply that knowledge to the Agricultural Sector. Information/statistics and relevant data on contemporary issues in agriculture are also required.

The standard of answering at Higher Level was generally satisfactory. There was general agreement that the examination was fair and balanced with topics ranging over the entire course. Questions were clear and concise. The examiners expressed satisfaction with the layout of the paper and the content of questions. The questions were seen as appropriate to this level.

Answers varied from very limited knowledge and understanding of core elements of the syllabus to answers displaying a high level of competence.

Answers achieving high marks focused on the question, showed a sound knowledge and understanding of the course and were expressed clearly, using appropriate terminology.

The better answers were characterised by analysis of economic concepts and their application to agricultural situations.

The lower scoring answers displayed limited knowledge and understanding of the course material and limited competence in the use of terminology.

In many cases, diagrams were not drawn clearly or labeled correctly.

It was apparent from the level of answering that a number of candidates who took the Higher Level paper might have performed better had they chosen the Ordinary Level examination.

The standard of answering at Ordinary Level was generally poor. A number of candidates did not attempt the required number of questions or omitted sections of questions. This was particularly evident in scripts that attained less than a Grade D.

A poor grasp of the knowledge required by the syllabus was displayed by many candidates at Ordinary Level and by a number of candidates at Higher Level.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Candidates should be familiar with the Marking Criteria for the Project work. Cognisance should be taken of each criterion and work undertaken should reflect the allocation of marks. Well-researched small-scale studies allow for analysis and interpretation of findings, which is a very important element of a Research Project.

Higher order skills of analysis and evaluation are required for good answering at Higher Level. It is important therefore that candidates continue to perfect these skills.

Candidates should choose carefully the questions they intend answering and complete the required number of questions.

Diagrams should be drawn clearly and labeled.

Greater attention should be given to an understanding of basic economic concepts/theories and their application to the agricultural sector.

APPENDIX 1

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

HIGHER LEVEL, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999

1995 - 221 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	14.5	7.7	6.3	8.1	8.1	11.3	7.2	5.4	5.4	5.9	7.7	9.5	2.7	0

1996 - 273 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	7.7	4.4	9.2	8.8	9.5	9.9	9.9	7.0	7.7	7.0	7.7	8.1	3.3	0

1997 - 246 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	12.2	6.9	11.8	13.8	10.6	5.7	7.3	8.5	9.3	5.3	5.3	3.3	0	0

1998 - 268 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	2.6	6.0	5.6	5.6	8.6	10.8	9.3	7.5	10.8	10.8	11.6	8.6	2.2	0

1999- 302 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	4.0	11.3	11.3	13.6	11.3	12.9	10.9	6.6	7.9	4.3	3.6	1.3	1.0	0

APPENDIX 2

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

ORDINARY LEVEL 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999

1995 - 65 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	0	0	0	4.6	3.1	1.5	10.8	4.6	9.2	10.8	26.2	20.0	9.2	0

1996 - 29 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.9	10.3	10.3	17.2	3.4	34.5	13.8	0

1997 - 21 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	0	0	0	0	9.5	4.8	14.3	14.3	14.3	4.8	14.3	19.0	4.8	0

1998 - 12 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	0	0	0	0	8.3	16.7	8.3	0	0	16.7	16.7	33.3	0	0

1999- 25 Candidates

GRADE	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E	F	NG
%	0	0	0	0	0	4.0	8.0	12.0	4.0	28.0	16.0	16.0	12.0	0

APPENDIX 3

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS RESEARCH PROJECT MARKING CRITERIA

These marking criteria have been devised to provide teachers with a framework within which to assess project work in Agricultural Economics.

The practical/project work merits 80 marks, representing 20% of the total mark for the subject (Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools). The scale of the project should reflect the marks available.

The general headings under which the practical work is to be assessed are: **Aim of project; Method employed; Records; Evaluation of records – economic principles; and Implications of principles as evidenced by projects. The candidate should be aware of each criterion and the work undertaken should reflect the marks allocated to each section.**

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

AIM OF PROJECT

The aim is the stated object of the exercise, i.e. what the candidate hopes will be achieved by the project. The aim of the project should be clear and should be related specifically to some aspect(s) of the syllabus. A clear single statement or a brief paragraph setting out the aim(s) will suffice.

Clarity (making a clear statement or set of statements): 5 marks

Relevance (relating the aim(s) to aspect(s) of the syllabus): 5 marks

METHOD EMPLOYED

The candidate should make a considered choice of method for the project. This should be reflected in the main body of the work. There should be evidence of planning and background research. This should show how the candidate arrived at the method chosen. There should be a clear link between the aim(s) of the project and the method chosen. Where the project involves desk research, a bibliography should be furnished. Various information gathering techniques might be employed. Sources of information should be identified (Published statistics; reference books; newspapers; questionnaires; interviews; surveys; library research; visits to companies; farms; farming bodies; Internet; etc.). Genuine research must be carried out.

Steps Involved in Arriving at Method(s): 5 marks

Suitability of Method(s) in Relation to Stated Aim(s): 5 marks

RECORDS

Records must be present. They may include one or more of the following: copies of letters; completed questionnaires; national statistics; survey results; maps; photos; graphics; accounting records (for farm accounts option); records of interviews, etc. Tape or video recordings and computer files are acceptable as records provided their content is reflected in the main document. There may be selective use of transcription and published materials. **It should be noted that, in the case of a project involving desk research, a candidate might be tested in the oral examination on familiarity with materials cited.**

Records (that a reasonable volume of suitable material is present): 10marks

Quality of Records (how relevant the content is): 10 marks

Accessibility (order of presentation; organisation of records): 10 marks

EVALUATION OF RECORDS – ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES

Reference should be made to economic principles or concepts when evaluating the records presented. These may include: demand and supply; forces that influence agricultural prices; the allocation of resources within agriculture; factor price formation, etc. Candidates should be able to critically evaluate the records and should show a clear knowledge of underlying economic concepts. Managerial economic concepts may also be included, especially for evaluation of farm accounts e.g., costing; return on capital; diminishing returns to scale; etc.

Economic Principles: 5 marks

Linking of Records to Economic Principles: 5 marks

Critical Evaluation (overall judgement): 5 marks

IMPLICATIONS OF PRINCIPLES AS EVIDENCED BY PROJECT(S)

Candidates should be able to interpret the information and make appropriate recommendations based on that interpretation. The specific aim(s) of the project should be achieved and the analysis of results/outcomes of the investigation should be compared against the stated aim(s). There should be evidence of development, analysis and interpretation of information. The outcome of the research and how it relates to the aim(s) of the project should be evaluated.

Interpretation of Information: 5 marks

Recommendation(s): 5 marks

Link With Stated Aim(s): 5 marks.