

Agricultural Crime in Ireland

**Report 1:
Incidence of Agricultural Crime in Ireland**

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31 January 2017

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31 January 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

Background to the Independent Agricultural Crime Survey

In the Republic of Ireland in recent years concerns have been raised about the amount and types of crimes being committed on farms. The *Farmer's Journal* in 2013 reported that organised theft of livestock was noted as a growing problem,¹ and in 2014 livestock theft was described as a multimillion euro economy.² Farmers expressed fear about going about their business on their farms³ and were informed in the media that thieves had shopping lists to target farm assets.⁴

Agriculture is an important indigenous sector that is crucial to Ireland's economy when measured in terms of production, exports and workforce. According to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine the agri-food sector accounts for 7.6% of Gross Value Added (a measure of the value of goods and services produced in a sector of the economy) almost €12 billion or 10.7% of Ireland's exports and employs 8.4% of the workforce⁵.

Although agriculture is a critical part of the Irish economy the extent and nature of agricultural crime in Ireland has never been the subject of a specific crime survey. This is not a study of rural crime. Rural crime is generally understood to be crime occurring outside of urban areas. This study examines crimes that occur solely on farms or relating to farming activities. Historically, the first agricultural crime survey was conducted in West Virginia in the US in 1978.⁶ Subsequently surveys have been conducted in various countries including Australia, Kenya and the United Kingdom. Determining the extent of agricultural crime is important because the financial costs of agricultural crime can extend well beyond the initial loss and affect the ability of the farm as a business to maximise the wealth of the farmer owner. For example, the theft of breeding stock can destroy an individual farmer's time, money and breeding programme⁷ and represents hidden opportunity costs. Also, the costs of agricultural crime can extend beyond the loss to the individual farmer to local businesses that rely on the farmer's income or products/services. Consumers may be impacted if agricultural product prices increase due to the cost of agricultural crime.⁸ Additionally, potential risks to the food chain may be created where illegal rubbish dumping pollutes crops, waterways or livestock, or stolen livestock is slaughtered and distributed outside of food protection processes.⁹

¹ J. McCarthy (2013) "Cattle Rustling – A Growing Problem." *Irish Farmers Journal* (29 August 2013).

² P. Donohoe (2014) "Rustling: The Multimillion Euro Economy." *Irish Farmers Journal* (10 July 2014).

³ A. Hennessy (2016) "Tipperary Farm Robbery: I'm Afraid to Go Down to the Cows Calving at Night." *Irish Farmers Journal* (11 March 2016).

⁴ O. Evans (2016) "Thieves Use Shopping List to Target Farmers." *Irish Farmers Journal* (25 August 2016).

⁵ Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (2016) *Annual Review and Outlook for Agriculture, Food and the Marine 2015-2016*. Dublin.

⁶ T. L. Bean & L. D. Bean (1978) *Crime on Farms in Hampshire County, West Virginia: Pilot Study*. Morgantown: Center for Extension and Continuing Education, West Virginia University (R.M. No. 69).

⁷ E. Barclay (2001) *A Review of the Literature on Agricultural Crime*. Armidale, New South Wales: Institute for Rural Futures.

⁸ A.Chalfin J. Roman, D. P. Mears & M. L. Scott (2007) *The Costs and Benefits of Agricultural Crime Prevention*. Florida State University: Urban Institute Justice Policy Center.

⁹ J. Jones (2010) "The Neglected Problem of Farm Crime: An Exploratory Study." *Safer Communities* 9(1) 36-44.

Five activities have been identified as necessary for the prevention and reduction of agricultural crime: (i) the collection and analysis of agricultural crime data; (ii) followed by information sharing; (iii) education about the issues; (iv) marking equipment and (v) promoting an aggressive stance towards enforcement and prosecution of offenders.¹⁰ This independent agricultural crime survey represents the collection and analysis of the data collected from the first national independent agriculture crime survey of farmers. This report represents the first sharing of the information relating to the incidence of agriculture related crime collected and analysed.

Methodology of Agricultural Crime Survey

The authors conducted an independent national survey of agricultural crime in Ireland. For the purpose of this study agricultural crime is defined as: (i) vandalism / criminal damage / trespass; (ii) theft; (iii) criminal assault; or (iv) fraud experienced by a farmer in the course of their farming activities. The primary objective of this survey was to gather data about the level and cost of agricultural crime experienced by farmers as well as crime prevention measures employed by farmers. The survey was open to all full-time and part-time farmers engaged in farming in any sector(s) in the period 1 January 2014 to 31 May 2016 regardless of whether the farmer experienced crime.

Respondents completed the independent anonymous survey online. The survey was open for four months between June and October 2016. A number of initiatives were employed to bring a request to complete the survey to the attention of farmers. The Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association (ICSA) conducted a media campaign calling on farmers to complete the survey and hosted a link to the survey site on the homepage of their website. The authors also encouraged participation and circulated the survey site address when engaging with farmers through farming newspaper and radio interviews, attending 'farming events' including agricultural shows, the National Ploughing Championship, mart sales, farming information gatherings as well as communicating with over forty specialist farming groups.

All respondents were asked to answer questions across the three parts of the survey: (i) general farm description; (ii) incidents of agricultural crime; and (iii) crime prevention measures. Questions relating to each incident of an agricultural crime were only asked if the respondent indicated the number of times they experienced that agricultural crime. The questions about the incident(s) of agricultural crime were not available to respondents where the respondent recorded zero incidents of the type of agricultural crime. The maximum number of crimes a respondent could indicate under each crime type was ten.

The survey was completed by 861 respondents from across all sectors and counties. This is comparable to the number of farms sampled by Teagasc in the 2015 National Farm Survey¹¹ as representative of the nearly 85,000 farms nationally.

¹⁰ D. P. Mears, M. L. Scott & A. S. Bhati (2007) "A Process and Outcome Evaluation of an Agricultural Crime Prevention Initiative." *Criminal Justice Policy Review* (18)1 51-80.

¹¹ Teagasc. (2016) *Teagasc National Farm Survey Results 2015*. Carlow: Teagasc.

2. AGRICULTURAL CRIME VICTIMISATION

Overall Victimization Levels on Farms in Ireland

The agricultural crime survey was open to all farmers engaged in farming activities between 1 January 2014 and 31 May 2016. 296 respondents recorded that they did not experience agricultural crime during this period whereas 565 respondents did experience agricultural crime.

Of the 565 respondents that recorded that they experienced of agricultural crime, 216 respondents experienced only one incident of agricultural crime. Whereas 349 experienced more than one incident within the same category or across multiple categories of agricultural crime.



Figure 1
Whether a Respondent Experienced Agricultural Crime between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16

In total 1,512 incidents of agricultural crime in the prescribed period were recorded. Incidents were recorded across the four categories of agricultural crime namely in descending order: (i) vandalism/criminal damage/trespass (VCDT) 711; (ii) theft 652; (iii) criminal assault 76; and (iv) fraud 73.

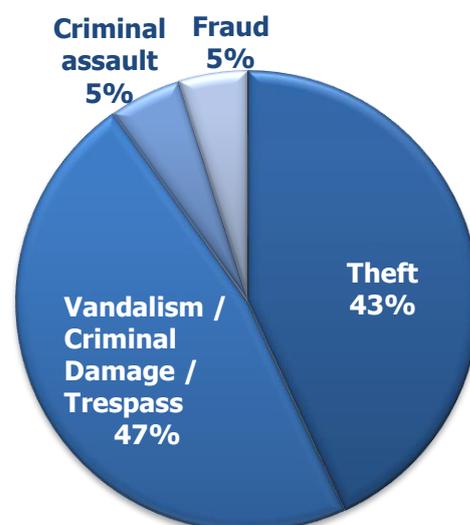


Figure 2
Incidents of Agricultural Crime Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 by Category of Agricultural Crime

3. VANDALISM / CRIMINAL DAMAGE / TRESPASS

Overall Vandalism / Criminal Damage / Trespass (VCDT) Levels

Respondents had 29 listed options available in the survey to record the type of vandalism / criminal damage / trespass (VCDT) experienced. These options can be divided into three groups, namely: (i) use of land related crimes more commonly related to as trespass; (ii) the destruction or injury to personal property; and (iii) the destruction or injury to land. Legally land includes anything that is permanently attached to the land such as buildings, walls, fences and gates. For clarity, the destruction or injury to crops was treated as the destruction or injury to personal property.

Of the survey's 861 respondents 814 recorded whether or not they had experienced VCDT between 1 January 2014 and 31 May 2016. 498 respondents recorded that they did not experience VCDT compared to 316 respondents that did experience a total of 711 incidents of VCDT.

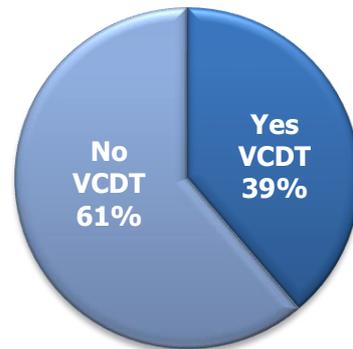


Figure 3
Whether a Respondent Experienced VCDT between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16

Of the 316 respondents who recorded experiencing incidents of VCDT the highest grouping of respondents who recorded experiencing VCDT was the 164 with one incident of VCDT, followed by 72 respondents with 2 incidents and 30 respondents with 3 incidents of VCDT.

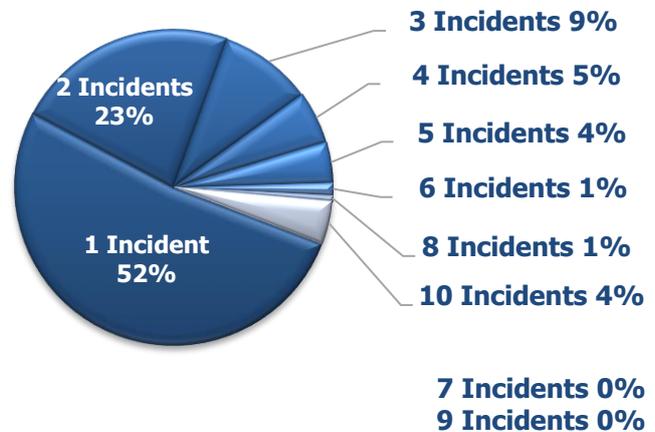


Figure 4
Respondents with Experience of VCDT between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 by Number of Incidents Recorded

The results suggest chronic experiences with VCDT and an extensive level of repeat victimisation. Just 164 of the 711 incidents of VCDT recorded in the prescribed period are the only incident experienced by a respondent. Whereas 152 incidents are the first of multiple incidents of VCDT recorded by a respondent and 395 of the 711 incidents of VCDT are incidents experienced where it was not the respondent's first incident of VCDT in the prescribed period.

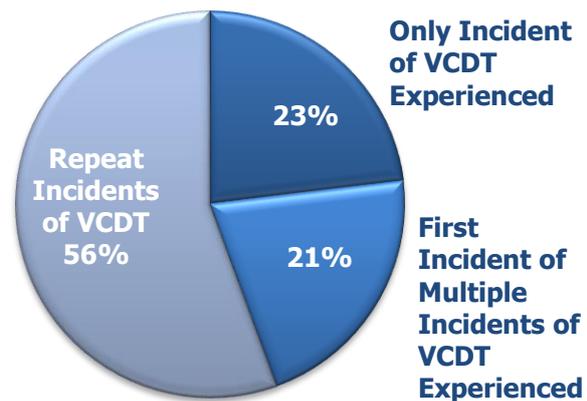


Figure 5
Characterisation of an Incident of VCDT Recorded as Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 as a First or Repeat Incident

Types of Vandalism / Criminal Damage / Trespass (VCDT) Experienced

The 316 respondents with experience of VCDT detailed the type of VCDT experienced for 561 of the 711 incidents recorded. Of the three groups of VCDT trespass was the most prevalent VCDT specified with 365 incidents recorded followed by 112 incidents of destruction / injury to personal property and 84 incidents of destruction / injury to land.

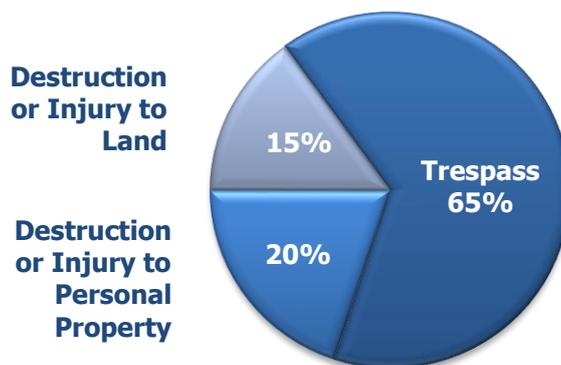


Figure 6
Incidents of VCDT Recorded by Respondents as Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 by Group

Across all the types of VCDT unauthorised hunting / fishing / shooting had the most incidents recorded and specified, accounting for a quarter of all VCDT. Just two types of VCDT account for nearly half of all the incidents of VCDT recorded; namely (i) unauthorised hunting / fishing / shooting; and (ii) rubbish dumping. Whereas, the lowest type of VCDT with incidents recorded was destruction / injury to the farmhouse with 3 incidents recorded.

Trespass:



Destruction or Injury to Personal Property:



Destruction or Injury to Land:

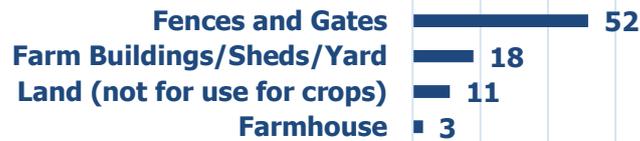


Figure 7
Type of VCDT Recorded by Respondents as Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 Ranked by Number of Incidents

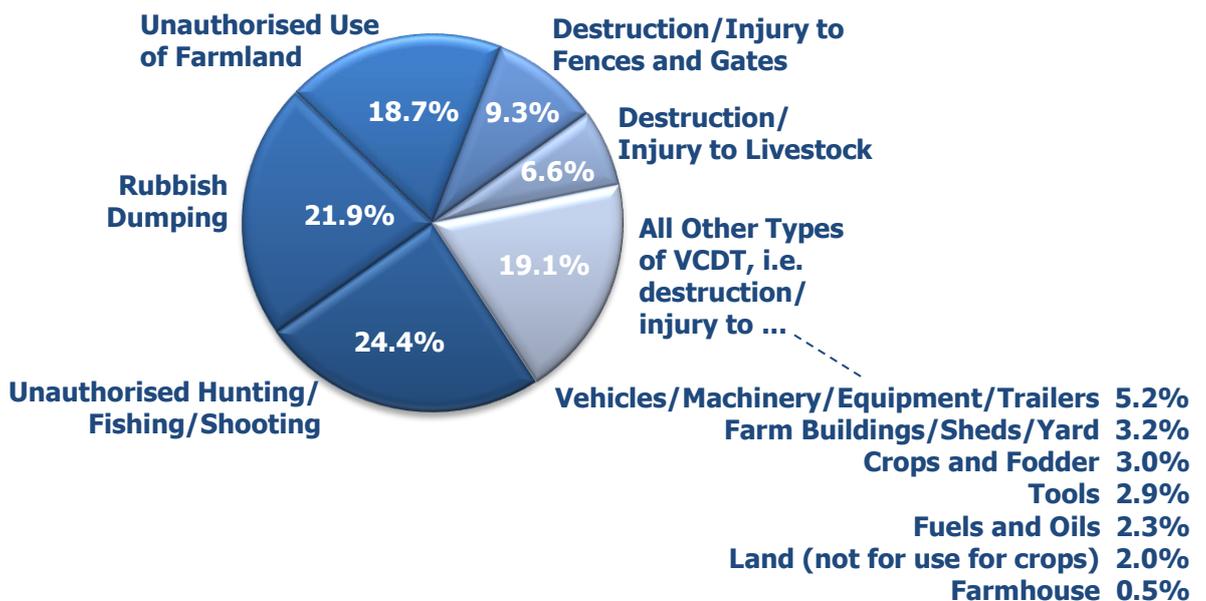


Figure 8
Incidents of VCDT Recorded by Respondents as Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 by Type

Arson

Generally arson is considered a much more serious crime than vandalism, criminal damage or trespass because of the increased risk posed to other properties and life. Of the 711 incidents of VCDT recorded respondents recorded that 34 of the incidents of vandalism and criminal damage were caused by arson. These 34 incidents of arson were experienced by 16 respondents; 9 of these respondents experienced repeated incidents of arson.

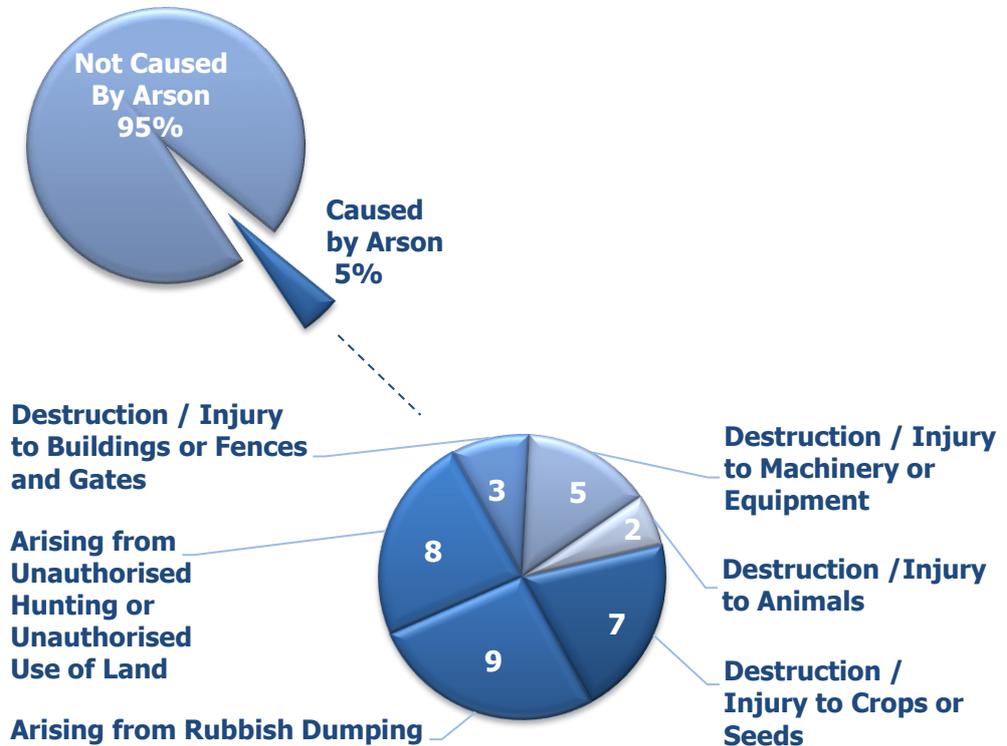


Figure 9
Whether VCDT Recorded as Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 was Caused by Arson and Number of Types of VCDT Caused by Arson

Overall Theft Levels

Respondents had 42 listed options available in the survey to record the type of farm related assets stolen as well as an 'other' option to record any particular farm related asset not applicable to the options provided. All of the farm related asset options can be broadly divided into three groups, namely: (i) machinery and equipment and vehicle related thefts; (ii) theft of tools, chemicals materials and miscellaneous personal property; and (iii) theft of livestock, feed and products.

Of the survey's 861 respondents 849 recorded whether or not they had experienced theft between 1 January 2014 and 31 May 2016. 498 respondents recorded that they did not experience theft compared to 351 respondents that did experience a total of 652 incidents of theft.



Figure 10
Whether a Respondent Experienced Theft between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16

Of the 351 respondents who recorded experiencing incidents of theft just over half the incidents of theft recorded occurred on farms where only 1 theft was recorded in the prescribed period. 191 respondents recorded experiencing one incident of theft; this is almost double the 100 respondents who recorded experiencing two incidents of theft which in turn is over three times the number of respondents who recorded 3 incidents of theft.

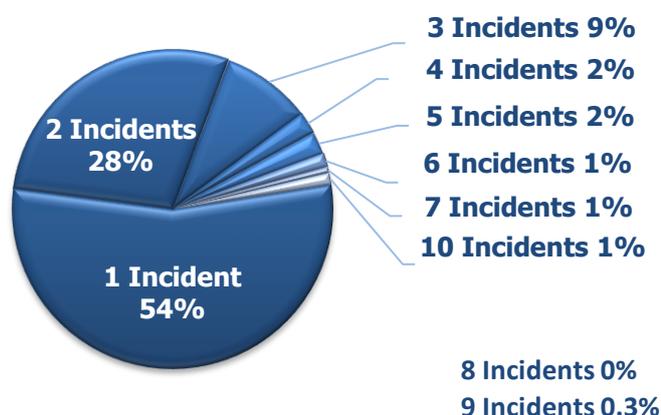


Figure 11
Respondents with Experience of Theft between 1.1.14 and 31.05.16 by Number of Incidents Recorded

The results suggest chronic experiences with theft and an extensive level of repeat victimisation. 191 of the 652 incidents of theft recorded in the prescribed period are the only incident experienced by a respondent. Whereas 160 incidents are the first of multiple incidents of theft recorded by a respondent and 301 of the 711 incidents of theft are incidents experienced where it was not the respondent's first incident of theft in the prescribed period.

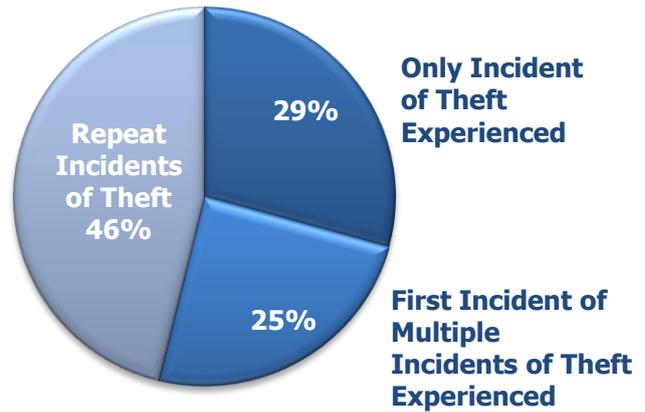


Figure 12
Characterisation of an Incident of Theft Recorded as Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 as a First or Repeat Incident

Types of Theft Experienced

The 351 respondents with experience of theft detailed the type of theft experienced for 554 of the 652 incidents recorded. Machinery and equipment / vehicle related theft was the most common group of thefts with 268 incidents recorded followed by 178 incidents of tools/chemicals/materials/ miscellaneous personal property related theft and 108 incidents of theft of livestock / feed / products.

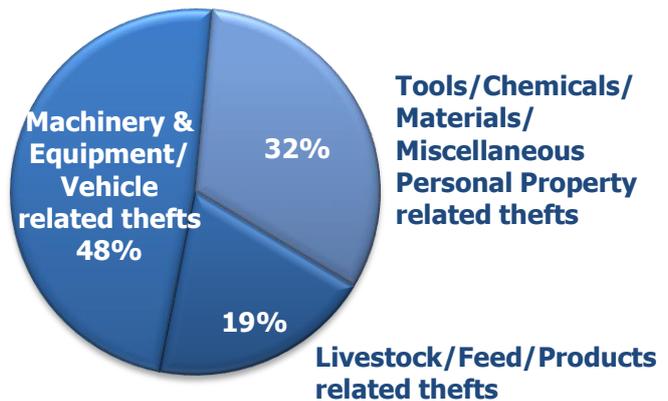


Figure 13
Incidents of Theft Recorded by Respondents as Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 by Group

Theft of agricultural diesel, accounting for a fifth of all thefts, was the type of theft with the most incidents recorded. This is nearly twice the number of incidents of theft of electrical tools recorded which was the next highest type of theft. In fact, of the 42 types of theft the 10 types of theft with the most incidents recorded accounted for 430 of the 554 specified incidents of theft.

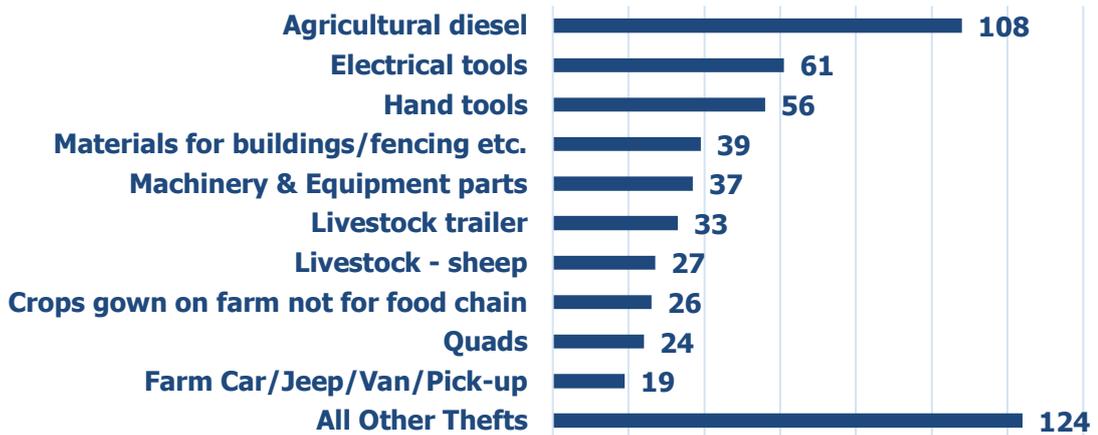
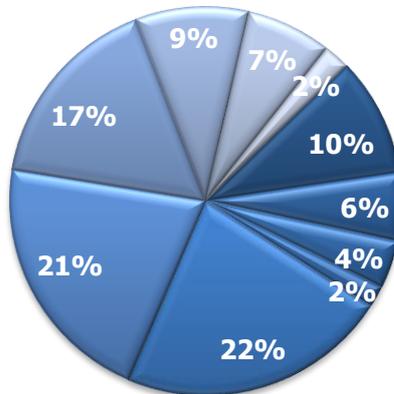


Figure 14
Type of Theft with the Highest Number of Incidents Recorded by Respondents as Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16



- 22% Fuels and Oils (agricultural diesel, heating fuel, coal/briquettes/firewood, machinery grease, motor oil, hydraulic fluids)
 - 21% Tools (electrical, hand)
 - 17% Machinery and Equipment (Livestock trailer, closed trailer, utility trailer, parts for machinery and equipment, computer and other IT)
 - 10% Livestock (dairy, beef, poultry, pigs, sheep, horses, fish, sheep/cattle dog)
 - 9% Vehicles (tractor, farm car/jeep/van/pick-up, Quad, vehicle parts)
 - 7% Materials for maintenance of buildings/fencing etc.
 - 6% Crops (grown on farm for food chain, grown on farm not for food chain, seeds/plants to grow on farm)
 - 4% Fodder (hay, straw, silage, meal)
 - 2% Chemicals (fertilizer, biocides, animal health/medicines)
 - 2% Other (including shotgun and money as specified by respondents)
- No incidents of theft of goats, fodder beat, dairy chemicals, combine/harvester or slurry spreaders were recorded.

Figure 15
Incidents of Theft Recorded by Respondents as Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 by Type

Robbery

Robbery occurs when a person uses force or threatens to use force in order to steal an asset, and is thus considered a much more serious crime than theft. Of the 652 incidents of agricultural theft recorded respondents detailed for 536 of the incidents whether force was used or threatened in order to steal the asset(s). Respondents recorded no force was used or threatened for 522 incidents of theft. A total of 14 incidents of robbery were recorded by respondents; 8 incidents where force was threatened and 6 incidents where force was used on order to steal the asset.

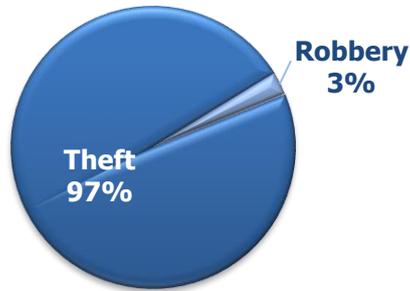


Figure 16
Whether an Incident where an Asset was Stolen between 1.1.14
and 31.5.16 was Theft or Robbery

5. CRIMINAL ASSAULT

Overall Criminal Assault Levels

Respondents had 3 listed options available in the survey to record the type of criminal assault experienced on the farm or during farming related activities, namely: (i) threat of criminal assault; (ii) physical assault; and (iii) coercion relating to farming activities.

Of the survey's 861 respondents 781 recorded whether or not they had experienced criminal assault occurring on the farm or during farming related activities between 1 January 2014 and 31 May 2016. 738 respondents recorded that they did not experience criminal assault compared to 43 respondents that did experience a total of 76 incidents of criminal assault.

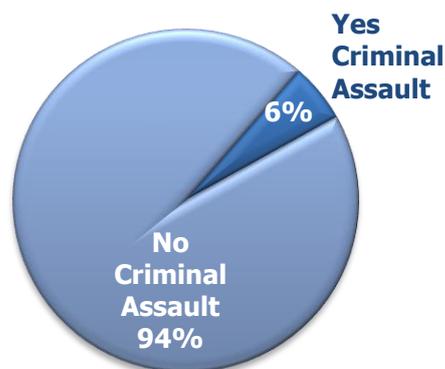


Figure 17
Whether a Respondent Experienced Criminal Assault between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16

Of the 43 respondents who recorded experiencing incidents of criminal assault 34 recorded experiencing 1 criminal assault only. Only 9 respondents experienced multiple incidents of criminal assault although these 9 respondents account for 42 of the incidents of criminal assault recorded experienced during the prescribed period.

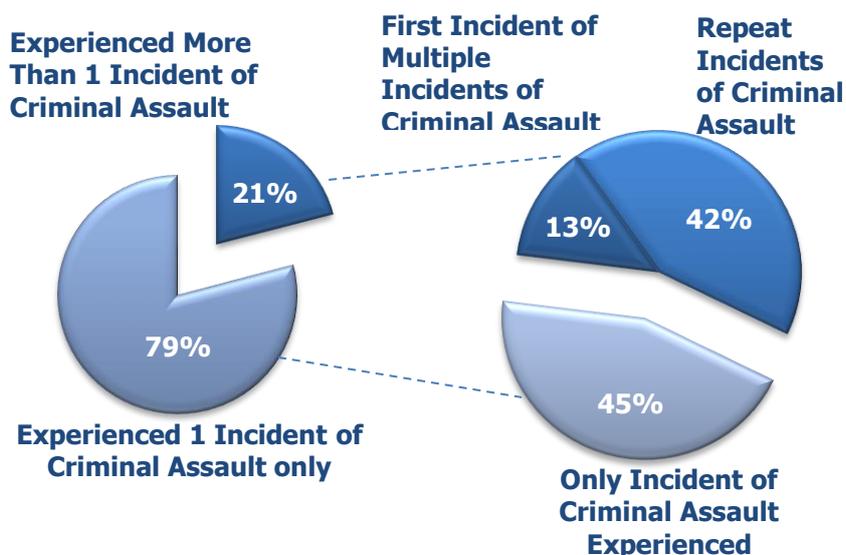


Figure 18
Whether Respondents with Experience of Criminal Assault between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 Recorded One or More Incident of Criminal Assault and the Characterisation of Incidents as First or Repeat Incident

Types of Criminal Assault Experienced

The 43 respondents with experience of criminal assault detailed the type of criminal assault experienced for 60 of the 76 incidents recorded. Threat of assault was five times more common than actual criminal assault.



Figure 19
Incidents of Criminal Assault Recorded by Respondents as Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 by Type

It is not only the farmer who may have experienced criminal assault on the farm or conducting farm related activities. Thus, respondents were asked to record whether the farmer, a family member and/or employee experienced the criminal assault recorded. The respondents recorded the person(s) who experienced the criminal assault for 59 of the 73 incidents recorded. The farmer only was the most prevalent category with employees only featuring in 4 recorded incidents of criminal assault. It should be noted that not all farmers have employees; in fact, only 384 of the 861 total respondents to the survey recorded having employees.



Figure 20
Whether the Farmer, Family Member and/or Employee Experienced the Criminal Assault Recorded as Experienced between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16

Overall Fraud Levels

Respondents had 3 listed options available in the survey to record the type of fraud experienced on the farm or during farming related activities, namely: (i) you were sold a stolen farm good(s); (ii) you were sold a counterfeit farm good(s); and (iii) you were provided with a forged farm related document(s).

Of the survey's 861 respondents 780 recorded whether or not they had experienced fraud between 1 January 2014 and 31 May 2016. 730 respondents recorded that they did not experience fraud compared to 50 respondents that did experience a total of 73 incidents of fraud.



Figure 21
Whether a Respondent Experienced Fraud between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16

Of the 50 respondents who recorded experiencing incidents of fraud 39 recorded experiencing 1 fraud only. 11 respondents experienced multiple incidents of fraud although these 11 respondents account for 34 of the incidents of fraud recorded as experienced during the prescribed period.

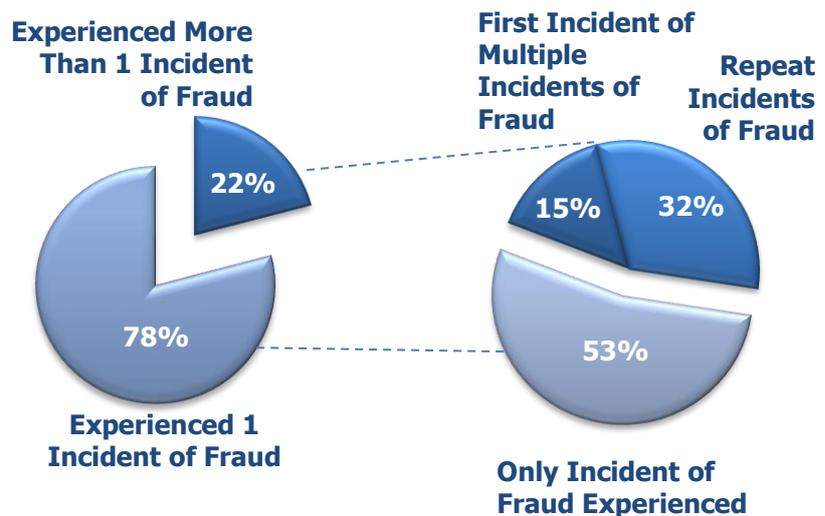


Figure 22
Whether Respondents with Experience of Fraud between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 Recorded One or More Incident of Fraud and the Characterisation of Incidents as First or Repeat Incident

Types of Fraud Experienced

The 43 respondents with experience of fraud detailed the type of fraud experienced for 35 of the 73 incidents recorded. Sold a counterfeit good(s) was the type of fraud with the most incidents recorded.

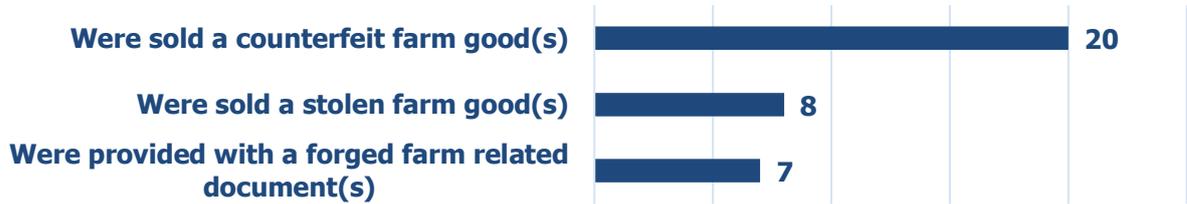


Figure 23
Incidents of Fraud Recorded by Respondents as Experienced
between 1.1.14 and 31.5.16 by Type

7. SUMMARY

The extent, nature and cost of agricultural crime in Ireland, rather than rural crime, has never been the subject of a specific crime survey. This independent national survey of agricultural crime aimed to address this deficit. This research is important because the collection, analysis and dissemination of agricultural crime data are recognised as the first actions in preventing and reducing agricultural crime. It is envisaged that the results of this survey will form the baseline data against which further study of agricultural crime can be conducted and compared.

This report is the first in a series of three reports to disseminate the data collated from this independent anonymous survey. This first report provides data on the incidence of agricultural crime in Ireland. The dissemination of this incidence of crime data will aid individual farmers, farm organisations and other decision makers to identify the nature and extent of the prevalent agricultural crimes.

For the purpose of the survey agricultural crime was categorised as any incident of (i) vandalism / criminal damage / trespass (VCDT); (ii) theft; (iii) criminal assault; and (iv) fraud experienced by a farmer carrying out farming activities. Overall a third of the respondents did not experience agricultural crime in the prescribed period 1 January 2014 to 31 May 2016. In fact, across each category of agricultural crime more respondents did not experience an incident of that agricultural crime than did. Of the 66% of respondents that did experience agricultural crime, theft was the type of crime with the highest number of respondents. However, the category of agricultural crime with the most incidents reported was VCDT. Collectively only 10% of incidents of agricultural crime arose from criminal assault and fraud. Of particular importance is the fact that statistically neither violence nor arson is a significant feature of agricultural crime in Ireland.

Reports two and three will focus on the data relating to agricultural crime reporting to authorities, costs of agricultural crime to the farm business and crime prevention measures employed by farmers.