



Teagasc's peer-reviewed journal marks 60th anniversary

This year marks the 60th anniversary of Teagasc's peer-reviewed journal the *Irish Journal of Agricultural and Food Research* (*IJAFR*). First published in 1961, the journal is fully online and open access. According to the journal's senior editor, Deirdre Hennessy: "Research published in the *IJAFR* is of interest to both national and international audiences. The journal is an important repository for Irish agricultural and food research". To mark the occasion, a special issue will be published later in the year to highlight the scientific advancements of the last 60 years, and to look to the future by addressing how current research can help us meet future targets.



Catriona Boyle, *IJAFR* Editorial Consultant, said: "We were very lucky to have been involved in a project to have the *IJAFR* digitised by Queen's University Belfast as part of the JSTOR Ireland collection in 2009, so every issue back to 1961 is available to view on the JSTOR repository. This is such a great resource for anyone who has an interest in agriculture and food research in Ireland".

For more information about submissions or to read the latest research papers, visit the journal's website: www.ijafr.org. See the JSTOR repository: <https://www.jstor.org/journal/irisjagrirese>.

Gentle robots

The Horticulture Development Department recently commenced work on a three-year EU project called 'SoftGrip'. This focuses on using a functionalised soft robotic gripper for harvesting delicate produce, in this case mushrooms, powered by imitation learning-based control.

Teagasc's role in the project is to ensure that the user needs and functional requirements of a robotic gripper are understood and incorporated into the design, manufacture and performance of the gripper. The partners include the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies in Italy, the Institute of Communication and Computer Systems in Greece, the University of Essex in the United Kingdom, TWI Hellas in Greece, and Mitsui Chemicals Europe GMBH in Germany. Novel 'intelligent' materials will be used that are food safe, self-repairable and recyclable, so that they are more environmentally sustainable. The gripper will also 'learn' how to harvest mushrooms by 'imitation' of the harvesting process performed by actual harvester. Once travel restrictions around Covid-19 are relaxed sufficiently, the SoftGrip team will be on site at the Teagasc Mushroom Unit in Ashtown, where they will develop the soft gripper functionality in conjunction with actual mushroom crops, and eventually demonstrate its performance once it has been refined and perfected.



Teagasc researchers are involved in a three-year project called 'SoftGrip' to develop a soft robotic gripper for harvesting delicate produce.

