

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

**Determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental
Assessment for 'Ag Climatise' - A Roadmap towards Climate
Neutrality**

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1. Introduction

The global community faces a future in which we need to balance the need to increase food and fibre production, with helping farmers, foresters, fishermen and society generally to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), build resilience and adapt to the impact of climate change.

The Programme for Government, and the recently published Climate Action Amendment Bill 2020, set out the objective to achieve a '**climate neutral economy**' which balances emissions and removals within the State, by the end of 2050 and in subsequent years.

Under the Paris Agreement, Ireland and other countries have committed to limiting temperature rise to less than 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit temperature rise to less than 1.5 degrees.

As a member of the EU, Ireland's target to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement goals is guided by the EU Climate and Energy Framework. The EU Commission recently announced its new European Green Deal agenda, including a Farm to Fork strategy and Biodiversity strategy. It is clear that at a whole of economy level, environmental ambition must be stepped up to meet the recently increased EU target of 55% reduction in emissions by 2030. Agriculture will have to play its part.

In practical terms, this means:

- reducing CO₂ to zero as soon as feasible,
- declining non -CO₂ emissions and
- enhancing CO₂ removals to balance historic CO₂ emissions and residual non CO₂ emissions.

The National Emission Ceilings Directive establishes limit values for five air pollutants to help mitigate their impact on Member State populations. Upon exceedance of these limit values, Member States must implement air quality plans to assess and combat the problem.

One of these air pollutants is ammonia, and it comes almost exclusively from the agri-food sector. Under the National Emissions Ceiling Directive, Ireland has an ammonia target of 107,000 tonnes in 2030. The most recent EPA Air Quality report (June 2020) indicated that there were 119,339 tonnes of ammonia produced in 2018.

While the primary focus of the Ag Climatise roadmap is on GHG and ammonia emissions, it is clear that achieving our 2030 targets for climate and air will also have positive co-benefits for water quality and biodiversity.

2. Purpose of the Plan

By 2050, the objective is to develop a climate neutral food system compatible with the Paris temperature goals, whereby the climate impact of biogenic methane is reduced to zero and remaining agricultural emissions are balanced by removals through land use and a significant contribution to renewable energy.

There are six key things that need to be done to meet climate and environmental objectives, while maintaining viable farm incomes in the sector.

1. Reduce GHG emissions from the sector. Methane from enteric fermentation and nitrous oxide from fertiliser use are the dominant greenhouse gases from agriculture.

2. Increase the carbon sequestration and carbon storage potential of Ireland's land use sector.
3. Reduce nutrient loss and contribute to improved water quality and biodiversity.
4. Meet ammonia emissions reduction targets.
5. Build sustainable, resilient food production and land use management systems that meet these climate and environmental obligations, while also meeting market expectations.
6. Transparently communicate progress; the Origin Green programme can play a key role in this regard.

The roadmap is based on stabilising methane emissions and a significant reduction in fertiliser related nitrous oxide emissions, leading to an absolute reduction in the agricultural greenhouse inventory by 2030. Any increase in biogenic methane emissions from continually increasing livestock numbers will put the achievement of this target in doubt.

In order to respond to the challenge in a coherent and coordinated manner, this roadmap can guide the development of an agri-food sector that is built on environmental sustainability and climate resilience, and contributes fairly to Ireland's climate, air and energy targets.

Many of the actions referenced in this roadmap are based on the Teagasc Marginal Abatement Cost Curves (MACC) for GHG and ammonia and can be acted on immediately. Other actions will need further consideration, and in collaboration with stakeholders, we will establish expert groups to oversee the development and implementation of actions where a path to delivery is unclear.

The roadmap provides the structure for the future development of the sector. It is envisaged that the details and operationalisation of actions will be set out in the various policies, strategies, plans and measures developed within the sector. Each of these national policies, strategies, plans and measures will, where appropriate, be subject to screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and/or screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA). Depending on the outcome of screening processes these policies, strategies, plans and measures may continue to full SEA and AA, as appropriate.

3. SEA Screening Process

The requirements of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plan and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004¹) (hereafter, 'the SEA Regulations'), as amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. 200 of 2011²), have been taken into account. Section 9 (4) of SI No. 435 of 2004 requires the screening of individual plans or programmes, based on the criteria in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. These criteria must be taken into account in determining whether or not significant effects on the environment would be likely to arise.

The SEA screening process undertaken by DAFM is consistent with the process as recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publication entitled *Development of Strategic*

¹ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/si/435/made/en/print>

² <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2011/si/200/made/en/pdf>

*Environment Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland – Synthesis Report*³, specifically Stage 1 (Screen of Plans and Programmes).

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has also been carried out in line with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC⁴).

4. Stage One: Screening Decision Process

As outlined in the *Development of Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland – Synthesis Report* a decision tree pre-screening check was carried out. The decision process and responses to the administrative questions are outlined in Appendix 1.

The outcome of the decision tree pre-screening check is that ‘Ag-Climatise’ A National Climate & Air Roadmap for the Agriculture Sector to 2030 and Beyond does not require an SEA as it does not provide a framework for the development consent for projects.

5. Stage Two: Environmental Significance Screening

While the pre-screening process indicated that an SEA is not required, further assessment was carried out using the environmental criteria contained in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations.

A table detailing the environmental significance screening is available in Appendix 2. The outcome of this screening is that a full SEA is not required.

6. Conclusion

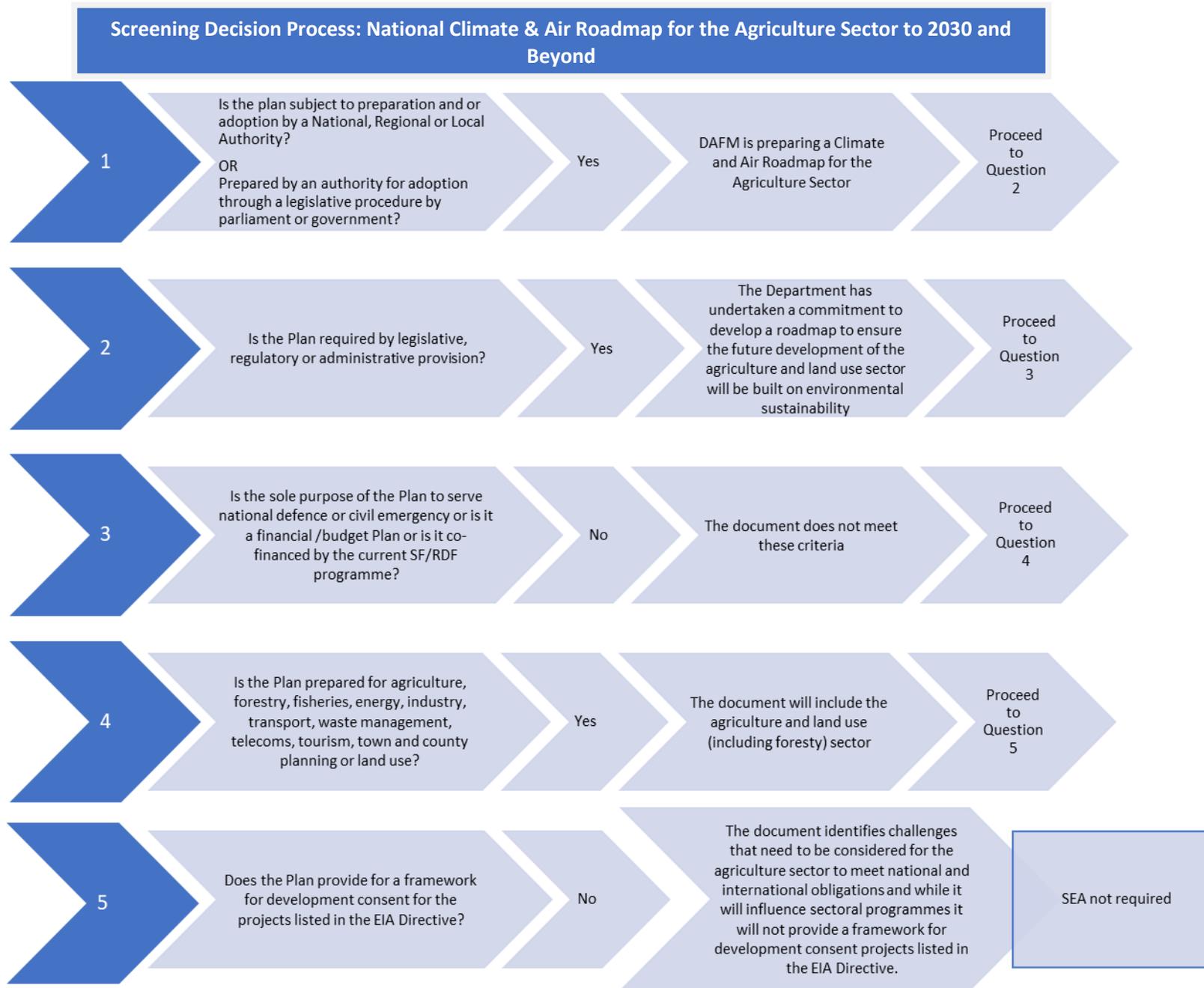
The conclusion reached following the screening check and the review against the environmental significance criteria as set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations is that a full Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required for the following reasons:

- That ‘Ag-Climatise’ A Roadmap towards Climate Neutrality does not provide a framework for development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive.
- The purpose of the document is to set out the unique climate and air challenges facing Irish agriculture, the opportunities that may arise from meeting our targets and ambitions, and how we are proposing to address the issues.
- Procedures, criteria and detailed rules for the implementation of actions and options contained in ‘Ag Climatise’ will be set out in the various policies, strategies, plans and measures developed within the sector. Each of these national policies, strategies, plans and measures will, where appropriate, be subject to screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and/or screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA). Depending on the outcome of the screening process these policies, strategies, plans and measures will continue to full SEA and AA, as appropriate. Any environmental effects uncovered will be considered within this process.

³ http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/EPA_development_methodology_SEA_synthesis_report.pdf

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31992L0043&from=EN>

Appendix 1 – Decision Tree



Appendix 2 – Schedule 1 - Article 9

SCHEDULE 1 - Article 9

Criteria for determining whether a Plan or Programme (or Modification thereto) is likely to have significant effects on the Environment

A. The characteristics of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, having regard, in particular, to:

Criteria	DAFM Response
The degree to which the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The document will not set a framework for future development consent of projects, i.e. projects listed in both Annex I and Annex II of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive
The degree to which the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, influences other plans including those in a hierarchy.	The document will inform other future plans as its main output is to ensure that all policies, strategies, plans and measures for, or related to, agriculture and forest must be informed of the actions necessary to protect the environment and address climate change. However, individual policies, strategies, plans and measures for, or related to, agriculture and forest must be considered under the SEA and, where appropriate, the AA process.
The relevance of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	It is envisaged that the details and operationalisation of actions contained in the roadmap will be implemented via future plans or programmes to ensure that the future development of the sector will be built on environmental sustainability and climate resilience. However, individual policies, strategies, plans and measures for, or related to, agriculture and forest must be considered under the SEA and, where appropriate, the AA process.
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme.	It is envisaged that the details and operationalisation of actions contained in the roadmap will be implemented via future plans or programmes to ensure that the future development of the sector will be built on environmental sustainability and climate resilience. However, individual policies, strategies, plans and measures for, or related to, agriculture and forest must be considered under the SEA and, where appropriate, the AA process.
The relevance of the plan or programme,	The implementation of the All-of-Government Climate

Appendix 2 – Schedule 1 - Article 9

or modification to a plan or programme, for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	Action Plan and the report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action will be positively supported through the operationalisation of actions contained in the roadmap.
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B. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

Criteria	DAFM Response
The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	<p>It is envisaged that the details and operationalisation of actions contained in the roadmap will be implemented via future plans or programmes to ensure that the future development of the sector will be built on environmental sustainability and climate resilience. However, individual policies, strategies, plans and measures for, or related to, agriculture and forest must be considered under the SEA and, where appropriate, the AA process.</p> <p>Any and all effects uncovered as part of this process will be considered in relation to the characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected and the process will have regard, in particular, to the criteria as listed, according to the legislation.</p>
The cumulative nature of the effects	
The transboundary nature of the effects	
The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)	
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage, (b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values, (c) intensive land-use. 	
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status	