SUBMISSION BY CÚL DARA CONSULTANCY

DRAFT AGRI-FOOD STRATEGY 2030

GAINING FARMER BUY-IN TO SECURE CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS IN THE IRISH AGRICULTURE SECTOR

Introduction

The Agri-Food Strategy 2030 approach, based on the UN Food Systems principles, is welcome: it allows for a more holistic approach than that of its two predecessors Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025, including specific environmental sustainability actions, and due recognition for the importance of the economic viability and wellbeing of primary producers.

It captures the importance of sustainability in food systems as set out by the UN Food Systems Summit process and the European Union's Green Deal Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies. It is part of the essential and urgent global response to climate change and environmental degradation, and comes in timely fashion, together with the Ag-Climatise Roadmap which it co-opts into its recommendations, to provide a plan for agri-food to do play its part in the delivery of the Climate Action Plan.

Ireland's situation is unique, in that 35% of greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to agriculture, especially livestock agriculture, in a country with a natural advantage to pastoralism, a centuries long vocation to food exports and little heavy industry.

Financial and technical supports will play a crucial role in ensuring that farmers adopt necessary technological and farming practice changes to improve their sustainability. But with the costs potentially involved, it will be essential to secure farmers' support through goodwill and buy-in rather than enforcement to allow for the necessary urgent and generalised uptake of innovative farm practices and technology required.

In addition to readily available financial and technical supports, and all the desirable actions and goals identified by Agri-Food Policy 2030, this will require a respectful approach to engage the hearts and intellects of farmers on agri-food environmental policy. It will also require the promotion of goodwill towards primary food producers and better education of the public on agricultural issues, including farm economics, the development of constructive engagement opportunities with environmental activists, and solidarity in sustainability-related actions through burden sharing by other food sector stakeholders.

Change in national agri-food policy direction and increased asks

There has been a major, and relatively sudden, change in Ireland's agri-food policy direction. *Food Harvest 2020* and *Food Wise 2025* created an unrelentingly "positive" policy messaging environment in which farmers – especially dairy farmers after the end of the EU milk quota regime – were encouraged to produce more, more efficiently, to grow Ireland's economic activity, exports and jobs. The emphasis on environmental sustainability and climate mitigation in those strategies was relatively light by comparison.

In the last couple of years, policy has moved to emphasise the urgency of climate and environmental action, which in Ireland's case, where 35% of GHG emissions originate from agriculture, will require significant engagements from the sector, and from farmers in particular.

This relatively sudden change in messaging has been very discombobulating for farmers.

In the last couple of years, climate neutrality by 2050 has become the normal commitment of all sectors, which will undoubtedly be very challenging for Irish agriculture. A plethora of statements, reports, roadmaps, plans, programmes and legal drafts have outlined the urgency for climate and environmental action and improvements in sustainability in agri-food with a heavy focus on primary production.

Furthermore, the official public discourse on health, diets, but also climate and the environment has changed to a more negative tone as it relates to animal products and livestock agriculture. On social media, but also in newspaper articles, documentaries, radio or television shows, it could be argued that this debate has at times turned quite toxic, raising hackles for many in the farming community.

Media reports and official guidelines have presented the solutions to climate mitigation, environmental improvement as well as healthier diets as being a reduction in animal product consumption and therefore livestock farming activity.

Some of the main programmes and legislative drafts of recent years

Global	**EU**	**Ireland**
Global climate agenda: ICCP	Green Deal	Programme for government
UN Development Goals	Farm to Fork Strategy	Climate Action Plan
Paris Climate Agreement	Biodiversity Strategy	Climate Action Bill
Eat-Lancet Planetary Health Diet	CAP Reform	Ag-Climatise Roadmap
UN Food Systems Summit and Dialogues	Carbon Neutral Europe by 2050 (55% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030)	Agri-Food Strategy 2030
	EU Methane Strategy	CAP National Strategic Plan

Survey of attitudes towards the sustainability of agriculture

To inform this submission, I undertook a very simple survey using the online tool Survey Monkey. The full results of the survey appear in the Annex.

The 186 respondents were self-selected, with participants responding to the promotion of the survey carried out through social media in early June 2021.

This survey does not claim to be representative, it merely aims to give a flavour of the attitudes of farmers, people working in agribusiness, environmental activists and ordinary members of the public towards the sustainability of agriculture and farmers' engagement with the environment and climate.

Not surprisingly, the majority of participants to the survey (51%) were farmers, with another 20% working in agribusiness. Only 10% self-described as environmental activists or similar, and 15% as ordinary members of the public.

Respondents' views of **farmers' attitudes to the environmental sustainability and climate mitigation of Irish agriculture** were largely that farmers want to do the right thing, but either don't know how to (18%), can't afford to (25%) or do their best but need to do more (31%). These views suggest an appreciation from respondents from all walks of life that farmers realise the importance of environmental and climate sustainability. Only 1% (a single answer) believed farmers do not care, and 10% stated farmers should be left alone, and other sectors do their bit.

Some of the commentaries stressed the importance of policy in guiding farmers' behaviour in the right direction, and the failure of earlier policies to do this.

The **three issues seen as most relevant to the sustainability of Irish agriculture** were improved biodiversity, air and water quality on farmland (81%), reduction in carbon emissions and increased carbon sequestration (64%) and improved economic viability of farms (51.5%). There was a stronger weight given to carbon emissions and carbon sequestration by respondents working in agribusiness (72%) and environmental activists (87%) than by farmers and ordinary members of the public (59-60%). Similarly, improving biodiversity, air and water quality on farmland was a high priority for farmers (76%), and higher still for agribusiness respondents (80%), environmental activists (93%) and the public (83%). The improved economic viability of farms was seen as relevant to sustainability by 59% of farmer respondents, but only by 13% of environmental activists.

Disappointingly, while the health and wellbeing of farmers was only in 5th place, scoring with 26% of respondents, animal welfare scored 6th, with just under 10% of respondents making it one of their top three.

However, a few respondents used the "Other" section to comment that all issues listed are important, with some adding the reduction of the livestock herd, the shift from animal farming to plant crops, the need to educate consumers to the value of their food, and paying farmers for carbon sequestration.

When asked **what they believe the main motivators for farmers to adopt more sustainable farming practices** to be, 33% of respondents cited the economic argument (improving farm sustainability will make savings and increase produce value); a combined 39% went for the emotional (passing land to the next generation in better condition) and ethical (the greater good) motivators. 17% believe the main motivator to be regulatory (I must take action or face penalties), while only 12% believe it is the intellectual understanding of the need for urgent action on climate mitigation and biodiversity.

54% of farmers saw the ethical and emotional factors as their main motivators, but only 20% considered that improving their farms' economic sustainability was it, perhaps revealing the perception by farmers that environmental sustainability is a cost, not an added value.

On the other hand, 7% of environmental activists believe ethical and emotional factors count, while nearly half (47%) believe the motivator to be the risk of penalties.

The economics factor is the main motivator of farmers as far as people working in agribusiness are concerned (48%), and even more so for ordinary members of the public (57%) – which shows a clear mismatch with farmers' perception.

With regards to **the best way to encourage improvements in the sustainability of Irish agriculture**, financial supports come well ahead at 31%, followed by improved produce prices at 25%, and at 17% of respondents, education of and targeted communication to farmers about the environment/climate.

1/3 of environmental activists favour financial supports for on-farm investment in improved practices/technology, while 27% favour rigorous enforcement.

Farmers strongly favoured the economic/financial side, with 30% identifying financial supports, and 32% higher produce prices reflecting the higher costs of production.

In the "other" answer option, many respondents from all walks of life commented that all of the suggested methods would be required to encourage progress.

Asked about the **three most impactful actions by farmers to reduce carbon emissions, improve biodiversity/air/water/animal welfare**, 69% of all respondents opted for the maintenance, restoration and developments of natural/planted habitats (hedgerows, riparian edges, pollinator plots, trees, ponds, wet/peatland...). This was followed by reduced chemical fertiliser use (47%), adoption of all MACC measures (46.5%) and change to LESS slurry spreading.

The suggestion to reduce ruminant livestock numbers found favour with 24% of respondents - at the same level as the reduction in pesticide use. Perhaps predictably, reducing cattle numbers is supported by 80% of environmental activists, 50% of ordinary members of the public, and only 16% of agribusiness and associated respondents, and 7% of farmers.

Farmers chiefly support the maintenance and development of habitats (75%), with that action also scoring strongly (73%) with environmental activist respondents.

Farmers' next preferred action is the adoption of the MACC measures (56%), which is not rated by environmental activists, with only 7% including this measure. This certainly reflects a preference for a reduction in the ruminant livestock herd among that group, but might it also show some ignorance of what is included in the MACC?
Farmers also support the move to LESS slurry spreading (51.5%) and reduced chemical fertiliser use (48.5%).

Environmental activists (33%) and the general public (23%) support going organic, which only 3% of farmers and 4% of agribusiness respondents identify.

The final question in the survey asked respondents to indicate their **level of optimism of Irish agriculture delivering its fair share of climate mitigation and environmental improvement.** It is encouraging that 56% of all respondents describe themselves as optimistic, or extremely optimistic. However, the level of the challenge is revealed by the 22% who are pessimistic, or extremely pessimistic, and the 18% who are uncertain.

Looking at different types of respondents, there is an element of predictability: the more optimistic are those employed in the agri-food sector (76%), closely followed by the farmers (73%) and those employed in agri-food adjacent businesses (60%). The most pessimistic are the environmental activists (87%) and the members of the public (60%).

Conclusions from the survey

It is clear that, while farmers already do quite a lot, they and other respondents to the survey understand that improving the sustainability of Irish agriculture will require more actions to be taken urgently, and at scale, on all farms.

It is also important to note that the majority of respondents, regardless of how they self-describe, believe farmers to be well intentioned when it comes to environmental and climate action.

All respondents have identified a mix of motivators – the heart, the mind and the pocket – and a multiplicity of actions which will have to be adopted to deal with carbon emissions and storage, and biodiversity in particular.

It is interesting to observe the differences in assessment between farmers and environmental activists when it comes to certain actions for example the desirability/necessity of using carrot versus stick.

In some of the commentary provided, suggestions to shift from animal farming to food crops displays some naivety – much of our agricultural land is not suitable for crop growing, and our fruit and vegetable-growing sector has been shrunk by import competition and retail competition. It is revealing of the focus on the frequently repeated perceived necessity to "reduce the national herd" despite Ireland's natural production advantage.

It augurs well, I believe, that there is clear recognition from agri-food professionals, the public and environmental activists alike that farmers are well motivated but need support to do more.

However, there seems to be a lack of appreciation of the importance of economic sustainability on farms among environmentalists and the general public. It may be a well-worn cliché, but it is difficult to be green while in the red. Even with the types, levels and conditionalities of financial supports CAP and national funding sources will likely provide, the intrinsic economic sustainability, or profitability, of their farm businesses is an essential precondition for farmers to make the necessary and urgent environmental and climate mitigation investments the Agri-food 2030 Strategy and the Climate Action Plan require from them.

See full results of the survey in Annex at page 13.

Securing farmers' goodwill to achieve rapid uptake and measurable results

The majority of farmers have already started to integrate climate mitigation, biodiversity and water quality improvements into their farming practices, but even they are often confused and antagonised by what they perceive, at best as moving goalposts, at worst as farmer bashing.

This is not helped by the ongoing debate around the negotiation of the new CAP, which will see a destabilising redistribution of direct payments through a combination of lower budget, convergence, redistributive payments and basic payment deductions to fund eco-schemes. Many farmers know they stand to lose out on their basic payment, with limited scope to recoup the cost of the additional environmental ask, even through the new Pillar 1 eco-schemes or Pillar 2 agri-environmental schemes.

To ensure Irish agriculture makes progress towards meeting its sustainability targets as rapidly as possible, it is vital to improve the serenity of the debate, to duly measure, recognise and value farmers' existing actions in the supply of public goods and to secure their goodwill. It is also vital to better empower farmers with an understanding of the deep-seated reasons for the policies which dictate the environmental actions expected of them and improve their ability to communicate their action to the public by creating opportunities for exchange.

In a recent webinar in the Teagasc SignPost Programme series, Dr Brendan Dunford stated that his experience through the Burren Programme showed that securing the engagement of farmers to deliver on biodiversity projects needed to address the pocket, with financial supports, the head, with technical supports and intellectual input, and the heart, with an emphasis on legacy.

This is clearly valid for all aspects of sustainability where farm practice changes are required to be delivered at scale, and relatively rapidly.

Mission 1 - A climate smart, environmentally sustainable, agri-food sector

- **An additional goal/action must be included, which precedes all others under this section, as follows:**

  Develop a communication and education campaign to engage farmers and the public emotionally and intellectually so that they understand in depth the global and national context and purposes of Agri-Food Strategy 2030.

  The campaign must help farmers appreciate the real urgency of further improving the sustainability of their farming practices, publicise the value their existing contribution to carbon sequestration, water quality and biodiversity improvements, while empowering them to contribute knowledgeably and serenely to the public debate.
  See also Mission 2, Goal 4, action relating to Education and Training, which ambitions to empower farmers to become educators in areas such as environmental sustainability.

  This campaign must also enhance public awareness of farmers' existing involvement, largely voluntary, in sustainability schemes such as Smart Farming, Origin Green Assurance Schemes, the Agricultural Sustainability Support Advisory Programme (ASSAP), EIPs such as the BRIDE project, etc. and document farmers' existing investment and actions undertaken in this space.

It must further be used to put the Strategy in context, especially highlighting the recognition of biogenic methane emissions, the proposal for carbon farming roll out, and the commitments, actions and contributions demanded from other parts of the food chain (processors, state agencies, retailers), including commitments towards the economic and social sustainability of primary producers (see below).

- **Under Goal 7: Strengthen Origin Green and sustainable supports to reflect the higher level of ambition:**

  Bord Bia's market related activity, including the development of the Origin Green sustainability proof points at every step of the food chain and the Grass-Fed standard, have been invaluable to improve the place of Irish food in the value chain and evidence its environmental credentials. This stands to benefit the agri-food sector, including farmers, and the Irish economy, especially in rural areas.

  However, to optimise this outcome, the OG standards must be modified to build in a fairer sharing out of the economic burden among stakeholders in the chain, and greater engagement from processors and retailers through sourcing and pricing commitments to support the sustainability of primary producers (see below under Mission 2).

  Also, to enable a more serene engagement with farmers, and bearing in mind that the Strategy proposes that AKIS, the SignPost Farm Programme and OG sustainability audits be more closely linked, it would be helpful to **separate the sustainability assessment functions from the market-related activity in Origin Green.**
  This would also help address some of the "greenwashing" accusations against the Bord Bia campaign.

Mission 2 - Viable and resilient primary producers with enhanced well being

- **Under Goal 2: Improve the creation and equitable distribution of value**

  As part of the actions relating to "market price transparency", and "contractual arrangements", and under the watch of the National Food Ombudsman, **obligations must be created for processors and retailers to benchmark primary producer prices to appropriate references**, as part of their own commitment to the economic sustainability of the food chain.

  For example, beef prices to be paid to farmers could be set at a premium to an appropriate price level identified through the Bord Bia Beef Market Tracker, and the price of milk could be benchmarked against the LTO league, the Ornua Product Purchasing Index (PPI) or other relevant reference. Equivalent appropriate references could be identified for other sectors.

  This is essential to ensure that producer action to add value by improving sustainability is recognised in a meaningful way and is monetized. But it is also important to demonstrate a fair sharing of the value as well as of the sustainability effort in the sector.

- **Under Goal 4: Improve the social sustainability of primary producers**

  Recommendations are made in the Strategy regarding the actions relating to Education and

Training, which suggest farmers should be empowered to become educators in areas such as environmental sustainability.

To facilitate this, **programmes should be developed to inform farmers of the background to the new environmental asks** (The science behind climate change and greenhouse gas impacts, UN sustainability goals and food systems approach, market developments and consumer expectations, etc.). This should also equip them with duly quantified and detailed information to show what is being done well on Irish farms, and how they compare internationally. Issues such as the specificity of biogenic methane as a circular, but nonetheless dangerous greenhouse gas which will have to be reduced, or the concept of carbon leakage where food produced in less climate efficient regions risk displacing foods produced through more sustainable methods, should be addressed. Organisations with relevant expertise such as Teagasc, Bord Bia, Ornua and agri-food policy experts should be involved in designing and delivering those programmes.

Actions in the section which relates to Mental Health and Wellbeing should **include efforts to improve the serenity of the national farm sustainability debate**, to reduce its toxicity, help farmers feel less badgered and create a more conducive environment for them to engage with the necessary sustainability actions. This could be done by utilising forums such as KT Discussion Groups, farm walks, Open Days on research farms, as well as the network of 100 SignPost Programme farms, to invite representatives of environmental NGOs as well as farmers to learn more about the methods and economic realities of sustainable farming.

Mission 3: Food that is safe, nutritious and appealing, trusted and valued at home and abroad

- **Under Goal 2: Enhance customer and consumer trust in our food system, providing evidence of a safe, ethical food supply**

To improve Transparency and Trust at the production end of the Irish food system, **occasions for consumers to meet with farmers** should be engineered, using Open Days on the SignPost Programme network of 100 farms, but including farmers as well as ordinary interested members of the public. This would help address perception versus reality of farm practices and foster more realistic societal expectations, while improving farmers' understanding of legitimate public concerns. It would also allow the public to witness first hand the environmental actions undertaken on farms.

Bord Bia's Bloom in the Park has done wonders to provide a highly publicised, festival-like day out for the public and encourage urban and rural dwellers alike to take a greater interest in their gardens and in nature. It is now a well-established date in the Irish public calendar (even if it has unfortunately had to be cancelled and go online this year again, courtesy of COVID-19). The popularity of the National Ploughing Championships – also cancelled as a public event for the second year - has also shown an appetite and an interest for agriculture from non-farmers.
A number of summer/autumn regional **farm festivals on real farms** could be excellent opportunities to provide a serene exchange between farmers and non-farmers, with the accompanying press coverage extending the positive messaging beyond the day itself.

Open days targeted to school groups of primary and secondary ages should also be undertaken, again using the SignPost farm network, to build up familiarity with farming

realities and yield more realistic expectations and a better appreciation of Irish farmers' contribution to the sustainability of our food systems.

- **Under Goal 4: Develop markets opportunities at home and abroad**

  Actions relating to domestic and local markets could take inspiration from the French legislation known as EGAlim (Etats Generaux Alimentaires), which also reflects the Food Systems approach, and sets out among many other things to secure fairer prices for farmers by benchmarking prices, creating sourcing obligations and restricting price-based promotional activity by retailers.

  We believe that, to achieve similar aims, and to signal strongly to farmers a solidarity from the entire sector, Agri-Food Strategy 2030 should create obligations on retailers, especially those members of Origin Green, or making public claims of support for local producers, to **source in priority from Irish suppliers all those products available in Ireland.**

  Retailers should also undertake to play their fullest part in optimising returns to primary producers by **limiting price-based promotions**, and funding those out of their own margins.

  These measures should be overseen by the National Food Ombudsman.

Mission 4: An innovative, competitive and resilient agri-food sector, driven by technology and talent

- **Under Goal 1: Move to a challenge-focused innovation system**

  Actions are envisaged to "focus on problem-specific societal challenges requiring interaction of many sectors and actors" to achieve, among other aims "behavioural change for speedier uptake" by farmers of new technology and more sustainable farm practices.

  When those stand to cost farmers financially or in reduced productivity, this must involve, in addition to financial and technical supports, a **programme of courses to fill in gaps in farmers' understanding of the environmental policies, societal/consumer demands and market insights** behind the climate mitigation and environmental actions they are being asked to undertake.

  These courses should involve, in their design and their delivery, environmental, farming and market insight experts from the EPA, universities, Teagasc and Bord Bia, as well as agri-food policy experts.
  While the current weekly SignPost webinar series delivered by Teagasc ConnectEd provides an excellent template, the audience which this proposed programme must target needs to be farmer focused.
  Post Covid-19, this would involve farm walks and Open Days, possibly as part of visits to the 100 SignPost Programme farms. More immediately, it may be opportune to co-operate with farm organisations to deliver this type of contents, as they have had a strong, and positive experience of high participation when utilising video conferencing for their own farmer meetings in the last 15 months.

- **Under Goal 4: Attract and nurture diverse and inclusive talent**

  Actions rightly focus on the need to implement diversity policies for employment throughout the sector in terms of gender and LGBT+ people. However, only 12% of farms in Ireland are managed by women, and the actions proposed do not seem to give any consideration to the farming population's lack of gender balance. We believe addressing this should also be seen as a means to improve the societal perception of Irish farming.

  New entrants' and young farmers' schemes in the National Strategic Plan for the implementation of the new CAP, as well as tax-based generational renewal tools should make specific quantified provisions for women to increase the number of female farm operators.

  The **boards of co-operatives and boards, councils and committees of farm organisations should be encouraged to determine and implement gender targets** at every level of their selection/election processes.

Conclusion

Irish agri-food truly has the potential to deliver on the vision of Agri-Food Strategy 2030 and be a world leader in sustainable food systems in the next decade.

While there is more to do, the sector is coming from a very strong place – and this needs to be publicly highlighted as part of the implementation of the Strategy.

Farmers will undertake to do more if their previous actions and investments in sequestering carbon, reducing their emissions, improving habitats and biodiversity and participating in actions to reduce nutrient losses to water are duly recognised and valued, and their future commitment is supported financially, technically, but also with goodwill.

Farmers will engage and do more with the required urgency, but they need to be given respect, recognition and be allowed work in serene circumstances.

ANNEX

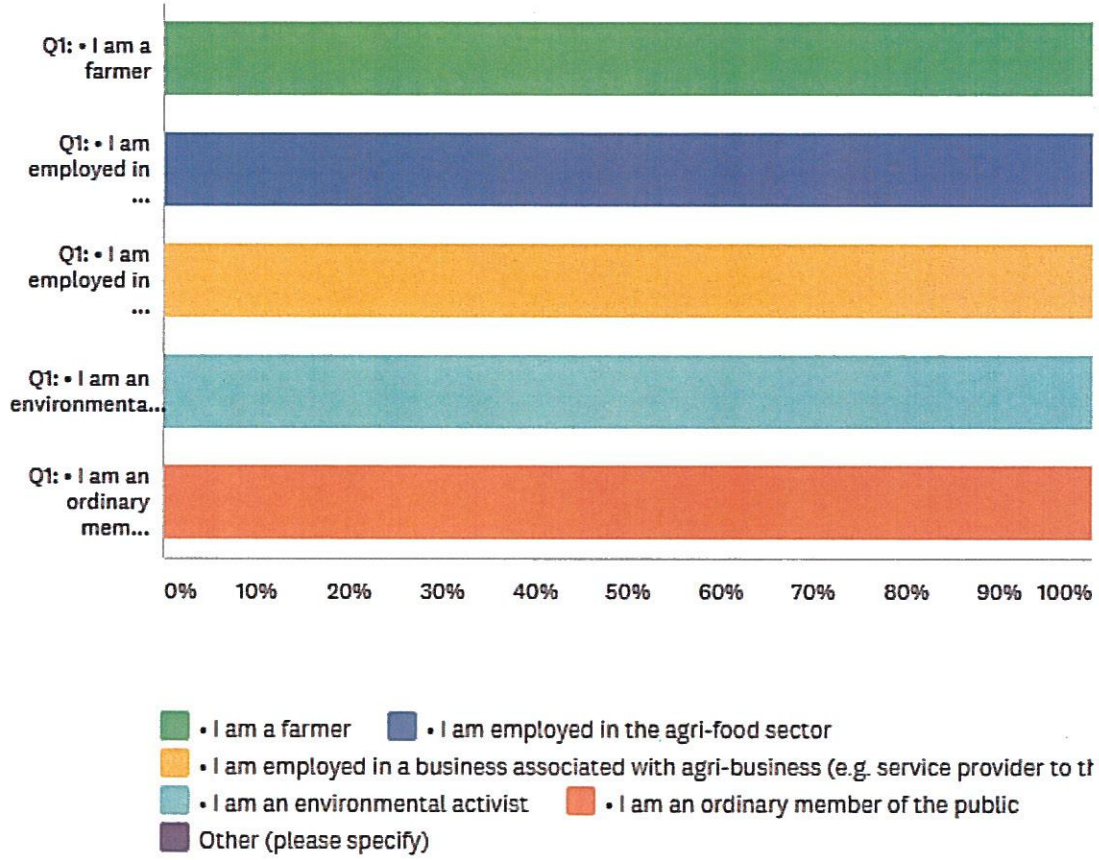
RESULTS OF SURVEY MONKEY SURVEY ON ATTITUDES TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF IRISH AGRICULTURE

Q1

Customize Save as

How would you describe who you are?

Answered: 186 Skipped: 0



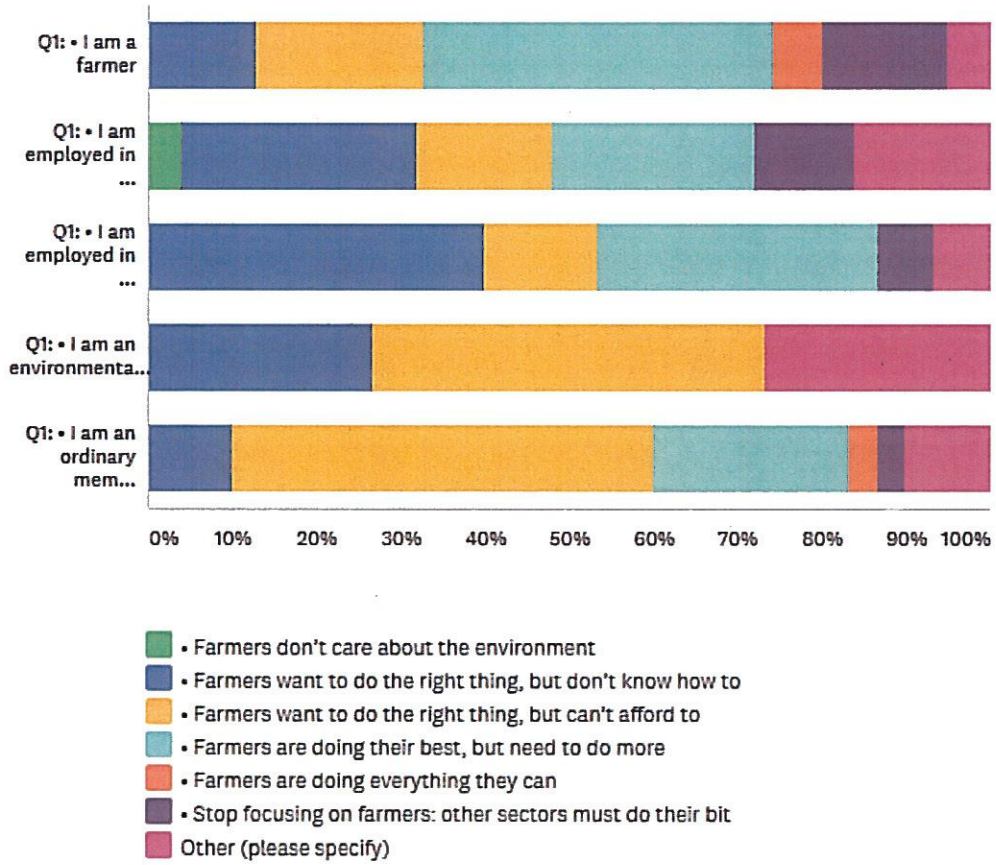
	• I AM A FARMER	• I AM EMPLOYED IN THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR	• I AM EMPLOYED IN A BUSINESS ASSOCIATED WITH AGRI-BUSINESS (E.G. SERVICE PROVIDER TO THE SECTOR)	• I AM AN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST	• I AM AN ORDINARY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	TOTAL
Q1: • I am a farmer	100.00% 101	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	54.30% 101
Q1: • I am employed in the agri-food sector	0.00% 0	100.00% 25	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	13.44% 25
Q1: • I am employed in a business associated with agri-business (e.g. service provider to the sector)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 15	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.06% 15
Q1: • I am an environmental activist	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 15	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.06% 15
Q1: • I am an ordinary member of the public	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 30	0.00% 0	16.13% 30
Total Respondents	101	25	15	15	30	0	186

Q2

Customize Save as

Which of the following statement best describes your views of farmers' attitude to environmental sustainability and climate mitigation:

Answered: 186 Skipped: 0



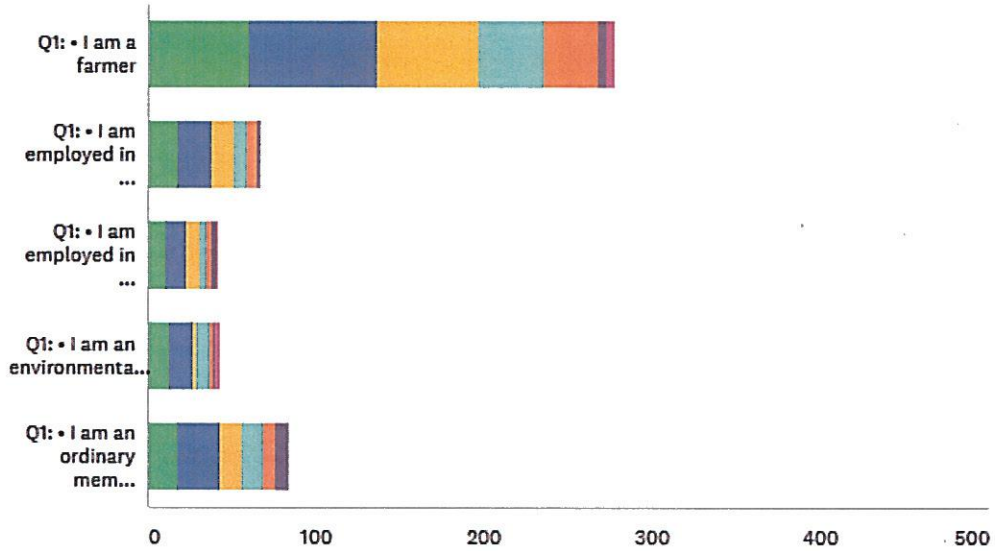
	• FARMERS DON'T CARE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT	• FARMERS WANT TO DO THE RIGHT THING, BUT DON'T KNOW HOW TO	• FARMERS WANT TO DO THE RIGHT THING, BUT CAN'T AFFORD TO	• FARMERS ARE DOING THEIR BEST, BUT NEED TO DO MORE	• FARMERS ARE DOING EVERYTHING THEY CAN	• STOP FOCUSING ON FARMERS: OTHER SECTORS MUST DO THEIR BIT	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	TOTAL
Q1: • I am a farmer	0.00% 0	12.87% 13	19.80% 20	41.58% 42	5.94% 6	14.85% 15	4.95% 5 Responses	54.30% 101
Q1: • I am employed in the agri-food sector	4.00% 1	28.00% 7	16.00% 4	24.00% 6	0.00% 0	12.00% 3	16.00% 4 Responses	13.44% 25
Q1: • I am employed in a business associated with agri-business (e.g. service provider to the sector)	0.00% 0	40.00% 6	13.33% 2	33.33% 5	0.00% 0	6.67% 1	6.67% 1 Responses	8.06% 15
Q1: • I am an environmental activist	0.00% 0	26.67% 4	46.67% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	26.67% 4 Responses	8.06% 15
Q1: • I am an ordinary member of the public	0.00% 0	10.00% 3	50.00% 15	23.33% 7	3.33% 1	3.33% 1	10.00% 3 Responses	16.13% 30
Total Respondents	1	33	48	60	7	20	17	186

Q3

Customize Save as

What are the 3 issues you believe are most relevant to the sustainability of agriculture:

Answered: 186 Skipped: 0



- Reduction in carbon emission and increased carbon sequestration
- Improved biodiversity, water and air quality on farmland
- Improved economic viability of farms
- Improved economic and social vibrancy of rural communities
- Improved health and wellbeing of farmers
- Improved animal welfare
- Other (please specify)

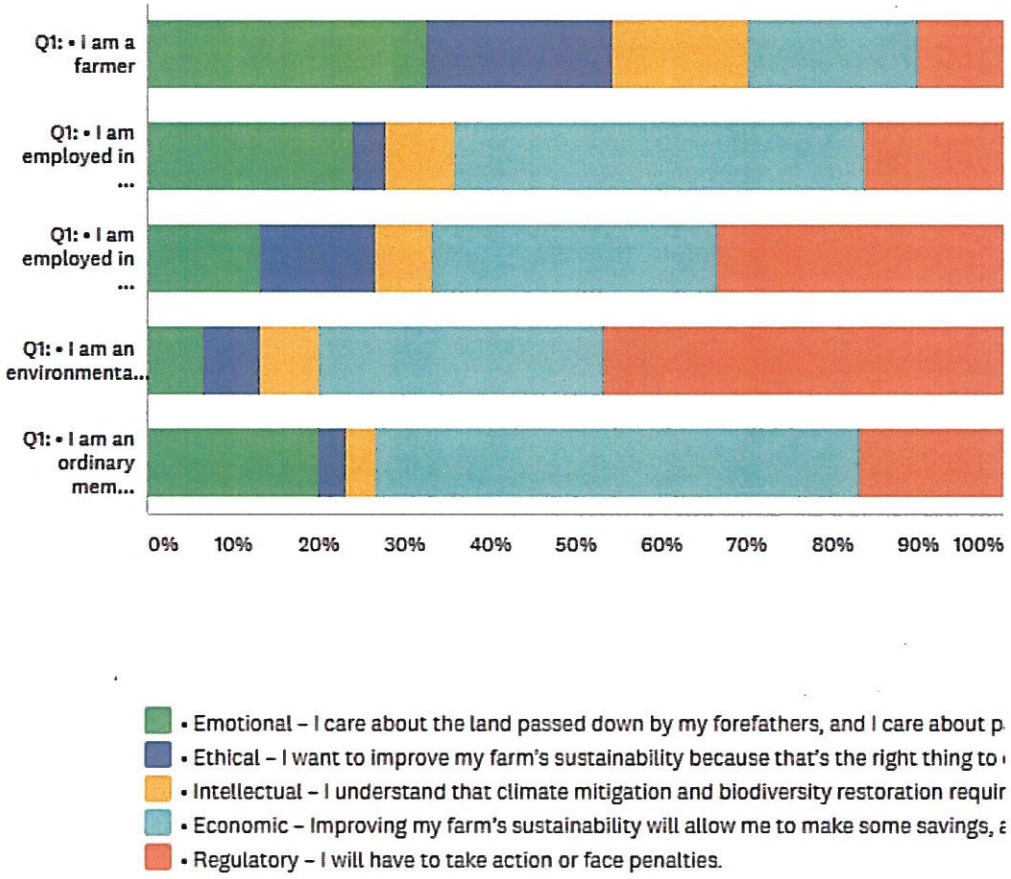
	• REDUCTION IN CARBON EMISSION AND INCREASED CARBON SEQUESTRATION	• IMPROVED BIODIVERSITY, WATER AND AIR QUALITY ON FARMLAND	• IMPROVED ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF FARMS	• IMPROVED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VIBRANCY OF RURAL COMMUNITIES	• IMPROVED HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF FARMERS	• IMPROVED ANIMAL WELFARE	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	TOTAL
Q1: • I am a farmer	59.41% 60	76.24% 77	59.41% 60	38.61% 39	31.68% 32	4.95% 5	4.95% 5 Responses	149.46% 278
Q1: • I am employed in the agri-food sector	72.00% 18	80.00% 20	52.00% 13	32.00% 8	24.00% 6	8.00% 2	0.00% 0	36.02% 67
Q1: • I am employed in a business associated with agri-business (e.g. service provider to the sector)	73.33% 11	80.00% 12	53.33% 8	26.67% 4	20.00% 3	20.00% 3	6.67% 1 Responses	22.58% 42
Q1: • I am an environmental activist	86.67% 13	93.33% 14	13.33% 2	53.33% 8	13.33% 2	6.67% 1	20.00% 3 Responses	23.12% 43
Q1: • I am an ordinary member of the public	60.00% 18	83.33% 25	43.33% 13	43.33% 13	23.33% 7	26.67% 8	0.00% 0	45.16% 84
Total Respondents	120	148	96	72	50	19	9	186

Q4

Customize Save as

What do you believe is the main motivator for farmers to adopt more sustainable farming practices:

Answered: 186 Skipped: 0



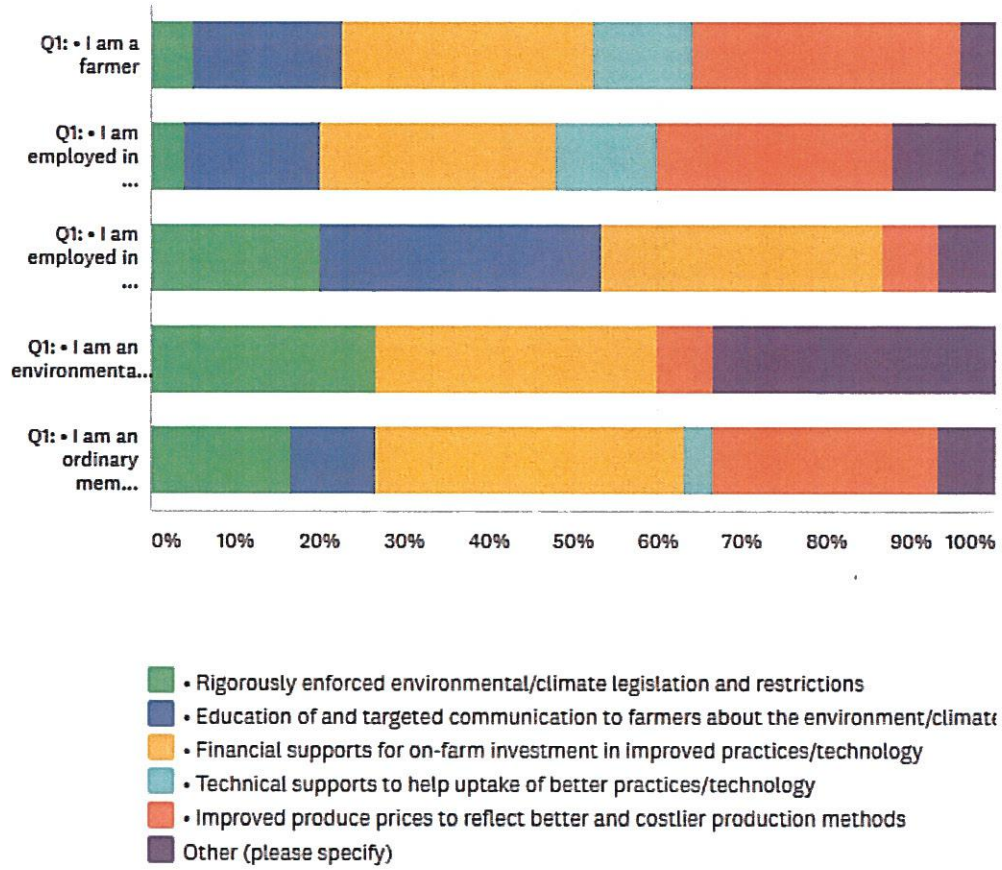
	• EMOTIONAL – I CARE ABOUT THE LAND PASSED DOWN BY MY FOREFATHERS, AND I CARE ABOUT PASSING IT ON TO MY CHILDREN IN BETTER CONDITION.	• ETHICAL – I WANT TO IMPROVE MY FARM'S SUSTAINABILITY BECAUSE THAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO FOR THE GREATER GOOD.	• INTELLECTUAL – I UNDERSTAND THAT CLIMATE MITIGATION AND BIODIVERSITY RESTORATION REQUIRE URGENT ACTION, INCLUDING FROM ME AND OTHER FARMERS;	• ECONOMIC – IMPROVING MY FARM'S SUSTAINABILITY WILL ALLOW ME TO MAKE SOME SAVINGS, AND TO INCREASE THE VALUE OF MY PRODUCE;	• REGULATORY – I WILL HAVE TO TAKE ACTION OR FACE PENALTIES.	TOTAL
Q1: • I am a farmer	32.67% 33	21.78% 22	15.84% 16	19.80% 20	9.90% 10	54.30% 101
Q1: • I am employed in the agri-food sector	24.00% 6	4.00% 1	8.00% 2	48.00% 12	16.00% 4	13.44% 25
Q1: • I am employed in a business associated with agri-business (e.g. service provider to the sector)	13.33% 2	13.33% 2	6.67% 1	33.33% 5	33.33% 5	8.06% 15
Q1: • I am an environmental activist	6.67% 1	6.67% 1	6.67% 1	33.33% 5	46.67% 7	8.06% 15
Q1: • I am an ordinary member of the public	20.00% 6	3.33% 1	3.33% 1	56.67% 17	16.67% 5	16.13% 30
Total Respondents	48	27	21	59	31	186

Q5

Customize Save as

What do you believe is the best way to encourage improvements in the sustainability of Irish agriculture:

Answered: 186 Skipped: 0



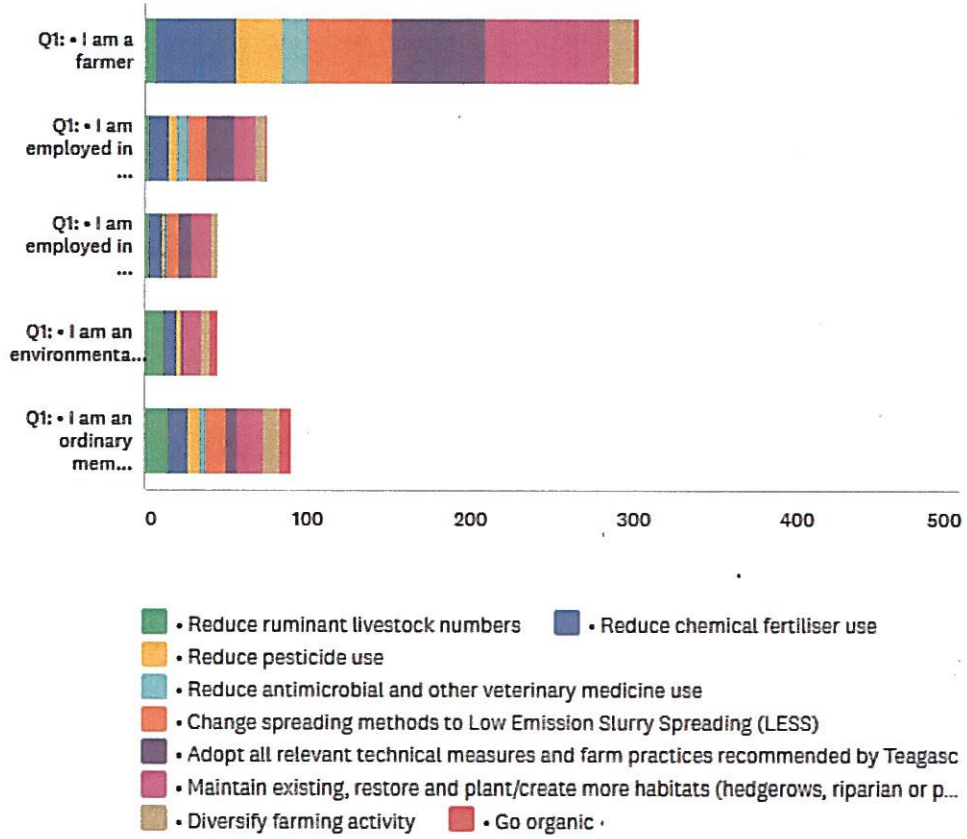
	• RIGOROUSLY ENFORCED ENVIRONMENTAL/CLIMATE LEGISLATION AND RESTRICTIONS	• EDUCATION OF AND TARGETED COMMUNICATION TO FARMERS ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT/CLIMATE	• FINANCIAL SUPPORTS FOR ON-FARM INVESTMENT IN IMPROVED PRACTICES/TECHNOLOGY	• TECHNICAL SUPPORTS TO HELP UPTAKE OF BETTER PRACTICES/TECHNOLOGY	• IMPROVED PRODUCE PRICES TO REFLECT BETTER AND COSTLIER PRODUCTION METHODS	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	TOTAL
Q1: • I am a farmer	4.95% 5	17.82% 18	29.70% 30	11.88% 12	31.68% 32	3.96% 4 Responses	54.30% 101
Q1: • I am employed in the agri-food sector	4.00% 1	16.00% 4	28.00% 7	12.00% 3	28.00% 7	12.00% 3 Responses	13.44% 25
Q1: • I am employed in a business associated with agri-business (e.g. service provider to the sector)	20.00% 3	33.33% 5	33.33% 5	0.00% 0	6.67% 1	6.67% 1 Responses	8.06% 15
Q1: • I am an environmental activist	26.67% 4	0.00% 0	33.33% 5	0.00% 0	6.67% 1	33.33% 5 Responses	8.06% 15
Q1: • I am an ordinary member of the public	16.67% 5	10.00% 3	36.67% 11	3.33% 1	26.67% 8	6.67% 2 Responses	16.13% 30
Total Respondents	18	30	58	16	49	15	186

Q6

Customize Save as

What are the 3 most impactful actions you think farmers should take to reduce carbon emissions, improve biodiversity and air/water quality and animal health/welfare

Answered: 186 Skipped: 0



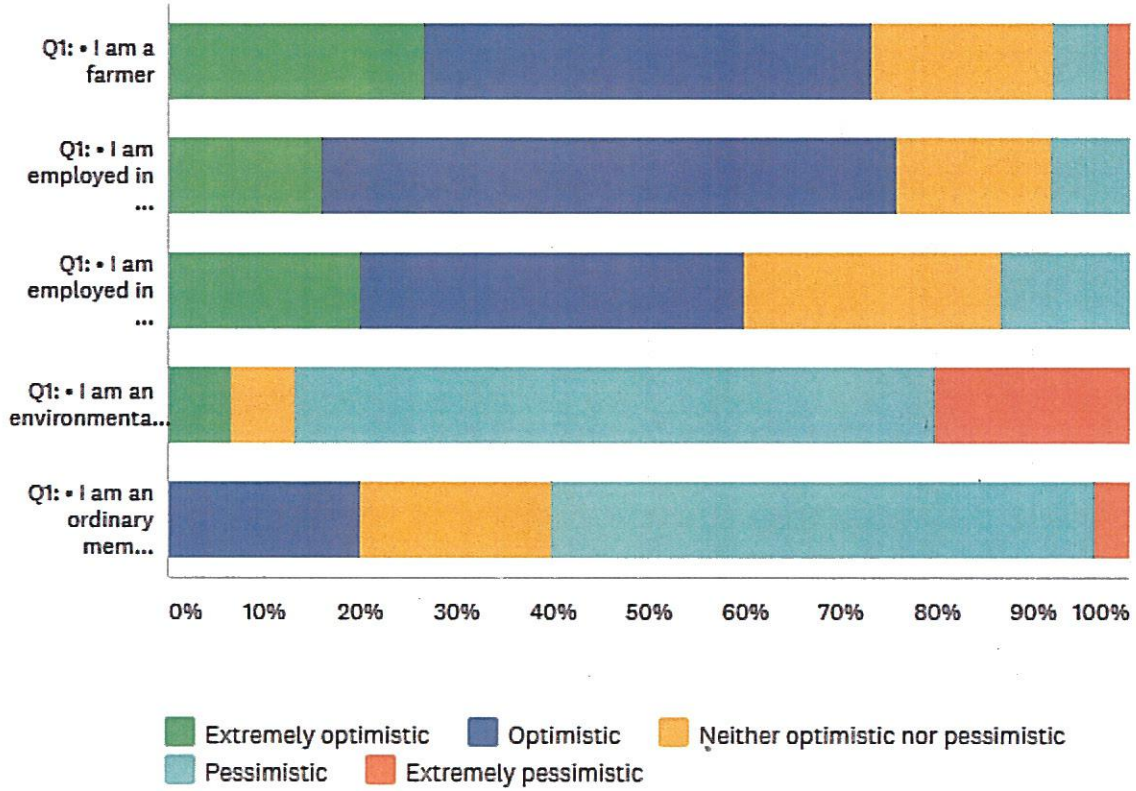
	• REDUCE RUMINANT LIVESTOCK NUMBERS	• REDUCE CHEMICAL FERTILISER USE	• REDUCE PESTICIDE USE	• REDUCE ANTIMICROBIAL AND OTHER VETERINARY MEDICINE USE	• CHANGE SPREADING METHODS TO LOW EMISSION SLURRY SPREADING (LESS)	• ADOPT ALL RELEVANT TECHNICAL MEASURES AND FARM PRACTICES RECOMMENDED BY TEAGASC (MARGINAL ABATEMENT COST CURVE (MACC))	• MAINTAIN EXISTING, RESTORE AND PLANT/CREATE MORE HABITATS (HEDGEROWS, RIPARIAN OR POLLINATOR EDGES, TREES, PONDS, WET/PEATLAND...)	• DIVERSIFY FARMING ACTIVITY	• GO ORGANIC	TOTAL
Q1: • I am a farmer	6.93% 7	48.51% 49	27.72% 28	15.84% 16	51.49% 52	56.44% 57	75.25% 76	14.85% 15	2.97% 3	162.90% 303
Q1: • I am employed in the agri-food sector	12.00% 3	48.00% 12	20.00% 5	28.00% 7	44.00% 11	68.00% 17	52.00% 13	24.00% 6	4.00% 1	40.32% 75
Q1: • I am employed in a business associated with agri-business (e.g. service provider to the sector)	20.00% 3	53.33% 8	6.67% 1	13.33% 2	46.67% 7	53.33% 8	80.00% 12	26.67% 4	0.00% 0	24.19% 45
Q1: • I am an environmental activist	80.00% 12	53.33% 8	13.33% 2	0.00% 0	6.67% 1	6.67% 1	73.33% 11	33.33% 5	33.33% 5	24.19% 45
Q1: • I am an ordinary member of the public	50.00% 15	40.00% 12	23.33% 7	13.33% 4	40.00% 12	23.33% 7	53.33% 16	33.33% 10	23.33% 7	48.39% 90
Total Respondents	40	89	43	29	83	90	128	40	16	186

Q7

Customize Save as

How optimistic are you of Irish agriculture delivering its fair share of climate mitigation and environmental improvements?

Answered: 186 Skipped: 0



	EXTREMELY OPTIMISTIC	OPTIMISTIC	NEITHER OPTIMISTIC NOR PESSIMISTIC	PESSIMISTIC	EXTREMELY PESSIMISTIC	TOTAL
Q1: • I am a farmer	26.73% 27	46.53% 47	18.81% 19	5.94% 6	1.98% 2	54.30% 101
Q1: • I am employed in the agri-food sector	16.00% 4	60.00% 15	16.00% 4	8.00% 2	0.00% 0	13.44% 25
Q1: • I am employed in a business associated with agri-business (e.g. service provider to the sector)	20.00% 3	40.00% 6	26.67% 4	13.33% 2	0.00% 0	8.06% 15
Q1: • I am an environmental activist	6.67% 1	0.00% 0	6.67% 1	66.67% 10	20.00% 3	8.06% 15
Q1: • I am an ordinary member of the public	0.00% 0	20.00% 6	20.00% 6	56.67% 17	3.33% 1	16.13% 30
Total Respondents	35	74	34	37	6	186

Irish Pure Friesian

[redacted]
Co. Limerick

Monday June 14th 2021

Re: Submission to public consultation of Agri-Food Strategy, 2030.

Dear Tom,

The Irish Pure Friesian Club was established almost twenty years ago in 2002 to promote, develop and improve the British Friesian breed and its suitability to the primarily grazing Irish dairy system. We act as custodians of the breed in Ireland, but have a close working relationship with the British Friesian Breeders Club in the UK. Among the most recent achievements of the Irish Pure Friesian Club, the top ranked Genus ABS (international AI company) British Friesian bull is currently Carrickshock GTW, bred in Kilkenny in the Carrickshock Herd of Mr Pat Cleary & family.

In response to the recent publication of the Agri-Food Strategy 2030 the club would like to submit the following for your consideration.

In the dairy section specifically, considering:

> *Action 1. Promote greater integration of the dairy and beef sectors, especially in relation to the production of beef coming from the dairy sector, to ensure that there is a market outlet for male calves from the dairy herd, and to provide an alternative business option for beef farmers.*
>
> *Action 4. Continue progress on genetics, including genomic breeding strategies focused on animal health and welfare, production efficiency and methane efficiency, and market suitability of all off-spring, including sexed-semen.*
>
> *Action 5. Continue measurable improvements in animal health and welfare. This has benefits both in terms of reputation and economic and climate efficiency.*

It is our view that the British Friesian breed can serve Ireland well. Capable of delivering 500 kilos of milk solids, off mainly grazed grass, with good feet and legs, a calving interval of 365 days, and a profitable male offspring, the British Friesian cow is ideally suited for the dairy to beef system delivering an O=/O+ carcass of average 330 kilos. Or a beef sired offspring capable of achieving desired R grade carcass. These are valuable to any beef farmer, with females suitable as suckler replacements.

The British Friesian breed has proven longevity, good health and commercially valuable male off-spring, all of which contribute to the positive animal welfare standards required by farmers, consumers and the industry.

Irish Pure Friesian

The club is willing to participate in discussions of how the breed's performance might be further researched and promoted as part of the suite of actions that will be required by the Irish agri-food industry to deliver the Agri-Food Strategy 2030.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Irish Pure Friesian Club

FAO:[redacted]

Dear[redacted]

The RDS valued the opportunity to partner with you and your colleagues in the Agri-Food 2030 Committee in running the National Food Systems Dialogues over the past few months. We hope you found it to be beneficial. In this document, the RDS Committee of Agriculture and Rural Affairs would like to make a short submission to the Agri-Food 2030 process.

Joint RDS-Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) research and consultation emphasises how Ireland can lead on Climate Smart Agriculture. In particular, there is an emphasis on the need to find win-wins. Producing food in Ireland reduces the global carbon footprint for food, given our positive environment and relatively sustainable practices. However, we recognise the need to burden-share Ireland's delivery of a better environmental footprint across greenhouse gasses, water quality and biodiversity. There is a critical need to deploy more effective policy levers to enable the delivery of these multiple goals. Also, recognising the Food Systems approach, we highlight the need to focus on system solutions to these grand challenges.

We recognise the need for different policies and goals for different types of farms. Solutions for economically viable farms are likely to be different to those for economically vulnerable farms. The rising tide won't lift all boats; dairy-led Food Harvest and Food Wise goals didn't impact on other parts of the sector positively. It is possible for policies to find win-wins if designed well. Delivering on the Teagasc recommendation in relation to Domestic Offsetting[1] could help to realise wider gains from Dairy Expansion. Tying expansion to emissions can deliver the triple win of greater income from dairy, maintaining or reduce emissions through offsetting from other areas (substituting emissions in other livestock sectors or increasing sequestration from forestry), while sharing the gains from dairy expansion more widely.

RDS funded research on the generational transition in farming highlights the need to re-consider the benefits of a retirement scheme. Targeting young farmers will have less of an impact unless older farmers can be facilitated in their transition to retirement. Addressing barriers in relation to the interaction of farm subsidies, taxes and social welfare benefits is essential to facilitate this. These should be considered by the Commission on Taxation and Social Welfare.

The RDS-COFORD[2] Forest Futures Dialogue generated a number of key discussion points. Firstly, the importance of getting back on track vis a vis afforestation with a degree of urgency was emphasised, particularly as the required gains in terms of carbon sequestration would not be generated for many years into the future. A second point relates to taking a systems approach to delivering change, requiring change across the Innovation System, akin to a Food Systems approach in food production. In particular, change was recommended for different actors: (a) highlighting the immediate need to resolve issues in relation to licensing and appeals, (b) the need to integrate forestry incentives with agricultural changes that occur on farms, (c) the need to integrate more clearly carbon sequestration objectives with timber mobilisation objectives in forestry incentives, and (d) the need to reverse the trend in research spending, with more research on behavioural aspects of forestry, particularly understanding issues in relation to the replanting obligation.

Fundamentally, delivering the goals of the Agri-Food and Forestry sectors requires change by many. Historic polices have not always been cohesive, emphasising the need for change by others, particularly farmers. The National Dialogues have been extremely helpful in facilitating a collective

---

[1] https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/publications/2011/TeagascSubmissionOnDomesticOffsetting.pdf
[2] Council for Forest Research and Development

perspective with responsibility across all stakeholders. Collective action to achieve the complex grand challenges in the Agri-Food 2030 strategy require respect and trust between players and a recognition that most will try to do the right thing if given the right incentives to do so.

The potential contributions of science, technology and the policy options are well identified and incorporated into the strategy. As the strategy is refined after consultation there is merit in defining more specific measurable targets.

The UN Food Systems initiative includes the economic and social sustainability of the food producing communities and the strategy. The strategy confirms the Government's commitment to Rural Development and cross-references the new rural development policy 'Our Rural Future 2021 to 2025', and commits the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to work with the Department for Rural and Community Development and others to deliver its goals. It is important that both Departments work closely together as the strategies develop and are implemented, to ensure coherence in approach between both strategies and to ensure that the rural development actions envisaged in Our Rural Future are in place to support the agricultural sector.

There remain challenges in the engagement between Agriculture and Environmental Stakeholders. Building upon the experience of the National Dialogues, the RDS is willing through its Sustainable Farming-Sustainable Living Programme to engage in ongoing dialogue between different stakeholders.

If you or your colleagues have any queries or would like to follow up on any of the issues raised, we would be happy to meet you.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

RDS Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

[redacted]

RDS

Appendix – RDS Funded and Organised Policy Reports

- Appendix 1: A Climate-Smart Pathway for Irish Agricultural Development - Exploring the Leadership Opportunity
- Appendix 2: Facilitating Land Mobility and Succession in Irish Agriculture
- Appendix 3: Social Sustainability: Improving the Income Position of Vulnerable Farms
- Appendix 4: Forest Futures – Pathways for Delivering Public and Private Goods from Forests