



2023 Multi-Species Swards Measure (MSSM)
Terms and Conditions

Background

This Measure is being introduced by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to promote environmentally sustainable methods of farming, which will have a positive impact on climate emissions, biodiversity and water quality. Research work carried out on multi-species swards has shown an ability to produce higher dry matter yields from lower nitrogen fertiliser inputs providing a more environmentally friendly production system allowing for increased Carbon sequestration while simultaneously reducing emissions of nitrous oxide, a potent greenhouse gas. This measure is anticipated to have a positive impact on targets under the EU Green Deal strategies including the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategy. In addition, it will contribute to the targets set in the Climate Action Plan 2023.

The Measure will run from the 12th of April 2023. Applicants must apply by 29th May 2023, seed can be purchased from date of application and must be sown by the 15th of July 2023. Claims for payment must be lodged by the 29th of September 2023. The measure is funded by the Irish Exchequer and notified under Agricultural Block Exemption Regulation.

Objective

This measure aims to incentivise farmers to sow multi-species swards, which will reduce reliance on nitrogen fertilisers and promote a more sustainable method of farming. A financial contribution will be provided to approved applicants to offset part of the cost that farmers will incur in the establishment of these swards. Research around multi-species swards has demonstrated significant advantages associated with their use and in order to realise these advantages there is a need to expand the area already established under the Multi-Species Sward pilot programme.

Trial work carried out by UCD on multi-species swards has shown positive results, around low nitrogen fertiliser use, which can be attributed to the ability of red and white clovers in the multi-species mix to fix atmospheric nitrogen. The result of lower quantities of Nitrogen (N) fertiliser being applied to these swards will not only have a beneficial impact on nitrous oxide emissions, a potent greenhouse gas, but will reduce input costs for farmers at a time of high fertiliser prices. The reduced N fertiliser use will also contribute to a reduction in ammonia emissions. Other benefits arising from this measure include improved biodiversity, greater tolerance to drought conditions and reduced anthelmintic requirements due to presence of chicory and plantain.

Definitions:

“Applicant” shall mean a farmer who submits an application for participation in the Multi-Species Swards Measure.

“Approved” shall mean approved by a designated officer of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

“Agricultural Block Exemption Regulation” – shall mean the legislation under which this measure has been deemed eligible for funding (Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/2472).

“Multi-species sward mixture” shall mean the seed mix of 6 species required by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to be purchased and sown in order to be eligible for a financial contribution to be paid under this measure.

“Financial Contribution” shall mean the payment to the value of up to €300/ha of multi-species sward established by an approved applicant.

Eligibility and Scheme Requirements

1. Participating applicants must be approved by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Department will make a financial contribution of up to €300 per hectare for the establishment of Multi-Species Swards to applicants approved under the Measure.
2. The Multi-Species Sward (MSS) must be grown to commercial requirements and sown at the recommended seeding rates of at least 30kg/ha. It **must be sown by 15th July 2023**. The multi-species sward must be **successfully established by 30th September 2023**.
3. **The Multi-Species Sward must be grown on lands declared on the approved applicant’s 2023 Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) Scheme application.**
4. In order to receive payment under this measure an applicant **must** indicate the crop type as Multi Species Swards on their 2023 BISS application, on the parcel(s) where they are sowing multi-species sward mixture for this scheme.

The following crop types are included on the 2023 BISS online portal for this purpose:

- **Permanent Pasture (MSS measure)** (for reseeding permanent pasture with multi-species sward mixture)
- **Grass Year 1 (MSS measure)** (for multi-species sward mixture following an arable crop)

Parcels declared as any other crop type for BISS 2023 are ineligible for this measure. Land parcels that received aid under the 2022 Multi-Species Sward Pilot Measure are not eligible to be included in the 2023 Multi-Species Sward Measure.

(Please note the use of data from an applicant’s BISS application for the purpose of assessment/verification of an application is necessary for participation in the Multi-Species Sward Measure.)

5. Payments under this Measure will be limited to a minimum area of 1 hectare and a maximum area of 20 hectares.
6. The multi-species sward mixture must include 6 species and the inclusion rates listed below for each 12kg pack, is the **minimum** requirement. The species mix sown must at least contain the minimum quantities per hectare set out below. If desired additional species may be added in line with good agricultural practices for the establishment of multi-species swards. DAFM recommends that the total seeding rate should not exceed 35kgs/ha.

Plant Species	Weight per pack (kg)	Minimum amount per hectare (kgs)
Perennial Ryegrass (PRG)	6.6	16.50
Timothy / other non-PRG grass	0.7	1.75
White Clover	1.5	3.75
Red Clover	1.5	3.75
Plantain	1.0	2.50
Chicory	0.7	1.75
Total	12.0	

All varieties of Perennial Ryegrasses and White Clover varieties included in the multi-species sward mixture must be included on the Grass and White Clover Recommended List Varieties for Ireland 2022/2023 publication produced by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

7. At claim stage, the applicant must upload at least one of the official seed labels from the packs of purchased seed showing the composition of the multi-species sward mixture.
8. In addition to the requirement to declare the Multi-Species Sward parcels on the 2023 BISS application, supporting documentation in the form of invoices and seed labels are required. At claim stage applicants must indicate the area sown as multi-species and upload their supporting documentation. **Claims must be up-loaded on Agfood.ie on or before 29th September 2023.** When up-loading claims applicants should log on to www.Agfood.ie and select **AgSchemes - Applications for Payment** and then select the relevant measure from the Scheme drop down menu.

If a contractor service is used, these receipts should be retained. Only **ONE** claim can be up-loaded per applicant containing a maximum of two invoices and two seed labels. A seed label must be uploaded for each species mix/batch of seed purchased. Only seed purchased **after the application is lodged on Agfood.ie and before the final date for sowing the crop, 15th July 2023** is eligible under this measure.

9. All Invoices/ receipts/ statements should be original, on headed paper and at least include the name, address, phone number and VAT number/Tax Reference Number TRN of the Agri-retailer/Co-op. In addition, the receipt must indicate-
 - the name and address of the approved applicant
 - the invoice number and date
 - the quantity and weight of the bags purchased.
 - all invoices must be marked paid.
10. Submission of incorrect or false information will render an application ineligible for aid.
11. In the event of eligible applications being received in excess of the available budget for the measure, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will implement a reduced payment rate on a per hectare basis as appropriate.
12. The measure will **open between 12th April 2023 and 29th September 2023.**
13. Under this measure, multi-species swards are not permitted to be sown on Commonage land, Natura 2000 sites, NHA designated land, Environmentally Sensitive Permanent Grassland or within archaeological monument buffer zones.
14. Applicants participating in the Agricultural Practice 8 Eco-Scheme - Sowing a Multi-Species Sward are eligible to participate in the Multi-Species Sward Measure but **will only be eligible where the Multi-Species Swards Measure is adopted in different parcel(s) to Eco-Scheme Agricultural Practice 8.** The correct crop codes must be input on the applicant's 2023 BISS application.
15. Participation in the Multi-Species Sward Measure does not remove an individual's responsibility to abide by the Terms and Conditions of any other Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine schemes. This also applies to **all** lands with specific conditions attached under either national or EU legislation.
16. If following acceptance into the Multi-Species Sward Measure there is a change in the control of the holding within the timeframe of this Measure i.e., change from a natural person to a legal person or from natural person to natural person, approval for this change must be requested in writing from this Department. A financial contribution will not be paid until and unless the change has been approved by the Department.
17. Application of the Terms and Conditions is at the discretion of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Minister shall lay down the procedures to be followed in the operation of the Measure and reserves the right to alter these procedures. The Minister may at any time lay down further conditions under the Multi-Species Sward Measure.

18. Application and Claim Process

To apply for the Multi-Species Swards Measure, an applicant/their agent log into Agfood.ie and then select “Multi-Species Sward and Red Clover Silage Measure”, they then select “Schemes to Enter” and finally “Multi-Species Sward Measure (MSSM) 2023”.

Applicants must agree to the declarations and Terms & Conditions (it is not necessary to declare areas to be sown at application stage). The **application portal will close on 29th May 2023**.

On their 2023 BISS application, on the parcel(s) where they are sowing multi-species sward mixture under this Measure the applicant must indicate the crop type as

- **Permanent Pasture (MSS measure)** (for reseeding permanent pasture with multi-species sward mixture)
Or
- **Grass Year 1 (MSS measure)** (for multi-species sward mixture following an arable crop)

Parcels declared as any other crop type for BISS 2023 are ineligible for this measure.

The Multi-Species Sward must be sown by 15th July 2023 and successfully established by 30th September 2023.

Claims must be up-loaded on Agfood.ie before 29th September 2023 and should include the invoice(s) and one seed label per species mix/batch of seed purchased. When up-loading claims applicants should log on to www.Agfood.ie and select **AgSchemes - Applications for Payment** and then select the relevant measure from the Scheme drop down menu.

Approved applicants should indicate the area sown at claim stage. The original seed labels and invoices must be retained on-farm and, if requested made available to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Payments will issue to eligible approved applicants from late 2023 when all claims have been assessed.

Administrative and Compliance Checks

19. Applications will be subject to administrative checks as part of the BISS application process. Checks on dual claims, over claims, etc. may potentially have an impact on the area declared and the area eligible for the Multi-Species Sward Measure.
20. The details provided on the Multi-Species Sward Measure claim may also be subject to verification through administrative checks by this Department. Such administrative checks may include examination of all supporting documentation provided in support of the claim.
21. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine reserves the right to request alternative/additional evidence with regard to any invoice/receipt/statement submitted with a payment claim directly from the applicant or from a third party. If required, an applicant must submit proofs of payment that are acceptable to the Department. These proofs will consist of copies of bank statements of the applicant's bank account showing relevant entries and/or copies of the two sides of encashed cheques.
22. Applicants may be required to supply any additional information or documentation that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine may request. Such documentation may be required in order to verify compliance with the requirements and objectives of the measure. The following non-exhaustive list of methods may be used by the Department as a means of assuring that the Measure is being complied with
 - (a)- geo-tagged photos
 - (b)- contractor receipts
23. The Department reserves the right to carry out inspections at any time on eligibility for the measure and any supporting documents. In submitting an application for the Multi-Species Sward Measure, applicants agree to

permit officials of the Department to carry out on-farm inspections at any reasonable time(s) and without prejudice to public liability. Every on-the-spot inspection will be the subject of a report. Such checks may include an examination of seed purchase documentation, seed labels, contractor receipts and/or field inspection to verify that the multi-species sward has established.

Penalties:

24. Failure to comply with the Multi-Species Sward Measure Terms and Conditions and eligibility criteria will result in an appropriate penalty/reduction in the level of aid payable. For example, crop sown but not managed appropriately leading to crop failure or a poorly established crop due to neglect by the applicant.
25. If the area declared exceeds the area determined, the aid shall be calculated based on the area determined. If the area declared exceeds that determined, the aid shall be calculated based on the area determined reduced by twice the difference found if that difference is more than 3%, but not more than 20% of the area determined. If the difference is more than 20% of the area determined, no aid shall be granted under the Multi-Species Sward Measure.
26. Penalty amounts may be deducted from future payments due to the beneficiary from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Where monetary penalties are not paid or recovered within the period requested, the Department may take whatever action is deemed necessary for their recovery.

In the event of a penalty applying, the applicant will have the right to an internal review of the original decision by a more senior official than the original decision maker within the Department.

Data Protection

Your attention is drawn to the Data Protection Notice on the Department's website at [gov.ie - Data Protection Privacy Notices \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie - Data Protection Privacy Notices (www.gov.ie))