
Changes to Ireland's draft CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027

In response to the formal observations, Ireland has made changes to the plan (almost 5,000 text changes, many repetitive) . However, several notable changes were made to align the plan with the regulatory framework, address the environmental ambition and to provide further clarification or justification of Ireland's approach. The main changes are set out below:

- Dairy Beef welfare scheme was redesigned to support the use of high dairy beef index sires in dairy herds. This will now focus on improving the beef traits of calves to facilitate retention of calves on the island and better integration into local production systems. This replaces the weighing action previously proposed. The rate per calf will remain at €20/head.
- Eligible hectare was amended to allow an increased percentage of beneficial features within a parcel giving farmers additional flexibility to protect these features without penalty. Beneficial features within a parcel can now account for up to 50% of the area of the parcel without any deduction in the eligible area.
- GAEC 7 was amended to ensure crop rotation requirements are implemented (as well as crop diversification), with rotation of either primary or with secondary crops (catch crops) on a 4-year cycle at parcel and holding level. Crop diversification (2 and 3 crop rules), continues as per initial proposal. Certain exemptions/exceptions apply to these requirements.
- To align with the regulatory framework changes were made to GAEC 8 (non-productive areas). The requirement for holdings to have 4% non-productive areas under GAEC 8 remains but Commonage, Natura 2000, Forestry, GAEC 2, and GAEC 9 lands will not have an area weighting factor, as originally proposed but will, in most cases, be effectively exempt from this requirement. Rock is now included as a non-productive beneficial feature. "The hedgerow removals text" was amended to specify that removals are to be permitted in exceptional cases only and the replanting obligation must take place as close as possible to the removed hedgerow.
- A number of changes were made to the eco-scheme to increase the environmental ambition:
 - No area weightings for Commonage, Natura 2000, GAEC 2, GAEC 9 and Forestry, but non-productive features on Commonage, Natura 2000, GAEC 2 & 9 may count as Space for Nature under Agricultural Practice 1.

- The maximum stocking rate for Agricultural Practice 2 was reduced from 1.5 to 1.4 livestock units/ha/annum, and the minimum stocking rate reduced from 0.15 to 0.1 (to align with new livestock equivalent for 1 ewe, 1 ewe was = 0.15; now = 0.1 LU). An enhanced option has been made available under this practice with an overall maximum stocking rate of 1.2, which will count as two practices under the eco-scheme. Agricultural Practice 5 was amended to require 100% of chemical fertilisers to be spread by GPS controlled sprayers, up from 60%. Agricultural Practice 8 was amended to require sowing of Multi-Species Swards on at least 7% of the farmers eligible area in the year selected, up from 6%. The definition of “New Farmer” was amended to exclude those that had carried out any previous agricultural activity from this definition. . It is defined as farmers that have set up as head of a holding for the first time in their lives and within the past 3 years.
- The proposal where in the case of a young farmer leasing entitlements that the topped up value of a leased entitlement would be clawed back when reverting to the original owner has been removed.
- The Areas Facing Natural Constraints - the minimum stocking rate reduced from 0.15 to 0.1 LU (to align with new livestock equivalent for 1 ewe, 1 ewe was = 0.15; now = 0.1 LU).
- A commitment to review the Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme mid-way through the programme was introduced.
- Fruit & Vegetable Producer Organisation support scheme, and the Apiculture scheme, were revised considerably in terms of layout and indicators, but there is no change to their content or budget. It remains otherwise as previously drafted.

The Agri-Environment Climate Measure (AECM) has been given a new name, the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES).