

# **STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT**

**Determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental  
Assessment for National Strategy for Horticulture 2023-2027**

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## 1. Introduction

The horticulture sector is the fourth largest sector in agriculture in Ireland and makes a significant contribution to the economy with a farm gate value of almost €521 million in 2021. An estimated 17,600 people are employed in the sector at both primary level and value added downstream.

Some 6,600 are employed in the Horticulture industry directly, including the ornamental (bulbs, nurseries, landscape, bedding plants etc.) sector, salad crops, vegetable and soft/top fruit sectors, while a further 11,000 are employed in downstream businesses.

Food Vision 2030 recognised the opportunity potential of the domestic horticulture sector and identified the need for a road map for the horticulture sector to 2030. This road map will be in the form of a National Horticulture Strategy which will aim to address the challenges and opportunities for sustaining and growing the sector.

The ambition of the strategy is to use it as a tool to grow a more profitable value-added sector driven by sustainability and innovation. This ambition is aligned with Food Vision 2030 and the three pillars of sustainability, which are environmental, economic and social, these three pillars underpin the horticulture strategy.

In the *Climate Action Plan for 2021* a specific action was identified for horticulture and the horticulture strategy will aim to address this action (330 Identify knowledge gaps in the horticulture sector around climate change mitigation actions and address areas for change). The horticulture sector is often acknowledged as being one of the most carbon efficient sectors, however verifying data to substantiate this claim need to be produced and this will be covered under the implementation of this new strategy.

While the focus of the horticulture as mentioned above is to address the challenges and opportunities for sustaining and growing the sector this will be intrinsically linked to achieving environmental sustainability too.

## 2. Purpose of the National Horticulture Strategy 2023-2027

The National Horticulture Strategy will help all stakeholders to work together to ensure the long term economic, social and environmental sustainability of the sector, by putting in place a series of targeted actions and a clear and achievable implementation plan. By collectively pooling expertise and energy we can determine how best to do it, ensuring this sector remains at the forefront of globally sustainable food production systems. The strategy comprises both Key Strategic Actions (KSAs) which need to be progressed now and KSAs which need to be progressed into the future.

The strategy aims to meet climate and environmental objectives, while maintaining viable farm incomes in the sector.

The National Horticulture Strategy provides the structure for the future development of the sector. The details and operationalisation of KSAs will be set out in this Strategy and will require relevant stakeholder engagement to progress as identified in this strategy.

There are eight Key Strategic Actions identified for the National Horticulture Strategy, these KSAs were shaped following engagement with the National Horticulture Strategy steering group and following public consultation. Each KSA will have a set of actions in order for it to have quantifiable outcomes. The KSAs are listed below.

1. Strengthen the position of the grower in the marketplace
2. Establish the framework for a permanent non-EEA seasonal workers' scheme
3. Modernise the horticulture curriculum and training to attract new entrants
4. Develop a written charter between growers and retailers and increase consumer understanding of horticulture sector
5. Research and Development for the industry
6. Better data and information for better insights
7. Integrate Horticulture back into AKIS
8. Support innovation and diversification

The National horticulture strategy provides the structure for the future development of the sector. The details and operationalisation of KSAs will be set out in this Strategy and will require relevant stakeholder engagement to progress as identified in this strategy. If on foot of this Strategy further national policies, strategies, plans and measures need to be put in place, these 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 Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004<sup>1</sup>) (hereafter, 'the SEA Regulations'), as amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. 200 of 2011<sup>2</sup>), 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*

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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*<sup>3</sup>, 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/EEC<sup>4</sup>).

## 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 the National Horticulture Strategy 2023-2027 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 criteria for determining whether a Plan or Programme is likely to have significant effects on the Environment.

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

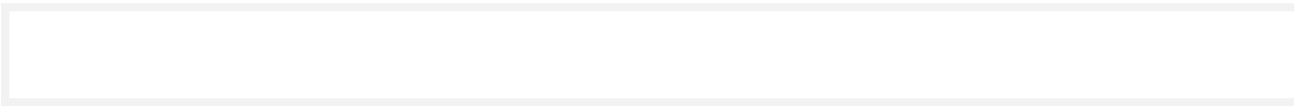
The conclusion reached following the screening check and the review against the environmental significance criteria as set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations is that a full Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required for the following reasons:

- That the national horticulture strategy does not provide a framework for development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive.
- The purpose of the document is to set out Key Strategic Actions for the sector and how it is proposed to develop progress these actions to lead to tangible outcomes.
- Procedures, criteria and detailed rules for the implementation of actions and options contained the National Horticulture Strategy 2023-2027 may 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.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/EPA\\_development\\_methodology\\_SEA\\_synthesis\\_report.pdf](http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/ea/EPA_development_methodology_SEA_synthesis_report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <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 National Horticulture Strategy 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.	<p>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, horticulture are linked to the actions of the National Strategy.</p> <p>However, individual policies, strategies, plans and measures for, or related to, horticulture may be considered under the SEA and, where appropriate, the AA processes.</p>
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.	<p>It is envisaged that the details and operationalisation of actions contained in this Strategy will be implemented via future plans or programmes to ensure that the future development of the sector will be built on sustainability</p> <p>However, individual policies, strategies, plans and measures for, or related to, horticulture may need to be considered under the SEA and, where appropriate, the AA process.</p>
Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme.	<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 sustainability</p> <p>However, individual policies, strategies,</p>

	plans and measures for, or related to, horticulture may be considered under the SEA and, where appropriate, the AA process.
The relevance of the plan or programme,	The implementation of the National horticulture strategy 2023-2027



## 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).	will be positively supported through the operationalisation of actions contained in this Strategy.
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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 implemented via future plans or programmes to ensure that the future development of the sector will be built on sustainability</p> <p>However, individual policies, strategies, plans and measures for, or related to, agriculture and forest may 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)	
<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <p>(a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,</p> <p>(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,</p> <p>(c) intensive land-use.</p>	
The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status	