



ACRES Circular No. 31 of 2023

6th December 2023

Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES) Tranche 2
Clarifications around ACRES and Afforestation

Dear ACRES Advisor

As you are aware the Terms and Conditions of ACRES Tranche 2 state that if an ACRES applicant is a participant in the Native Woodland Establishment Scheme or GPC 11 – Agro-forestry (or successor or comparable schemes approved under the National Forestry Programme) by the closing date for applications under relevant Tranche of ACRES, he/she may be eligible for Tier 2 priority entry to ACRES General. The Department wishes to advise that, for the purposes of ACRES, the Native Tree Area Scheme is deemed a comparable scheme to the Native Woodland Establishment Scheme.

It should be noted, therefore, that an ACRES applicant applying for entry under Tier 2 of ACRES General based on being a participant in the Native Tree Area Scheme must have been approved into the Native Tree Area Scheme on or before the closing date for applications for Tranche 2 of ACRES which is 5.30pm on 13th December 2023.

The Department has received a number of queries about the position as regards the planting of trees under the Native Tree Area scheme if participating in ACRES. Please note, in this context, that

- while afforestation is compatible with ACRES, afforestation may not take place on a parcel where an ACRES action is situated or on which an ACRES action is being undertaken.
- A parcel on which an ACRES action is situated may, however, be split to facilitate afforestation.
- Where changes to the contract result in a reduction in area/length/unit of the ACRES action, this may result in a penalty or full reimbursement* except under certain limited circumstances as follows:-
 - The new commitment is considered to be of equal or higher benefit to the environment and/or climate, and
 - The existing commitment is undertaken in line with the scheme specifications for that action for a minimum of 2 years, and
 - The proposed new commitment is part of Ireland's EU-approved National Forestry Programme.

*ACRES Circular 3 of 2023, dated 14th March 2023, gives information about the withdrawal of an action from an ACRES Contract and possible financial consequences.



An ACRES contract can only be amended with the prior approval of the Department. To qualify under the above exemption rule and to avoid penalty or reimbursement, a farmer who wishes to terminate an ACRES action to facilitate afforestation, must first request approval by submitting, by email to the relevant ACRES Section, a brief outline of what is proposed. This proposal must include parcel identification, details of the existing ACRES action and details of the proposed afforestation measure to be undertaken. The relevant email addresses for participants in Tranche 1 of ACRES are:

- For those in ACRES General: acres@agriculture.gov.ie
- For those in ACRES Co-operation: acrescp@agriculture.gov.ie

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