



SUBMISSION TO CAP STRATEGY ON BEHALF OF THE IRISH RARE BREEDS SOCIETY CLG. .

The objective of the IRBS is to preserve rare breeds that are true to type with a pure genetic pool.

Irish Rare domestic Breeds represent an opportunity to achieve many of the existing draft proposals:

The current draft proposals will focus on nine specific objectives;

1. support viable farm income and resilience across the EU territory to enhance food security;
2. enhance market orientation and increase competitiveness including greater focus on research, technology and digitalisation;
3. Improve farmers' position in the value chain;
4. Contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as sustainable energy;
5. Foster sustainable development and efficient management of natural resources such as water, soil and air;
6. Contribute to the protection of biodiversity, enhance ecosystem services and preserve habitats and landscapes;
7. Attract young farmers and facilitate business development in rural areas;
8. Promote employment, growth, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including bio-economy and sustainable forestry;
9. Improve the response of EU agriculture to societal demands on food and health, including safe, nutritious and sustainable food, as well as animal welfare.

Native Irish domestic Rare Breeds are uniquely placed to facilitate these goals.

They represent an important part of our economic and social history. They are an invaluable heritage not simply a commodity to be marketed in the same way as entirely commercial breeds. Today traditional farming practices have been undergoing rapid change with increasing emphasis on larger farms and intensive commercial options.

However Ireland should have a lot more to offer. Intensive monoculture has caused considerable harm to our biodiversity. This is clearly seen in the most recent publication on Clare Island by John Feehan published by the Royal Irish Academy. The island is an area which has been extremely well studied since Praeger's first survey in 1909-1911. Much of the lower land was ridged and furrowed by intensive cultivation, now grassed over. A patchwork of arable fields drew winter flocks of thrushes and blackbirds from the mainland. They don't come now, and nor does the once common corncrake. In Praeger's survey, the drier upland commonage on nearly half the island bristled with heather, cover for woodcock, red grouse and hares. By the time of the second survey, sheep

subsidies and overgrazing had worn the same ground bare. One quarter of the island's plants recorded by Praeger have disappeared. Down to the middle of the last century most farm families remained largely self-sufficient, with gardens for vegetables, a few cows for milk, poultry and an occasional pig. Today all food is purchased from the mainland and there is total farm dependency on EU support. Half of the properties are holiday homes empty for most of the year.

Much of what has happened on Clare Island is also happening or has already happened throughout Ireland. This summary is relevant for much of Ireland's uplands and small farms.

Traditional Rare Breeds have a major contribution to make as efforts are being made locally to achieve ecological restoration.

Less intensive farming with concentration on biodiversity makes ecological sense when compared with intensive beef farming or milk production which relies on intensive application of fertiliser and the feeding of concentrates. Many of the breeds are small and easy on the land if wintered out. All are easy to do and on the whole reproduce easily.

Quality not quantity should be our goal.

Biodiversity in all its forms is hugely desirable. In our efforts to mitigate climate change smaller numbers of farm animals which cater to a niche market would seem a logical path to follow. Rare Breeds are listed as a Priority under Glas. On average the breeds are smaller and kill out at 200 - 250kg which suits the modern household providing a smaller cut of meat. Dexter Beef is now seen as a premium product in restaurants and the Moiled and Droimeann breeds are not far behind. Under the Natura 2000 scheme Environmental Consultants worked with stakeholders to draw up a Specification for Hill Lamb, a Specification for Quality Control, and to build a brand.

Tourism

Much of Ireland's income comes from Tourism and traditional farming practices are now of huge interest to visitors - witness traffic jams in Connemara when there are ponies grazing and the success of Traditional Farms in Muckross and Newbridge House. Tourism that is outdoor oriented could benefit eg The White Cattle of Roscommon and the Brown Bull evoke the Tain Saga.

The Land of the Horse

The Irish Draught, the Connemara Pony and the Kerry Bog Pony are Ireland's three native equine breeds. They each have great tourism potential. Each represents an important role in our Social History – the background of the small farm with a range of domestic animals. But more than that they are a unique genetic resource with many qualities which may prove to be of great use to horse populations across Europe. Irish equines have great temperaments from generations working with people and this attribute contributes to their popularity both in Ireland and abroad. Horses do not carry TB and so are easy to move around. They have been used by Burren Beo as part of their controlled conservation grazing plans.

Low impact farming is the way of the future.

Leisure farming will become an antidote to city centred populations which are divorced entirely from the land. Rare Breeds are suited to the older farmer as it is not a numbers game and they reproduce easily. They also suit the hobby farmer, and those interested in Agritourism and Ecotourism, small holders and people on the periphery. They have some advantages in that they are "easy to do", and are suitable for marginal land and commonages. eg There are 330 thousand hectares of commonage which need to be managed and some of this land would be suitable for indigenous species.

Biodiversity

Recent trends in intensive tillage and cattle farming have been extremely detrimental to our traditional biodiversity. In depth research on Clare Island bears this out. So too do all the major biodiversity surveys carried out in recent years. This cannot be allowed to continue. We must have a major rethink in order to reverse this trend.

Education is a vitally important part of any formula for change and we need a completely new approach to our way of living on this island. The emphasis should be practical rather than purely academic. Teagasc has a major role to play in informing and encouraging farmers to change the emphasis of their farming practices. People have begun to eat less meat and more vegetables. Specialised meat from Rare Breeds is a premium product which should yield a greater income with fewer animals. However it is necessary to find a marketing outlet. What is needed is a meaningful end product. This applies to all breeds. So Marketing should be part of any future plans.

Climate change is happening.

We have to change our dependence on turf and fossil fuels in order to achieve our European objectives by 2030. Organic farming is desirable and rare agricultural breeds are a natural choice for these farms. Sheep are suitable for grazing around photovoltaic installations which will be established to provide an alternative source of clean energy. Conservation grazing will lessen the extent of accidental wildfires. We need to ensure that clean water, clean air, and a healthy soil are part of our future existence. Intensive farming must be phased out.

What is needed is greater joined up thinking on behalf of the Government Departments.

It sometimes seems as if there is very little or no communication between Agriculture, Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Tourism. For example the Heritage Council is supporting the preservation of traditional hedgerows – but what about the animals that are suitable to graze in these fields? Smaller fields with species rich hedgerows are ideally suited for the smaller native Irish Breeds. There must be a role for these animals in Tourism eg the Wild Atlantic Way and the Ancient East. The DAFM currently supports a number of rare breeds under the GLAS scheme. But each of these departments operates in isolation. If there were better interaction the results would be greatly enhanced.

What we are asking for is:

- 1) Greater co-operation between government departments**
- 2) Information,**
- 3) Education,**
- 4) Marketing**
- 5) More focused Agri-environment schemes. These schemes should be results - driven with interim assessments and a greater degree of conservation requirements.**
- 6) At the moment the subsidy is limited to 10 animals. It would be good if this number could be increased.**
- 7) At the moment one has to be a member of the GLAS scheme from the beginning. It would be good if one could join during the life of the scheme.**
- 8) At the moment grants are given for simply holding the animals with limited breeding requirements. Increased grants might be linked to performance such as compliance with breeding programs.**
- 9) That the important role of Irish Rare Breeds be given serious consideration as part of the forthcoming CAP Strategy.**

Mary McGrath

Secretary

Interim Steering Committee, Irish Rare Breeds Society.

SWOT template

Please use a separate template for each objective

<u>Objective -</u>	
<u>Strength</u> <u>Traditional,</u> <u>Native,</u> <u>Easy to Manage,</u> <u>Suitable for small farms,</u> <u>Healthy,</u> <u>Can live out</u> <u>Genetic Diversity,</u> <u>Suitable for organic farming</u> <u>Ideal for Tourism related activities,</u> <u>Biodiversity</u>	<u>Weakness</u>
<u>Opportunity</u>	<u>Threat</u>

<u>Strength</u>	<u>Weakness</u>
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<p><u>Opportunity</u></p> <p><u>Undervalued Asset,</u></p> <p><u>Huge potential for Tourism</u></p> <p><u>With Marketing could achieve greater distribution</u></p> <p><u>It's all about the story</u></p>	<p><u>Threat</u></p>
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<p><u>Strength</u></p>	<p><u>Weakness</u></p> <p><u>Currently not financially viable,</u></p> <p><u>Lack of Information/knowledge re Rare Breeds</u></p> <p><u>No organised Marketing</u></p> <p><u>Prior lack of Organisation</u></p>
<p><u>Opportunity</u></p>	<p><u>Threat</u></p>

<p><u>Strength</u></p>	<p><u>Weakness</u></p>
<p><u>Opportunity</u></p>	<p><u>Threat</u></p> <p><u>Small numbers,</u></p> <p><u>Lack of Overall planning,</u></p> <p><u>No Governmental joined up thinking,</u></p> <p><u>Apathy</u></p>

IRBS Background Information

The Irish Rare Breeds Society has recently established a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The Objectives of the CLG are as follows:

- a. To preserve and promote rare Irish native breeds.
- b. To act as the representative body for various individual societies of indigenous endangered breeds.
- c. To promote education in and knowledge of the importance-of endangered breeds of indigenous domestic farm animals.
- d. To promote awareness of the need for biodiversity in domestic farm animals.
- e. To demonstrate the importance of the domestic farm animal heritage of Ireland.
- f. To provide assistance to individual societies wishing to explore the possibility of gaining official recognition for a putative breed, such as developing a managed breeding programme, genetic testing etc.
- g. To promote the use of rare breeds in sensitive ecosystems with special regard to climate change.

In order to achieve these objectives the Society would act as an umbrella body representing recognised and emerging Rare Irish Domestic Breeds in all dealings with the Department of Agriculture.

The Breed Societies who have pledged support are:

Irish Dexter Cattle Society

Irish Moiled Cattle Society

Droimeann Cattle Society

Irish Draught Horse Breeders Association

Kerry Bog Pony Co-operative Society

Galway Sheep Breeders Association

These are all breeds supported under the Rare Breed Option in GLAS.