

**From:** Siobhan Walsh <[REDACTED]>

**Sent:** [REDACTED]

**To:** CAP Strategic Plan

**Subject:** CAP Submission

Hello,

Please see my submission to the CAP below.

Kind regards,

Siobhán Walsh.

**CAP Submission – From a young, part-time farmer in a partnership**

**Main points:**

- **Compulsory rotation would be detrimental to the Irish tillage sector**
- **Ways to access land**
- **Equal grants and supports for tillage farmers**

Current focus in Ireland seems to be on the dairy industry and climate change, both of which together are not sustainable going into the future.

As a young tillage farmer there is currently very little available to support our business, this is despite the fact that this sector provides carbon syncs, biodiversity, habitats and much more.

**The area under tillage continues to decline every year and is down 6.4% alone in the past year.**

At present access to land for tillage farmers is a huge problem. The cost of land is driven by the dairy industry and as a result is out of tillage farmers reach to turn a profit. Part of the reason dairy farmers take this land is to have land available for slurry spreading and nitrates.

**Joined up thinking can free up land for more environmentally friendly farming practices**

Initiatives need to be set up to allow tillage farmers and livestock farmers to work together.

The production of fodder crops over the winter would provide a cover to soak up nutrients, fodder for livestock and would allow slurry from that livestock farm to be spread before sowing and taken up by that cover crop.

Land would be freed up for tillage farmers, which results in more carbon syncs, less loss of nutrients over winter, cover crops which will not only take up nutrients and take in carbon but provide food for wildlife and new habitats.

The increase in fertiliser use and poor water quality is directly linked to the abolition of quotas. Intensive grassland which is now made up of predominantly perennial ryegrass is not providing habitats or encouraging biodiversity.

**Compulsory rotation is not suited to Ireland**

This was mentioned by a member of the Department at the Tillage Crops Forum. In Ireland, unlike France, Germany, etc farms are small. The number of tillage farmers who must grow two and three

crops under current regulations is between 6,000 and 7,000. This means the majority of farmers have a small amount of land.

Forcing a crop rotation could lead to farmers going out of business. Farmers know the benefits of rotation, but cover crops and other farming practices can be more beneficial than a crop rotation.

Farmers must farm to the market and grow what suits their farm best and which is most profitable.

For example if a farmer has to rotate instead of growing the amount of malting barley they usually grow their income will most likely be down.

Small farmers are not set up to deal with a range of different crop types and would not be viable if they were. A range of equipment for these crops is also not available on TAMS.

Tillage farmers are probably the most conscious farmers when it comes to soil and are always working to improve it.

In a year like 2019, where weather is not suitable for winter sowing in the middle of October the three-crop rule or compulsory rotation become extremely hard to implement.

#### **Lack of investment in the industries which are better for the environment**

It is currently very hard to invest in a tillage farm. While minimum tillage equipment and equipment for sowing cover crops on TAMS are welcome the basics are missing.

If I was a young sheep farmer I would get a grant to fence my farm. If I was a young dairy farmer I can get a grant to build a parlour. In fact livestock farmers can pretty much avail of anything basic needed to set up their farm.

If I am a tillage farmer I can apply for a grain store. How do I fill this grain store though? A grant for a trailer or a combine is surely the equivalent of fencing or a parlour, a milk tank, a slurry tank.

It's a necessity, yet a young tillage farmer who needs this equipment cannot buy it.

If a young tillage farmer cannot buy this basic equipment they cannot farm. Therefore the amount of land in tillage will continue to decline.

If a tillage farmer cannot carry out tasks themselves it is very difficult to turn a profit and afford the expensive equipment and infrastructure that is available on TAMS.

As a young tillage farmer I feel I am being put at a complete disadvantage to my counterparts in the livestock sector.

#### **Importing grain**

Moreover those livestock farmers are using a huge amount of foreign grain in their rations. Grain that is not being produced to the same standard or under the same regulations as here in Ireland.

If the chemical toolbox continues to decline and we are not provided with tools like gene-editing we will have no Irish grain in this country. Yields will go down and costs will go up in many cases.

Ensuring Irish grain use to a greater degree and including it in Irish whiskey and beer in livestock rations would ensure a market for Irish grain and if land is made available to tillage farmers this can result in more environmentally friendly farming practices being used on a greater percentage of Irish land.

The protein aid scheme is vital in providing more Irish rations and should be continued into the next CAP.

**Disagree with forced tree planting**

I also disagree with any suggestion that farmers should have to sow an area of trees on their land. Trees are not the answer to everything as stated above tillage can be an environmentally friendly form of farming while also providing food for the growing population.

In the past, tree planting has been included in schemes, but it was never mandatory. At the end of the day our income comes from our land and the less land we have the less money can be made. As a young tillage farmer I cannot allow my current income to decrease.