



“Restoration of the Lower Shannon SAC (Mulkear River) for Sea Lamprey, Atlantic Salmon and the European Otter”

Press Release

15th January 2014

Minister Announces Support of €12.5bn to Irish Agriculture Sector up to 2020

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney TD, yesterday announced the allocation of more than €12.5 billion in Common Agricultural Policy and Irish exchequer funding to the agriculture sector in the period to 2020. The new draft Rural Development Programme for Ireland, which forms part of the EU CAP, will see a €12.5 billion investment in Irish agriculture. The funding is comprised of €8.5 billion in EU funding, to be paid as direct payments to farmers in the period up to 2020. The old Single Payment Scheme will be replaced by a new Basic Payment Scheme. In addition, the announcement includes €1.9 billion in Irish exchequer funding which will be added to the €2.2 billion EU funding already secured for expenditure on rural development.



Local farmer, Patsy Egan, on the Mulkear River (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

Minister Coveney noted that, throughout the CAP reform process, negotiations have been informed by the need to ensure that the agriculture sector can grow in a competitive and sustainable manner: "The focus for me is consistently on the need to achieve smart, green growth, as envisaged in Food Harvest 2020. We need to be smart about what we do so that we can become more efficient and more competitive, and we need to do it in a way that is sustainable from an environmental and climate viewpoint. The package of measures I am announcing provides practical, targeted support that will help the sector to achieve its ambitions while meeting its climate change responsibilities."

Greening of the CAP

It was also announced that Greening farmers who participate in the Basic Payment Scheme must implement the three standard greening measures as; Crop diversification, Permanent grassland,

Ecological Focus Area (EFA). The greening payment will take the form of an annual payment per hectare. The payment will be calculated as a percentage of the payment the farmer receives under the Basic Payment Scheme. The same percentage will be applied to all farmers and greening will represent some 30% of each farmer's total payment.



High Nature Value farming in the Upper Mulkear Catchment (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

A new agri-environment/climate measure – GLAS

Outside of the direct payments, and in terms of the type of work MulkearLIFE has been undertaking with local farmers since 2010, namely catchment sensitive farming, farming for conservation, water harvesting and riparian management work, the announcement refers to areas to be targeted, to include; a substantial new agri-environment/climate scheme (GLAS), which will build on the progress made under REPS and AEOS. There will also be continued strong support for disadvantaged areas (now Areas of Natural Constraint), to the tune of about €195 million per year. The proposed new agri-environment/climate measure – to be called GLAS (green, low carbon agri-environment scheme) – will build on the progress made under REPS and AEOS. The Scheme will target specific environmental challenges facing the sector as well as focusing on biodiversity, water quality and climate change issues in certain key areas. It will be designed to deliver real environmental benefits and will require significant action by farmers on environmental challenges including those identified in the recent environmental assessment of Food Harvest 2020. It is proposed that a maximum payment of €5,000 per farmer will apply, and it is expected that there will be up to 50,000 farmer participants at its peak. It is also proposed that, within budget limits, a GLAS+ payment would be put in place for a limited number of farmers who take on particularly challenging actions which deliver an exceptional level of environmental benefit. It is proposed that this additional payment will be up to €2,000.



Advisory staff review invasive plants on the Bilboa River (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

Continued support for disadvantaged areas

It is proposed that support to farmers in these areas will continue at its current level, with payments to the tune of about €195 million per year. A full review of the scheme will be necessary, before 2018 at the latest, when the areas classified as ANCs will be redesignated using new bio-physical criteria.

New Basic Payment Scheme

Some important changes have been announced to the old Single Payment Scheme. The new model, while initially retaining the link with current payments under the Single Payment Scheme, will gradually move all farmers towards a national average value over the five years of the new scheme but does not arrive at a 'flat-rate' by 2019. The purpose of this model is to achieve a phased redistribution of payments between those who currently hold high value entitlements and those who hold low value entitlements. It introduces a fairer more equitable distribution of funds between farmers while avoiding the negative impact of a sudden move to a 'flat-rate'. Farmers who hold entitlements with a unit value below 90% of the national average value will be increased by one third of the difference between their starting value and the 90% level over the five years of the scheme. Farmers who hold entitlements with a unit value over 100% of the national average value will see their value decrease over the period of the scheme. The reduction will be determined by the amount needed to fund the increase for those whose entitlement value is being increased. By 2019 all entitlements will have a minimum value of 60% of the national average value. No farmer will receive a payment under the Basic Payment Scheme of over €150,000 per annum. By 2019 no farmer will receive a payment per hectare (Basic Payment plus Greening payment) greater than €700.00.

MulkearLIFE welcomes this initial announcement. The project is hopeful that more targeted measures, with enhanced funding support, will be developed in the next number of months. It is hoped that these will focus on catchment sensitive farming, water quality, the role of farmers in addressing Non Native Invasive Species and riparian management. MulkearLIFE looks forward to inputting into this process and the development of the new Rural Development Programme.

Notes for Editors

1. High Resolution Digital Images are available to accompany this Press Release.

2. Interviews can be arranged with the Project Manager by using the contact details below.
3. MulkearLIFE is a new €1.75 million European Commission funded LIFE Nature project working on the restoration of the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation (with a focus on the Mulkear River catchment) for Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and European Otter. Further details may be viewed on the project website www.mulkearlifeproject.com
4. Inland Fisheries Ireland (Limerick) is lead partner together with the OPW and Limerick County Council. Additional funding support comes from National Parks and Wildlife Service. Other supporters include Teagasc, IFA, ICMSA, and local angling groups.
5. The project is one of the first and most important integrated catchment management projects in Ireland. It is a flagship EU LIFE Nature project –covering some 650 sq km which contain a variety of habitats and protected species. Much of the area is designated as a Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the EU Habitats Directive and forms part of the Natura 2000 Network.

Issued by:

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