

Hill Committee Report

Commonages

- At a recent meeting with the Department of Agriculture an overview of GLAS in commonages was discussed.
- About 4,000 commonage farmers on 2,700 commonages have applied for the scheme. It is expected that many more farmers who were in AEOS1 have waited for the next phase of the scheme as they are guaranteed entry to the scheme under the Tier 1 category.
The Commonage Plans have now to be completed. Already over 100 planners have signed up to do the CMP's
- With 4,000 commonage plans due to be completed, it is likely that the process to complete these plans will commence shortly.
- Plans have got to be completed by the end of August.
- From the county by county analysis on commonage, the highest number of commonage farmers to participate in GLAS is in Mayo (839), followed by Galway (719), Donegal (693), Kerry (635), Cork (338), Leitrim (149), Sligo (122), Tipperary (105), Clare (92), and Wicklow (74). Other counties have smaller amounts with two counties having no application.
- At the meeting with the Department of Agriculture some details of the Commonage Management Plan were discussed. IFA insisted that that the CMP is simple and that it does not involve a major amount of work for the Planner as otherwise higher fees will be passed on to farmers. A major concern for IFA is the requirement for the whole commonage been put on a small number of individuals where a lot of farmers stay out of GLAS. This problem has been compounded as there is no minimum stocking level for Pillar 1.
- A further meeting is planned over the next week.
- Teagasc have already set-out their fees of around €4 per/ha up to a maximum of €250. IFA believe that the fees must be at a minimal level and the earlier proposal of IFA for the Department to pay these charges still stands.
- The Commonage Implementation Committee chaired by Joe Healy will adjudicate where the Department is unable to resolve an issue.
- The min/max figures for stocking must be applied flexibly as the figures which were produced by the National Parks and Wildlife Services a while ago have proven to be faulty in many instances.
- The targeted output scheme is being sought for Hill areas. This was highlighted at the recent visit to the Burren in conjunction with the Rural Development Committee.

Review of Section 40 of the Wildlife Act Burning/Cutting Control

- At a recent meeting with Minister Humphrey's it was indicated that as part of the review that the IFA proposal is being very seriously looked at and that she is hoping to make some announcement shortly on this issue.
- In advance of the meeting, the Hill Committee lobbied TDs in the areas affected given the importance that a resolution to this issue is sorted out immediately.
- It was highlighted to the Minister that burning is a vital management tool to ensure that land is maintained to be suitable for grazing and not overgrown and as a result abandoned.
- Management plans for the uplands should involve a burning period much longer than currently exists and dates for the burning season should be brought back in line with the UK and Northern Ireland.

Pat Dunne

IFA Hill Farming Committee Chairman

Gerry Gunning

Rural Development Executive

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