

## Hill Committee

### 1. Commonages

- The Department of Agriculture has recently produced a guide for the completion of GLAS Commonage Plans (CMP). This followed on from consultations with IFA over the past number of months.
- The key requirement of the guide is to determine sustainable stocking levels for commonages
- The CMP system will be online.
- The Planner will have to determine the gross area which is payable for GLAS and the maximum eligible area for Basic Payment.
- The details for each commonage had already been issued by the Department some time ago which listed the size of the commonage, the number of sheep on that commonage and the number of claimants in 2014.
- In the plan the Planner has to determine the minimum stocking level and the maximum stocking level for the overall commonage to be met by 2018, also the minimum stocking level for each commonage participant to be met by 2016.
- For commonages less than 10ha each individual participant must reach their minimum stocking level by the end of 2016 and must not exceed their individual maximum stocking level.
- For commonage greater than 10ha each individual must reach their individual stocking level by the end of 2016 and by the end of 2018 the sum of the participants stocking level must reach the commonage minimum. The commonage maximum cannot be exceeded.
- The minimum and the maximum stocking level can be changed by the Planner based on the assessment of the commonage.
- Where the Planner wants to get a derogation to the guide, they can do so by presenting a case to the Commonage Implementation Committee (CIC) which is independently chaired by Joe Healy. This will be necessary where some GLAS participants will not be able to reach their minimum. A concession has been given following IFA pressure that each participant will have to deliver at least 50% of the individual stocking density by the end of 2015.
- IFA will be monitoring closely the implementation of the new commonage guidelines to ensure that all commonage farmers can get into the GLAS scheme.
- The CIC will mainly deal with the following:
  - Where there is a disagreement between shareholders.
  - Where the commonage minimum cannot be reached by the target date because of too few shareholders.
  - Where in exceptional cases a rebalancing of the minimum stocking level between shareholders signed up to the plan is sought.
- Plans have to be completed by the end of October.

- About 4,000 commonage farmers on 2,700 commonages have applied for the GLAS 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 CMPs.
- With 4,000 commonage plans due to be completed, it is likely that the process to complete these plans will commence shortly.
- Teagasc have already set-out their fees of around €4 per/ha up to a maximum of €250. IFA believes 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 targeted output scheme is also been sought for Hill areas as additional payment under the agri-environment scheme.

## **2. Review of Section 40 of the Wildlife Act Burning/Cutting Control**

- IFA continues to put pressure on Minister Humphreys to change the date for burning from the end of February to 15th April.
- Indications suggest that there is likely to be change however this needs to be continually pressed politically in each county over the coming weeks.

*Gerry Gunning*