

# Rural Development & Less Favoured Areas Committee Report

## Progress and Delivery in 2015

### Rural Development Plan 2014-2020

- Following the successful lobbying campaign in 2014 in securing €4bn for the 7 year RDP Plan, the workload during 2015 was to ensure EU approval of the plan.
- Ireland's plan was agreed in May but IFA ensured that measures were implemented earlier.
- Allocations for each of the main measures were TAMS - €395m, GLAS - €1,750m, ANCs - €1,350m, Targeted Output - €70m, Knowledge Transfer - €100m, Beef Data Genomics - €250m, Organics - €40m, Leader - €250m.
- The Committee was involved in detailed discussions on the implementation with the Department of Agriculture and met with the EU Commission on several occasions.

### GLAS

- The first phase of the GLAS scheme was introduced in February 2015 the second phase opened in October.
- From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016, 38,000 farmers are in GLAS.
- IFA ensured that flexibility was given so that farmers could maximise their payments either for the GLAS+ of €7,000 or the basic scheme of €5,000.
- The Committee secured a €22m pay-out for first phase payment of 3 months in 2015.
- IFA negotiated reduced charges for GLAS plans with Teagasc.

### TAMS II

- All TAMS measures were opened by July 2015.
- The 60% Young Farmers Scheme included support for a very wide range of works.
- Other schemes with a 40% grant introduced were the Dairy Equipment; Animal Welfare, Safety Nutrient Storage; Low Emission Slurry Spreading; Pigs & Poultry and Organics.
- Following 2 tranches, 6,000 farmers had applied by end of March 2016.
- Given the need of some farmers to proceed with investments such as dairy farmers and farmers with LESS, IFA ensured that 1,000 farmers got early approval.
- Improvements were made for farmers in partnerships where the investment limit is doubled from €80,000 to €160,000. A separate investment limit for Low Emissions Slurry of €40,000 applies with the measures either available for 60% in the Young Farmers Scheme or 40% in the other scheme.
- IFA has lobbied for changes to the scheme and has secured agreement that Sheep Fencing, Grain Storage and Tillage Equipment will be eligible for grant aid in 2016.

### TAMS I

- Under TAMS I Farm Safety, Dairy Equipment and Sheep Handling - 8,550 had applied and by end of March 2015 - 279 remained to be paid.

### Knowledge Transfer

- IFA secured important changes to the Knowledge Transfer measure these included: two payments where a farmer has two enterprises, double payment for partnerships and a practical payment system for farmers.
- The KT groups involve Beef, Sheep, Dairying, Poultry, Grain and Equine.

## **ANCs**

- The payment of ANCs increased to over €200m in 2015 as a result of more flexible arrangements for farmers on the borders of ANCs, eligibility of farmers excluded who did not meet the Stocking Level in 2011 and the increase negotiated by IFA for offshore island farmers.
- Discussions have commenced with the Department in relation to the review of the ANC which must be completed by 2018.

## **Budget 2016**

- IFA lobbied vigorously for funding for key farm schemes in 2016 such as ANCs, GLAS, TAMS and Farm Assist. The allocation for ANCs was set at €200m and agri-environment schemes which include residual AEOS and full payments for GLAS at €205m.

## **Charter of Rights**

- A new Charter of Rights was negotiated which involved improved payment regime, reduced inspections and better Department procedures.

## **Leader Programme**

- The Committee had a number of discussions with the Department of the Environment and local companies in the context of the new alignment LCDCs. IFA ensured that agriculture is a vital element of the local plan.

## **Locally Led Agri-environment schemes**

- The Committee were involved in discussions on the locally led agri-environment schemes in Hen Harrier areas, the Burren, Upland areas, Callows and other areas. The Committee visited the Burren Life Project in July.

## **CAP Reform**

- The Committee were involved in ongoing discussions and had an input on the new CAP including the new BPS, National Reserve and Young Farmers schemes.

## **Priorities for 2016**

- The Committee will continue to seek changes to ensure that the full allocation of €4bn to the programme is utilised.
- Further amendments will be sought through the RDP Monitoring Committee.
- The early opening of GLAS to ensure 50,000 farmers are in the scheme from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017.
- Getting the Targeted Output Scheme up and running in 2016.
- In the ANC review IFA will be ensuring that no area loses out and areas that have been excluded in the past are now included.
- That the allocation to ANCs is increased to €250m so as to restore the losses arising out of cuts in Budget 2008.
- The restoration of the income disregards for Farm Assist assessment.
- Ensuring that the Charter of Rights commitment for approvals of TAMS and payments across all schemes is fully honoured.

**Flor McCarthy**  
**Rural Development Executive**

**Gerry Gunning**  
**Executive**