Farmers' climate actions

40% of farmers in Ireland participate in GLAS - the Green Low Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme, which makes a positive difference for the climate, water quality and biodiversity.

GLAS is designed to deliver the following agri-environment benefits:

- Almost 13,000km of watercourses will be fenced off from livestock.
- Almost 46,000ha of traditional hay meadow will be planted.
- Almost 240,000ha of carbon sequestering low-input permanent pastures will be created.
- 360km of arable grass margins, as well as 62km of riparian margins will be created.

The GLAS programme is oversubscribed.

Ireland is taking a leading position in Europe by targeting funding, through the Common Agriculture Policy, to areas that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the sector.

87% of the measures in Ireland's Rural Development Programme have climate reducing elements.

Farmers have a carbon efficient model of food production in Ireland.

Independent research completed by the European Commission's science and knowledge service, the Joint Research Council, has confirmed that Ireland's dairy farmers have the lowest carbon footprint for milk and our beef farmers are in the top five. This is under-pinned by our grass-based model of food production.

Each year Smart Farming resource efficiency studies are completed on at least 50 farms.

Over 1,000 farmers take part in Smart Farming farm talks, seminars and discussion group meetings. In 2018, the average cost savings identified on participating farms was €7,170 and the average greenhouse gas emissions reduction identified was 9%.

Over 200,000 carbon assessments completed, as part of Bord Bia's Origin Green programme.

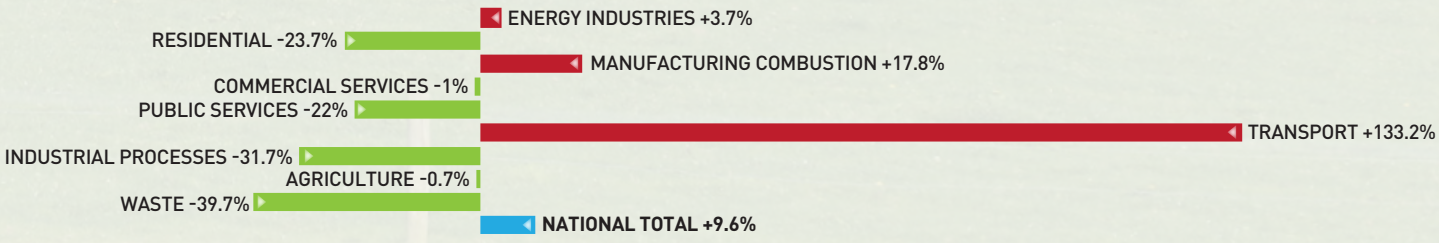
Given that there are only 130,000 family farms in Ireland, no other sector of society has demonstrated such a climate commitment.

CAP and the environment.

All farmers in receipt of a basic payment under CAP have to meet stringent EU requirements to keep their farms in Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions. This includes requirements regarding the management of soils, hedgerows, water courses and fertiliser management. Farmers are subject to onerous inspections to ensure adherence to these obligations.

Many of these requirements sequester carbon and have a positive environmental impact on water, air and climate.

Greenhouse gas emissions since 1990



Source: EPA

Measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Teagasc climate roadmap.

The Teagasc scientific report of June 2018 sets out key measures that the agriculture sector could implement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The implementation of these measures will also improve farm level efficiency, reduce fossil fuel use and create a vibrant on-farm renewables sector.

Delivery of many of these measures will require cross Government departmental and State agencies co-operation. IFA has requested An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar to provide the climate leadership required, by co-ordinating a whole of Government approach to the delivery of the abatement potential in the Teagasc climate roadmap.

Carbon sinks from forests, permanent pastures and hedgerows must be fully counted.

The positive climate impact achieved through carbon sinks, such as forests, hedges and permanent pastures, are currently not fully counted. This has led to an unbalanced picture of agriculture's climate impact. For example, afforestation since 1990 will remove an estimated net 4.5m tonnes of CO_2 from the atmosphere per annum, over the period 2021 – 2030. Yet the climate value of this will not be fully recognised, but any changes in methane and cattle numbers will be fully counted.

All sinks associated with forestry, hedgerows and permanent pasture must be included when measuring agriculture's climate contribution.

Benchmarking methane against carbon dioxide when counting carbon must be reviewed, as methane does not last as long in the atmosphere.

Methane is short-lived in the atmosphere compared to CO_2, as it is broken down by natural processes on a timescale of about 12 years. This compares with 20-200 years for CO_2. Given the short-lived behaviour of methane, the current practice of applying historical type calculations for methane should be reviewed.

The climate metrics applied for ruminant livestock should reflect the accurate impact of methane on global temperatures.

Climate by numbers

200,000	Carbon assessments completed in the Bord Bia's Origin Green programme.
3.4m tonnes	The amount of CO_2 offset each year from renewable energy in Ireland. Farming receives no credit for this good climate news, it all goes to the energy sector, despite farmlands being used.
€97m	The proposed cut in the annual CAP budget that has to be filled before inflation, if the increased climate and environmental asks are to be delivered.
33%	Emissions attributed to agriculture in Ireland.
90%	Beef exports that are now in a carbon auditing and foot-printing programme.
100%	The percentage of milk production entering into a carbon auditing cycle.
100%	The percentage of eggs produced in Ireland that are part of the Sustainability Egg Assurance Scheme operated by Bord Bia.
90%	The percentage of measures in Ireland's Rural Development programme that have climate reducing elements.
1st	Irish dairy farmers are in first place when it comes to producing low carbon milk in Europe.
Top five	Irish beef farmers are in the top five in Europe for producing low carbon beef.
2.14	The paragraph in the European Union's Heads of Government climate and energy agreement, which states that when deciding on climate plans, regard must be had for the multiple objectives of the agriculture sector as food, fuel and energy producers, as well as environmental enhancement and the lower mitigation potential of the agriculture sector.
2	The Article in the UN Paris Agreement, which states that food production must not be threatened when addressing the climate challenge.

Farming by numbers

1	Agri-food sector is Ireland's largest indigenous productive sector.
300,000	Number of people directly and indirectly employed in the agri-food sector in every parish in Ireland.
€13.5b	Value of food, drink and forestry exports in 2017.
74%	Increase in total exports from the agri-food sector between 2009 - 2017.
€31,000	Average farm income.
70%	Amount of extra food that will be required to be produced by 2050 to meet increasing demand, according to the UN.
€1.5b	Spend by cattle farmers in Ireland each year on agri-inputs.