IFA Submission to Oireachtas Special Committee on COVID-19 Response

'Re-opening the Economy –
the State's Response and Support for Businesses'

5th June 2020

The Irish Farmers' Association

The IFA is Ireland's largest farming organisation with 72,000 farmer members, the majority which are involved in beef and livestock production. The Association is structured with 947 branches and 29 County Executives across the country.

The IFA President and various Committee Chairmen along with branch and county representatives are democratically elected by the farmer membership.

IFA represents all farming sectors at National, European and International Level. Through our office in Brussels the IFA represents Irish farmers on the European umbrella body of farm organisations COPA. In addition, the IFA are the representative for Irish farmers on the World Farmers' Organisation.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause unprecedented challenges for the global economy and societies all over the world. Everywhere, it has been recognised that keeping a viable food supply chain fully operational is a priority in managing the crisis. The crisis has highlighted the importance and vulnerability of the food supply chain and farming plays a vital role in this.

Governments in Europe and internationally have implemented protocols within various levels of lockdowns to maintain food production, processing, transport, distribution and retail sales, taking account of necessary social distancing health measures.

While there has been a marked economic impact on the agri-food sector, IFA recognises the efforts of all those involved, including workers in processing plants, hauliers, other service providers and staff in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in keeping the sector open and functioning.

While some more domestically-oriented markets have seen increased retail sales, partially offsetting losses, this is not the case for the mainly export-oriented Irish agri-food sector. The disruption of food sales caused by the pandemic has seen retail sales continue to rise, while the closure of restaurants and cafes has led to a collapse in food service sales. The ongoing disruption of the supply chain is resulting in an increasing number of farming enterprises moving to a zero cash flow situation.

Teagasc Impact Analysis

On 22nd May, Teagasc published a report[1] looking at three scenarios arising from the impact of the pandemic, and the most benign would see farm incomes fall by 26% this year. Particularly for low-income sectors, this would be a disaster for farmers. This report reinforces IFA's campaign for a direct payment to support cattle finishers and is a stark warning and a wake-up call for the Government. We need to see a much stronger Government response if farmers are to survive.

In March, IFA made a submission[2] to the EU Commission and the Government setting out the importance of the agriculture and food sector in providing food security to EU citizens in the current crisis and proposals for strong supports and the need for emergency measures to be triggered.

The aid package from the EU Commission in April falls far short of what is required to deal with the shock to farm incomes that Teagasc is predicting and this analysis takes no account of the scale of losses inflicted by Brexit, especially in the beef sector.

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[1] https://www.teagasc.ie/publications/2020/covid-19-initial-economic-assessment-of-its-impact-on-irish-agriculture.php

[2] https://www.ifa.ie/covid19/supporting-irish-farmers-through-the-covid-19-emergency/

Other EU member states are availing of state aid flexibilities to support their farmers. Northern Ireland has come forward with £25m of support for their beef and dairy sector and is also actively considering supporting the horticulture sector under this measure. Despite the severe pressure on farm incomes, the Irish Government has to date provided no financial support.

In addition, the Dutch Government has provided €650m direct financial support to the potato and ornamental sectors for the loss of revenue or additional costs related to the collapse in demand for their products. €600m will be allocated to aid farmers and traders in the floricultural sector and companies in the specialty horticultural sector for the food-service market, who have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. €50m will be allocated to compensate potato growers affected by the outbreak.

Re-opening the Economy – Sector Perspective

While fully respecting the public health advice and guidelines and the importance of avoiding an increase in COVID-19 cases, it is IFA's view that every effort should be made to open up the economy as quickly as possible.

Farming by and large has been able to operate, however, family farm income has been hit due to job losses in other parts of the economy. Over 50% of farm households had an off-farm income employment source in 2018[3].

The continued and efficient functioning of the food supply chain is a critical service and it is important that consideration would be given to priority COVID-19 testing for key frontline staff in the food processing sector.

The considerations in how each particular sector has been affected by the pandemic are set out in this submission and IFA's proposals to Government and the European Commission to address issues in the context of re-opening the economy.

EU State Aid Flexibility available to Irish Government

IFA is concerned that agriculture is falling between two stools in that the Irish Government has put the onus on the European Commission to address issues that have arisen for farmers as a result of the COVID-19 emergency, while the European Commission has given Member States greater State Aid flexibility to address the problems. The Irish Government has to date failed to avail of these State Aid flexibilities for agriculture, in contrast to the measures taken by some other Member States have. This is potentially leading to Irish agriculture being at a competitive disadvantage as the European economy reopens.

Government Formation

The protracted Government formation negotiations need to be brought to a speedy conclusion so that a fully functioning Government, with a mandate from the February 2020 General Election is in place, to lead the re-opening of the Irish economy and society.

IFA will be holding any new Government to account in regard to the policies required to support farming and agriculture and in particular to specific commitments made during the election campaign in response to the IFA General Election 2020 submission[4] to the political parties.

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[3] Teagasc National Farm Survey 2018

[4] https://www.ifa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/IFA-2020-General-Election-Submisison.pdf

Increased Capital and Working Capital Requirements on Farms

Primary agriculture accounts for 15% of the €23.5bn[5] outstanding debt held by Irish SMEs or 23% when financial intermediation and property related activities are excluded. The primary industries sector, dominated by agriculture, has the lowest share of outstanding balances in default, however the COVID-19 crisis is having a severe impact on borrowing and payment capacity on farms.

The increased capital requirements for banks post the 2008 financial crisis has seen banks become more risk adverse in terms of their lending policies. This has resulted in a greater reluctance on their part to lend to some farmers and greater delays in loan approvals. This is an area banks need to urgently address.

This is especially the case for many in the beef / drystock sectors as they are deemed to be vulnerable / higher risk, following on from a number of difficult trading years. The cashflow situation in many farming households has been further compounded by the loss of off-farm income.

Access to low-cost funding including overdraft, working capital, asset finance and term is paramount for farmers as they are a critical part of the food supply chain. Farmers are excluded from current Government backed COVID-19 schemes with the exception of a limited amount of funding available through Microfinance Ireland along with SME Finance & Leasing.

It is incumbent on Government to fast track the introduction of the State backed loan guarantee scheme to support famers involved in primary agricultural and aquaculture production, but also to increase the allocation of funding to the proposed Future Growth Loan Scheme.

Recent history has shown that the agri-sector was key to revitalising Ireland's economy post the 2008 financial crash. However, given that farming is a low margin business it is critically important that primary producers / farmers can access sufficient low-cost funding to cover their operating expenses during this unprecedented crisis. Increased reliance on merchant / co-operative credit is not an option as many of these businesses are struggling to collect monies owed from farmer and non-farmer debtors.

IFA Proposal

Access to cash flow / working capital

- Competitively priced credit to support cash flow must urgently be made available to farmers as well as processors. The €2bn COVID-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme[6] to support SMEs, including farmers, depends on Government formation.
- The introduction of a Government-backed guarantee (80%) low-cost interest (max 2.5%) loan scheme is required, which is accessible to all primary producers across all the farming sectors including aquaculture, forestry and amenity horticulture.
- This scheme must operate through the main banks, as heretofore, with previous SBCI[7] schemes, but also to include other financial institutions such as Credit Unions, An Post and other accredited asset lenders.
- There must be a provision for overdrafts, working capital, asset finance in addition to term loans, the operation of a 12-month moratorium on capital repayments with Government covering interest payments for the 1st year.
- Potential borrowers should not be denied access to the scheme due to insufficient security arising from reduced commodity prices and or current asset valuations. The family home cannot be used as security. Personal guarantees would not be required for loan amounts under €150,000. As the scheme is 80% Government-backed guaranteed, recoveries are capped at 20% of the outstanding balance of the loan facility. No facility fees should apply. Minimum loan value of €5,000.

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[5] Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Annual Review and Outlook 2019

[6] https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Supports-for-SMEs/COVID-19-supports/Credit-Guarantee-Scheme-COVID-19-FAQ.html

[7] Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland

Beef Sector

As the largest net beef exporter in the EU, with annual exports of c560,000t pa, COVID-19 market closures and disturbances have caused major disruption and a very severe impact across the beef and livestock sector in Ireland.

Impact at Market Level

- Ireland exports c560,000 tonnes of beef annually (265,000t to the UK, 250,000t to EU and 45,000t to international markets.)
- COVID-19 has caused major market closures and disruptions. The restaurant and food service sector initially fully closed across the domestic market, the UK and all EU markets and is only slowly reopening.
- Bord Bia and MII[8] estimate that Irish beef sales are divided 40% retail, 32% food service and 29% manufacturing, with large volumes of manufacturing ending up in food service.
- While retail demand has increased (some estimates of a 10% to 20% increase), a high proportion of retail sales are for mince, burgers and diced beef.
- It is estimated that up to 60% of Irish steak sales go to the food service markets. Steak meat represents 30% of the value of a carcase.
- With the collapse in the restaurant / food service sector, the impact on steak sales (volumes and price) has been very severe and the impact in Ireland was compounded due to our very high export dependence.
- In regard to the price of non-EU imports, there are reports of price discounts of 50% on steak cuts and of high quality (Hilton) quota price reductions from €14-€15/kg down to €8-€9/kg.
- The closure of the EU restaurant / food service markets is having a severe impact on the sales of Dutch veal, which in turn is impacting on the live export trade (price and volume) of calves from Ireland.

Impact at Farm Level

- Since Autumn 2018, Irish farmers have endured a prolonged period of exceptionally low and unsustainable beef prices, as a result of on-going Brexit market uncertainty and sterling/euro exchange rate fluctuations. Approximately 50% of all Irish beef exports go to the UK market. In the last 12 months the €uro/sterling exchange rate has varied from 83p/€ to 95p/€, currently at 90p/€.
- Since mid-March and the COVID-19 impact, market confidence was rapidly eroded with cattle prices falling in an already difficult spring price situation. Farmers found it very difficult to sell cattle and the beef kill fell from 30/35,000 per week back to 20/25,000 per week.
- Beef price fell by an additional 20/30c/kg from a base price of €3.65/€3.70/kg incl. vat back to €3.40/kg by early April. This is a price reduction of €100/110 per head in a very short period, at a time when producers were already losing over €100 per head due to Brexit uncertainty.
- Using similar methodology to that used to calculate beef price losses for the BEAM[9] scheme, IFA has calculated that since January 2020, beef finishers have incurred Brexit and COVID-19 beef price losses of €111m (Brexit related price losses €89.8m, COVID-19 related price losses €21.2m) up to May 17th 2020.

IFA Proposal

Getting markets re-opened

- Swift action is required at Government and EU Commission level to support and protect the beef supply chain, beef markets and beef farmers in order to minimise the impact of the COVID-19.

[8] Meat Industry Ireland
[9] Beef Exceptional Aid Measure (2019)

- The priority must be to get back into all our export markets and to get routes to markets re-opened. This is essential for our domestic market, the EU Single Market, the UK market and international markets.
- Government to provide access to export credit insurance in line with the flexibility provided by the EU under State Aid rules.
- A further difficulty is the closure of the beef market to China as a result of a A-typical BSE case. This is expected to be resolved by the Department of Agriculture quickly.

Direct support for beef farmers

- In view of their extremely low farm incomes, beef farmers cannot endure the ongoing financial losses inflicted by both the COVID-19 and Brexit market disruptions.
- In respect of the current COVID-19 losses, IFA is calling on the Government to pay out immediately the unspent BEAM I funding of €23m to beef finishers.
- In addition, IFA is seeking that the EU Commission would use the EU CMO (Common Market Organisation) measures available under EU Regulation 1308/2013, Articles 219 to 221 to immediately support farmers with direct payments for price related market losses.

Market supports

- The EU Commission has put in place some level of market support with APS, with only a very small volume utilised in Ireland. Market supports in the form of higher and more targeted APS[10] may have to be utilised to support specific products/parts of the market.

Suspension of non-EU Imports

- In 2019, a total of 318,500 tonnes cwe[11] of beef was imported from non-EU countries, with 78% coming from Mercosur countries, which equates to the steak cuts from 45% of the EU beef kill. The majority of non-EU beef imports is chilled/frozen product with a small share as processed beef. The chilled/frozen product is dominated by steak cuts which are targeted at the restaurant/food service sector.
- With the collapse in the steak market due to COVID-19, the EU Commission should move to protect the EU markets and prices, and suspend all non-EU beef imports.

Promotions

- The Government and the EU should immediately introduce a strong pan-European promotional programme at retail level on beef targeted at higher-value steak cuts.

Marts

The impact of COVID-19 on the trade in younger cattle (calves, weanlings and store cattle) at the marts has been very significant. While the marts have adopted significantly with many moving to on-line sales, a large number of farmers have decided not to sell their stock during this period because of the absence of a traditional mart sale, with open auction sales.

IFA Proposal

- That marts can get back to full open auction ring sales as soon as possible.
- This is particularly important in the context of the second half of the year for the summer and autumn sales for cattle and sheep.
- Support needs to be forthcoming to marts involving an amnesty on rates, reduction in insurance charges and grant aid for infrastructural investments such as IT expenditure to facilitate on line sales.

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10 Aids to Private Storage

11 Carcase Weight Equivalent

Dairy Sector

Export Credit Insurance

The greater flexibility in State Aids recently allowed by the EU Commission was absolutely intended to allow member states provide Export Credit Insurance in the context of COVID-19. This is crucial to support dairy exporters' cash flow when trading with countries where COVID-19 also has caused major economic disruption, which may impact short term payment ability by customers.

IFA Proposal

- That the Government would ensure access to this type of facility to support co-ops in maintaining the highest possible milk prices to farmers.

Priority testing for COVID-19 of critical dairy plant staff.

IFA has been informed by industry that this is a cohort nationwide of probably no more than 100-150 staff, without whom complex highly automated machinery cannot be run, and whose absence could cause entire or parts of plants to be closed.
While we are past peak milk supplies, Irish milk production continues on a rising curve into 2020, and we will see some of the highest levels of milk produced, collected and processed for some weeks yet.

IFA Proposal

- That the ad-hoc staff COVID-19 testing that operates in dairy processing plants would be formalised and a systematic priority protocol would be introduced to provide greater protection and reassurance to the critical staff concerned.

EU market supports

After much IFA and industry lobbying for market supports to offset the dramatic impact of COVID-19 on dairy markets, the EU Commission reluctantly introduced an APS scheme for SMP[12], butter and cheese. It is clear at this point that the scheme, together with the progressive reopening of economies and food services globally, have helped change market sentiment, and we are starting to see some recovery, albeit after a major fall and still at historically low product price levels.

IFA Proposal

- That the national cheese allocations in the scheme would be re-opened to allow all unused quantities to be fully taken up by the end of June closing date. The current APS scheme for cheese is only 40% utilised (as at the end of May), but Ireland had utilised 100% of its very low allocation (2,180t) within 3 days of the scheme opening. Other countries such as Italy and Spain, have also rapidly filled their allocation, while other countries have barely touched theirs.
- That the June closing date, applying to all products, would be extended. The EU Commission appears to not understand that the willingness of operators to engage with APS depends on their expectation of improved prices when the storage period ends. Since the scheme was first mooted at the end of April, the outlook for prices has been improving. Lengthening the closing date would allow for a fuller use of the scheme by operators and would contribute to strengthening the dairy product price outlook for the latter part of the year.

[12] Skim Milk Powder

Sheep Sector

The impact of COVID-19 on the sheep sector has been limited to date, but with the increase in numbers over the coming weeks, as mid-season lambs come fit and with the food service market still closed, sheep farmers are very concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on the sheep market.

IFA Proposal

The Government and the EU Commission need to be in a position to support the sheep sector through the following measures;

- The EU CMO (Common Market Organisation) measures available under EU reg. 1308/2013, Articles 219 to 221 must be immediately utilised to support farmers with direct payments for any price related market losses.
- In terms of market support, a more flexible Aids to Private Storage (APS) scheme needs to continue to be available for the sector.
- A new promotional programme for lamb targeted at retail is needed.
- Review and suspend non-EU imports during the COVID-19 crisis.

Tillage Sector

COVID-19 is having a significant negative impact on the Grain sector, with the barley segment in particular being most affected.

The impact of COVID-19 has resulted in a collapse in maize demand for the worldwide ethanol industry. This has seen world maize prices falling by up to 15% since the start of the pandemic. As Ireland imported 1.35m tonnes of maize for animal feed purposes in the 2018/2019 marketing year from third countries, and has imported over 600,000 tonnes so far this year, the collapse in the maize price is having a knock-on effect on Irish domestic barley prices.

The Irish drinks sector was expected to utilise 280,000 tonnes of barley from this year's harvest. However, the closure of pubs and restaurants due to pandemic related government restrictions has had a severe effect on consumption in these markets. This will result in a reduction of at least 30% in the demand for Irish malting barley this harvest.

IFA will continue to insist that feed merchants use more native barley and, will continue discussions with other stakeholders in the drinks sector to mitigate the impact of pub and restaurant closures on malting barley growers.

The introduction of the following measures by the Government and EU Commission will provide support to the sector:

IFA Proposal

- The recently adopted EU Temporary Framework for state aid must be immediately utilised to support farmers with direct payments for any price related market losses.
- Introduce a maximum quota regarding the importation of maize from third world countries such as Brazil into Ireland.
- In relation to the phased reduction of government restrictions, the reopening of pubs and bars should be considered in Phase 3 (29th June) of the roadmap, in tandem with restaurants and cafes. Of course, this can only happen if all protocols regarding social distancing, hygiene etc are followed.

Pig and Poultry Sectors

Both the Pig and Poultry sectors have remained open and fully operational since the onset of COVID-19 restrictions. The nature of pig and poultry production does not allow for much disruption in the primary supply chain without dire consequences.

Pig farmers employ significant numbers of farm workers and in order to follow HSE guidelines and additional costs are now placed on these farms, with increased canteen and changing facilities being provided by many pig farmers.

Personal protective equipment is now provided to all meat plant employees, protective screens to divide workspaces, social and physical distancing is now implemented in all plants. Increased changing and canteen facilities needs to be provided in the medium term at substantial cost. While, in the short term, splitting employees into smaller teams ensures that facilities are compliant with public health recommendations.

The closure of the foodservice channels and the increase in retail demand has massively disrupted the route to market. This change has meant an increase in distribution costs. Export opportunities, particularly in the pigmeat sector have also been massively impacted with reduced sailings over the past two months.

Pre COVID-19 restrictions in Ireland and Europe, the trade of pigmeat to 3rd country markets was restricted due to both the unavailability of shipping containers and the closures of destination ports, particularly in China.

IFA Proposal

- That the Government support for ferries, which has been critical in keeping the transport channel open throughout the crisis period, is extended for the remainder of the year. This would ease a potential backlog in the entire supply chain, right back to farm level, which needs to be avoided at all costs.
- That the cost of additional changing and canteen facilities necessary to address public health guidelines on farms, would be grant aided by the DAFM[13]
- Addition costs that are and will continue to be placed on the pig and poultry meat processors will inevitable fall back on the primary producer. IFA supports Government financial measures to assist processors in adapting to specific workplace measures required due to COVID-19 restrictions.

[13] Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Horticulture Sector
Most horticulture enterprises are SMEs. Currently there is no direct financial support for these businesses. Some of the nurseries may have availed of the government worker furlough scheme. It has been confirmed that tillage farmers and horticulture enterprises can access credit / finance through the Credit Guarantee Scheme, however, legislation has to be passed in the Dáil before this initiative can be availed of.

Potatoes - due to the impact of COVID-19 it is estimated that the food service sector was at only 20% capacity. Chip shops have also remained closed due to the pandemic, with some doing only a limited takeaway business. This has had a major effect on potato growers supplying these markets. It will result in 5,000 tonnes of potatoes either being dumped or sent for cattle feed at a loss of €1million to the sector.

Fruit and Vegetables Sector - the COVID-19 crisis has seen demand for retail supplies of fresh produce remaining strong, however, for those supplying the food service sector it has had a serious affect. In addition to loss of sales, some food service outlets have stopped paying suppliers for produce delivered even in advance of the pandemic. This has left serious cash flow issues on farms.

Ornamental Sector - cut flowers, ornamental plants, trees and bulbs have been hit extremely hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Preliminary feedback suggests the sector has suffered a drop in production by up to 80% due to the initial restrictions from mid-March until the garden centres reopened in mid-May.

The closure of garden centres, at what was typically the busiest time of the year for this sector, has been devastating. Nurseries had to dispose of thousands of euro worth of stock due to the perishable nature of the products. Retail trade fell an estimated 40% and contracts were not upheld. The cash flow situation is very poor on nurseries as their income has depleted and many had to lay off workers and impose salary cuts.

Cut Flower Sector - Some growers in the cut flower sector have suffered losses in turnover of up to 50%. These growers expected to sell daffodils in March where most of these flowers are exported. COVID-19 restrictions meant this trade came to a complete halt with EU countries and flowers having to be dumped. In addition, 25% of daffodil crops were not harvested and of those that reached market were hit with a price reduction of at least 30%.

Extra costs on businesses
In addition to the loss of sales due to COVID-19 restrictions, all business in the horticulture sector have experienced significant extra costs due to the impact of the pandemic. These include the following:

- Extra spend on PPE equipment for workers and the provision of screens etc.
- Seasonal workers had to be brought into the country two weeks earlier than required in order for them to self-isolate. This involves extra costs in accommodation and the payment of workers when they are not actually allowed to work on the farms.
- Where farms are transporting workers, extra vehicles have to be provided to ensure social distancing.
- Labour costs account for up to 50% of production costs on many farms. As producers have been unable to access all their usual seasonal workers, they have had to hire other workers which makes their business less efficient. As a result, production costs have increased by up to 20% on this alone.

IFA Proposal
- That the ornamental sector would be included under the Temporary Framework for State Aid. A flexible approach must be adopted to the existing CAP rules and for extraordinary support measures. Individual producers affected by the closure of the food service industry should also be included in any extraordinary support measures.

- Provide access to low cost credit/finance for all horticultural operators, including the Credit Guarantee Scheme and COVID-19 Loan Scheme.

Aquaculture

Irish aquaculture businesses have remained operational throughout the COVID-19 crisis and have adapted their work practices to implement HSE social distancing guidelines. Aquaculture production is predominantly outdoor work and maintaining a 2m social distance is possible. In many instances, new staff have been employed to facilitate these circumstances.

Irish shellfish producers, many of whom are price-takers, export 90% of their produce to the EU, with these markets now facing similar pressures in their own domestic shellfish sector. If these markers not re-open in the late summer, in addition to loss of business, employment and potentially, entire operations, there is the looming prospect of tonnes of worthless, damaged or dying shellfish product, building up on sites with potential shellfish health, environmental and legal consequences to the state.

The Irish oyster industry, in particular, has been affected by the crisis since the start of the year due to market losses in China, Hong Kong, and have already suffered considerable losses (reduction in almost 100% of sales by end April 2020).

Following the introduction of measures allowing for redirecting of available EU Maritime & Fisheries Funds (EMFF), IFA Aquaculture has assessed the financial losses due to market disruption and impacts for the Irish Aquaculture sector as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and estimates a 58% reduction of annual turnover for Irish aquaculture.

Supports available for SMEs

A number of the current business supports, for example the SBCI COVID-19 Working Capital Loan Scheme specifically, exclude SMEs involved in the Aquaculture sector.

IFA Proposal

- That primary producers, including aquaculture be included in the SBCI scheme.

COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme

IFA Aquaculture members acknowledge the effectiveness of the COVID-19 national support measures but further enhancement of a number of measures is required to support the aquaculture sector.

IFA Proposal

- That the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme and the SBCI COVID-19 Working Capital Loan Scheme would be extended and that the proposed COVID-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme and Future Growth Loan Scheme be made available to aquaculture producers.

Market Impact

Irish aquaculture, particularly the shellfish sector, is experiencing a severe and unexpected impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with market closures and disturbances having an unprecedented level of disruption.

Amendments to rules for the EMFF[14] have been introduced which allow for support measures to be implemented for aquaculture producers. These measures allow for the redirection of funds to compensate aquaculture producers and processing enterprises for the temporary suspension and the reduction of production and sales, or for additional storage costs, occurred between 1 February and 31 December 2020, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[14] European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

IFA Proposal

- That the EU measures redirecting EMFF funds would be adopted in Ireland and prevent further and irreversible negative impacts on the normal operation of Irish aquaculture, particularly the shellfish sector.
- To support the preservation of the Irish shellfish industry, that the annual aquaculture licence fees be suspended
- Subsidised scheme for loss of sales/reduction in production - 40% subsidy/single farm payment (based on 3-year average of market value) for reduced 2020 production and sales based on a 3-year average of verifiable annual production figures, compared with reduced production figure for 2020.
- Compensation for stock lost due to mortality losses/unsaleable stock as a result of over stocked sites unable to sell due to lack of demand and no available markets. Unsaleable stock losses to be assessed similar to 40% subsidy/single farm payment (based on 3-year average of market value).
- Insurance costs – State to subsidise insurance costs for one year.

Conduct of Business & Rural Broadband

Democratic representative organisations such as IFA rely heavily on public and private meetings for the conduct of both our internal business and our external representative function. While many activities have been moved to remote forms of communication, this is not always possible and remote meetings are not always as effective as actual face-to-face meetings in the quality of interaction and getting business done.

IFA Proposal

- Greater clarity is required in regard to the return to holding meetings, the phasing of this return and the public health protection measures which will apply.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has once again highlighted the urgent need for the rapid roll-out for high quality affordable Broadband across rural Ireland to help ensure a balanced economic recovery.

5th June 2020