



Ireland

Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Summary of Measures

Available through
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Rural Development Division,
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1. Introduction

1.1 Summary

The Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP) has a budget of €5.778 billion over a 7 year period of which €2.339 billion will be funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARDF) and €3.438 billion by the National Exchequer. It was approved by the EU Commission in July 2007. In line with the requirements of Council Regulation (EC) 1698/2005 the programme is structured around three core Axes which have the aim of (a) improving the competitiveness of agriculture, (b) improving the environment and (c) improving the quality of life in rural areas. Within these three Axes there are individual measures, which contribute to the overall aim of the Axis. A fourth Axis defines the LEADER approach towards achieving the objectives of the RDP.

Axis 1

The first Axis of the RDP is aimed at improving the competitiveness of farm enterprises through support for restructuring, development and innovation. Measures under this Axis have the objective of promoting structural change at farm level and include support for training, installation aid for young farmers, early retirement and modernisation of agricultural holdings through on farm investment.

Axis 2

The second Axis of the RDP is directed at preserving and, where possible, enhancing the environment, biodiversity and the amenity value of the countryside. 80% of expenditure under the RDP comes within this Axis which provides for compensatory payments to farmers who farm in Less Favoured Areas, Natura 2000 payments in respect of designated Special Areas of Conservation/Special Protection Areas and agri environment payments under the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS).

Axis 3 and 4

The broad objectives of Axis 3 are to improve the quality of life in rural areas and to encourage diversification of economic activity in rural areas including supports for non-agricultural activities. The measures under Axis 3 include a range of initiatives that are designed to promote economic activity in rural areas and also stimulate broader community initiatives aimed at improving the overall quality of life for rural dwellers. The measures will be implemented using the LEADER approach under Axis 4, which emphasises a “bottom up” approach comprising area based local development strategies implemented by local action groups.

1.2 The Aim of the Programme

Ireland’s RDP is based on the EU framework for rural development and on the National Rural Development Strategy formulated in line with that framework. It forms part of the National Development Plan and takes account of the Agri- vision 2015 Action Plan. The programme for Ireland sets out three main priorities:

- Improving the competitiveness of the agriculture sector through support for structural change

- Improving the environment and the countryside by support for land management
- Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity through the implementation of local development strategies.

The first two priorities are directed primarily at the agricultural sector. Their competitiveness and environmental focus reflects the multifunctional nature of the sector. The main focus of these two measures is based on the vision of “an industry attaining optimal levels of efficiency, competitiveness and responsiveness to the market while also respecting and enhancing the physical environment”.

The third priority of the programme relating to quality of life and diversification in rural areas is relevant to all rural dwellers, including farmers, particularly in view of the growth in part-time farming. In this part of the programme actions are centred on the development of rural enterprises, tourism, village enhancement and environmental initiatives implemented through local action groups using the LEADER approach.

1.3 Funding

The table below sets out the allocations for each of the Axis, showing also the EU contribution to the programme.

| | Total €m | National financing €m | EU Financing €m |
|----------------------|----------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Axis 1 | 580 | 339 | 241 |
| Axis 2 | 4,767 | 2,905 | 1,862 |
| Axes 3 +4 | 425 | 191 | 234 |
| Technical Assistance | 6 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 5,778 | 3,438 | 2,339 |

2. Breakdown of Programme by Rural Development Measure

Axis 1 Competitiveness

- Vocational Training and information actions
- Setting up of Young Farmers
- Early Retirement of farmers and farm workers
- Farm Modernisation.

Axis 2 Improving the environment and the countryside

- Payment to farmers in areas with handicaps other than mountain areas
- NATURA 2000 payments and payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC (Framework for Community action in the field of water policy)
- Agri- Environment Payments (REPs).

Axis 3 Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

- Diversification into non-agricultural activities
- Support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises
- Encouragement of tourism activities
- Basic services for the rural economy and population
- Village renewal and development
- Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage
- Training and information for economic actors operating in the fields covered by Axis 3
- A skills-acquisition and animation measure with a view to implementing local development strategies.

Axis 4 Implementation of the LEADER approach

- Implementing local development strategies with a view to achieving the objectives of one or more of Axis 1, 2 or 3
- Running the local action groups, skills acquisition, and animation
- Implementing co-operation projects involving achievement of the objectives of one or more of Axis 1, 2 or 3.

3 Axis 1 - Competitiveness

3.1 Vocational training and information actions

The objectives of this measure are:

1. To provide participants with information on environmental benefits arising from the Agri-Environment and Natura 2000 Measures
2. To provide participants with clarification on all relevant measure requirements at individual farm level
3. To equip farmers with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement comprehensive environmental actions.

Under this measure, beneficiaries under the Axis 2 Agri-Environment and Natura 2000 measures will be required to attend approved education courses. Those beneficiaries who have not attended a training course in the 2000-06 programming period will be obliged to attend an appreciation training module. Additionally all beneficiaries will be encouraged to attend further one day training/demonstration modules in years one and two of the five year Natura 2000 or Agri-Environment contract.

The support will be available to all participants in the Natura 2000 and Agri-Environmental measures under Axis 2. A payment rate of €130 is proposed for attendance at the 10 hour appreciation module. Additional payment proposed up to a maximum of €100 per annum for training/demonstration modules attended in the relevant Agri-Environment contract year.

Training will be provided by professional agriculturalists approved by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. All courses must be approved in advance by the Department.

Public Expenditure: €14m

For further information contact REPS Division, Johnstown Castle, Wexford.

Tel. 053-9163400

3.2 Setting-up of young farmers (Young Farmers' Installation Scheme)

The objectives of this measure are:

- to achieve the transfer of land to young trained farmers who are able to meet the new challenges facing Irish agriculture
- to offset the set-up costs faced by young people when establishing themselves in farming
- To provide assistance for the investments required on such holdings.

A Business Plan is required from each applicant. In addition, participants are required to continue farming for five years from the date of set-up and to farm the land transferred or its equivalent during that period. Applicants must be between the age of 18 and 35 at the time of setting-up in farming for the first time; the date of setting-up must be on or after 1 January 2007 and not later than 31 December 2013. Applicants will be subject to compliance with off-farm income ceilings. Applicants must be set-up on at least 20 ha (non less favoured area) or 15 ha (less favoured area) for a minimum period of seven years and be an applicant for a herd number or other Department identifier. The minimum land area does not apply to certain intensive enterprises. Time limits will apply to applications and to completion of the development options set out in the Business Plan.

Applicants will be required to complete occupational skills and competence requirements within two years from date of set-up. Eligible applicants will also be able to apply for investment grants under the farm modernisation measure. A grant of €15,000 will be paid on completion of education, property and income requirements. A review will be carried out in the fifth year following the date of set-up and the grant will be recouped if the beneficiary is not farming the land transferred or its equivalent at the time of the review.

Public Expenditure: €63.00m

For further information contact On Farm Investment Section, Johnstown Castle, Wexford. Tel. 053-9163400

3.3 Early retirement of farmers and farm workers

The objectives of this measure are to complement the Setting up of Young Farmers measure by encouraging the transfer of holdings from older farmers to younger trained farmers setting up in farming under the measure at Paragraph 3.2 and to reassign land from retiring farmers to established farmers who wish to enlarge their holdings. The scheme will encompass the payment of an annual pension to eligible applicants for a maximum period of 10 years.

Beneficiaries

The transferors, farm workers and transferees are defined as follows:

A transferor must:

- Be between the ages of 55 and 66 on the date of admission to the scheme; pension payments will not be made after a participant's 66th birthday
- Have practised farming for at least ten years immediately before retirement
- Be farming an area of not less than 5 hectares of agricultural land, except in the case of intensive enterprises (e.g. pigs, poultry or horticulture)
- Undertake to cease all agricultural activity.

On the date of submission of a valid application by the transferor, the transferee must:

- (1) Be approved for payment under the Young Farmer's Installation Scheme (2007–2013)[YFIS] or have submitted a second stage application for payment (YFIS2) that results in the issue of an approval for payment and fulfil the conditions of that scheme.

Or

- (2)(i) Be a farmer who fulfils the following conditions:

- (a) Be between 18 and 45 years of age
- (b) Be farming a minimum of 5 hectares of agricultural land and enlarge that holding by becoming a transferee
- (c) On completion of land transfer and enlargement, farm a holding of at least 20 hectares of agricultural land (non less favoured area), or at least 15 hectares (less favoured area) of agricultural land, except in the case of intensive enterprises where a minimum level of production will be required
- (d) Be compliant with the off-farm income ceiling of €50,000 which is designed to focus the scheme on those young farmers with a greater dependence on farming who are most likely to remain in farming
- (e) Meet the educational requirements.

Or

- (2)(ii) Be a farmer who fulfils the following conditions:

- (a) Be approved as a Transferee under a previous Early Retirement Scheme (ERS1 or ERS2)
- (b) Be between 45 and 50 years of age
- (c) Be farming a minimum of 5 hectares of agricultural land and enlarge that holding by becoming a transferee
- (d) On completion of land transfer and enlargement, farm a holding of at least 20 hectares of agricultural land (non less favoured area), or at least 15 hectares (less favoured area) of agricultural land, except in the case of intensive enterprises where a minimum level of production will be required.

A farm worker must on the date of submission of a valid application by the transferor:

- Be aged between 55 and 66 years of age
- Have devoted at least half of his/her working time to farm work, during the preceding five years, as a family helper or farm worker
- Have worked on the transferor's agricultural holding for at least the equivalent of two years full-time during the four-year period preceding the early retirement of the transferor and have paid PRSI contributions in respect of that period of employment.

Early Retirement support will be granted as a supplement, this will take into account the amount of any national retirement pension to which the transferor is entitled. Applicants for the early retirement scheme, including those in joint-management, must have applied for any normal retirement pension paid by the State to which they may be entitled and they must notify the outcome of their application. If they become entitled to any such pension after they enter the Early Retirement Scheme, they must apply for it and subsequently notify the outcome of their application.

The total duration of early retirement support cannot exceed 10 years for the transferor and for the farm worker. It will not go beyond the 66th birthday of the transferor and the farm worker.

The pension will be at a flat rate of €9,300 per annum for the first 5 ha. plus €300 per ha. thereafter up to a maximum of 24 hectares. The maximum payment per farmer is €15,000 per annum. Farm workers may be entitled to a pension of €4,000 per annum.

Public Expenditure: €418.00m

For further information contact Early Retirement Section, Johnstown Castle, Wexford, Tel. 053-9163400.

3.4 Farm Modernisation (Farm Improvement Scheme)

The objective of this measure is to ensure that the agriculture sector in Ireland becomes more competitive and market-oriented. It aims to promote diversification of activities, higher standards of animal welfare and health and safety on Irish farms. It also aims to ensure higher environmental standards on Irish farms and reduce overall greenhouse and trans-boundary gas emissions from the agriculture sector.

Unless covered by another specific exchequer funded measure in the NDP, farmers in all farming sectors will be eligible to participate regardless of the level of farm income. All eligible farmers will be subject to compliance with minimum educational requirements or farming experience.

Type of qualifying investments

- Animal housing, handling and related facilities
- Sheep handling and weighing facilities
- Investments in regard to diversification of farm enterprises, including handling facilities, exercise arenas and fencing for horse/deer breeding and production
- Investments relating to improvement of dairy hygiene
- Investments which improve animal welfare standards including the conversion of sow housing to meet new EU animal welfare standards, the installation of rubber mats on slats/cubicle beds, etc.
- The installation of water storage equipment on farms for the recycling of rainwater
- The installation of equipment designed to improve occupational safety
- On-farm grain storage
- New and developing technology for the processing of manure.

Grants will be based on the percentage of eligible expenditure by farmers, subject to maximum investment ceiling and subject to the application of the Department's standard costings where appropriate.

Aid intensity

(a) Farm Improvement

- (i) 40% standard grant-rate with top-up grant for young farmers of 10% subject to an overall maximum eligible investment ceiling of €120,000 per holding, with a separate €120,000 investment ceiling per holding for investments in relation to dairy hygiene.
- (ii) 20% or 40% grant rate for mobile equipment depending on the type of equipment.

(b) Manure Processing Facilities

40% grant-rate for the installation of manure processing facilities subject to a maximum eligible investment ceiling of €1 million per holding with a view, *inter alia*, to the improvement of air quality in Ireland. All applicants will be subject to assessment for compliance with the environmental objectives of the Scheme.

(c) Pig Welfare

40% grant-rate subject to maximum eligible investment ceiling of €300,000 per holding for improvements in relation to the protection of pigs (sow housing).

Public Expenditure: €85m

For further information contact On Farm investment Section, Johnstown Castle, Wexford. Tel. 053-9163400

4. Axis 2

Improving the environment and the countryside.

4.1 Payment to farmers in areas with handicaps other than mountain areas

The scheme will provide support for farmers in Less Favoured Areas (LFAs) to compensate for additional costs and income foregone related to maintaining agricultural production in these areas. The Scheme applies to currently designated LFAs and these designations will apply until at least 2010.

Levels of payment will generally be based on eligible forage area declared in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS). Payment rates will be as follows:

- More Severely Handicapped (lowland) €95.99 per hectare up to 45 hectares
- Less Severely Handicapped (lowland) €82.27 per hectare up to 45 hectares
- Mountain type land €109.71 per hectare on first 10 hectares or part thereof and €95.99 per hectare on remaining hectares subject to an overall payment ceiling of 45 hectares.

Applicants will be required to:

- Be a registered herd owner i.e. a person who currently holds a herd number issued by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
- Occupy and farm a minimum of 3 hectares of forage land in a disadvantaged area
- Undertake to remain in farming in the LFA for 5 years from the first payment of a compensatory allowance
- Comply with good agricultural and environmental conditions.

Applicants must also:

- Adhere to the requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1782/2003 on cross compliance
- Maintain a minimum stocking level of 0.15 livestock unit equivalent per forage hectare for at least three continuous months each year.

Payment will also be made in respect of land under energy crops subject to the following conditions:

- The maximum area of eligible land under energy crops will be 10 hectares
 - The minimum requirement of 3 hectares forage area remains
- The applicant will be required to meet the minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units per forage hectare declared.

In the case of applications covering land under energy crops the following adjusted rates applied to the 2007 application period. This rate is subject to change each year depending on the total area of land subject to Energy Crops for which aid is claimed.

- Less Severely Handicapped Lowland (including Coastal areas with Specific Handicaps) €37.27 per hectare
- More Severely Handicapped Lowland €50.99 per hectare
- Mountain Type land €64.71 per hectare on the first 10 hectares or part thereof and €50.99 per hectare subject to an overall payment ceiling of 45 hectares.

Payment calculation example below for an applicant with 45 hectares to declare

| Land Type | Area Declared Hectares max 45 Hectares | Payable Area Hectares | Rate € | Grant € |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------|--------|----------------|
| Mountain Type Land | 11 | | | |
| High Rate max 10 Ha | | 10 | 109.71 | 1097.1 |
| Low Rate | | 1 | 95.99 | 95.99 |
| More Severe | 5 | 5 | 95.99 | 479.95 |
| Less Severe | 5 | 5 | 82.77 | 413.85 |
| Mountain Type Land (Energy crops) | 14 | | | 0 |
| High Rate max 10 Ha | | 10 | 64.71 | 647.1 |
| Low Rate | | 4 | 50.99 | 203.96 |
| More Severe (Energy crops) | 5 | 5 | 50.99 | 254.95 |
| Less Severe (Energy crops) | 5 | 5 | 32.27 | 161.35 |
| Total | 45 | 45 | | 4456.75 |

Public Expenditure: €1,799m

For further information contact Single Payment Unit, Old Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, Tel. (057) 8674400.

4.2 Natura 2000 payments and payment linked to Directive 2000/60/EC

The aim of this measure is to contribute to positive environmental management of farmed Natura 2000 sites and river catchments in the implementation of the Birds Directive, the Habitats Directive and the Water Framework Directive. The beneficiaries of this measure are farmers actively farming designated Natura 2000 sites and its main purpose is to compensate farmers with utilisable agricultural land in these sites for the mandatory restrictions related to the designation. A minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units per hectare is required as a condition of eligibility.

Natura is classified into two land types in Ireland:

1 Privately owned land with SAC and/or SPA designation

The rationale for this measure is to provide a comprehensive approach to the conservation of privately owned designated Natura 2000 sites. Participants in this measure

- Must comply with the mandatory requirements for Natura 2000 sites, which comprise notifiable actions communicated to the farmer in the designation process
- Must engage the services of an environmentalist to provide advice on appropriate farming practices compatible with the conservation of the site
- Must undertake additional voluntary agri-environment commitments under the REPS scheme.

To ensure a uniform approach in the delivery of the Natura element of farm plans giving effect to the restrictions on notifiable actions, farming conditions for the following habitat types have been developed and must be complied with:

- Conditions for the conservation of the Burren
- Blanket bogs, heaths and upland grasslands
- Sand dune and machair areas
- Shannon Callows, Wet Grassland and Corncrake Habitat.

For other habitat types in designated areas for which specific farming conditions have not yet been developed, the planner must contact the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) section of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for instructions on any conditions appropriate to the site, and must incorporate any such conditions into the Natura element of the farm plan. If specified conditions have not yet been determined by NPWS for specific habitat types, the planner must set down appropriate environmental conditions in the individual farm plan in consultation with the environmentalist.

The payment rates for privately owned land under this measure are €77 per hectare up to 40 hectares; €29 per hectare on next 40 hectares; €22 per hectare on next 40 hectares and €5 per hectare for each hectare above 120 hectares. In addition the Natura area will qualify for a REPS payment of €205 per hectare up to a maximum of 40 hectares.

2. Lands farmed in Common (Commonage land) with SAC and /or SPA designation

The main aim of this measure is to provide a comprehensive approach to the conservation and/or regeneration of designated commonage land. Payments under this measure compensate for the mandatory requirements placed on the farmer as a result of the Natura designation, i.e. compliance with the application of the terms of the Commonage Framework Plan to his/her holding. On Natura commonage full compliance with the terms of the Commonage framework Plan is mandatory. Under the Natura measure, the farmer must engage both an approved planner and an environmentalist in the preparation of a farm plan for Natura 2000 commonage.

Approximately 60% of commonage land is designated under Natura 2000 and is subject to mandatory Natura 2000 restrictions on notifiable actions.

Eligibility for payment will normally (exceptions in the case of inheritance, setting up young farmers and transferees under the Early Retirement Scheme) be restricted to commonage shares declared on IACS in the five years preceding the date of the REPS application.

- Shareholders may not exercise other shareholders' rights to grazing entitlements under the overall Framework Plan
- Each active commonage shareholder must undertake works and grazing restrictions on commonages in proportion to his/her owned share in the commonage
- Farmers must abide by the restrictions on notifiable actions for the retention of Natura 2000 habitats.

In addition to abiding by the Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) requirement to implement the reduced stocking requirement set out in the relevant Commonage Framework Plan, farmers must implement sustainable farming practices prepared by the approved planner and environmentalist which contribute to the maintenance of the habitat and the avoidance of land abandonment. Participants are required to have an integrated farm plan embracing Natura 2000 and agri-environment requirements on the non-designated area of the farm.

To ensure a uniform approach in the delivery of the Natura element of farm plans giving effect to the notifiable actions, farming conditions for the following habitat types on commonages have been developed and must be complied with:

- Conditions for the conservation of the Burren
- Blanket bogs, heaths and upland grasslands
- Sand dune and machair areas.

The amount payable under this measure is €282 per hectare up to 40 hectares, €29 per hectare on next 40 hectares. €22 per hectare on next 40 hectares and €5 per hectare for each hectare above 120 hectares.

Public Expenditure: €465m

For further information contact REPS Division, Johnstown Castle, Wexford. Tel. 053-9163400

4.3 Agri-Environment Payments

The main objectives of the agri-environment measures are:

- To promote
 - ways of using agricultural land which are compatible with the protection and improvement of the environment, biodiversity, the landscape and its features, climate change, natural resources, water quality, the soil and genetic diversity
 - environmentally-favourable farming systems
 - the conservation of high nature-value farmed environments which are under threat
 - the upkeep of historical features on agricultural land
 - the use of environmental planning in farming practice
- To protect against land abandonment
- To sustain the social fabric in rural communities
- To promote conversion to organic production standards

Under this measure farmers will be obliged to carry out their farming activity in accordance with farming conditions relevant to land classification for a minimum period of five years.

All general programme scheme participants will be obliged to have a farm nutrient management plan prepared by a qualified planner approved by the Department. If the participant has obtained a derogation from the national Regulations implementing the Nitrates Directive, the REPS nutrient management plan must be prepared in accordance with the derogation and will be acceptable for such a period as the derogation remains in force.

A minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units per hectare is required as a condition of eligibility. In exceptional circumstances this minimum stocking density requirement may be dispensed with where it is necessary on grounds of environmental sustainability.

Where application for REPS is made for farms benefiting from derogations under the nitrates directive, these applications will be subject to detailed examination to establish in what way each farm is in a position to fulfil each of the requirements of the mandatory undertakings.

A General Programme for all applicants will consist of

- A set of mandatory undertakings required in respect of their entire farm holding
- Supplementary measures for which beneficiaries can draw down additional payment in accordance with the cumulation of aid programme provisions
- A dedicated stand-alone Organic Farming sub-measure.

General Programme participants must apply eleven core measures in respect of the total area of their holding for a five-year period together with at least two additional undertakings to be selected from listed biodiversity options. Individual farm plans must be drawn up by professionally qualified planners approved by the Department.

Core actions

- Action 1*** Follow a farm nutrient management plan prepared for the total area of the farm.
- Action 2*** Adopt an appropriate grassland and soil management plan for the total area of the farm
- Action 3*** Protect and maintain Watercourses, Water bodies and Wells.
- Action 4*** Retain wildlife habitats
- Action 5*** Maintain Farm and Field Boundaries.
- Action 6*** Restrict the use of pesticides and fertilisers in and around hedgerows, lakes, ponds, rivers and streams.
- Action 7*** Establish biodiversity buffer strips surrounding features of historical and archaeological interest.
- Action 8*** Maintain and Improve Visual Appearance of the Farm and Farmyard
- Action 9*** Produce tillage crops respecting environmental principles
- Action 10*** Undertake Training under Axis 1
- Action 11*** Prepare, monitor and update an agri-environmental plan in consultation with a planner and keep such farm and environmental records as may be prescribed by the Minister.

Biodiversity Options

| | Core Measures | Category 1 Options | Category 2 Options |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | Nutrient management | | |
| 2 | Grassland management | 2A Traditional Hay Meadows 2B Species Rich Grassland 2D Use of Clover in Swards | 2A Traditional Hay Meadows 2B Species Rich Grassland 2C Mixed Livestock Enterprises 2E Use of Trailing Shoe 2F Control of Invasive Species |
| 3 | Protection of watercourses | | 3A Increased Watercourse Margin 3B No Bovine Access to Watercourses 3C Use of Planted Buffer Zones |
| 4 | Retain wildlife habitats | 4A Creation of New Habitat 4B Tree Planting 4D Establish Farm Woodland | 4B Tree Planting 4C Nature Corridors |
| 5 | Maintain farm and field boundaries | 5A Coppicing of Hedgerows 5B Laying of Hedgerows 5C Plant New Hedgerows 5D Additional Stone Wall Maintenance | 5A Coppicing of Hedgerows 5B Laying of Hedgerows 5C Plant New Hedgerows 5D Additional Stone Wall Maintenance |
| 6 | Restrict the use of pesticides and fertilisers in and around hedgerows, lakes, ponds, rivers and streams | There are no biodiversity options in relation to Measure 6 | |
| 7 | Establish biodiversity buffer strips surrounding features of historical and archaeological interest | | 7A Increased biodiversity Buffer Strips surrounding features of Historical and Archaeological interest |
| 8 | Visual appearance of farm and farmyard | | 8A Establish Traditional Orchard of specified varieties of Irish origin 8B. Install Bird or Bat Boxes |
| 9 | Produce Tillage Crops respecting environmental Principles | 9A Green Cover Establishment 9B Environmental Management of Setaside | 9A Green Cover Establishment |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | 9C Increased Arable Margins 9D Low Input Cereals/Root Crops 9E Minimum Tillage Crops | 9C Increased Arable Margins 9D Low input cereals/root crops |
|--|--|--|--|

Supplementary Measures

- Supplementary Measure** Traditional Orchards
- Supplementary Measure** Conservation of Animal Genetic Resources
- Supplementary Measure** Riparian Zones
- Supplementary Measure** LINNET (Land Invested in Nature, Natural Eco-Tillage) Habitats
- Supplementary Measure** Low-Input Tillage Crops
- Supplementary Measure** Minimum Tillage
- Supplementary Measure** Traditional Grazers
- Supplementary Measure** Clover Swards
- Supplementary Measure** Conservation of Wild Bird Habitat
- Supplementary Measure** Lake Catchments
- Supplementary Measure** Mixed Grazing
- Supplementary Measure** Heritage Buildings

Agri-Environment Organic Farming (Stand-alone measure)

The objective of this measure is to promote conversion to organic production methods thereby delivering enhanced environmental benefits and responding to supply deficits and demand for organic produce. Participants in this measure must hold a licence issued by one of the Certifying Bodies approved by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, be registered as an organic producer of animals or crops intended for human consumption, or crops for animal feed, with the Department's Organic Unit, comply with the provisions of Council Regulation 2092/91 (as amended) on the organic production area of the holding and be subject to annual inspection.

Farmers may opt to convert all or part of the holding and may participate in this measure on a stand-alone basis outside of the general REPS programme. Where part of the holding only is converted the good agricultural and environmental conditions and statutory management requirements of the Single Payment Scheme must be respected on the entire holding. Only areas declared on the IACS system will be considered for payment.

Commonage land outside the Natura 2000 Network.

The aim of this measure is to provide a comprehensive approach to the conservation and/or regeneration of non-designated commonage land. The farming conditions for commonage land are set out in Commonage Framework Plans. These plans set out the environmental condition of the commonage and appropriate agricultural activity to ensure environmental sustainability, including where necessary a reduction in the grazing pressure to be achieved by destocking of sheep. Approximately 40% of Commonage land is not designated under Natura 2000 and there is no facility to make Natura 2000 payments on this land. To be eligible for payment on these commonage areas farmers must maintain habitats, implement the reduced stocking rates laid down and a sustainable grazing regime. The payment rate is fixed at a similar rate to Natura 2000 commonage payments.

National Heritage Areas outside the Natura 2000 Network

The aim of this measure is to provide a comprehensive approach to the conservation and/or regeneration of nationally designated wildlife sites.

| Amounts of support under REPS Scheme | |
|--|--|
| | Amount |
| General REPS Programme (Core measures plus options) | €234 /ha up to 20ha €205 /ha for next 20ha up to 40 ha €82 /ha for the next 15ha up to 55ha €10 /ha thereafter |
| Non-Natura 2000 commonage and NHA land | €282/ha up to 40ha, €29 /ha for the next 40ha up to 80ha; €22 /ha for the next 40ha up to 120ha; and €5/ha thereafter |
| Supplementary Measures | Amount |
| Rare Breeds | €234 per livestock unit of the breed registered with the breed society. |
| Riparian Zones | €850/ha. up to a max. of 4 ha.in respect of salmonid and crayfish sites and 4 ha. in respect of Pearl Mussel sites |
| Participation in LINNET Project | First hectare €700 From 1 to 2.5ha €400 per hectare |
| Low-Input tillage Crops | €370/ha up to maximum of 2.5ha |
| Minimum Tillage | €25/ha up to maximum of 40ha |
| | |
| Traditional Orchards | €300 per holding |
| Traditional Sustainable Grazing | €50/ha up to a maximum area of 20ha |
| Mixed Grazing | €50/ha up to a maximum area of 20ha |
| Lake Catchments | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole-Farm Reduction in Organic N by Reduction in Stock Numbers • Traditional Hay Meadows • Species Rich Grasslands • Increase Water Course Margin • Alternative Drinking Points • Buffer Zones | €80/ha €120/ha up to 2.5ha €120/ha up to 2.5ha €3 per 100m €5 per ha/per drinking unit €200/ha up to maximum of 2.5ha |
| Clover Swards | €30 /ha up to max of 40ha |
| Conservation of Wild Birds — Participation in Corncrake Project | €100 /ha |
| Organic Farming | Amount |
| Organic Farming (55ha) | €212/ha in conversion up to 55ha and €30/ha thereafter €106/ha in full organic status up to 55ha and €15/ha thereafter |
| Organic Farming (\leq 6ha) | €283/ha in conversion €142 /ha organic status |
| Organic Farming additional option Applicants (non-REPS stockless farmers) applying green cover during the conversion period | €240/ha per year up to a maximum of 40 ha for the two years of conversion |

Cumulation of Aid

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Organic Payment Plus | REPS basic Plus | Owned Natura or Any one of LINNET Rare Breeds Traditional Orchards Riparian Zone |
| REPS basic Payment Plus | One of Plus LINNET Riparian Clover Swards Minimum Tillage Low Input Cereal Mixed Grazers Traditional Grazing | One of Rare Breeds Traditional Orchards Wild Birds Habitat <i># Lake Catchment</i> |
| REPS basic Payment Plus | Natura 2000 Plus And/or Non-Natura 2000 NHA And/or Non-Natura 2000 Commonage- And/or <i>Riparian¹</i> | One of <i>LINNET*</i> <i>Clover Swards*</i> <i>Minimum Tillage*</i> <i>Low-Input Cereal*</i> <i>Traditional Grazers*</i> <i>Mixed Grazing*</i> Rare Breeds Traditional Orchards Wild Birds Habitat <i># Lake Catchment</i> |
| <i>¹Where Riparian is selected none of SMs marked * in column 3 can be chosen. #Lake Catchment SM will have limited application to specific lakes.</i> | | |

Public Expenditure €2,503,298,800

For further information contact REPS Division or the Organics Section, Johnstown Castle, Wexford, Tel. 053-9163400

5. Axes 3 and 4

The quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

All measures contained in Axis 3 will be delivered through the Leader approach. Rates of Aid cannot exceed rates available to comparable projects under other grant aid schemes operated by Government Departments and State Agencies. Subject to this underlying principle the maximum rate of public funding as a general rule will be 50% with the following exceptions:

- Administration up to 100%
- Animation up to 100%
- Training up to 100%
- Analysis and Development for community based projects up to 90% and 75% for private promoters, subject in all cases to a maximum of €30,000 per project
- Community groups will be eligible for a higher rate of aid at 75% where this higher rate of grant would not discriminate against private interests or promoters in the same sphere of activity.

5.1 Diversification Into Non-Agricultural Activities

The objective of this measure is to significantly increase the percentage of holdings where the fixed assets of the farm are utilised in any non-agricultural activity by a member of the farm household for economic gain.

While the scope of the measure encompasses all non-agricultural activities, common actions will include:

- Provision of tourism facilities. The type of facilities envisaged would be renovation of farm buildings for tourism purposes, walking, cycling, angling, pony trekking, bird watching etc.
- Development of niche tourism and educational services such as arts and crafts, speciality food provision, open farms etc.
- Development of farm shops selling home/locally grown and manufactured products.

Public Expenditure: €16.66m

For further information contact Rural Development II, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Teeling Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, telephone (07191) 86700.

5.2 Support For Business Creation And Development

The objective of this measure is to position rural areas to provide economic activity of sufficient mass to attract people to live and work in those areas.

- Selected investment in small rural enterprise space
- Provision for a range of assistance types for start-up enterprises and the expansion of existing enterprises including the adoption of new technologies
- Development of innovative products and activities
- The provision of a range of assistance types for adding value to local products, including support for business networks, collective marketing, local branding initiatives, improved quality and the development of artisan processing facilities
- Utilisation of local ICT capacity, for example centralised online processing of micro enterprise administrative activities, will also be supported
- Actions to foster rural entrepreneurship particularly combined with support for small-scale research, analysis and development.

It is a requirement under this measure that a sectoral agreement exists between the Local Action Group and the relevant County Enterprise Board. This can, where appropriate and by mutual consent, be a continuation of the agreement in place under the Leader programme 2000 - 2006

Public Expenditure

€48.26 million

For further information contact Rural Development II, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Teeling Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, telephone (07191) 86700.

5.3 Encouragement Of Tourism Activities

The main objective of this measure is to promote the sustainable, regionally balanced, tourism potential of all rural areas through the provision of necessary infrastructure and the development of the countryside as a recreational resource for all. The following are eligible for funding.

- Analysis and provision of infrastructural needs for tourism and countryside recreation in a defined area
- Maintenance of vernacular features - in a way that protects the heritage of the features - such as disused railway lines, canal towpaths, bog-roads etc
- Development of the use of forests for countryside recreation
- Development of niche tourism such as arts and crafts, speciality food provision, ecotourism, genealogy, archaeology etc

- Development of the use of the Internet and e-commerce facilities in general for the provision of booking and information services to tourists.

Public expenditure €45.40m

For further information contact Rural Development II, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Teeling Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, telephone (07191) 86700.

5.4 Basic Services For The Economy And Rural Population

The main objective of this measure is to identify and provide appropriate cultural and leisure facilities to local communities, not otherwise available to them.

Initiatives will broadly address the provision of:

- Amenity and leisure facilities
- Support for cultural activities
- Certain arts facilities
- General community and recreational infrastructure
- Innovative activities in local communities such as social and information networks etc.

All assessments and actions should be carried out in consultation and with the agreement of the appropriate local authorities. Any equipment, activities or infrastructure provided must be available and accessible to all age and social groups in the community concerned. Mainstream activities of sports organisations and bodies are excluded from support under this measure.

Public Expenditure: €49.61m

For further information contact Rural Development II, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Teeling Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, telephone (07191) 86700.

5.5 Village Renewal And Development

The main objective of this measure is to provide appropriate supports to enhance the economic and social attractiveness of villages, small towns and the surrounding countryside. The following measure will be eligible for funding:

- Environmental upgrading e.g. upgrading parks, civic areas, river walks etc
- Access facilities to amenities
- Public utilities such as street lighting etc
- General surface upgrading and renovation of relevant derelict buildings excluding traditional farm buildings, which will be eligible for support under Axis 2
- Farmers markets
- Other small-scale actions

Public Expenditure: €54.20m

For further information contact Rural Development II, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Teeling Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, telephone (07191) 86700.

5.6 Conservation And Upgrading Of The Rural Heritage

The main objective of this measure is to provide an integrated approach for the protection of the local heritage through a number of related preservation actions, complemented by a range of initiatives designed to develop the sustainable economic contribution of the natural heritage. The following are eligible for funding under this measure:

- Actions to preserve and develop vernacular architecture; crafts, archaeology, cultural traditions etc
- Integrated plans for the restoration and development of locally significant natural areas, features and areas of environmental significance
- Community environmental actions to protect and restore the amenity value of local water resources and high value nature areas
- Other environmental initiatives aimed at waste reduction
- Alternative or renewable energy actions addressing suitability of new technologies to meet community energy needs, awareness actions for community groups and under certain conditions, capital assistance to community groups adopting such technology.

Public Expenditure: €51.70m

For further information contact Rural Development II, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Teeling Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, telephone (07191) 86700.

5.7 A Training And Information Measure For Economic Actors Operating In The Fields Covered By Axis 3

The main objective of this measure is to equip rural dwellers and communities with the appropriate range of skills and training to derive maximum social and economic benefit from the initiatives available under this Axis. The following are eligible for funding under this measure:

- Provision of general/specialised training courses in fixed/mobile facilities and in-house development of appropriate training facilities linked to the increased use of know-how and new technologies to make the products and services in rural areas more competitive
- Provision of flexible learning opportunities in new technology for women, young people and minority groups in particular
- Development of training facilities in rural areas (fixed/mobile)
- Facilitation of distant learning (mainstream or tailored courses) through the use of new technologies
- Provision of relevant training courses to those wishing to add value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions
- Developing the capacity of rural dwellers to utilise ICT including Internet and broadband to access e-services and other public/commercial electronic applications.

Public Expenditure: €29.45m

For further information contact Rural Development II, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Teeling Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, telephone (07191) 86700.

5.8 A Skills-Acquisition And Animation Measure With A View To Preparing And Implementing A Local Development Strategy

The main objective of this measure is to utilise the bottom-up structures of the Leader methodology to create awareness, understanding and motivation in rural communities so as to enable their full participation and input into the preparation of local development strategies. The following are eligible for funding under this measure:

- Animation activities at group and individual level to encourage community involvement in a broad range of social and economic activities
- Capacity building measures aimed at community and minority groups to foster the spirit of social capital and self-help
- Initiatives aimed at geographically disadvantaged communities or those lacking in sufficient mass to enhance cohesion and capacity to develop
- Initiatives to animate specific interest or marginal groups to harness unique potential

Public Expenditure: €34.63m

For further information contact Rural Development II, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Teeling Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, telephone (07191) 86700.

5.9. Implementing Local Development Strategies

The main objective of this measure is to deliver integrated value-added measures in the whole of the rural territory across Axis 3.

The selection process for Local Action groups, including a call for proposals, submission of applications with business plan, evaluation and final selection of groups will take place in time to facilitate timely implementation of the programme.

Procedures to select groups will be open to all rural areas, all existing groups and partnerships developed through the Cohesion process currently underway.

Selection criteria will include:

- The coherence of the plan with the nature of the territory, particularly in socio-economic terms.
- The degree to which the plan targets support, which seeks to enhance the job opportunities and/or activities for women and young people
- The level of business activity demonstrated in the proposed actions
- The rigour and depth of the needs assessment and the described links between the needs assessment, the process and outcome of local objective setting, activities, actions, projects and their relationship with national and EU policy objectives
- The extent of the commitment, ability and proposed methods for ensuring on-the-ground co-operation with other agencies involved in local development
- The overall flexibility of the plans with regard to ongoing local needs and policy review, as well as wider contextual policy development (e.g. the national Spatial Strategy and/or the County Development planning process)
- The group's management structure, administrative ability and financial status
- The physical size and population of the territory, its degree of rurality and the characteristics of the area population
- The degree to which co-operation is integrated into the local development strategy
- Representation of the community pillars in the area concerned (and observance of the "bottom-up" principle).

Public Expenditure €4.10m

For further information contact Rural Development II, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Teeling Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, telephone (07191) 86700.

5.10 Implementing Co-Operation Projects

Transnational and inter-territorial co-operation will be supported under this measure. Co-operation is allowable between Leader groups and other non-Leader groups provided the project involved is led and co-ordinated by a Leader group. Support will be available for projects falling under Axis 3 and also for innovative and experimental approaches to promoting joint ventures addressing common issues. In this context, preparatory activity, co-ordination and animation are eligible for funding. While joint actions may involve groups from third countries, only activities taking place within the EU are eligible for funding. All cross-border projects involving LAGs from Northern Ireland must be submitted to the relevant Managing Authority and endorsed by the Cross Border Steering Group for Rural Development.

Procedure, timetable and objective criteria to select inter-territorial and trans-national cooperation projects

The co-operation methodology must be integrated in the business plans of LAGs at the outset of the programme. The selection and approval of projects must be carried out to the same extent as for other projects i.e. through the project evaluation committee process. The value-added benefit of all projects must be clearly demonstrated and transparent. To underline the importance of co-operation, each LAG must reserve a minimum of 3% of its annual public funding allocation for this measure.

Public Expenditure €10.70 million

For further information contact Rural Development II, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Teeling Street, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, telephone (07191) 86700.

5.11 Running The Local Action Group, Acquiring Skills And Animating The Territory

The main objective of this measure is to provide Local Action Groups with sufficient resources and expertise to efficiently administer all measures under Axis 3 and 4 throughout all of the rural territory. The administration budget for each Local Action Group is set at a maximum of 20% of public funding, at programme and group level.

Public Expenditure: €80.73m

6. Controls/Sanctions

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs have structures in place to ensure that they're administrative and control systems protect the financial interests of the EU. These include appropriate numbers of trained administrative staff in authorising divisions, a technical inspectorate which carries out controls on the spot, and an appropriately staffed and trained Internal Audit Unit. Strict control measures are in place for implementation of the Programme with provision for sanctions to be applied in the case of non-compliance. The provisions of Commission Regulation (EC) No.1975/2006 lay down specific control procedures in respect of measures under the programme.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food - as the managing authority – and the RDP Monitoring Committee will have responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of the Programme. This process will take account of the EU common monitoring and evaluation framework (CMEF). On-going monitoring and evaluation work will be carried out by the implementing Departments – Agriculture, Fisheries & Food and Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Its scope and nature will be determined by the CMEF requirements and the deliberations of the Monitoring Committee. An annual Report must be made to the EU Commission for the duration of the Programme and in addition independent evaluations must be carried out midway through the programme and following its completion.

8. Further Details

The Rural Development Programme has been published in full and is available from Rural Development Division, or it can be down loaded at <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie>.

The contact details for Rural Development Division are:-

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