Dear Sirs,

Alcohol Beverage Federation of Ireland (ABFI) is the representative body of the Irish drinks industry, representing over 60 companies ranging from beer, cider and spirits producers to distributors and brand-owners.

ABFI wishes to make the following submission in respect of the public consultation on the Draft Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan.

Contribution to Irish agriculture
The Irish drinks industry makes a substantial contribution to Irish agriculture through the purchase annually of hundreds of thousands of tonnes Irish malt and grain. As the Irish drinks industry grows its global exports, there will be an ever-increasing demand for Irish malt and grain - with Irish malting companies proceeding with developments to increase malting capacity.

Decline in area planted with spring barley and cereal crops
However, since 1985, the total area planted with spring barley has halved from 248 hectares to 127 hectares. However less than one fifth (18.5%) of this loss of area under spring barley can be accounted for by a shift to winter barley for feed. The balance, over 98 hectares, no longer holds any barley. In the past five years the total area under wheats, oats and barley has declined 14.7% from 306 hectares to 261 hectares. This poses major challenges as the demand for Irish malting barley and Irish grain cannot be met if the area being planted is in decline.

Challenges posed by climate change
Further challenges are posed by climate change, in the form of increasingly-disruptive weather conditions from drought to severe rain. Objective No. 2 of the draft plans seeks to ‘raise awareness of the impacts of climate change in the agriculture, forest and seafood sector.’ In the case of the Irish tillage sector, case study 11 in the draft plan outlines the impacts in real terms i.e. “In 2018 the resultant impact of the extreme weather events was a substantial decrease in cereal production of 23% as a result of decreased area and reduced yields... In addition, such extreme events can result in specifications for primary producers supplying high value niche markets such as barley for malting not being met as was the case in Ireland in 2018.”

Response
In response to the increasing risks to the Irish tillage sector from climate change, the Irish drinks industry support the objectives set out in the draft plan to ‘reduce vulnerability of the agriculture, forest and seafood sector to main climate impacts and seek to increase
resilience' and to 'embed adaptation planning in agriculture, forest and seafood sectoral policies'.

With respect to the Irish tillage sector, we note the reference in the draft plan to: “Opportunities include increased potential for increased areas of crops currently accounting for limited areas such as Peas and Maize in the short-term and in the long term the expected development of soya varieties suitable for growing in the Irish climate by mid-century.”

The Irish drinks industry would fully support measures to incentivise the growing of cereal crops suitable for use in the distillation of grain Irish whiskey.

**Increasing the area planted with spring barley and cereal crops**

However, we believe the draft plan must go much further than this through:

- recognising the sustainability of tillage farming and its potential contribution in supporting climate action adaptation;
- pursuing a reversal in the total area planted with cereal crops, particularly barley.

According to the Teagasc National Farm Survey 2017 Sustainability Report, in 2015-2017, greenhouse gas emissions per hectare from tillage farming (2.0 tonnes Co2 eqv/ha) were approximately a quarter of the emissions from dairy farming (8.5 tonnes) and half of the emissions from cattle farming (4.2 tonnes).

ABFI would call on the Government to more actively examine how future policy developments could support more tillage planting as part of our climate action response.

**Sustainable generation of animal feed**

In addition to grain and malt going-in; Irish breweries and distilleries – in a clear contribution to the circular economy – generate hundreds of thousands of tonnes of high-nutrient, moist animal feed. This is displacing the need for imported animal feed with evident climate action benefits.

**Conclusion**

The Irish drinks industry, represented by ABFI, looks forward to working with the Irish Government on the complimentary goals of implementing effective measures on climate action and supporting the future development of a sustainable Irish tillage sector.

Kind Regards,
For and on behalf of Alcohol Beverage Federation of Ireland (ABFI)

IRISH WHISKEY ASSOCIATION

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