What is the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020?

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) is part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a common set of objectives, principles and rules through which the European Union (EU) co-ordinates support for European agriculture. The CAP is structured around two complementary pillars:

**Pillar 1** deals with direct payments to farmers and market management measures;

**Pillar 2** covers multiannual rural development measures which include those that have beneficial impacts on the environment and climate change.

The Irish RDP for the period 2014 to 2020 was formally adopted by the EU Commission in May 2015 and has subsequently been amended on six occasions – the most recent being in February 2019. Revised versions of the Programme are published on the RDP section of the Department's website once they are approved by the European Commission.

Reflecting the EU policy framework set out in the governing legislation, the Programme contains a suite of schemes designed to enhance the competitiveness of the agri-food sector, achieve more sustainable management of natural resources and ensure a more balanced development of rural areas.

The RDP is co-funded by the EU’s European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the national exchequer. EAFRD support will amount to €2.19 billion over the seven-year Programme lifecycle and will be supplemented by exchequer funding to bring the total available Programme budget to approximately €4.1 billion.

According to the European Commission, Ireland’s drawdown of EU funds in the 2014-2018 period represented approximately 59.8% of its EAFRD allocation (excluding the performance reserve which will only be available to member states after 2019). This was second highest rate of all 28 countries and exceeded the EU average of 40%.

What is an Annual Implementation Report?

As the Managing Authority for the Irish RDP, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) must submit to the European Commission an Annual Implementation Report (AIR) setting out the progress made in implementing the Programme during the previous calendar year. This report must account for all active schemes supported by the 2014-2020 Programme budget. The AIR submitted in 2019, which was the fourth report for the present Programme, contained data on all operations implemented in the calendar years 2014 to 2018, including transitional funding for outstanding commitments from the previous Programme. At the end of 2018, Ireland had spent approximately €2.4 billion of the available budget for the current RDP.
A citizens’ summary is intended to highlight and explain for a general readership the headline information contained in the AIR. The remainder of this document outlines the progress made in the implementation of the RDP to the end of the 2018 calendar year.

**How is progress measured?**

Support under 2014-2020 Programme is provided through priorities and focus areas, measures and sub-measures as set out in EU Regulations 1305/2013 and 808/2014 (see Appendix 1 for more details). In some instances, schemes cut across a number of focus areas while in others a particular measure may encompass a combination of separate schemes.

For each RDP scheme, a budget is allocated, and various milestones / targets are set to quantify achievements for the priorities under which schemes are programmed. Results are monitored each year and progress towards the specified indicators is included in the annual report sent to the European Commission. Ongoing monitoring ensures that money is spent in the manner envisaged in the approved RDP.

**Why has data on the 2007-2013 RDP been included?**

Under the 2007-2013 Programme, DAFM entered into multi-annual agreements for agri-environment schemes which were extended into the 2014-2020 programming period. Transitional arrangements were put in place to meet these and other overlapping commitments from the previous programming period.

Accordingly, transitional expenditure is included in the figures for Measures 1, 4, 10 and 13 and also for Measure 12 (Natura 2000 payments) and Early Retirement Scheme for which there is no corresponding scheme in the current RDP. Separate data is also provided in respect of the Early Retirement Scheme introduced in 2007.
What progress has been made in implementing the Programme?

Table 1 below shows realised Programme expenditure by priority at the end of 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority No.</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Cumulative Expenditure 2014-2018 €m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas.</td>
<td>Overarching priority*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests.</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture.</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry.</td>
<td>1,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors.</td>
<td>244.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P1 results are captured in the outcomes of other priorities.

Taking cumulative Programme expenditure in term of priorities, the highest and lowest spending rates at the end of 2018 were recorded for P4 and P6 respectively which reflects the general pattern observed at EU level also.

At measure level, the highest expenditure rates were recorded for the ANC (M13) and various schemes that collectively contribute to agri-environment-climate objectives (M10) as shown in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure No.</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Cumulative Expenditure 2014-2018 €m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Knowledge transfer and information actions</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Advisory services, farm management and farm relief services</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Investments in physical assets</td>
<td>129.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Basic services and village renewal in rural areas</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Agri-environment-climate</td>
<td>1015.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Organic farming</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Natura 2000 payments</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints</td>
<td>1042.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Animal welfare</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Co-operation</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Support for LEADER local development</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Technical assistance</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>Early retirement</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following information outlines the progress made in implementing Ireland’s RDP up to 31 December 2018
Measure 1 – Knowledge Transfer and Information Actions

This measure consists of:

- Sub-measure 1.1: support for vocational training and skills acquisition actions – Knowledge Transfer (KT) Groups; and

- Sub-measure 1.1: support for vocational training and skills acquisition actions training delivered in support of Measure 10 (Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) and the Green Low-carbon Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS))

Knowledge transfer discussion groups for beef, sheep, dairy, equine, poultry and tillage sectors.

This measure involves interaction between farmers and qualified advisors in a group setting for the purpose of sharing knowledge and experience on competitiveness and sustainability issues affecting individual holdings and sectors. Approximately 1,100 KT groups consisting of some 18,700 farmers are currently participating in the scheme, facilitated by some 460 advisors. Farmers are required to attend 5 meetings, or 4 meetings and an approved, national events each year and to complete / update a tailored Farm Improvement Plan with their KT Facilitator and a qualified veterinary practitioner where appropriate.

The purpose of KT meetings is to provide a suitable forum for learning.

There are 6 types of meetings:

- Standard meetings;
- National events;
- Farm progression planning;
- Additional expertise;
- Mandatory Private Veterinary Practitioner; &
- Mandatory Farm Health and Safety
To encourage flexibility and to allow the facilitator to adapt to a group’s specific needs, there is no prescribed format to individual meetings. Facilitators are trained to identify suitable topics to be introduced as part of discussion that will most benefit individual groups at a specific point in time. A list of suggested topics suitable to each sector can be referenced, however, this list is not exhaustive and group facilitators can identify other additional topics that may be relevant for discussion to their KT groups.

Group discussions can focus on all aspects of a farm’s performance including financial management, grass management, sustainability, breeding and integrated pest management but 2 meeting topics are prescribed: one on farm health and safety and one on animal health and welfare involving a private veterinary practitioner.

In 2018, payments amounting to €21.7m issued to almost 17,000 beneficiaries. Approximately €12.4m was paid to participating farmers with an additional €9.3m paid to facilitators.

Training for farmers in the BDGP and GLAS

This training is provided to approved participants in the BDGP and GLAS which is programmed under Measure 10 of the RDP. It aims to optimise the implementation of the schemes and while the scheme intervention logic and contribution is linked to Measure 10, funding for this training is allocated under Measure 1. Total expenditure on BDGP training in 2018 amounted to €0.4 million. Additionally, a sum of €7.1m was spent on GLAS training sessions which were attended by almost 23,000 scheme participants in 2018. Total expenditure on these training schemes (including some outstanding liabilities arising from training undertaken during the previous RDP) was €21.8m for the period 2014 to 2018.

There are two elements to the BDGP training. The first element is a four-hour general course designed to provide participating farmers with the information and skills necessary to meet their scheme commitments and to improve their knowledge of genomics and breeding strategies. The second element consists of two hours of personalised coaching on the use of the carbon navigator – a compulsory element of the scheme that must be completed annually by each participant. The general element of BDGP training has been completed by all currently active participants i.e. 23,000 farmers in BDGP I and 1,550 farmers in BDGP II.

The carbon navigator is an online decision support tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from livestock production systems; it estimates the potential environmental and financial gains that can be made on each holding through carbon-efficient farming practices (e.g. by turning animals out to grass two weeks earlier in spring, a farmer can save on feed costs and increase herd performance by getting more grass into their diets). Some 24,000 carbon navigators were completed in 2016. Over, 1,200 farmers were trained, and 220 carbon navigators were completed in 2018. GLAS training began in Q3 of 2017 and over 99.7% of GLAS participants have attended the compulsory one-day training course for that scheme.
Cumulative expenditure on Measure 1 schemes amounted to €57.2 m at the end of 2018.

**Measure 2 – Advisory Services**

This measure includes support for the use of advisory services (sub-measure 2.1) and support for the training of advisors (sub-measure 2.3).

- **Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Agricultural Advisors.**
- **Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health and Welfare (TASAHW) incorporating**
  - Sub-measure 2.3: Animal Health & Welfare – Training for advisors; and

**CPD for Agricultural Advisors**

There are four separate strands of support for farmer advisory services:

- CPD to train farmers on using the carbon navigator for the BDGP and/or KT;
- CPD for KT meeting facilitation skills;
- CPD for the provision of a Farm Health and Safety Training Programme;
- CPD for training of dairy farmers on the Somatic Cell Check workshop

Expenditure on training of agricultural advisors was approximately €2,600 in 2018 spent on one advanced facilitator training session. Cumulative expenditure on CPD until the end of 2018 was around €117,000. Further CPD training in 2019 will be considered in response to stakeholder requests.

**TASAHW training and advice**

This scheme aims to limit the costs associated with certain animal diseases. Animal Health Ireland is responsible for setting up and organising the provision of an advisory service to farmers on the control and prevention of diseases falling within the scope of the scheme which include Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD), Johne’s Disease (JD), Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR) and mastitis in dairy herds. Specialist advice is provided on request to individual farmers by eligible private veterinary practitioners (PVPs) who have undertaken TASAHW training on the relevant disease. PVP's are paid by DAFM for up to three hours of advice per visit.

In 2018, almost €257,000 was paid for the provision of on-farm advice and the training of PVPs. A total of 794 herd health investigations were conducted and 33 PVPs attended BVD training sessions. Scheme expenditure to the end of 2018 amounted to over €1 million and 3,205 farmers benefitted from the advisory service in that period during which disease control training and advice was concentrated on BVD and JD. Cumulative expenditure on Measure 2 schemes amounted to €1.13m at the end of 2018.
Measure 4 – Investments in Physical Assets

This measure consists of:

- Sub-measure 4.1: support for investments in agricultural holdings – Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS II);

- Sub-measure 4.4: support for non-productive investments which are potentially available through the GLAS and Burren schemes. As the underlying logic of this sub-measure is intrinsically linked to the achievement of agri-environment objectives, funding is allocated under Measure 10.

TAMS II

TAMS II will make €395m available to Irish farmers for investment in infrastructure, facilities and equipment under the suite of seven measures (listed below) which are opened for applications in rolling three-month tranches.

- Young Farmers Capital Investment Scheme;
- Dairy Equipment Scheme;
- Organic Capital Investment Scheme;
- Animal Welfare, Safety and Nutrient Storage Scheme;
- Low Emissions Slurry Spreading;
- Pig and Poultry Investment Scheme; and
- Tillage Capital Investment Scheme.

Of the €67.4m expended on this measure in 2018, less than €30,000 related to spending on ongoing TAMS 1 investments from the previous programming period. Grants were paid to almost 4,200 farm enterprises, bringing the overall number of TAMS beneficiaries at the end of 2018 to almost 9,800. The main expenditure items for TAMS 2 were the Young Farmers Capital Investment Scheme at €31.4m, the Dairy Equipment Scheme at €12.6m, and the Animal Welfare and Nutrient Storage Scheme at €11.3 m respectively. A further €3.9m was spent on funding the acquisition of Low Emissions Slurry Spreading equipment.

Non-productive investments

Transitional expenditure of approximately €0.8m was incurred in respect of non-productive investments carried out on around 1,300 holdings carried over from the 2007-2013 programming period. Cumulative expenditure on Measure 4 investments in physical assets amounted to €129.2m at the end of 2018.
**Measure 7 – Rural Services and Renewal**

Sub-measure 7.6: support for investments associated with the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of the cultural and natural heritage of villages and rural landscapes – GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme

This scheme provides once-off grant aid for approved conservation work to traditional farm buildings and associated structures that are now used for agricultural purposes or available for such use. It ensures that traditional farm buildings and other structures are restored and conserved for practical agricultural use and is administered by the Heritage Council on behalf of DAFM. Participation in the GLAS is a primary eligibility condition for entry to the scheme.

In 2018, €0.84m was paid to support the restoration of 94 buildings and 3 other features on 54 farms. When private funding is considered, the total amount invested in these operations was €1.2m.

Total scheme spend, including private investment, at the end of 2018 was approximately €3.3m with grant aid accounting for more than 70% of that figure.

**Measure 10 – Agri-environment-climate**


The table below provides a breakdown of all the schemes contributing to spending under Measure 10. The total spend for this measure in 2018 was €277.4m comprised of €270.7m on current RDP schemes (i.e. the GLAS, BDGP and Burren Programme in order of importance) and €6.7m in transitional spending related to the previous RDP.

**GLAS**

GLAS promotes agricultural production methods with environmental benefits related to climate change mitigation, improving water quality and the preservation of priority habitats and species. Scheme payments totalled €225m on 48,000 contracts in 2018. The total GLAS spend at the end of 2018 was approximately €529m.

Some 70% of active GLAS participants are located in 10 counties. The largest concentrations are located along the western seaboard, particularly Galway, Mayo and Donegal. Apart from Waterford, the 10 counties with the lowest number of GLAS participants (i.e. less than 1,000 farmers each) were all in Leinster.

In an ADAS survey undertaken on GLAS beneficiaries, 75% of participants indicated that the maintenance of hedgerows, walls and ditches was fully achieved due to GLAS, and 65% indicated an increase in biodiversity on farms due to GLAS.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Expenditure (€m)</th>
<th>Total Area (ha)&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Number of contracts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GLAS</td>
<td>224.9</td>
<td>1,175,442</td>
<td>48,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDGP</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>331,574</td>
<td>22,901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burren Programme</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>11,012</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPS / AEOS (2007-2013 RDP)</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3,421</td>
<td>1,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Farming Scheme (OFS)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3,765</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that individual holdings may be counted under more than one scheme if different types of agri-environment contracts are being implemented on the same area of land.
The BDGP requires participating farmers to undertake a range of actions designed to accelerate genetic improvement in the beef herd resulting in climate benefits associated with lower greenhouse gas emissions. Scheme payments totalled €44.8m to over 23,000 beneficiaries in 2018, similar to 2017 figures. The total scheme spend at the end of 2018 was approximately €169m.

The Burren Programme

The Burren Programme is focused specifically on the conservation of the unique limestone landscape of that region in counties Clare and Galway. It promotes a particular farming model that couples traditional farming practices with scientific assessment of environmental health at field level.

Public expenditure of €1m was paid on 11,000 hectares (ha) to 304 farmers in 2018. Total scheme spend at the end of 2018 was approximately €2.1m.

Transitional payments for REPS / AEOS totalled €6m for 1,990 holdings in 2018. Transitional payments for the OFS totalled €0.7m for 87 contracts in 2018.

Cumulative expenditure on Measure 10 schemes amounted to €1,015m at the end of 2018.
**Measure 11 – Organic Farming**

Measure 11 consists of:

- Sub-measure 11.1: payment to convert to organic farming practices and methods; and
- Sub-measure 11.2: payment to maintain organic farming practices and methods.

The Organic Farming Scheme aims to encourage farmers to convert from conventional to organic farming methods and to maintain those methods after the initial two-year conversion period. Public expenditure of €9.8m was paid in respect of almost 51,000 hectares (ha) on 1,368 holdings under the OFS in 2018. Total scheme spend at the end of 2018 was approximately €23.2m. Additionally, €0.7 million in transitional money, for 87 unexpired contracts relating to the previous period, is reported under Measure 10 in the current Programme.

**Measure 12 – Natura 2000 payments**

Sub-measure 12.1: Compensation payment for Natura 2000 agricultural areas.

Natura 2000 is an EU-wide network of protected areas designated as being of special value and importance for the endangered animals, plants and habitats that they contain. These sites comprise both Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for habitats and species. Some sites are designated as both an SPA and an SAC.

The measure is programmed solely to provide for ongoing commitments from the 2007-2013 RDP as Natura sites are targeted under Measure 10 GLAS in the current RDP. The scheme supports farmers in dealing with specific disadvantages arising from the conservation of natural habitats and the effective management of those ecologically important sites. It thus contributes to the appropriate environmental management of farmed Natura sites in compliance with EU rules. A sum of €0.8m was spent on supporting the management of 515 ha on almost 644 holdings in 2018. Total funding for this scheme in the current programming period has so far amounted to €44.6m.
Measure 13 – Areas facing natural or other specific constraints

The measure consists of the following two sub-measures:

- Sub-measure 13.2: compensation payment for other areas facing significant natural constraints; and
- Sub-measure 13.3: compensation payment to other areas affected by specific constraints (referring to island farming).

Support under these two sub-measures is disbursed nationally under a single Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) scheme. It is the largest RDP support available to farmers. The scheme provides important environmental and social benefits by compensating farmers for additional costs and income foregone related to constraints on agricultural production in the areas concerned. A separate category of support is available to compensate island farmers in recognition of the specific constraints on agricultural activity in those locations.

Total public expenditure of €228.6m, including additional national financing of €37m and transitional monies of some €0.2m, was paid to approximately 94,000 farmers in respect of 2.14m ha under Measure 13 in 2018. Payments to island farmers accounted for just over €2.5m. This brings cumulative ANC payments in the current programming period to almost €1042.5m.
Measure 14 – Animal Welfare

Payment for animal welfare – Sheep Welfare Scheme

The objective of the Sheep Welfare Scheme is to develop the Irish sheep production system. It contributes to improved animal welfare in the areas of lameness control, parasite control, flystrike control and appropriate supplementation. Sheep farmers with breeding ewes can apply for payment based on two actions they choose to undertake from a menu of options appropriate to their flock type (i.e. hill or lowland).

Payment under the scheme is based on the number of eligible breeding ewes in an individual flock. In 2018, the second year of scheme payments, total public expenditure of €17.6m, including additional national financing of €8.8m, was paid to approximately 20,000 farmers in respect of over 274,000 livestock units (based on the number of eligible ewes held by participants).
Measure 16 – Co-operation

This measure is comprised of the following elements:

- Sub-measure 16.1: support for the establishment of European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational groups for agricultural productivity and sustainability.
  - General EIPs
  - Locally-Led Hen Harrier & Freshwater Pearl Mussel Projects
  - Locally-Led Environmental & Climate Projects

- Sub-measure 16.3: Co-operation among small operators in organising joint work processes and sharing facilities and resources – Collaborative Farming Grant Scheme.

European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs)

EIP Operational Groups are clearly linked to supporting innovation and best practice. Specifically, they will be intended to address all or some of the following:

- promoting a resource efficient, productive and low emission agricultural sector, working in harmony with the essential natural resources on which farming depends,
- improving processes to preserve the environment and agricultural landscapes, address biodiversity challenges, enhance water quality, adapt to climate change and mitigate it, and
- creating added value by better linking research and farming practice and encouraging the wider use of available innovative practices.

There are two funding streams for EIP groups depending on the themes they seek to address in their project proposals. The general stream focuses on farm viability, economic performance, sustainable forest management and innovative technologies, while environmental, biodiversity and climate change issues are the main concerns of the locally-led stream. Open calls for proposals were announced in December 2016 and August 2017 resulting in 21 proposals from both streams being selected for implementation. Two other locally-led projects on the conservation of the Hen Harrier and the Freshwater Pearl Mussel were the subject of procurement competitions. Contracts for those projects were signed in April 2017 and May 2018 respectively.

Approximately €34,000 was paid to four prospective general EIP groups in 2018 to enable them to develop their project plans. There are currently three general EIP groups being implemented which were recruited from the first open call for proposals and running costs for these supported operations will be included in next year’s report.
In 2018, approximately €2.9m was paid to 27 locally-led EIP groups to assist in the development of their project plans. 10 did not proceed past this stage. Most expenditure was absorbed by the Hen Harrier project with almost €1.2m being paid to participating farmers. Apart from the Hen Harrier and Freshwater Pearl Mussel projects, the other locally-led EIP operations funded in 2018 were:

- Biodiversity Regeneration in a Dairying Environment (BRIDE);
- Blackstairs Farming Futures;
- DANU Farming Group;
- The Conservation of the Breeding Curlew in Ireland;
- Sustainable Uplands Agri-Environment Scheme (SUAS); and
- A Sustainable Agricultural Plan for the MacGillycuddy Reeks.

The Hen Harrier has been described as one of our most enigmatic and rarest birds of prey. The photograph shows a male hunting over bogland. Image credit: Mr Mario MacRory.

**Collaborative Farming Grant Scheme**

Collaborative approaches to farming can address some of the structural challenges facing Irish agriculture such as limited land availability and intergenerational transfer. This scheme is specifically aimed at encouraging the formation of new farm partnerships by contributing up to 50% of vouched legal, accounting and advisory costs incurred in drawing up a partnership agreement, subject to a maximum payment of €2,500. In 2018, approximately €181,000 was paid towards costs incurred in setting up of 129 farm partnerships- 118 to facilitate generational renewal and 11 to facilitate mergers. A cumulative sum of around €1m was paid to support the creation of 783 registered partnerships in the period to the end of 2018. Cumulative expenditure on Measure 16 schemes amounted to €4.6m at the end of 2018.
Measure 19 – LEADER

There are 4 sub-measures to LEADER:

- Sub-measure 19.1: Preparatory support;
- Sub-measure 19.2: Support for implementation of operations under the Community-led Local Development strategy;
- Sub-measure 19.3: Preparation and implementation of co-operation activities of Local Action Groups; and
- Sub-measure 19.4: Support for running costs and animation.

LEADER aims to address local needs under the broad themes of economic development, social inclusion and rural development. Local communities direct where this funding is provided through their participation in Local Action Groups (LAGs) and the implementation of Local Development Strategies (LDSs) formulated by the LAGs. LAGs have been selected in all 28 sub-regional areas covering a population of 3.1m rural dwellers and funding agreements signed with all groups.

LEADER expenditure in 2018 exceeded €22.2m with most of this sum provided for funding of project implementation. There were substantial increases in the number of projects approved for funding in the second half of 2017 and throughout 2018. Consequently, project payments have increased considerably reaching €11.8 million in 2018 compared to €0.7 in 2017. Given the growing pipeline of project approvals, with funding approved for 984 projects throughout Ireland, it is anticipated that the momentum now evident in LEADER will ensure a full drawdown of the available funding over the programming period. Cumulative expenditure under Measure 19 amounted to €36.1m at the end of 2018.

LEADER 2014-2020 includes themes that reflect the overarching needs of rural Ireland. Each theme contains a number of sub-themes which are considered the key areas in need of the greatest support and have the greatest potential to promote the sustainable development of rural communities in Ireland.

The NRN website contains a LAG’s and Implementing Partners (IP’s) database which provides rural individuals, businesses and community groups interested in accessing assistance under the LEADER programme.
Measure 20 – Technical Assistance

- Sub-measure 20.1: Support for technical assistance (other than the National Rural Network (NRN));
- Sub-measure 20.2: Support for establishing and operating the NRN.

Technical assistance (TA) supports evaluation, information, communication and other activities that contribute to the effective management of the RDP and strengthen stakeholder capacity.

Cumulative payments of €3.3 million (excluding VAT) were made from the TA budget in the period 2014 to 2018. A sum of €1.2m was paid in technical support for Programme implementation in 2018. TA is reported under two distinct categories:

- support for establishing and operating the NRN; and
- non-NRN support comprised of administrative and other costs.

The 2018 spend was split equally between NRN and non-NRN support with the latter composed mostly of administrative costs for the Burren Programme together with contract payments for the GLAS evaluation project, the outputs of which are published on the DAFM website.

NRN activities for 2018 included organising 8 consultation exercises with stakeholders, 6 meetings of thematic working groups and 9 events. It also disseminated 120 project examples as well as 17 publications in printed and electronic formats.

Measure 113 – Early Retirement Scheme

A sum of €0.81m was paid to 117 scheme beneficiaries in 2018. This compares to €2.4m paid to 235 beneficiaries in 2017. No transitional funding was paid on this scheme during the years 2014 and 2015.

Cumulative expenditure under Measure 113 amounted to €7.5m at the end of 2018.

Rural Development Division

September 2019

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**Priority / Focus Area**

**P1: Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas**

1A) Fostering innovation, cooperation, and the development of the knowledge base in rural areas

1B) Strengthening the links between agriculture, food production and forestry and research and innovation, including for the purpose of improved environmental management and performance

1C) Fostering lifelong and vocational training in agriculture and forestry sectors

**P2: Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests**

2A) Improving the economic performance of all farms and facilitating farm restructuring and modernisation, notably with a view to increasing market participation and orientation as agricultural diversification

2B) Facilitating the entry of adequately skilled farmers into the agricultural sector and in particular, generational renewal

**P3: Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture**

3A) Improving competitiveness of primary producers by better integrating them into the agri-food chain through quality schemes, adding value to agricultural products, promotion in local markets and short supply circuits, producer groups and inter-branch organisations

3B) Supporting farm risk prevention and management

**P4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry**

4A) Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including in Natura 2000 areas, in areas facing natural constraints and high nature value farming, as well as the state of European landscapes

4B) Improving water management, including fertiliser and pesticide management

4C) Preventing soil erosion and improving soil management

**P5: Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors**

5A) Increasing efficiency in water use by agriculture

5B) Increasing efficiency in energy use in agriculture and food processing

5C) Facilitating the supply and use of renewable sources of energy, of by products, wastes, residues and non-food raw materials for the purposes of the bio-economy

5D) Reducing greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions from agriculture
5E) Fostering carbon conservation and sequestration in agriculture and forestry

P6: Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas

6A) Facilitating diversification, creation and development of small enterprises, as well as job creation

6B) Fostering local development in rural areas

6C) Enhancing the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas

Image credit: NRN
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Sub-measure</th>
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- **M6.1** - business start-up aid for young farmers
- **M6.2** - business start-up aid for non-agricultural activities in rural areas
- **M6.3** - business start-up aid for the development of small farms
- **M6.4** - support for investments in creation and development of non-agricultural activities
- **M6.5** - payments for farmers eligible for the small farmers scheme who permanently transfer their holding to another farmer

### M07 - Basic services and village renewal in rural areas (art 20)

- **M7.1** - support for drawing up and updating of plans for the development of municipalities and villages in rural areas and their basic services and of protection and management plans relating to N2000 sites and other areas of high nature value
- **M7.2** - support for investments in the creation, improvement or expansion of all types of small-scale infrastructure, including investments in renewable energy and energy saving
- **M7.3** - support for broadband infrastructure, including its creation, improvement and expansion, passive broadband infrastructure and provision of access to broadband and public e-government
- **M7.4** - support for investments in the setting-up, improvement or expansion of local basic services for the rural population including leisure and culture, and the related infrastructure
- **M7.5** - support for investments for public use in recreational infrastructure, tourist information and small-scale tourism infrastructure
- **M7.6** - support for studies/investments associated with the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of the cultural and natural heritage of villages, rural landscapes and high nature value sites including related socio-economic aspects, as well as environmental awareness actions
- **M7.7** - support for investments targeting the relocation of activities and conversion of buildings or other facilities located inside or close to rural settlements, with a view to improving the quality of life or increasing the environmental performance of the settlement
- **M7.8** - others

### M08 - Investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of catastrophic events
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**M9 - Setting-up of producer groups and organisations (art 27)**

| M9.1 | Setting up of producer groups and organisations in the agriculture and forestry sectors |

**M10 - Agri-environment-climate (art 28)**

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**M12 - Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive payments (art 30)**

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**M13 - Payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints (art 31)**

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### M13.3 - Compensation payment to other areas affected by specific constraints

### M14 - Animal welfare (art 33)

- **M14.1** - Payment for animal welfare

### M15 - Forest environmental and climate services and forest conservation (art 34)

- **M15.1** - Payment for forest environmental and climate commitments
- **M15.2** - Support for the conservation and promotion of forest genetic resources

### M16 - Co-operation (art 35)

- **M16.0** - Others
- **M16.1** - Support for the establishment and operation of operational groups of the EIP for agricultural productivity and sustainability
- **M16.2** - Support for pilot projects, and for the development of new products, practices, processes and technologies
- **M16.3** - (Other) co-operation among smalls operators in organising joint work processes and sharing facilities and resources, and for developing/marketing tourism
- **M16.4** - Support for horizontal and vertical co-operation among supply chain actors for the establishment and development of short supply chains and local markets, and for promotion activities in a local context relating to the development of short supply chains and local markets
- **M16.5** - Support for joint action undertaken with a view to mitigating or adapting to climate change, and for joint approaches to environmental projects and ongoing environmental practices
- **M16.6** - Support for cooperation among supply chain actors for sustainable provision of biomass for use in food and energy production and industrial processes
- **M16.7** - Support for non-CLLD local development strategies
- **M16.8** - Support for drawing up of forest management plans or equivalent instruments
- **M16.9** - Support for diversification of farming activities into activities concerning health care, social integration, community-supported agriculture and education about the environment and food

### M17 - Risk management (art 36)
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<td>M18 - Financing of complementary national direct payments for Croatia</td>
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### Rural Development Programme (RDP) - Mid-term Evaluation

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<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>57% of RDP funds spent by 2018</td>
<td>RDP is estimated to have an output multiplier of 1.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>GLAS expenditure 2015-2018 was €500 million</td>
<td>65% of beneficiaries surveyed indicated GLAS helped increase biodiversity of farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94,000 farmers supported by 2018 in areas facing natural constraints (ANC's)</td>
<td>75% of beneficiaries indicated that GLAS helped with the maintenance of hedgerows, walls and ditches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88% of public agreed RDP assisted in fostering innovation</td>
<td>90% of beneficiaries believe TAMS contributed to the modernisation of farms</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 EIP groups were supported in 2018</td>
<td>RDP funded on farm investment, increasing productivity by 5-6% and output by 6-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most LEADER projects in North-West and South-West regions</td>
<td>77% of LEADER beneficiaries believe their LEADER project would not have happened without LEADER funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape value generated by RDP €285 million per annum</td>
<td>Largest number of GLAS beneficiaries are on the Western seaboard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: GLAS stands for Green Logbook and Sustainable Acreage Scheme, EIP stands for European Innovation Partnership, LEADER is a EU rural development instrument, and TAMS is an Irish government programme for the modernisation of farms.*