

**Public debate on Pillar II of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Post 2013.
Synthesis of submissions to the
Irish Managing Authority of the Rural Development programme**

In July 2009, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food launched a public consultation process on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post 2013. As part of this process, the Department invited interested parties to submit their views on the range of issues that arise in relation to the future of the CAP. Over 60 submissions were received under this process. These submissions related to general CAP issues.

In April 2010, members of the Coordination Committee for the European Network for Rural Development were invited to launch a debate on CAP, specific to Pillar II. In response to this, members of the Monitoring Committee of Ireland's RDP, members of the Coordination Committee for Ireland's National Rural Network and all those who had made submissions to Ireland's earlier consultation process, were invited to make submissions specific to the Rural Development aspects of CAP. Invitations for submissions were also extended to attendees at CAP consultative committees and other RD communication events.

In respect of the Pillar II specific consultation, submissions were received from Teagasc¹, the IFA², the ICMSA³, the ICOS⁴, ICSA⁵, IRL⁶, ILDN⁷, the Tipperary Institute, the Heritage Council, the Agricultural Science Association, the National Monuments Service, Compassion in World Farming – Ireland, IRD Duhallow⁸ and the National Association of ERS Farmers inter alia. Some of the 60 submissions mentioned above also dealt with Rural Development issues. What follows is a brief synthesis of the overarching themes of the submissions from the stakeholders only. The Irish Managing Authority has not contributed to this aspect of the debate but will be interacting with the Commission on this issue on an ongoing basis in the future.

1. What should be the objectives of the future rural development policy?

A number of the submissions, from both farming organisations and other institutions, cited the original Rural Development Policy of the CAP and suggested that the key elements of restructuring and modernisation should receive renewed emphasis post 2013, with particular emphasis on investment in innovation and new technologies. Another key recurring theme was the need for future Rural Development policy to increase the diversity of employment in rural areas. It was suggested that the maintenance of vibrant rural communities and economies should be led by a viable agricultural sector, with indigenous enterprises delivering sustainable employment. While the need to address the New Challenges was widely recognised, submissions also stress that the CAP should not be limited to these areas and a strong emphasis was placed on the continuation of Agri Environment and Forest Environmental

¹ Teagasc - the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority

² IFA – Irish Farmers' Association

³ ICMSA – Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association

⁴ ICOS - Irish Cooperative Organisation Society

⁵ ICSA – Irish Cattle & Sheep Farmers' Association

⁶ IRL – Irish Rural Link

⁷ ILDN - Irish Local Development Network

⁸ IRD Duhallow – an Integrated Rural Development (IRD) company

Schemes, Organic Schemes, Renewable Energy Schemes and Land Management Schemes. A farming organisation gave specific support to Grassland Premium payments for farmers with an appropriate stocking density, while a rural association sought the addition of schemes to protect river systems thus encouraging tourist activities and related employment. Support was also given by two associations to schemes which protect the country's cultural heritage and landscape features and specifically to the protection of archaeological monuments on farmland. A rural association suggested that the future of Pillar II must take account of the diverse nature of rural areas and sustain the quality of life of rural communities through measures that enhance economic performance. Two further associations called for CAP funds to be used to support the societal, environmental and animal welfare benefits that are increasingly valued by taxpayers.

2. How can the RD policy instruments be made more effective?

While the majority of submissions on this topic focused on the rigidity of the Axis requirements, there was a wide range of opinion of how this could be addressed. One farming organisation suggested that the requirement to maintain an axis balance, through prescription of a minimum percentage allocation, should be abolished. An institution suggested that a greater "flexibility to respond" should be included, which would allow member states to react to challenges which may include economic change or specific environmental issues. Another farming organisation suggested that the future Rural Development policy must provide a menu of funding programme options, which gives the flexibility to be applied appropriately to individual Member State's needs. The submission added that the RD policy instruments can be made more effective through identification of key target areas within each Axis, with programmes that meet both the overarching aims of the EU Rural Development Plan and the Member State's own RD needs.

A farming organisation stated that it is absolutely essential that rural development policy retains its position separate from general regional policy and that it would be a mistake to subsume it into a policy area where priorities would be different. A second farming organisation suggested a strong research focus on new technology that contributes to a reduction in agri-related green house gas emissions going forward will be vital and that this should be done in a uniformed and harmonised manner across the EU. This research focus would also need to include a focus for the improvement in environmental performance of the sector.

An institution supported the continuation of LEADER as a developmental model and suggested that more resources be specifically assigned to that purpose. This was supported by a rural association which suggested that as future policy should focus on job creation and the long-term sustainability of the rural economy, LEADER funding should be significantly increased. A third rural association added that the bottom-up, localised delivery of LEADER must remain a core principle and promoted the use of the LEADER Approach across all axes of the RDP.

3. How can the management/implementation of the RD policy be improved?

With regard to management of RD policy, a clear theme of simplification was evident. The farming bodies in particular suggested a range of areas to apply simplification, including: the need to simplify the payment and cross compliance systems, by reducing unnecessary compliance checks. Concern was expressed at the perceived loss of entrepreneurial focus of the LEADER programme, with the suggestion that successive programmes had become increasingly “bureaucratised, formulaic and administratively overloaded”. Examples were given of “unnecessary requirements” of schemes, and it was suggested that the collection of some indicators was in essence a “meaningless costly regulation.” Conversely, another institution considered whether more specific selection criteria and indicators should be introduced and suggested the establishment of an Ecological Monitoring and Evaluation programme for all agri-environment schemes.

There was clear support for a co-funded Pillar II of the CAP, however a recurring sentiment from the farming bodies was that funding should not be redistributed, through modulation or other means, from Pillar I to Pillar II throughout the course of the programme. One institution’s submission suggested that given the importance of restructuring and the improvement in the competitiveness required by the agricultural sector, proceeds from modulation should be targeted specifically at Axis 1’s agricultural and food supply chain modernisation and restructuring agenda. A number of rural associations proposed a three Pillar model for CAP, whereby the first two Pillars would be farmer and farm family focused and the third pillar could be focused on the general rural community. An academic association suggested that rather than the current confusion regarding Pillar I and Pillar II, a single Pillar should operate in future, with payments targeted at agricultural activities which represent added value and are not rewarded by the market.

Summary

The main broad themes emerging from the consultation process were:

- A strong Rural Development policy into the future
- Eliminate rigidity in spending requirements
- Rural Development policy should have a fixed budget and not depend on modulation
- Administration of Rural Development policy/measures needs to be simplified
- There is across the board support for environmental and forestry measures
- Emphasis to be placed on investment, restructuring and innovation
- Employment in rural areas to be prioritised
- Bottom up localised delivery under LEADER measures to be enhanced
- Animal welfare measures to be promoted
- Cultural and archaeological heritage to be preserved