

IRELAND

Ireland CAP Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

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Relevant Contact Details

Address: Department for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, CAP Rural Development Division, 4 Centre, Agriculture House, Kildare Street, Dublin

Telephone number: +386 1890 200 510

E-mail: info@agriculture.gov.ie



Managing Authority Website: <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie>

Other useful links:

Rural Development Programme (RDP):

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/countries/irl/index_en.htm

National Strategy Plan (NSP):

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/ruralenvironment/ruraldevelopment/strategiesandprogrammes/>

National Rural Network (NRN):

<http://www.nrn.ie/>

Climate Change and Renewable Energy issues in 2007-2013 RDP

Climate change (CC) is recognised as one of today's most serious global challenges, and as such is a fundamental issue for agriculture and related policy making. EU agriculture has the potential to play an important role in mitigating this phenomenon by curbing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. At the same time it needs to adapt to expected climatic adversities which are expected to have serious consequences for production processes. Rural development offers a range of possible means of support to ensure farming practices and investments contribute to climate change *mitigation* efforts. This includes increasing the use of Renewable Energy [RE] resources and assisting with adaptation efforts. CC challenges have been well recognised in the baseline analysis of the 2007-2013 EU Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) and addressed in their strategies. Following the Health Check (HC) of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the 'new challenges' of RD policy include 'climate change' and 'renewable energy'. Accordingly, an additional budget of approximately €1 billion⁽¹⁾ has been made available to Member States (MSs) to tackle these issues⁽²⁾. As a consequence, operations related to these newly introduced EU priorities have been further strengthened in the RDPs.

⁽¹⁾ 19.8% of the total additional funds released.

⁽²⁾ The budget allocated to the 'new challenges' includes the funds released by the HC of the CAP (including voluntary modulation and transfers according to Art. 136 of regulation (EC) N. 73/2009) and the European Economic Recovery Package (EERP) .

Introduction - overview of Member State RDP

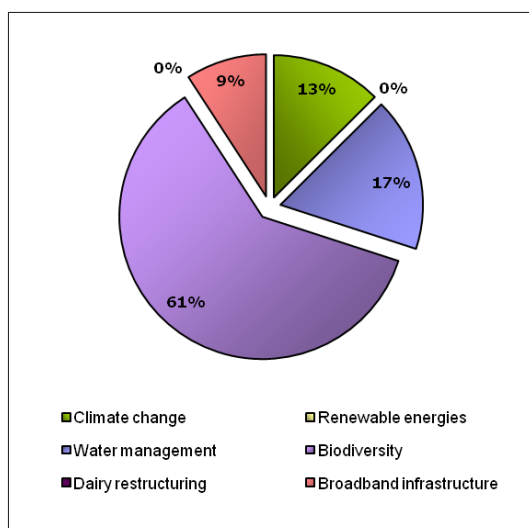
The Irish RDP recognises that Ireland must encourage the agricultural sector to embrace techniques designed to mitigate CC and minimise gaseous emissions to the atmosphere. It also encourages the agricultural sector to identify likely future impacts of CC, and prepare a strategy to assist with adaptation to these impacts.

Agriculture remains the single largest contributor to overall GHG emissions from Ireland and this has been identified as a weakness of Irish agriculture within the Baseline Analysis. Agricultural emissions of methane and nitrous oxide account for almost 26.8% of the national total of CO₂ equivalents. However, this is a significant improvement on 1990 figures when agriculture contributed 35.9% of the total.

The National Strategy Plan contains axis 2 targets related to CC mitigation and RE, which require the production of 370 kToe of RE from agriculture and forestry, from a baseline value of 183 kToe. For agriculture, there is also a requirement to reduce methane and nitrous oxide emissions to 9,791,000 tonnes and 6,625,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent respectively, from their baseline values of 11,398,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (methane) and 7,584,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (nitrous oxide). However, there is little mention of CC adaptation.

The Baseline Analysis identifies a number of opportunities related to CC and renewable energy. Following the complete decoupling of direct payments from production, the potential exists for alternative land use. This includes forestry, renewable energy crops and agri-tourism - all of which are environmentally and economically sustainable, and would mitigate the effects of CC by delivering additional reductions to Ireland's GHG emissions. Furthermore, the capability exists to significantly increase carbon sequestration and mitigate CC, through growth in afforestation and renewable energy sources, particularly biofuels and biomass.

The forestry sector appears to lack support under the Irish RDP, although forestry has a significant role to play in combating climate change, with a target set in Ireland's National Climate Change Strategy (published in 2007³) of 1.01 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, to be sequestered annually by 2010. The contribution of forestry thinnings to the national energy supply chain will increase from 0.8 PJ in 2006 to 2.6 PJ in 2020, which is indicative of the potential future contribution of forestry to the energy needs of Ireland.



According to the RDP strategy, the efforts to mitigate and adapt to CC will be mainly implemented through axis 2, with subsidiary efforts under axis 1. Axis 2 measures within the Irish RDP aim to improve the environment and countryside. Key outcomes of the identified operations related to combating CC within axis 2 are: i) the reduction of greenhouse emissions (principally methane and nitrous oxide); ii) increased carbon sequestration, and; iii) maintaining the genetic resource base (habitats and species). Within axis 1 measures, which aim to improve the competitiveness of the Irish agricultural sector, key actions related to combating CC will reduce GHG emissions, increase water efficiency, and increase the production of energy crops (although it should

³ Environment, Heritage and Local Government

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Atmosphere/ClimateChange/NationalClimateChangeStrategy/>

be noted that support for RE is relatively poor within the RDP).

Allocation of additional resources per type of priority

The overall budget of the Irish RDP in terms of total public expenditure amounts to €4,509,085,201, of which €2,494,540,590 is contributed by the EAFRD. This includes an additional allocation of €146.326 million (EAFRD contribution) as a result of the 'new challenges' raised by the HC (including voluntary modulation) and the adoption of the European Economic Recovery Plan (EERP). As a result of these changes, financial support to RDP objectives related to CC (plus €18 million for broadband) has been enhanced for the period 2010-2013, but there is no additional financial support for the RDP objectives related to RE.

Agri-environment actions targeted at the mitigation of CC, as well as actions to promote biodiversity and water quality, are the main CC-related actions supported under the enhanced RDP strategy in Ireland.

However, there have been major parallel changes to axis 1 and 2 which reflect the contraction of the Irish economy since the start of the programming period, as well as the consequent implementation of budget cuts in all public spending areas. In particular the new agri-environment scheme under **measure 214** (Agri-environment payments), is likely to have a lesser environmental impact than the previous scheme, but it does tailor the more limited resources to address specific priorities. However, a new sub-measure under **measure 121** (Modernisation of agricultural holdings) has been introduced following the budget cuts to axis 1 and 2 which includes an action for investment in increasing willow and miscanthus bio-energy production.

Further details of the overall RDP budget allocation for Ireland are available at:

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/rural-development-policy/country-information/rural-development-policy-fiches/en/rural-development-policy-fiches_home_en.cfm

Mitigation

Activities aimed at reducing agricultural greenhouse gas emissions

The Irish RDP provides support for a range of activities which could contribute to the reduction of agricultural emissions. Following the HC revision and the adoption of the EERP, new operations have been implemented for environmental protection and sustainable agriculture, which enhance the uptake of CC mitigation. These particularly relate to investments in the promotion of sustainable land management practices, which either reduce GHG emissions or increase carbon sequestration.

The two key measures through which the RDP seeks to support efforts to reduce agricultural GHG emissions are, **measure 121** and **measure 214**. Under the former, support is provided for farm investments to ensure higher environmental standards, including a reduction in overall greenhouse and transboundary gas emissions from the farm. The types of investment referenced under this include: equipment for slurry handling and spreading; and technology for manure processing, water storage equipment, and rainwater recycling. A new scheme under **measure 121**, the 'Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme', has been introduced into the revised RDP following the budget cuts to axis 1 and 2. It includes an action for investment, to increase willow and miscanthus production, which may contribute to fossil fuel substitution.

Measure 214 contains a greater number of potentially emission-reducing initiatives, specifically those related to fertiliser management, the reduction of chemical use and the promotion of organic practices. Support is also given under this measure for: mixed grazing to

promote biodiversity, grassland management, tillage and crop management - based on environmental principles and the retention of wildlife habitats. Within the new agri-environment scheme, the 'Agri-Environmental Options Scheme' (which replaces the original Rural Environment Protection Scheme and was closed to new applicants in July 2009), under **measure 214** in the revised RDP, new operations relating to the creation of arable margins, green cover establishment, minimum tillage, and the use of trailing shoe technology or injection systems for slurry, are introduced. These will reduce emissions of nitrous oxide and methane, and increase carbon sequestration.

Finally, support for training in farm systems which are compatible with good environmental practices is given under **measure 111** (Vocational training and information actions). There are no further training or advisory measures in the Irish RDP. There is also no reference to promoting energy efficiency, RE, or reducing energy use as a means of CC mitigation.

Adaptation

Prevention of, and coping with, potential impacts of climate change on agriculture

The Irish RDP supports a limited range of CC adaptation actions. The same two measures under which the majority of mitigation actions are supported (**measures 121** and **214**) are employed with regard to adaptation. The main focus of adaptation in the plan is placed on activities to help cope with the potential impacts of CC. These include: managing crops and habitats to conserve important genetic resources; supporting investments in modernising farm equipment and storage; and water storage and rainwater recycling.

The primary measure supporting CC adaptation is **measure 214**. Under this measure, a range of sub-measures are detailed, which support crop and habitat management to maintain plant and animal species diversity; for example, conservation of wild bird habitat, and maintaining field boundaries and hedgerows, buffer zones, and grassland cultivation. Wetland restoration is implied with support for corncrake habitat conservation; fertiliser management and restricted pesticide use to protect water courses is also referenced. Within the new agri-environment scheme under **measure 214** in the revised RDP, new operations relating to riparian margins and the provision of alternative water sources for bovines aim to promote water quality.

In addition, **measure 121** provides details on support for investments in farm buildings and infrastructure, which ensure higher environmental standards. This could include adaptive improvements. Investment in water storage and rainwater recycling are explicitly included under this measure. The new 'Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme', also includes an action for investment to reduce water consumption, through investment in dairy enterprises and water conservation measures, such as water harvesting.

Finally, **measure 111** could contribute to adaptation by increasing environmental skills and training.

There is no reference to preventative actions with respect to CC, such as flood prevention, in the RDP.

Main RDP measures which contribute to addressing CC mitigation/adaptation issues

Axis/Measure	Description	Type of operation	Potential effects
Axis 1			
Measure 121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings	Investments in new environmental technologies, particularly in relation to manure and slurry storage and treatment.	Reduce emission of GHG (N ₂ O and CH ₄) at farm level and the leakage of nutrients.
		Investments in water storage and rainwater cycling.	Reduced water use.
Measure 111	Vocational training and information actions	Support for training in farming systems compatible with good environmental practices.	Increased environmental awareness and uptake of measures.
Axis 2			
Measure 214	Agri-environment payments	Improved efficiency of fertiliser use and application; improved slurry and manure management	Reduce emissions of GHG (N ₂ O and CH ₄) at farm level and the leakage of fertilisers.
		Soil conservation techniques (e.g., reduced tillage methods, green cover, catch crops, management stubble); arable margins.	Increased carbon sequestration in soils; Reduce N ₂ O emission.
		Establishment of riparian margins.	Improved water quality.

Renewable energies

Electricity, heating and transport fuels, produced from biomass (such as biofuels, biogas) and other renewable sources (solar, wind, geothermal).

Renewable energy is mentioned in **measure 323** (Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage). Under this measure, support is provided for 'renewable energy initiatives to meet energy needs'.

A further three measures could offer some support to renewable technologies or training, but there are no explicit references in the measures to biogas, biomass, renewable energy sources or local energy supply, other than energy crops:

- although not directly funded by the HC and EERP, the new Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme under **measure 121** includes an action for investment to increase willow and miscanthus production where growers have a proven link to end users;
- **measure 312** (Business creation and development) supports enterprises to adopt new technologies. This could conceivably be used to support RE;
- similarly, **measure 111** could provide education and training with respect to RE, although this is not specified. There is no further reference to RE in a broad sense in this measure or to specific aspects of RE, such as biogas, energy crops, solar energy, wind energy, or use of biomass for energy.

Main implemented RDP measures related to the development of RE sources

Axis/Measure	Description	Type of operation	Potential effects
Axis 1			
Measure 121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings.	Investment in bioenergy (willow and miscanthus).	Increased RE derived from biomass from agriculture.
Axis 3			
Measure 312	Business creation and development	Supports enterprises to adopt new technologies.	Could conceivably be used to support RE.
Measure 323	Conservation and Upgrading of Rural Holdings.	Support for renewable energy initiatives to meet energy needs.	Increased use of RE.