







National Rural Network

**Connecting Communities
growing our future**

December 2016

Connect with the National Rural Network

Welcome to the tenth issue of the NRN's monthly newsletter. This is the newsletter for members of the NRN. The goal of the National Rural Network (NRN) 2016-2020 is to inform the broader public and potential beneficiaries about rural development policy and funding opportunities. For more see www.nationalruralnetwork.ie

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**Farming Group Raises Awareness of
Biodiversity in the Blackstairs Region**

Biodiversity and Farming



The Blackstairs Farming Group, a collaborative venture to promote sustainable development of the Blackstairs, is a working group formed in 2014 to investigate the potential for a Locally Led Agri-Environment Project in Mount Leinster and The Blackstairs.

Part of this project involved the establishment of a dedicated website blackstairsbiodiversity.com, as a collaboration between the Blackstairs Farming Group and Wild Carlow, with the objective of raising awareness of the biodiversity of the Blackstairs region.

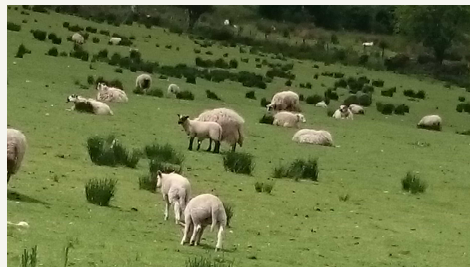
The National Biodiversity Data Centre provided a bespoke online system to enable sightings of wildlife of the region to be submitted through the website and fed to the Data Centre for validation. This collaboration will help build the knowledge base on the biodiversity resource of the Blackstairs and ensure that the information will be available to assist with its future management. This initiative may serve as an example to other community groups on how to explore the commercial potential of biodiversity.

For further information see <http://blackstairsbiodiversity.com>

Knowledge Transfer Discussion Groups

Benefiting the Environment and Increasing Profitability

The Knowledge Transfer Programme is now well underway with over 20,000 farmers participating in 1,100 groups across the beef, dairy, sheep, poultry, equine and tillage sectors. The Knowledge Transfer Scheme is co-funded by the National Exchequer and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural



Development as part of Ireland's €4bn Rural Development Programme, 2014-2020.

Noel Feeney an Agricultural Consultant based in Croghan, Co. Roscommon is a Knowledge Transfer Advisor and facilitator with four discussion groups including one organic beef group, a commercial beef group, and two sheep groups. According to Noel, "the course content is broad, with participating farmers covering topics which benefit the environment and increase profitability."

Farmers participating in the three year programme attend meetings of their KT Group and produce a Farm Improvement Plan tailored to their farming enterprise. The programme addresses the following topics

- Animal Health & Management
- Profitability & Financial Management
- Grassland Management
- Sustainability
- Farm Health and Safety
- Farm Progression
- Breeding Plan

Farmers must attend five meetings per year or four meetings and one Knowledge Transfer event usually on a demonstration farm. Noel explained, "Firstly the monetary payment of €750 is welcome. By listening to the experiences of others in the group they are learning new and innovative ways to do things. Discussion groups can be used to bring the latest technology to farmers and can be used to discuss complex and topical issues such as climate change."

For more information about the Knowledge Transfer Programme, see [here](#).

Operational Groups for Innovation in Agriculture

European Innovation Partnerships for Agriculture



In 2017, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will fund some of the first Operational Groups in Ireland under the European Innovation Partnerships for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability programme (EIP-AGRI). This multi-actor approach to innovation in agriculture brings together farmers, advisors, researchers and others to find innovative solutions for problems faced by farmers and foresters.

In looking for project ideas and innovations, some interesting European Operational Groups are already up and running through the following projects:

- **ROBUSTAGNO - Mid-Pyrénées, France**

This project identifies innovative solutions to reduce lamb mortality by making lambs more robust at birth. The project strongly involved farmers in all stages of the project.

- **Population Management - Schleswig-Holstein, Germany**

The aim of this project is to find solutions to small and local populations of old breeds of domestic animals to ensure long-term genetic diversity.

- **Organic Dock Control - Austria**

This Austrian project evaluates if native clearwing moths can be applied as an effective organic measure to control broad-leaved dock weeds, which cause heavy loss of cattle fodder in Austrian grasslands.

To find out more about these and other EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects, visit the EU EIP-AGRI website www.eip-agri.eu.

Open Call for Proposals under the

EIP's Initiative

European Innovation Partnerships for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed TD, has issued an Open Call under the European Innovation Partnerships Initiative (EIP) inviting applications for funding.



Projects developed under this Open Call will form part of the Department's new 'Locally-Led' initiative, a measure proposed by Ireland under the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020.

To find out more about European Innovation Partnerships please visit <http://bit.ly/2hDhpqs>. (Source: DAFM)

Minister Creed Appoints New Chair of the Commonage Implementation Committee

Commonage



The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed TD, has appointed Mr. Padraig Gibbons as the new chair of the independent Commonage Implementation Committee. Mr. Gibbons is a farmer from Westport Co. Mayo and has experience of all aspects of the agricultural sector, and has previously chaired the independent appeals committees established to deal with both the operation of the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the review of the Land Parcel Identification System.

Mr Gibbons will be joined on the committee by nominees from the Department of

Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Teagasc. The committee will have a role in examining cases where there may be disagreement or difficulties in reaching agreement between active shareholders in the preparation of a GLAS Commonage Management Plan. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/2fYwdYb> (Source: DAFM).

Viability and Competitiveness of the Farming Community

Advisory Sub-Committee

The NRN held the first Advisory Sub-committee meeting for the Viability and Competitiveness of the Farming Community in Moate, Co. Westmeath, on the 17th November. This Sub-Committee brought together key stakeholders and experts from the agricultural and rural sectors with a focus on succession and inheritance, land mobility, the role of women and young people in agriculture.



Dissemination of the Rural Development Programme is a key focus of the NRN's work and the Sub-Committee provided some excellent direction in how this can be achieved within the area of farm viability and competitiveness. Areas such as land mobility and the role of women in agriculture and rural areas were key aspects of the Sub-Committee's discussion, with the group providing some excellent suggestions on accessing 'hard to reach' communities. Although, we have witnessed wide spread acceptance of technology within agriculture, the Sub-Committee was of the opinion that traditional sources of media such as local radio and newspapers remain central to communicating with the farming community and should be targeted as a method of disseminating information. A suggestion put forward by the Sub-Committee currently under consideration by the NRN is a rolling calendar on the NRN website providing key dates relating to the Rural Development Programme. NRN members who would like issues around farm viability and competitiveness raised at the next meeting of the Sub-

Committee can contact, Chairperson, Dr Maura Farrell
(maura.farrell@nuigalway.ie) or the National Rural Network directly
(info@nationalruralnetwork.ie).

Almost 9,000 Farmers Apply to Young Farmers' Scheme

Y o u n g F a r m e r s ' S c h e m e



The Young Farmers' Scheme was introduced in 2015 as a measure to support young farmers under the reformed Common Agricultural Policy. Ireland has allocated 2% of the Basic Payment Scheme national ceiling to fund the Young Farmers' Scheme each year from 2015 to 2019. This is the highest percentage allowable under the relevant EU Regulations and provides funding of some €24m annually for the scheme.

Payments to Young Farmers began to issue to farmers on the 1st December. 8,600 young farmers submitted an application to the scheme this year. Payment to successful applicants under the Young Farmers' Scheme in 2016 is based on €68.54 per activated entitlement, subject to a maximum of 50 entitlements (Source: DAFM).

Irish Involvement in European Network for Rural Development Seminar in Sweden

L E A D E R / C o m m u n i t y - l e d L o c a l D e v e l o p m e n t (C L L D)

Ireland was represented at the recent European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) Seminar in Sweden by Maura Farrell, National Rural Network, Gabrielle O'Connell, Monaghan Local Action Group and David Raftis, Westmeath Local Community Development Committee.



The event focused on LEADER and the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) model in particular. The aims of the seminar were to update participants on CLLD implementation progress throughout Europe; to strengthen participant's knowledge of the CLLD method and to develop recommendations on how implementation and strategy can be improved. Conference delegates heard that the LEADER programme is currently implemented by around 2600 Local Action Groups (LAGs), covering over 54% of the rural population in the EU and bringing together public, private and civil-society stakeholders in a particular area. In the rural development context, LEADER is implemented under the national and regional Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) of each EU Member State, co-financed from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

Key aspects of the conference focused on EU counties that are currently engaging in the new LEADER method under the broader term of Community-Led Local Development, which is funded under three additional funds: the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF); the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); and the European Social Fund (ESF). A variety of conference workshops highlighted that although LEADER is obligatory only under the EAFRD, a single action can now be supported under two or more of the four EU Funds at the same time through the concept of multi-funded CLLD.

For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/2gWvLHv>.

First Report of Independent Climate

Change Advisory Council Published

Climate Change



The first report of the Climate Change Advisory Council outlines that the Council is concerned that Ireland will not meet its 2020 emission targets. Ireland's 2020 target is to achieve a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the non-Emission Trading Sector (NETS) compared with 2005 levels. This target is a national target and applies to all sectors in the NETS, which includes agriculture, transport, residential, commercial, non-energy, intensive industry, and waste. The Irish target of a 20% reduction is in contrast with an EU wide average target of 10%.

In relation to Agriculture, Forestry and other Land Use, the report states that to achieve its contribution to the 2050 national mitigation objective "the sector should " include actions to significantly reduce emissions and to enhance carbon uptake in soils and biomass through forestry and improved land management. However, it recognises that more research will be essential to achieve carbon neutrality in agriculture and land use. It recommends making the switch to lower emission fertiliser to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

For further details see

http://www.climatecouncil.ie/media/CCAC_FIRSTREPORT.pdf.

The Schemes and Services Booklet 2014-2020

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

The Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM) has published 'The Schemes and Services Booklet 2014-2020'. This booklet provides a comprehensive guide of initiatives and services available to farmers. It provides a useful guide to farmers and advisors on all schemes and services operated by DAFM including details on how to apply and scheme closing dates.

It is available on request from the local offices of DAFM and from Teagasc offices and can be accessed on the publications page of the Department's website:

www.agriculture.gov.ie (Source: DAFM)

Best Practice

GLAS Protection of Watercourses from Bovines



The GLAS Scheme which is funded through the Rural Development Programme has a number of specifically designed measures which address water quality, climate change and biodiversity. Some areas of the country have been designated by the EPA as high status water bodies (HSWs). These

areas have very high water quality and measures under GLAS have been designed to maintain this high water status. Farms located within HSW's are given priority access to GLAS. Beef and dairy farmers must fence water courses on their farms to prevent access by livestock. The payment for fencing of the watercourse is €1.50 per m/year.

Water courses are extremely important to biodiversity with many habitats flourishing both in the water and along the banks of streams. Keeping livestock out is important both to prevent contamination by nutrients, and to allow vegetation to flourish on the banks. All and all, in excess of 12,000 kilometers of water courses have been fenced under the scheme.

Hugh Mooney a beef farmer from Kildare joined GLAS in 2015. "Choosing to fence off the water course on my farm increased the likelihood of gaining entry to the scheme. I decided to fence off 258 meters of a stream running along the boundary of my property. I used treated timber stakes and attached barbed wire to them. The fence was constructed 1.5 meters from the top of the bank. This will create a buffer strip which will allow vegetation to grow along the bank of the stream which will allow biodiversity to flourish while also acting as a buffer preventing nutrients and pesticides from entering the stream."

Mr. Mooney concluded, “without the incentive of the payment for the GLAS action Protection of Watercourses from Bovines, I would never have considered fencing the stream or have given any thought to the damage being done to biodiversity by allowing animal’s access to the stream.”

Forthcoming Events

**Sheep Technical Training course, Teagasc, Athenry, Co. Galway,
21 December**

Teagasc ConnectEd will host a one day technical training course for professionals working with sheep farmers, focusing on Flock Health and Sheep Nutrition <http://bit.ly/2gSrcR4>



Sheep Welfare Scheme Information Sessions, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

10 Jan - Cork (venue TBC)

11 Jan - Glen Eagle Hotel, Killarney, Co. Kerry

12 Jan - Clonmel Park Hotel, Co. Tipperary

16 Jan - Breaffy House, Castlebar, Co. Mayo

17 Jan - Peacocke's Hotel, Maam Cross, Co. Galway

18 Jan - Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone, Co. Roscommon

19 Jan - Landmark Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim

24 Jan - Ballymascanlon, Dundalk, Co. Louth

25 Jan - Nesbitt's, Ardara, Co. Donegal

The information sessions for farmers will begin at 8pm. <http://bit.ly/2hS77sE>

**ENRD Workshop 'Generational Renewal through Rural Development', Brussels,
25 January**

This workshop, jointly organised by the ENRD Contact Point and the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA), will look to identify how various Rural Development Programmes Measures could support generational renewal <http://bit.ly/2gx7Mh1>



The NRN Team wish all our members a very

Happy Christmas

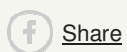
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Peaceful New Year

Visit us at www.nationalruralnetwork.ie

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Ireland's EU Structural and
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