

THE HIDDEN TRUTH

Environmental Impact of New EU Rural Development Programmes



BACKGROUND

One of the overarching aims of CAP reform was to make it deliver more for the environment. To find out what Irish Rural Development spending means for the environment, specifically for biodiversity, this factsheet analyses how public money will really be spent and what hides behind the official numbers. Despite the alarming state of the environment, Ireland is not using its Rural Development spending in the most optimal way.

STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

14 of the 37 breeding birds on the current Irish **Red-List** are Farmland Bird species.

100%

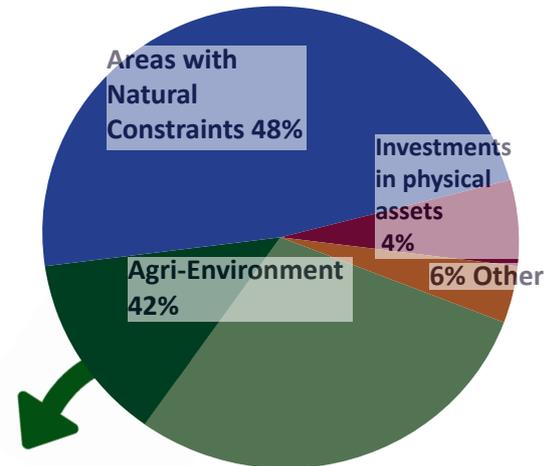
OF PROTECTED EXTENSIVE GRASSLANDS IN NATURA 200 SITES IN UNFAVOURABLE CONDITION

PAPER VS. PRACTICE

Each Rural Development programme needs to respect certain EU priorities, including the protection of ecosystems. While 73% of total public budget in Ireland has been allocated to measures that should directly benefit biodiversity, water and soil (priority 4), the reality is that not all measures for which this money has been earmarked have high environmental value.

In Ireland, **48%** of this budget goes to a basic income support instrument without any environmental conditions attached to it, namely payments for farmers in Areas with Natural Constraints (ANC).

*Ecosystems budget 2014-2020
Priority 4*

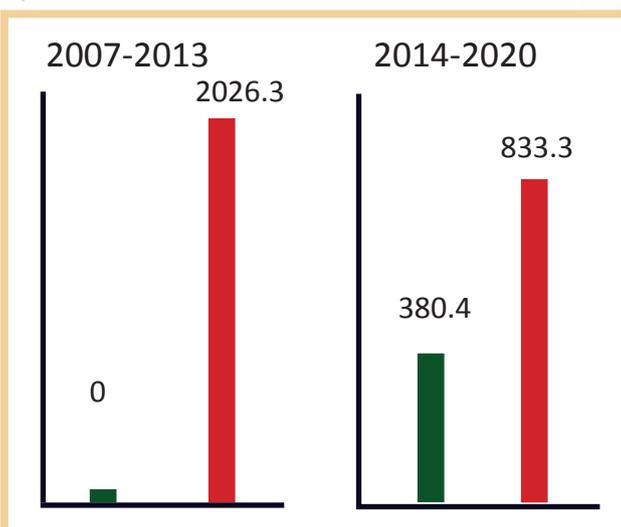


Just **30%** of the 2014-2020 Agri-Environment budget for Ireland will be spent on 'dark green' measures.

What are 'dark green' agri-environment measures?

There is no common definition of light or dark green measures. Our analysis uses the following principle: the scheme has been considered dark green if it targets specific species (groups of species), habitats or a specific biodiversity problem (e.g. pollinator strips).

HOW DOES TOTAL AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SPENDING COMPARE WITH THE LAST FUNDING PERIOD?



Dark green agri-environmental measures
Other measures

*Figures in millions of euros.
2007-2013 figures don't include organic measures.*

There will be a **40% cut** in total Agri-Environment spending for the 2014-2020 period in comparison with the 2007-2013 programming period.

Only **14%** of farmland in Ireland will be under contracts that directly address the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

IRELAND must

- ✓ Keep up the consultation efforts put in place by the Irish Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in developing the Rural Development Programme in the future.
- ✓ Follow the example of the targeted approach for wild and farmland birds and expand this type of scheme to other species groups and habitats.
- ✓ Support targeted schemes elsewhere within the Rural Development Programme with non-productive investments (e.g. for habitat creation), advisory support, research and monitoring.
- ✓ Reform payments for farmers in Areas with Natural Constraints to ensure that they also generate concrete benefits for biodiversity, water and soil.

EUROPE must

- ✓ Ensure that a well-designed greening and reinforced cross compliance represent a firm baseline for Pillar 2 environmental measures. This could help free up money for more efficient and targeted measures that benefit the environment and biodiversity.
- ✓ Ensure the CAP is designed in a way which helps reach the EU Biodiversity Strategy goals by 2020. So far evidence shows that the agriculture target is the most problematic.
- ✓ Have a genuine system for tracking environmental spending. Only measures with clear environmental objectives and delivery can be included. Areas of Natural Constraints (ANCs) must not be counted as environmentally-beneficial measures as there are no environmental obligations or management requirements attached to the payments.
- ✓ Ensure proper monitoring of the Rural Development schemes' delivery.

Europe needs to take a proper look at the whole of its agricultural policy to see whether it is working for or against environmental commitments and priorities. Even if Rural Development can be a large part of the answer and has the potential to play a positive role in many parts of Europe, the figures unfortunately show adjustments are necessary for this policy to truly deliver on its objectives. It is now clear that this reformed CAP still has a long way to go before it can be called green.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Faustine Bas-Defossez, EEB
Senior Policy Officer for Agriculture and Bioenergy
faustine.bas-defossez@eeb.org
Tel: +32 (0) 2 790 8814

Trees Robijns, BirdLife Europe
Senior Policy Officer for Agriculture and Bioenergy
trees.robijns@birdlife.org
Tel: +32 (0) 2 238 5091

Alex Copland, BirdWatch Ireland
Tel: +353 (0) 5791 51676
acopland@birdwatchireland.ie



The data in this factsheet is based on the first version of the Rural Development Programme.