



IFA CALL FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION FOR HILL FARMERS – 15 POINT PLAN

Given the serious income crisis facing Hill Farmers as a result of poor lamb market returns, high cost of farming, Government cutbacks to vital income support schemes, poor land market returns, high costs associated with farming in difficult land areas and severe environmental restrictions, IFA is setting out a 15 point plan to revitalise farming in Hill and Commonage areas which the Government must act on.

CAP

1. In the implementation of CAP in 2015, IFA is opposed to the use of regionalisation and land reduction co-efficients on eligible land for Single Farm Payment. IFA is supporting the approximation model including the 60% minimum payment.
2. Targeted support through the Sheep Grassland (€15/ewe) and Suckler Cow (€100/cow) schemes must be put in place in the new CAP.

Commonages

3. Sustainable stocking levels to replace Commonage Framework Plans must be immediately established for each commonage area to allow Hill Farmers reach their full potential in a flexible manner.

Upland Environmental Management Scheme

4. To coincide with the new stocking regime, IFA is calling for the introduction of a meaningful Upland Agri-Environment Scheme in the next Rural Development Plan 2014 - 2020.
5. Payment to farmers under the agri-environment scheme must reflect the restrictions imposed by SAC designation and other restrictions with strong incentive for farmers to participate. Payment should apply across the whole farm with higher payments in SAC and Commonage areas.

Rollover of REPS 4 in 2014

6. REPS 4 farmers whose contracts finish in December 2013 should be allowed a year's extension up to the end of 2014. Furthermore, any Hill Farmers locked out of AEOS 3 must be allowed join from 1st January next.



SACs

7. Where restrictions are imposed across farming and other developments in SAC areas, compensation must be paid by either the Department of Agriculture or the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Disadvantaged Areas

8. In the review of the Disadvantaged Areas, following the CAP agreement, higher payments should apply in mountain areas under new Area of Natural Constraint criteria.

Eligible Land

9. Flexibility must be allowed in determining eligible land in Hill Areas for payments under Single Farm Payment, DAS and Agri-Environment measures in the new CAP.

Walks Scheme

10. The number of walks covered by the Walks Scheme must be increased to 80 and the allocation increased from €2m to €4m.

Lamb Market Measures

11. Bord Bia in conjunction with Teagasc, the Department of Agriculture and lamb processors should undertake a comprehensive census/assessment of light lamb production and market potential and undertake a strong marketing drive for hill lamb in the most attractive markets.
12. Through the advisory and STAP network, Teagasc should highlight the potential economic benefit to lowland farmers of purchasing store lambs from the hill areas and link up potential hill farmer sellers and lowland buyers to meet and maximise market returns.

TAMS in Hill Areas

13. A broader TAMS scheme for Sheep farmers including fencing and handling equipment as well as support for Sheep structures.

Changing Burning Date

14. That the closing date for Burning is changed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan from 1st March to 15th April under the Wildlife Amendment Act.

Farm Assist

15. As many Hill Farmers are on Farm Assist it is vital that the income and child disregards in the means income assessment, be restored to their pre-Budget 2012 level.