



IFA

Thomond Park Declaration on climate action

April 2023



In January 2023, IFA held a Climate Summit in Thomond Park, Limerick attended by over 400 farmers and many representatives across the sector. The Summit was addressed by Minister Charlie McConalogue and representatives from Teagasc, Bord Bia, the EPA and the IFA. IFA recognises the importance of climate action as well as enhancing biodiversity and water quality. Like all citizens, farmers are playing their part to reduce emissions, protect water quality and safeguard biodiversity. Following the Summit, the IFA Environment Committee and the IFA National Council compiled and agreed this Declaration, which summarises IFA's position on a number of climate and environmental issues.

1. Balancing Climate Action & Food Production

Our grass-based livestock and arable systems are among the world's most climate-efficient food production systems. Farmers will work to reduce emissions by adopting measures in the Teagasc Marginal Abatement Cost Curve (MACC) and other reasonable policy measures that do not negatively impact farm family incomes, the rural economy or food production.

Environmental measures undertaken by farmers are, in many cases, leading to increased costs at farm level. The marketplace must return a higher price to farmers to cover these increased costs of food production.

Emissions from food production must be treated differently from emissions from non-essential economic activity. The focus must be on the sustainable development of our farming and food sector to ensure an adequate supply of food for human nutrition.

2. Environmental, Social & Economic Sustainability

As set out in *Food Vision 2030*, there must be a balance between environmental, economic and social sustainability. To ensure this, rigorous assessments of all EU and national policy proposals are required to understand their impact on farm viability, the rural economy and the social viability of rural areas. IFA cannot support policies that negatively impact the livelihood of farm families and the economic and social sustainability of rural Ireland.

3. Accurate Calculation of Emissions & Removals

There must be an accurate measurement of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon removals at farm level. It was accepted at the IFA Climate Summit that research is ongoing to facilitate more accurate estimates of emissions from Irish agriculture and land use. In the future, it is imperative that any measurement of emissions and removals is based on research that reflects Irish conditions.

On-farm sequestration and biogenic methane from livestock, along with emissions and removals from Ireland's unique mineral and peat soils, must be based on peer reviewed trials in Ireland. On-farm measures such as anaerobic digestion and rooftop solar should count towards reducing emissions from the agricultural sector.



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4. The Risk of Carbon Leakage

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, requires the Government to take account of the potential for carbon leakage to arise from climate policies in Ireland. Carbon leakage occurs when food production is curtailed in one region (e.g. Ireland) and shifts to another region (e.g. Brazil) with a higher carbon footprint.

Independent, peer-reviewed assessments of the potential for 'carbon leakage' from climate policies must be carried out. Without such assessments, there are genuine concerns that policies that reduce food production in Ireland will actually lead to an increase in global emissions as that food will be produced elsewhere with a higher carbon footprint.

5. Land Use Change Issues

Policy measures around land use change including the forestry programme, biodiversity proposals and rewetting must all be agreed with farmers. IFA will not agree with land being designated or re-wetted without prior agreement with farmers and full compensation must be provided for any reduction in farming activity or associated impairment of land values.

The Irish Government must ensure that Irish farmers are not being treated unfairly in EU proposals, such as the proposed Nature Restoration Law, the Sustainable Use Regulation, EU Taxonomy Regulation and the Industrial Emissions Directive.

6. New Funding

New funding is required to support farmers and the wider agricultural sector to achieve our environmental objectives. This must include renewable energy as well as research funding to maximise the potential for technology-based solutions to help agriculture reduce emissions, protect water quality and enhance biodiversity.

The Common Agricultural Policy was introduced to support food production. Continuing to raid and repurpose it for environmental measures will not work. There must be new funding for taking on optional environment measures, land-use changes and renewable energy initiatives. This must go to farmers, not investment funds.

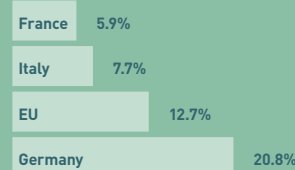
Some Farming & Climate Facts

67%

of all slurry spread on dairy farms in 2021 was applied via low emissions slurry spreading (LESS). This has increased from just 5% in 2018

Source: Teagasc sustainability report 2021

The 2020 percentage of farmland under agri-environmental schemes in Europe



IRELAND 32.6%

Source: European Commission

Average pesticide usage (kgs/hectare)

EU-27 2.08

OECD 0.93

IRELAND 0.64

Source: Ireland/EU - 2020 data (Eurostat)
Source: OECD - 2016 data (most recent available)

59%

increase in use of protected Urea in 2022

Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine