SPRING 2014

ICMSA NEWSLETTER

THE FAMILY FARM ORGANISATION THAT CONCENTRATES ON SOLUTIONS

Inside: Dairy, Beef & CAP update, plus, TB Compensation arrangements - how they work and how they're calculated.

INTRODUCTION

Changes happening at almost dizzying speed

John Comer, President, ICMSA

As I sit down to write this editorial, I struggle to recall any single six month period during my involvement with ICMSA that has seen anything like the challenges and changes we're currently experiencing.

First things first, mid-January saw the Government outline the CAP funding programme. It's important to acknowledge the Government's efforts at fairness in the allocation of funding and we especially welcomed the decision not to introduce a coupled payment, which we had vigorously lobbied against on the grounds that it effectively diverted resources away from the most active farmers and this is a strategy which is always unwise, both in practice and principle. On Pillar II, we are reasonably satisfied on the parameters set out but we question whether the funding envisaged for the new Agri-Enviroment Scheme, GLAS, will be adequate and whether intensive farmers will meet the terms and conditions. Our reaction to Pillar I is more restrained on the basis that - whatever way the calculation were done – average farmers are going to face substantial reductions. We estimate that someone who had received a Single Farm Payment of €10,000 last year could suffer a reduction of up to €1,250 and that's before any factoring-in of approximation. Having outlined the programme, farm families had to endure what amounted to an information vacuum over the following month till - just before going to print – Minister Coveney made his announcement on entitlements from leased land and the picture became at once somewhat clearer and a little more perplexing, at the same time.

It's already obvious that this decision on SFP entitlements with leased land is going to throw up situations where, under the new system, neither the lessor nor leasee will be able to draw entitlements. To say that this is a significant dilemma is to do no more than state the facts. In addition to that problem, we have already raised the possibility of tax liabilities occurring where farmers try and resolve the intricacies around leased land and entitlements.

While we waited for some clarity on CAP, the skies overhead darkened and the country has undergone a series of storms since Christmas that have even our most veteran members struggling to recall anything similar. The storm experienced particularly over Munster and South Leinster on 12 Feb 'Storm Darwin' will live in the memories of many of us. The damage done to specific areas is enormous and is dealt with in more detail on page 12. But certain lessons badly need to be learned arising out of the series of extreme weather events we've experienced and the resultant chaotic and prolonged flooding of land.

Principal amongst those lessons is that it's no longer possible to go on with the present situation where we have a herd of agencies and quangos all with a 'say' in our inland waterways. ICMSA has been a steady and vociferous critic of many years standing of this arrangement which we have correctly identified as a recipe for chaos. As of now, we have county councils, Department of the Environment, OPW, National Parks and Wildlife, ESB, various fisheries boards and even The Land Commission – which has some residual responsibilities in certain parts of the state despite the fact that it was abolished decades ago. The answer is a central authority with sole responsibility for all internal waterways, certain coastlines and flood management that will take over the powers in these areas and not just run alongside the existing chaotic overlaps.

I know I speak for us all when I express thanks to the ESB crews who worked long and hard to restore our power. That said, I would like to put on record our absolute determination to fight hard against the elements of the ESB Bill 2013 which expressly permits the ESB to provide access to any of its infrastructure situated on farmers' land without any reference to the farmer or landowner. In our opinion, this is 'Trojan Horse' legislation where farmers could see the ESB sell on their rights of access to other commercial, private and profit-making entities. That's not on and we're going to resist it energetically.

Finally, a special 'Thank You' to Sophie and Dominic O'Loughlin featured on the cover whose daddy is Shane O'Loughlin, Secretary of our Wicklow Executive. They look expert enough to have entered the Zurich Farming Independent Farmer of the Year competition in which ICMSA is proud to sponsor two categories, including 'Dairy Farmer of the Year. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to present the award – and the cheque – to an ICMSA member.

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ICMSA provides a FREE text and email service to members. If you would like to receive email alerts please contact Linda on: 061 314 677 or email: info@icmsa.ie with your email and/or mobile phone number.

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Dairy Markets – Where To From Here?

By Pat McCormack, Deputy President and Chairperson of Dairy Committee.

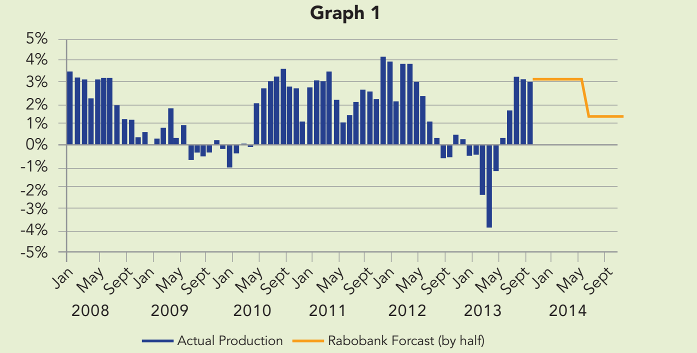
International markets for dairy products have seen prices strengthen considerably over the last 18 months. But now what? Will it be another quick fall like 2009 or can prices stay at this plateau through 2014? The answer is based on a number of factors: demand, supply and price.

Supply side shocks of 2013 have abated and all the major milk producing countries have rebounded to normal. In fact the Southern Hemisphere had an exceptional season just past. New Zealand are up approximately 5% and Argentina and Brazil enjoying similar percentages increases, only Australia suffering with challenging weather causing production to fall. The US increased supply in the second half of 2013 but still not to the extent possible given the dramatic fall in feed prices on that side of the Atlantic. These lower feed prices should push on more milk for exports in 2014 with a 2% increase expected for the first half of the year. The EU finished the second half of 2013 with increased supply and that is expected to increase further in the first half of 2014 by close to 2%. Graph 1 shows the expected supply pattern of the main dairy producing nations for the coming year. Supply is expected to be ahead of 2013 levels.

This increase in World supply may have a dampening effect on price, coupled with ongoing poor consumer sentiment in developed nations. However, China is buying powders continuously on the back of their poor domestic production and this has had the effect of boosting dairy product demand and keeping prices higher at this time. If this importing of dairy product relaxes in 2014 it could see a reduction in milk price, however a rebound in the world economy could partially offset this softening in prices.

The EU dairy Markets may have reached their peak but any softening would be expected in mid to late 2014. Wholesale prices in EU dairy markets remained relatively stable this winter. European spot prices have remained mostly stable overall with butter showing signs of weakness as seen in graph 2. This stability was emphasised in small gains and small losses in the major commodities on the markets. The ability to export product is a key determinant to keeping prices in the EU stable. And the aforementioned demand is responsible for overall stability in world wholesale prices, the demand and supply in short term are finely balanced. In conclusion the first half of 2014, the expectation is that milk prices will be maintaind at current prices.

Graph 1



Note: includes EU, US, New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay

Source: Rabobank, 2013

Graph 2: Global Trade Results all Products 2011-2014

SUPERLEVY A KEY ISSUE

Uppermost in the minds of dairy farmers this spring is the availability of quota. The quota situation countrywide is challenging given that every percentage point over quota the state finishes results in practically a €16 million fine. This is a considerable issue for farmers to face barely a year after the fodder crisis when many are still repaying substantial debts accrued at that time. In previous years, most farmers who produced in excess of their quota availed of flexi-milk in order to avoid a superlevy fine but they will find that this year the level of fleximilk is dramatically reduced. ICMSA had been calling for changes to be introduced at EU level that would provide some relief from these fines and, to this end, we pressed Minister Coveney to investigate the possibilities around a butterfat adjustment that we estimated would have had the net effect of increasing the Irish quota by 1.87%. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, it looks increasingly likely that Ireland has been unable to convince the required number of Member States that such an adjustment was either necessary or desirable. ICMSA holds that such an adjustment is precisely both necessary and desirable and we will continue to lobby in every way available to us.

Table 1: Dutch Dairy Quotations €/100kg. 2011-2014

	Butter	WMP	Food SMP	Whey
5-Jan-11	362	290	231	80
1-Jun-11	409	299	243	85
4-Jan-12	346	283	229	98
6-Jun-12	248	236	201	85
02-Jan-13	334	296	264	102
03-Apr-13	357	337	285	99
05-Jun-13	402	370	310	98
04-Sep-13	422	380	327	100
02-Oct-13	420	375	310	92
06-Nov-13	410	369	306	93
18-Dec-13	409	379	330	99
08-Jan-14	399	379	330	100
22-Jan-14	387	377	330	102
5-Feb- 14	365	379	332	102
12-Feb- 14	352	377	330	100
19-Feb- 14	352	377	330	97
26-Feb- 14	352	377	330	98

Early Returns in 2014 Lower and Future Supply Issues Uncertain

Michael Guinan, Chairperson, Beef and Cattle Committee

Cattle supplies to beef factories increased 7% in 2013 and average prices held similar to 2012. However, averages can mask the real story behind the market. High prices in early and mid-2013 softened the lower prices that were returned in late 2013. These lower prices have remained into 2014 and show little sign of improving in the short term. The on-going problems in the Bull-Beef market have put pressure on the prices received for other animals. The returns to this enterprise are being eroded at a fast pace. Returns from an R3 300kg bull have reduced €198 within 12 months. This represents a decline of 17% and with inputs costs remaining static; this return takes away any profit margin in the enterprise.

Farmers who have bull calves and are thinking of rearing them for bull beef must consider strongly the options for those calves. At current market prices the returns are hard to justify given that factories are forcing finishers to be ready at 16 months. To prepare bulls for finishing at this early stage, they must be monitored to make sure they are hitting targets and must be pushed all the way from the start. Early born calves (Oct- Jan) are more likely to meet the 16 month target as they can maximise grass intake in their first summer and finished the following winter. Table 1 below shows a price comparison between the different grades over the last year to give an indication of how far bulls have fallen in comparison to the other grades. Overall all grades are back substantially.

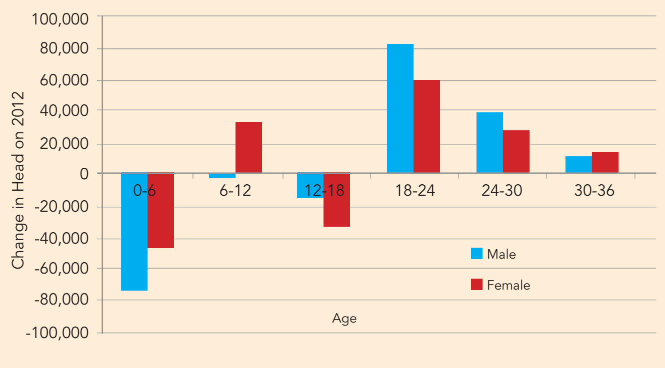
Table 1

Cattle		02.02.2013	10.08.2013	15.02.2014
Steers	O3	3.83	3.84	3.67
	R3	4.00	4.02	3.85
	U3	4.09	4.12	3.92
Young Bulls	O3	3.84	3.60	3.22
	R3	3.97	3.92	3.52
	U3	4.03	4.03	3.61
Heifers	O3	3.98	3.94	3.85
	R3	4.18	4.16	4.03
Cows	O3	3.32	3.12	2.91
	O4	3.35	3.15	2.93

FUTURE SUPPLY

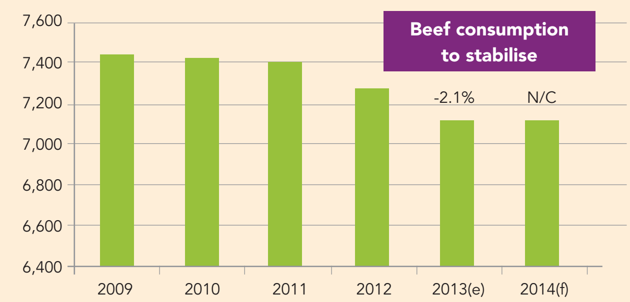
Calf registrations for 2013 were down 2.5% or 53,000 down on 2012 levels. Combined with a significant increase in calf exports of 52,000 to over 90,000 there will be supply issues for factories in 2015. The lower prices for bull beef at the moment are as a direct result of lower calf exports in 2012 and the higher birth rate of that year. Calf registrations increased by 115,000 in 2012 from 2011 and exports of calves & weanlings declined by 60,000. Short term issues should therefore be resolved but this constant cycle must be resolved if beef farmers are to stay profitable. Table 2 shows the AIMS profile of the country in November 2013 and details the increased number of animals in the 18-30 month bracket.

Table 2: AIMS profile November 2013



The supply pattern for the future is dictated by live exports, producer decisions, culling rates, and the possibility of a swing back to steers from the current bull beef issues. Overall, 2014 is likely to see the throughput of factories rise by approximately 100,000 head which means lower prices for farmers. Longer term in Ireland the supply issue is uncertain. While overall birth registrations declined in 2013, dairy progeny actually increased with the decline wholly in the Suckler herd. The beef produced from dairy herds is mainly Friesian beef which is not as demanded on international markets. The expected increase in the dairy herd, post quota-removal, could be a worry for the profitability of beef systems. However, the use of sexed semen may be a useful tool to reduce Friesian bull numbers if the results of the current trials continue to prove successful.
Looking further afield EU beef production trends for 2014 show a 2% increase on the back of a decline of 1.1% in 2013. However, worryingly EU consumption declined in 2013 and is predicted to stay at this level for the upcoming year as seen in table 3. There is a worrying trend worldwide that beef consumption is staying static or declining in developed nations. This in part is due to the availability of cheaper meats such as pork or chicken. This substitution effect is a worry for future beef production and the era of cheaper alternatives must come to an end if beef production can remain profitable.

Table 3: EU beef consumption, '000 tonnes



Source: EU working beef forcasting group

Robotic milking achieves 15% milk yield uplift on a Co Limerick farm

Robotic milking achieves 15% milk yield uplift on Donaman, Co. Limerick dairy farm.

Jimmy and Kathryn milk 65 cows at Donaman in County Limerick. In April 2013 they installed a Fullwood Merlin robot to replace the farm's old herringbone parlour.

The cows are given free access to fresh grass for up to 10 months of the year, with a 3-way grazing gate automatically diverting cows to one of three paddocks. The availability of fresh grass in the next paddock acts as incentive for the cows to visit the robot an average of 2.7 times per day.

When the cows are housed during the winter they visit the robots an average of 3.6 times per day and are fed to yield through the robot's built-in feeder.

The corner stone of the entire system is the Crystal herd management software which controls the grazing gates to determine how often each animal is milked and when she is able to access the next grazing paddock, thereby ensuring that no individual animal is under or over-milked.

Jimmy O'Brien pictured above has seen a 15% uplift in milk output since the installation of his Fullwood Merlin robot.

More than 300 visitors from across Ireland attended an open day at Jimmy O'Brien's farm to watch the Fullwood Merlin robot in action.

The installation of a Fullwood Merlin robot has modernised the milking facilities at Jimmy and Kathryn O'Brien's Limerick dairy farm, resulting in a 15% uplift in milk output.

As part of it's service Fullwood Packo offers expert planning and advise from to ensure maximum profi ts from your farm.

Donaman – key facts and figures

65 cows in milk · Milk yield increase of 15% · Grazing 70 acres

1 x Fullwood Merlin robot · CrystaLab real time milk analysis

Pedometers for accurate heat detection

3-way grazing gates control access to A, B & C paddocks

Fullwood Packo cooling tank with buffer tank and shell heat exchanger

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Brighter Outlook For Sheep Farming?

Denis Carroll, Chairperson, ICMSA Sheep Committee

Bord Bia has recently announced that the value of Irish food and drink exports approached €10 billion for the first time in 2013. This represents an increase of 9% on the previous year and 40% in the last four years, with revenues almost €3 billion higher than in 2009. Export values for dairy product and ingredients exceeded €3 billion for the first time and strong performances for meat and livestock (€3.3 billion) and prepared foods (€1.65 billion) all contributed to the positive outcome.

It is estimated that the value of meat and livestock exports increased by 8% or €245m to reach €3.3 billion in 2013, which represents a third of food and drink exports. Significantly, there was a rise of 7% in sheep output, which helped offset lower carcase weights and a marginal drop in prices to leave the value of Irish sheepmeat exports over 4% higher than 2012 at €220m.

Teagasc has shown that sheep prices were 1.5% lower in 2013 relative to 2012 on foot of sizeable increase of imports of lamb into the EU – particularly from New Zealand – which offset declining EU production of lamb. However, the outlook for Irish and EU lamb prices for 2014 is more optimistic. Teagasc has forecast that sheep farm incomes will recover from low levels in 2013. Tightening global supplies of mutton and lamb are forecast due to the impact of last year's drought in New Zealand and the flock rebuilding process ongoing in Australia. Also, New Zealand and Australia appear to be focusing their lamb exports towards Asian markets.

On supply, Teagasc has stated that feed and fertiliser prices are both forecast to decline in 2014. With lower costs of production and higher output values. Gross margins on mid-season lowland lamb enterprises in 2014 are forecast to increase by 22%. Teagasc has forecast that sheep farm incomes will recover somewhat in 2014 and a 25% increase in farm income is expected bringing the average sheep farm income to €19,500.

Rohan warmly welcomes Minister Varadkar's 'sensible and speedy' derogation decision on vehicle height restrictions

The Chairman of the ICMSA's Farm Services and Environment Committee, Patrick Rohan, has warmly welcomed the confirmation given by The Minister for Transport Tourism amd Sport, Leo Varadkar that a derogation is to be allowed from the 4.65m vehicle height restriction for the haulage of hay and straw. Mr Rohan said the specialist dairy farmers' organisation has been pursuing this issue with Minister Varadkar for some time and were delighted that he has agreed to this derogation. ICMSA had always felt that the 4.65m limit would have pointlessly increased costs considerably for farmers in the transportation of straw, hay and haylage across the country and also created logistical and financial difficulties for the importation of forages. Mr Rohan said that the Minister's decision is precisely the kind of practical and rational response from Government that we need more of and Minister Varadker deserves recognition for his sensible and speedy response to the problem once it was highlighted. 'He should follow this up by ensuring that the Statutory Instrument is signed into law as soon as possible', said Mr Rohan.

Derogation Application Process Open – Do you need to apply?

The Nitrates Derogation application process is now open and farmers and their agents registered with www.agfood.ie can submit 2014 derogation applications online. The documentation for postal applications is available for download on the Department's website.

The closing date for receipt of paper Derogation applications will be the 31st March 2014. Applications will, however, be accepted using the on-line system until the 30th April 2014. In addition, fertiliser records for 2013 can now also be submitted online.

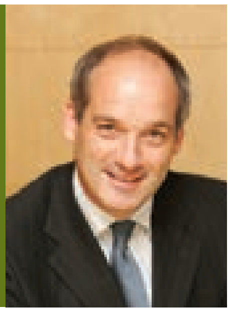
Nitrogen and Phosphorus statements for the 2013 calendar year are available to all farmers at agfood.ie

Non-derogation farmers at nitrates levels between 150 and 170 kgs, and derogation farmers up to 250/kg Nitrogen per hectare, who are registered with the Department for SMS text alerts, have received their 2013 figures by text message. Written statements will only issue to those herdowners in breach of the 170/250/kg limits.

ICMSA urges all farmers that expect to exceed the stocking rate limit in 2014 to apply for a derogation or take other remedial action and thereby avoid penalties being applied to your scheme payments.

Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme

Michael Maloney, Bord Bia



Bord Bia launched the Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme (SDAS) in December 2013. The development of this scheme was requested by the dairy industry to meet customer requirements, particularly with the approach of the abolition of quotas in 2015 and the consequent expected increase in output. Customers of dairy products (infant formula, milk powder etc) increasingly require that is not only milk produced to the highest quality standards of quality but that it is produced from farms that are managed in a sustainable way. Sustainable production includes responsible use of water, good soil management, improving biodiversity measures and efficient production that minimises the amount of green house gasses that are produced. The SDAS was developed by a technical committee drawn from the dairy sector and includes representation from the farming organisations, the co-ops, ICOS, DAFM, Teagasc, FSAI and Bord Bia. This committee based the new SDAS on existing international schemes, as well as Bord Bia's Beef and Lamb Quality Assurance Scheme (BLQAS). It also ensured that all the requirements of the dairy hygiene regulations were incorporated into the SDAS.

The SDAS standard has two significant components – auditable criteria and additional information collected to establish the sustainability performance of the farm. The auditable criteria include legal requirements, dairy hygiene requirements, animal welfare, farm safety and environmental protection. The farm visit, which includes the inspection and the collection of sustainability information, takes about three hours to complete. It has been agreed that audits will occur at 18-month intervals.

The dairy co-ops (milk purchasers) are supportive of this scheme and Bord Bia has been working with them to train their field/dairy advisors in its requirements. Training sessions for all co-ops were completed in December and January and staff are currently contacting their suppliers to provide them with packs that contain the details of the scheme and to brief them on the process of becoming a member. It is expected that the vast majority of farmers joining

the scheme will do so through their milk purchaser. Once a farmer signs an application form and the co-op and/ or the farmer indicates that the farm is ready for inspection, an audit will be arranged. A team of auditors has been trained and an auditor will contact the farmer to arrange a suitable time for the audit. Once the audit is completed there are two possible outcomes, no major issues to be addressed and the farm goes forward for certification or some issues to be sorted out and when completed the farm goes forward for certification. The staff from the Co-op have been trained to assist the farmer to provide evidence to Bord Bia (on its database) that non-compliances have been satisfactorily addressed. In most cases the Bord Bia auditor will be able to verify this without a re-visit to the farm.

On-farm auditing commenced in January and it is expected that numbers will increase steadily over the coming months. Where a farm is currently a member of the BLQAS, Bord Bia will organise for the dairy audit and the BLQAS audit to take place at the same time. There is no charge to the farmer for the audits. Farmers interested in joining the SDAS should contact their milk purchaser.

TB COMPENSATION ARRANGEMENTS

By Pat McCormack, Deputy President and Chairperson Dairy Committee.

The level of TB has been falling over the last number of years with the number of reactors down to 15,612 animals in 2013 compared to 18,476 in 2012 and the number of herds restricted at 4,430 in 2013 compared to 4,856 in 2012. However, TB remains a serious problem for the individual farmers affected. Over 4,000 herds per year run into TB problems and the impact on individual farmers of a TB outbreak can be very severe depending on the timing, extent and period of the restriction. In this article, ICMSA sets out, in summary format, the compensation arrangements available for farmers who find themselves restricted. Full details of the compensation arrangements are available at http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/diseasecontrol/bovinetbbrucellosiseradicationschemes/diseasecompensationregime/. ICMSA is, on an ongoing basis, seeking improvements to these schemes.

1. THE ON-FARM MARKET VALUATION SCHEME:

The On-Farm Market Valuation Scheme is the principal compensation measure available to farmers under the TB Eradication Schemes. "Market Value" is the equivalent price which might reasonably have been obtained for the animal at the time of determination of compensation from a purchaser in an open market. Where reactors are found in a herd, an independent valuer is appointed by agreement between the herdowner and the Department. The valuer calls to the farm and based on visual inspection of the animal, along with background information including milk recording data and EBI, a valuation is placed on each animal to be removed from the herd. Both the farmer and the Department can either accept or reject the valuation. If the farmer rejects the valuation, he/she must pay a proportion of the cost of the second valuation. If a second valuation is rejected, the animals are removed and the valuation is referred to an Arbitration Panel. Valuers operate on the basis of guideline figures published by the Department on a weekly basis, a copy of which ICMSA can make available to you if you contact ICMSA head office.

Milk yield is important to valuation of dairy cows. Milk yield is calculated either on the basis of the following:

- - milk recording figures supplied by the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) or
- - by dividing the milk deliveries by the number of cows in the herd. Where a dairy farm also has suckler cows, it is important to pre-declare suckler cows in advance of the herd test on Form ER83 so that they are not included in the milk yield calculation.

2. DEPOPULATION GRANTS:

Farmers whose herds are depopulated (totally or partially) may qualify for Depopulation Grants. Grants are generally paid for each animal removed. Where permission is given, depopulation grants are not payable on animals (with the exception of stock bull, replacement suckler calf or newly established herds) moved onto the holding during the restriction period if these animals are subsequently deemed reactors.

The rates currently in force are as follows:

Animal	TB Rate (€)
(i) Dairy Cows/In-Calf Heifers/Pedigree Bulls > 12 months	228.52
(ii) Other Cows / In-Calf Heifers	126.96
(iii) Other Animals	76.16

The Depopulation Grant rates quoted above represent the maximum available in respect of a 4 month rest period following depopulation. Pro rata deductions will be made if the rest period after depopulation is less than 4 months.

3. INCOME SUPPLEMENT:

Income Supplement is payable where more than 10% of animals are removed and where depopulation is not deemed appropriate.

- The 10% is based on the number of animals at the breakdown test.
- The date of eligibility is the date when the total reactors removed represents more than 10% of the animals.
- Payment is subject to a maximum of 100 animals.
- A farmer will not be eligible for Income Supplement when cattle are moved into a restricted herd.

TB Income Supplement Monthly rates

	Rate (€)
(i) Other Cows	38.09
(ii) Dairy Cows & Other Animals	25.39

4. HARDSHIP GRANT:

The Hardship Grant eligibility period runs from **1 November to 30 April.** This Scheme is designed to alleviate the additional feed costs incurred by some owner/keepers **whose holdings are restricted during this period on foot of a herd re test** and where animals are retained and fed during periods of restriction. Farmers must meet certain conditions including requirements that they (i) must not have any income from milk sales. Dairy farmers can apply for this scheme when the cows are dry and no milk is being sent to the Co-op.and (ii) must not have any off farm income.

Farmers must apply for this scheme using application form ER 97. The Scheme provides for a payment of 38 per month for each suckler cow and 25 per month for each dairy cow or other bovine animal retained on the farm subject to a maximum payment of 250 per month for a period not exceeding 4 months within the period 1 November to 30 April.

5. DISEASE FLEXIMILK SCHEME:

Farmers can apply for an allocation of milk quota from the Disease Fleximilk Scheme where additional dairy cows are held due to a TB restriction. The scheme usually has a closing date in December.

IRELAND'S 3rd NITRATES ACTION PROGRAMME

Patrick Rohan, Chairperson, ICMSA Farm Services and Environment Committee

The review of the Nitrates Action Programme has concluded with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney TD, and the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Phil Hogan TD, announcing details of Ireland's 3rd Nitrate Action Programme on 29th January 2014. In addition, Ireland has secured the continuation of the derogation which is crucial for more intensive farmers. This third Programme will run until the end of 2017.

The new Action Programme provides for improvements in relation to the levels of P application, details of which are outlined below. Structural P deficits have become a major problem on many Irish farms and these changes will provide for much needed additional P application on many farms that were significantly deficient. Adequate levels of P are necessary to provide for maximum grass production and animal health as well as the efficient up-take and use of other plant nutrients particularly nitrogen.

Much needed clarity regarding the definition of soiled water has been provided in the new Action Programme. On many dairy farms large volumes of soiled water is generated as a result of frequent washing down of milking parlours and lightly soiled collecting yards. Previous interpretation of the regulations resulted in almost all dairy yard effluent being regarded as slurry with considerable implications for dairy farmers in terms of the amount of slurry storage capacity required. However, new regulations allow for this effluent, which is generated from frequent washing of the collecting yard next to the parlour to be treated as soiled water provided the BOD and dry matter are under the required levels and this effluent is stored separate from slurry.

Unfortunately, the ongoing problems associated with 'Calendar Farming' were not addressed in the current review. ICMSA believe the need for flexibility was never more evident than over the past few months when we experienced ideal weather and ground conditions with grass growing but farmers were prevented from spreading slurry. More flexibility is required to take account of the unusual weather patterns being experienced both now and into the future.

The main changes to the Programme are summarised in the following table:

Summary of changes to Nitrates Action Programme

The Programme	Applies to all livestock manure movements in the State Provides basic set of measures to ameliorate any potential nutrient losses due to FH2020
Phosphorus	Amends Table 13 (grassland phosphorus allowance) following recalculation of P requirement for grazing and silage as follows: • Increased P limits for grassland stocking rates greater than 85kg • Reduced P limits for grassland stocking rates of less than 85kg • First 300kg concentrate used per dairy cow (or each 85kg livestock manure N equivalent) discounted when calculating P allowances • Reduces availability of P in organic fertilisers to 50% when applied to Index 1 and 2 soils (subject to soil testing) • Provides an annual P allowance on maize crops grown on Index 4 soils as provided for other selected tillage crops (20kg per ha, subject to soil testing) • Allows 20kg per ha of P on Index 4 soils used for cereal crops where the soil pH is greater than 7 (subject to soil testing) • Reduces the assumed P concentration in SMC from 2.5kg t-1 to 1.5kg t-1 • Allowance for lowly stocked farms (<85kgs/ha) to use P allowances in Table 15 for silage/hay sold off the farm.
Soil testing requirements	The period for which a soil sample remains valid is reduced from six years to five on non-derogation farms.
Uncultivated zone near surface waters	A 2m uncultivated and unsown zone alongside all surface waters identified on the 6" OSI maps (1:10560) of Ireland for tillage crops, excluding grassland establishment.
Setback distances from water courses	Supplementary feeding points must be located at least 20m from waters and not on bare rock. This is a new measure and will apply to location of ring-feeders/supplementary feeding. The distance from which farmyard manure can be stored near waters is increased from 10m to 20m. Removal of provision for reduced buffer strips (Art. 17(13)).
Prohibited periods for the spreading of organic fertiliser	No change to prohibited periods. This is a major disappointment as the need for flexibility was never more evident than over the past few months when we experienced ideal weather and ground conditions with grass growing but farmers were prevented from spreading slurry due to "Calendar Farming" restrictions. Setback distances from surface waters for the spreading of organic fertiliser in Art. 17(2)(f) of the regulations is increased from 5m to 10m for the two weeks preceding and subsequent to the prohibited period.
Soiled water	Definition amended to give legal clarity. However, storage capacity must be increased from 10 to 15 days for newly constructed soiled water tanks (from 1 January, 2015).
Control of grass weeds in specific cereal crops	Removal of requirement to establish green cover following non-selective herbicide use after 15 October on 25% of the land harvested for specific cereals where pre harvest control is prohibited (i.e. cereal crops grown for malting, seed or human consumption).
Nitrogen Applications limits	Increased N rate on winter barley and spring wheat by 20kg/ha across all indices consistent with similar adjustments previously made to other crops. Corrects the rate of N permitted for top-dressing broccoli from 20kg ha-1 to 120kg ha-1.

Storm related Insurance Advice For ICMSA Members

Following the recent storms that have battered the country, many farmers have been left to face losses as a result of having inadequate cover in place to cater for various storm related incidents. Campion Insurance's exclusive farm offering for all ICMSA customers is a market-leading policy however we would like to provide this general advice to all ICMSA members to help them review their cover (particularly if your policy has been in place for many years with the same insurer)

STORM COVER

- It is vital that you ensure you actually have storm cover included in your policy.
- You should ensure that you have provided an adequate valuation of your buildings to your insurance provider.
- Your buildings should be deemed suitable for storm cover (maintained in reasonable repair).
- Notify your insurer as soon as possible in the event of storm damage.

CHAINSAW COVER (Fallen Trees etc)

- Many insurers do not incorporate this within their farm policies so please ensure you ask before you undertake any work.
- It should be noted that there is no cover for commercial purposes (commercial tree felling etc unless your policy is specifically extended to cover this).
- You are required to wear the appropriate personal protection equipment when handling this machinery (i.e. protective goggles, steel toed boots etc).

FULL MORTALITY INSURANCE COVER

- Under your public liability insurance you are covered for damage caused by your livestock. However it is important that you also have cover for the livestock itself. Some insurance policies only cover losses occurring off your land or limit the circumstances in which claims are paid. It is important that you check to ensure you have cover for losses to livestock on your land for full mortality Insurance cover following accidental loss.

LEGAL EXPENSES

- In running your business you will not only need to take legal advice occasionally but you will want to ensure you are insured for your solicitors and other legal costs. I would recommend that you ensure your policy has legal expense cover and if so that it covers:
- HR/employer disputes.
- Contractual disputes (suppliers etc).
- Remember however it is vital you contact your insurer prior to instigating any legal action to ensure you have their approval to proceed under the legal expense section of your policy.

PRODUCT LIABILITY COVER

If you supply milk that is contaminated by antibiotics, or otherwise contaminated, you are covered for any loss as a consequence of you supplying the milk. It is important to note that you are not covered for the value of your own milk.

While most policies cover this loss some limit the number of claims you may have.

Denis McCarthy
Denis McCarthy is a Certified Insurance Practioner and is based in Campion Insurance's Cashel branch
062 70782/ 087 1247225
denis@campionins.com

Please note the above is for guidance purposes only. Please contact us for a full review of your insurance needs and requirements and we will be happy to advise you.
Campion Insurances Ltd t/a Campion Insurance is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

Nice Win for Wilson!

Congratulations to Chairman of West Cork ICMSA, Tom Wilson, whose name came out of the hat as the winner of Campion Insurances ICMSA Members Draw and who receives free insurance to the value of €2000 from the company. Everyone's a WINNER with the FarmForce insurance policy exclusive to ICMSA members and you could save money and secure yourself a far superior insurance package today with a simple call to FREEPHONE 1890 300 306.

ICMSA Summary of Budget 2014 and Finance Bill (No. 2) 2013

Lorcan Mc Cabe, Chairperson, ICMSA Taxation Committee

Budget 2014 provided for a total adjustment of €2.5bn which consists of €1.5bn for current expenditure reductions, €100m capital expenditure and €900m in taxation increases. Expenditure under the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will be €1,203m in 2014 and this represents a 3.3% reduction on the 2013 allocation. This will consist of €1,019m in current expenditure and €184m capital expenditure.

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine expenditure has been reduced by 15% in the period 2011-2014, while all Government department expenditure has decreased by 8% in the same period from €57.5bn in 2011 to €52.941bn.

The following is a brief summary of the main adjustments in Budget 2014 and Finance Bill (No. 2) 2013:

TAXATION MEASURES

Adjustment to Capital Gains Tax Retirement Relief

A new measure was introduced in Budget 2014 which will extend Capital Gains Tax Retirement relief to include farmers who lease their land out on a long term basis (a minimum lease of five years) in the period prior to retirement, and intend transferring their land to a person other than a child. The main purpose of the measure is to encourage older farmers who have no children to lease out their farmland over the long term to younger farmers.

VAT – Increase in farmers' flat rate addition from 4.8% to 5%

The farmer's flat-rate addition is being increased from 4.8% to 5% with effect from 1 January 2014. The flat-rate scheme compensates unregistered farmers for VAT incurred on their farming inputs, and is reviewed annually in accordance with the EU VAT Directive.

Review of Farmers Taxation

In his Budget speech, Minister for Finance Michael Noonan announced that there would be a comprehensive independent cost benefit analysis of existing tax reliefs in the agriculture sector. On 11th February Minister Noonan and Minister Coveney announced the commencement of a public consultation process as part of this 'Agri-Taxation Review'. ICMSA will be actively engaging in this consultation process with a view to holding the farm taxation reliefs that are there at present, and working to achieve new measures which will address farm investment, income volatility, succession and land mobility issues.

FUNDING OF FARM SCHEMES

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme

The allocation for the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme in 2014 is €195m – no change from 2013 allocation.

REPS & AEOS

The total allocation for REPS & AEOS 1, 2 and 3 is €184m in 2014.

This will provide for 2014 payments on these schemes but also carryover payments from 2013.

There will be no transitional Agri-Environment Scheme in 2014 for the 13,000 farmers whose REPS 4 contracts expired on 31 December 2013.

TAMS

€15m has been provided for Targeted Agricultural Measures, including the Dairy Equipment Scheme.

Discussion Groups

€5m is available for the continuation of the Beef Technology Adoption Programme for 2014.

€3m is available for the continuation of the Sheep Technology Adoption Programme in 2014.

Beef Sector Supports

Some €40m has been provided for the beef sector which includes €23m for a new Beef Genomics Scheme when combined with the Beef Data Programme worth €10m will allow for equivalent of payments worth €60 per calf for 32,000 herds covering up to 550,000 suckler calves.

The new Suckler Genomic Scheme will provide suckler farmers with a payment of €40 per calf. The requirements under the new Suckler Genomic Scheme are still to be clarified, but it is understood that it will involve DNA and Genomic testing about 15% of the herd, plus the stock bull.

€2m is being provided to cover remaining payments under the Sucker Cow Welfare Scheme.

Sheep Grassland Scheme

This Scheme has been extended for 2014 with funding increased by €1m to €15m.

Forestry

€105m has been provided for Forestry. This will allow for maintenance of current forestry premium commitments and will also allow for funding of some 7,000 ha of new planting.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Farm Assist

No change to Farm Assist but measures introduced in Budget 2013 such as disregards for income from self-employment, including farming, and disregards for children has resulted in a cut in funding from €99.45m in 2013 to €91.6m in 2014.

Medical Card

There has been a reduction in the income thresholds for the over 70s medical card holders from €1,200/week to €900/week for a couple and from €600/week to €500/week for a single person.

Devastation Of Recent Weather Shows Need For Single Waterways Authority

Willie O'Donoghue, Chairperson, ICMSA Rural Development Committee

The financial impact of recent flooding and storm damage on communities across the country is growing on a daily basis. Many family homes, businesses and farmland has been severely damaged during the recent storms and resultant flooding experienced to date in 2014. One of the most worrying aspects is the fact that the threat of massive and more frequent flooding due to changing weather patterns appears to be more likely into the future.

Farmers are experiencing considerable hardship as vast tracts of land are flooded and in particular in costal regions there are large deposits of stone and debris on many holdings. In addition, slurry tanks are full or nearly full on many holdings with farmers unable to get the slurry out due to poor weather and ground conditions. The issue of inspections and associated penalties is a constant worry for farm families but ICMSA has got assurances from Minister Coveney that his Department will take a common sense approach to inspections during this current period of bad weather.

Pat O'Donoghue, ICMSA County Secretary; Martin McMahon, ICMSA County Chairman; Pat Blake, Local Farmer; and TJ Shannon, ICMSA Chairman West Clare inspecting road damage on the coast road near Kilbaha Co. Clare. Pic: Arthur Ellis.

On the wider issue of management of our waterways, ICMSA believes that a very significant first step would be the setting up of a National Waterways Authority that would take over responsibility for the oversight and maintenance of the state's internal waterways and designated stretches of coastline. Currently, there is a plethora of agencies and bodies all sharing responsibility for the oversight and maintenance of our waterways and coastlines with resultant confusion about who's doing what – or, in very many cases, who's not doing what. We have county councils, Department of the Environment Community and Local Government, OPW, national parks and wildlife service, the ESB, and various fisheries boards. It appears nobody can disentangle the various strands of responsibility and the whole mess is an absolute recipe for chaos and inaction. We desperately need a central authority with sole responsibility for oversight and maintenance of all internal waterways, certain coastlines and flood management. That has got to be the first step in any serious attempt to address what looks likely to be an ongoing and potentially very serious threat to large swathes of the country.

Department clarify position on storm damage *Force Majeure* in positive meeting with ICMSA

Speaking following a meeting with senior officials of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, Patrick Rohan, Chairperson of ICMSA's Farm Services and Environment Committee, said that the Department had clarified a number of issues for ICMSA in relation to farmland damaged during recent storms and how this will be addressed in inspections in the coming year, clarifications which, according to Mr Rohan, are both needed and welcome. The Farm Services Chairman was particularly satisfied that the Department clarified the following would be treated as Force Majeure for the coming year:

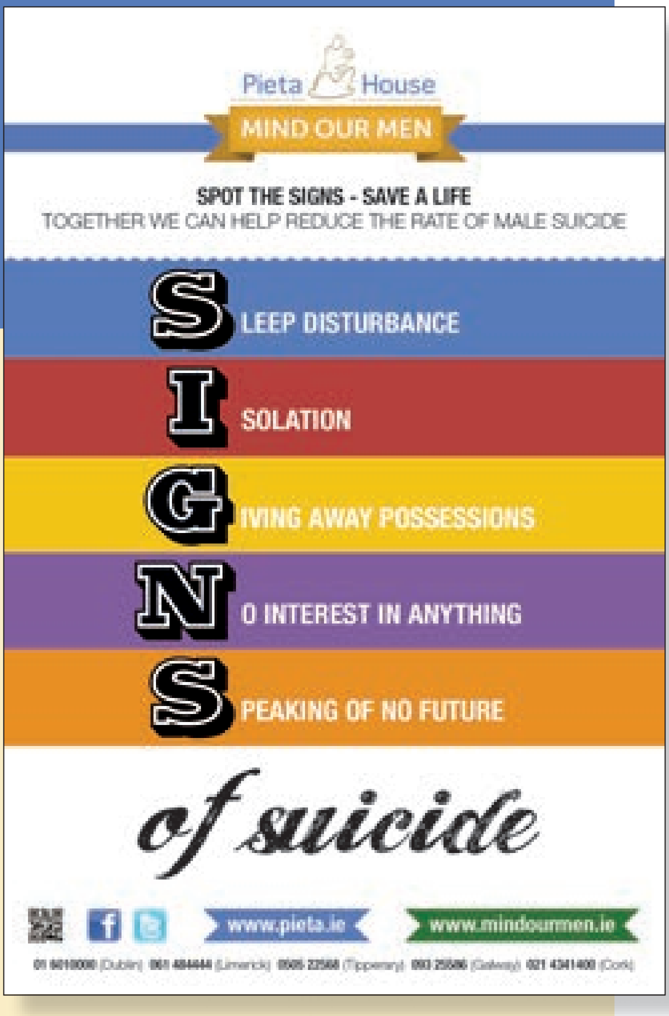
- Where trees have fallen on farmland and will not be cut this year, the Department has confirmed that the area covered by the trees will remain eligible land and thus the farmer does not have to make an adjustment to his/her land area. Given the huge number of trees that have fallen throughout the country in recent storms, this is a welcome development and takes some pressure off farmers said Mr. Rohan.
- Where farmland that was declared in previous years has become covered in rock, stones, rubbish, seaweed etc, the Department will again treat this land as eligible land so the farmer will not have to adjust his/her maps in relation to this issue.
- In relation to farmers who have lost land to the sea, the Department have confirmed that these farmers will be able to consolidate their entitlements onto their remaining land to ensure that they can claim their full payment for 2014. While this is welcome in relation to their direct payments, Mr. Rohan pointed out that the reality for the farmers concerned is that they have lost land to the sea and this is a wider issue that needs to be addressed by the state agencies responsible for the management of their coastlines.
- In relation to forestry land that is eligible for Single Farm Payment that was badly damaged with trees blown-over, etc, the Department confirmed that this land will remain eligible for 2014 for the Single Farm Payment.

Following the meeting, Mr. Rohan said that he was satisfied that the Department will take a reasonable approach on this matter but he added that ICMSA will be monitoring the situation in the coming months to ensure that the Department live up to the commitments given at the meeting.

Together we can help reduce the rate of Male Suicide

Ten people die by suicide in Ireland every week and eight of them are men.

Men are often reluctant to speak about their feelings or seek help for themselves, and friends or family can play a vital role in helping them through times of need. Pieta House – the centre for prevention of suicide or self-harm launched a campaign entitled 'Mind Our Men' in March of 2013 to address the problem and reduce male suicide statistics in Ireland. Following the construction industry, the agricultural sector accounts for the second highest rate of male suicide in Ireland.



Our primary aim is to reduce suicide by helping people get through that critical phase when suicide becomes a plan rather than just an idea.

Pieta House was established by psychologist Joan Freeman in 2006 to provide compassionate, solution focused one-to-one therapeutic support to those in suicidal crisis or engaging in self-harming behaviours.

Our mission is:

1. TO REDUCE the number of deaths by suicide
2. TO REDUCE the numbers engaging in self-harming behaviours
3. TO BREAK DOWN the stigma associated with suicide and self-harm

"There are so many factors that can cause huge stress for farmers and people living in rural Ireland," said Joan Freeman. "Isolation, loneliness, crop failure, lack of fodder and loss of animals can cause terrible distress which is leading to a rising suicide rate in rural areas. We hope that by reaching out to these areas, by teaching family and friends how to look out for their loved ones, and by making them more aware of services such as Pieta House, we will help them realise that there is support out there and that they can get through these tough times," she said.

In 2014 Pieta House now has a total of eight centres across the country Dublin (4), Limerick (1), Tipperary (1), Cork (1) & Galway(1) with plans already underway to open a further service in Castleisland, Kerry shortly. Our ultimate vision is to have a Pieta House centre within 100km of every person in Ireland.

A key feature of our service is that it is provided free of charge and does not require any formal referral making it as accessible and barrier-free as possible to people who are in acute distress. By the end of 2013 over 10,000 men, women and children have been seen and helped by Pieta House and that number continues to grow each day.

Now we would like everyone to be part of **Mind Our Men**, our movement to reduce male suicide in Ireland. We hope to educate people on the signs and symptoms of suicide and encourage them to take action when a man close to them shows these signs. We're not asking people to be therapists but to be the link between a loved one in distress and services like Pieta House.

CAP Post-2013 – An Update

John Comer, President.

Greater detail in relation to CAP post-2013 has now been made available by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine. However, there are still a number of issues to be clarified by the Department and each individual needs to be aware of the possible implications of the new system for his/her farm. The following article is an outline of what farmers can expect in the new system. ICMSA has very serious concerns that the position of active farmers is and will be considerably undermined in the regime.

THE SINGLE FARM PAYMENT SCHEME

Will I get a Single Farm Payment post 2014?

The answer to this question is no. On 31 December 2014, the Single Farm Payment will be abolished and will be replaced by a Basic Payment Scheme and a Greening payment. The Basic Payment Scheme is equivalent to 70% of your Single Farm Payment and the Greening payment is equivalent to 30% of your Single Farm Payment.

When will payments be made?

50% of the new payment will be made on 16 October each year and the remaining 50% will be payable from 1 December each year.

How will my new payment be calculated?

The Department will take the number of entitlements held by you in 2014 and divide this by the total land area determined in 2013 or 2015 whichever is the lower. For example:

- Farmer who owns 50 entitlements worth €300 per hectare at present. (Assuming after deductions etc.)
- Claimed 50 ha in 2013 and 30 ha in 2015.
- His/her new entitlements will be €300 multiplied by 50, equals €15,000 divided by 30 which gives 30 new entitlements worth €500 per hectare.

Will there be a cut to my Single Farm Payment in 2014?

Yes, under the agreement reached at EU level, each farmers payment in 2014 will be approximately 10% below their 2012 payment level with the exception of farmers whose total payment is less than €5,000 who will suffer a smaller deduction. Farmers with a payment above €5,000 can expect a cut of €500 from their 2013 payment.

Depending on my payment per hectare, payments will go up and down, when will this happen?

Between 2015 and 2019, payments will be adjusted upwards or downwards in five equal amounts each year.

How will the adjustment be calculated?

Farmers who hold entitlements with a unit value below 90% of the national average value will be increased by one third of the difference between their starting value and the 90% level over the five years of the scheme. The national average is expected to be in the range €230 - €270 per hectare. Farmers who hold entitlements with a unit value over 100% of the national average value will see their value decrease over the period of the scheme. The reduction will be determined by the amount needed to fund the increase for those whose entitlement value are being increased.

Table 1 gives two examples of likely outcomes by 2019.

Table 1: Examples of possible gains/losses under the new regime.

	Farmer A (Low value)	% Increase	Farmer B (High Value)	% Decrease
2014 Unit Value	€77.00		€672.75	
Initial Unit Value	€50.00		€400.14	
2015 Value	€60.40 (€87.87)	14.12%	€382.68 (€556.73)	- 17.25%
2016 Value	€70.89 (€103.13)	33.94%	€363.94 (€529.46)	- 21.3%
2017 Value	€81.38 (€118.39)	53.75%	€345.84 (€501.98)	- 25.38%
2018 Value	€91.87 (€142.38)	84.81%	€327.69 (€476.72)	- 29.14%
2019 Value	€102.50 (€149.12)	93.66%	€309.56 (€450.35)	- 33.06%

The figure in brackets is the Basic Payment plus Greening.

Is there a minimum payment per heactare?

Yes, by 2019, all entitlements will have a minimum value of 60% of the national average value. This will be approximately €150 per hectare.

Is their a maximum payment per farmer?

Yes, no farmer will receive a payment under the Basic Payment Scheme of over €150,000 per annum.

Will there be a maximum payment per hectare under the new regime?

Yes, by 2019 no farmer will receive a payment per hectare (Basic Payment plus Greening payment) greater than €700.00.

If a farmer has been farming and has no Single Farm Payment, will they be allocated a payment under the new regime?

Farmers who never held entitlements, either owned or leased, under the current Single Payment Scheme but who actively farmed in 2013 will be eligible for an allocation of entitlements in 2015 – details of qualifying criteria to be confirmed by the Department.

What is the position regarding leased entitlements?

Leased entitlements can be divided into two types:

- Where the lessor was farming in 2013, for example, the lessor has leased 20ha plus 20 entitlements but still declared 10ha in his/her own right, the entitlements on the 20ha leased hectares can be activated by the leasee on the lessors behalf by simply completing a form. In this case, in 2015, the leasee will have two sets of entitlements, one based on his own entitlements and one based on the value of the leased entitlements.
- Where the lessor was not farming in 2013, the entitlements will be lost unless the entitlements are definitely transferred to an active farmer. This applies to family leases, leases to companies, and non-family leases. In this scenario, neither the lessor or leasee will be able to claim the entitlements and they will go into the national pool. To maintain these entitlements, the lessor will have to transfer these entitlements to active farmers.

What is 'Greening' and how will it impact on me?

Farmers who participate in the Basic Payment Scheme must implement the three standard greening measures as follows;

- Crop diversification;
- Permanent grassland, and;
- Ecological Focus Area (EFA).

The greening payment will take the form of an annual payment per hectare. The payment will be calculated as a percentage of the payment the farmer receives under the Basic Payment Scheme. The same percentage will be applied to all farmers and greening will represent some 30% of each farmer's total payment.

There are a number of scenarios where a holding or part of it may be considered as 'green by definition' and there is no further obligation to implement the three greening standard measures. Two of the most significant are:

- Land that is subject to organic farming practices automatically fulfils all greening requirements. However such exemption only applies to that part of the holding which is farmed organically.
- Holdings where more than 75% of the eligible agricultural area is permanent grassland or is used for the production of grasses or other herbaceous forage have no further obligation to implement the three greening measures, provided the remaining arable area does not exceed 30 hectares.

What is the Young Farmers Scheme and who qualifies?

Under the agreement, each Member State must establish a Young Farmers Scheme the purpose of which is to encourage the participation of young farmers in agriculture. The scheme will assist young farmers in the initial stages of establishing a farming enterprise in their own name by providing a 'top-up' payment on the payment they receive under the Basic Payment Scheme.

Ireland will allocate the full allowable amount of 2% of its national ceiling to the scheme in 2015. Percentages to be applied in subsequent years will be determined by demand.

The payment is available for a maximum of five years from the date of the establishment of the holding in the young farmer's name (Date he/she got a Herd Number).

A Young farmer is defined as being aged 40 or less in their first year of application to the Basic Payment Scheme and having established their holding within the previous five years. In addition, successful applicants will have completed a recognised course of education in agriculture giving rise to an award at FETAC level 6 or its equivalent.

The Young Farmers payment will be calculated as 25% of the national average payment per hectare (based on the national ceiling) multiplied by the number of entitlements activated by the young farmer subject to a maximum number of 50.

What is the National Reserve and who qualifies?

Ireland will establish a National Reserve using 3% of the ceiling allocated to the Basic Payment Scheme in 2015. This is a once-off allocation and in subsequent years the Reserve will be replenished from the return of unused entitlements.

Priority for the allocation of entitlements from the Reserve will be given to 'young farmers' and to those who 'commence their agricultural activity' i.e. new entrants to farming. In all cases, allocations of entitlements from the Reserve will only be given to persons who are 'active farmers'. The definition of 'young farmer' is the same as that under the Young Farmers Scheme. A 'new entrant to farming' is defined as persons who commenced their agricultural activity in the 2013 calendar year or any later year and did not have any agricultural activity in their own name and at their own risk in the five years preceding the start of the agricultural activity. As with the Young Farmers Scheme, successful applicants will have completed a recognised course of education in agriculture giving rise to an award at FETAC level 6 or its equivalent.

Will there be a REPS type scheme in the new programme?

Yes, there is a new Agri-Environment/ Climate Scheme which is called GLAS or Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme

What is the maximum payment under GLAS?

The maximum payment is €5,000 per farmer and it is expected that there will be up to 50,000 farmer participants at its peak.

How long will the GLAS scheme run for?

The proposed minimum contract under GLAS will be five years. Payments for Natura sites are included in the general scheme under specific actions (Farmland Habitat Conservation, Conservation of Bird Species, Upland Conservation).

To qualify for payment, what must I do?

All farmers in the Scheme must comply with the list of core requirements. In addition, priority will be given to farmers who chose at least one action from Tier 1 (some of these actions may be mandatory for farms in certain locations). Once all places under Tier 1 have been filled, and if there is capacity, a selection process will be used to allow other farmers who have chosen actions from the General list (Annex 1) to join the Scheme.

It is also proposed that, within budget limits, a GLAS+ payment would be put in place for a limited number of farmers who take on particularly challenging actions which deliver an exceptional level of environmental benefit. It is proposed that this additional payment will be up to €2,000.

PROPOSED GLAS MEASURES.

Core requirements for all applicants:

- Application approved by planner;
- Nutrient Management Plan;
- Compulsory knowledge transfer, and;
- Record keeping.

Tier 1 Priority entry

Actions you must undertake to get **priority access** if they apply to your farm.

- Habitat conservation (natura sites e.g. freshwater pearl mussel);
- Conservation of bird species (e.g. corncrake, twite);
- Uplands conservation (commonages only);
- Watercourse fencing where field is in grass, and
- Watercourse buffer zones where field is in tillage.

If the above aren't applicable you must undertake one of these actions to get priority access

- Low emission slurry spreading;
- Minimum tillage;
- Green cover establishment from a sown crop, and
- Wild bird/flower cover.

Tier 2 General Environmental Actions

- Low input permanent pasture/hay meadow;
- Riparian margins;
- Coppicing hedgegrows and laying hedgegrows;
- Traditional stone wall maintenance.
- Tree planting;
- Enlarged headlands;
- Cultivation of tramlines;
- Environmental management of fallow land;
- Arable margins;
- Rare breeds, and
- Birds, bees and bat boxes.

Will there be a Disadvantaged Areas Scheme in the new programme?

Yes, there will be a Disadvantaged Areas Scheme but the name has changed to Areas of Natural Constraint (ANCs). It is proposed that support to farmers in these areas will continue at its current level. The scheme will be reviewed before 2018 when the areas classified as ANCs will be redesignated using new bio-physical criteria.

Will there be grants for Farm Development?

Yes, the new programme includes a Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme II. It is proposed to provide a scheme similar to the previous TAMS model and it is envisaged that a separate scheme will be established for each of the following investment areas initially:

- Dairy Equipment (milking, storage and cooling equipment);
- Slurry Storage;
- Animal Housing, and
- Trailing Shoe Low Emission Spreading Equipment.

The duration of each scheme is to be determined. Eligibility and selection criteria will apply to each scheme.

What will be the rate of grant aid?

The rate of grant aid will be 40% and for young farmers (actual definition of young farmer to be established), a 60% grant rate will apply.

Will there be support for Discussion Groups?

Yes. The proposed measures will enhance the output-driven focus of the existing discussion groups, increase participation in knowledge transfer and focus on key policy issues – both sector specific and cross cutting.

Proposed Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health and Welfare (AHW)

It is proposed to include a measure based on the delivery, upon request, of farm-specific advice for individual farmers on animal health and welfare issues (including BVD and Johne's Disease).

ICMSA meetings in Thurles and Limerick

Ger Brett, Simon Ryan and Ned Buckley at Tipp's first meeting of the year in Thurles

Smiles all round at recent Limerick ICMSA meeting in Ballylanders.