



THE FAMILY FARM ORGANISATION

The ICMSA Guide To Election 2020

The Questions That Farmers Need Answered



ICMSA- The Farm Organisation That Concentres On Solutions!

What this is and why you should read it

This document is the ICMSA Guide to General Election 2020 and it has been produced and distributed to candidates standing in rural constituencies. It is designed to make sure that those candidates are alert to the issues identified as most pressing for our farming communities at this point and also to the solutions being proposed by ICMSA, the farm organisation that focusses on solutions.

We have carefully identified the key issues that matter most to our members, the farming community in general and the wider rural society in which we work, live, and to which we wish to continue contributing. We have had to be broad and general in setting out these issues but anyone who wants more detail on both the issues and our solutions is welcome to contact us at **061-314677** or info@icmsa.ie

Before a word has been uttered, we already know that two issues will dominate this election as far as farmers are concerned. Firstly, the relentless pressure on farmer income and farmer margin has been and remains the central point. Last year saw unprecedented and costly disruption in the sector – our biggest indigenous economic sector – as farmers broke under the pressure of producing particularly beef for prices that were less than their costs of production. We have farmers across all sectors receiving the same prices as their parents received 30 years ago. Everyone sympathises, but we don't want sympathy anymore. We want fair prices. We want action. Politicians who go to farmers' yards and doors are going to be told that forcefully and straight out.

The second issue that is going to dominate this Election for farmers is the relentless attack on their livelihoods and the economic viability of rural Ireland by the most aggressive and arrogant elements of the environmental movement. Farmers accept the reality of climate change and accept the need for change, but we reject absolutely the idea that farmers alone will have to change their way of life. Every part of society will have to contribute to the increased costs of changing the way we produce food. Any candidate that comes out with ill-informed and glib messages – and there'll be plenty – will be challenged at every opportunity and interrogated on what they actually know about farming and rural life – as opposed to what they pretend to know or care about.

ICMSA is a categorically non-political organisation and does not endorse specific candidates or a specific political party. However, we will not tolerate a campaign where farmers are made the 'whipping boys' for anyone's pet projects or concerns. We have represented farm families for a long time; this is our 70th anniversary and I would strongly urge you as a candidate to read and adopt the policies set out here in the sure knowledge that they are fair, workable and necessary. To our members around the various constituencies, I know that you will make your views known to every candidate and convey our expectation that they accept and will act on the issues identified in this document.



Pat McCormack
President



Price, Income and Margin

- Family farming must be able to deliver an income comparable with other sectors of the economy and Government policy must reflect that.
- That the incoming Government ensures that farmers receive a fair price for their produce and are not subject to unfair trading practices dictated by processors or retailers. Legislation must be introduced if required.
- Recognition of the total costs of food production – including regulatory costs - and the adoption of policies that ensure retail prices will reflect the total costs of production.
- The implementation of a Food Price Monitoring Tool (FPMT) that would improve transparency across the food supply chain.
- The conclusion of a Free Trade Agreement between the EU and the UK and any Brexit-related losses suffered by Irish farmers to be recognised and fully addressed.

Dairy

- The Intervention Price for butter and SMP should be adjusted annually to reflect 90% of the average cost of milk production in the EU.
- The Voluntary Milk Supply Reduction Scheme should be available once milk price falls below 90% of the average cost of milk production in the EU.
- The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine resume their quarterly publication of the milk testing results carried out by Co-ops.
- Delivery of verifiable return from the marketplace for farm participation in quality assurance schemes.
- As a more accurate estimate of protein in feed, the PDI content must be clearly labelled on all purchased concentrates and legislation introduced if required.
- Better financial support for farmers that experience TB outbreaks and better management of the national deer herd to minimise the spread of TB.



CAP Post 2020:

- The existing CAP Budget must be maintained.
- That CAP payments should be directed at active farmers and index-linked.
- That the system of inspections should be simplified and made more farmer-friendly.
- That the maximum amount of co-funding is made available to the Rural Development Programme.
- That the convergence model requires reform in a way that protects farmers with a direct payment of less than €30,000.
- That a Young Farmers Scheme and Early Retirement Scheme should be run in unison in a way that facilitates the smooth transition to the next generation.



Rural Ireland: Security, Infrastructure and Rural Renewal:

- Delivery of quality high-speed broadband to farms homes and businesses must be delivered upon immediately.
- Garda resources must be distributed to rural areas in fair proportion and that criminal elements that target remote and vulnerable communities face the maximum penalty that their offences warrant.
- That the obvious need to renew and reinvigorate our rural towns is recognised and acted upon.
- The provision of an annual hazardous waste collection facility.
- Local authority planning policies cannot prevent population stabilisation and renewal in rural areas.
- An single state agency to address waterways management and flooding.

Fixing Ireland's Beef and Livestock Sector:

- The base price for beef must increase to ensure that livestock farms remain economically viable.
- Implementation of ICMSA Sustainable Beef Production Scheme which incentivises farmers to rear beef calves from the dairy herd.
- That the actions proposed by the Beef Taskforce be properly implemented.
- That transparency in beef pricing at farm, processor and retail level needs to be improved and legislation towards that must be introduced if required.
- The current beef grid needs to be simplified and reformed.
- The Bord Bia Quality Assurance bonus should be paid on every animal coming from a Quality Assured farm.
- The Mercosur Agreement must be rejected and there can no possibility of increased importation of beef from South America.
- Imported food must meet the exact standards of Irish and EU produce from a food safety, traceability, and environment perspective.
- A dedicated and cross-agency unit to be established to sustain and grow our live export trade.
- Support for the development of sexed semen and the implementation of sex sorting technology in Ireland.



Environment, Sustainable Farming and Renewables:

- **All** sectors must contribute to lowering carbon emissions and that farming cannot be singled out for reasons of ideology or political expediency.
- A fairer accounting of 'greenhouse' emissions that properly acknowledges the amount of carbon sequestered at farm level.
- The Nitrates Derogation must be renewed in 2021 in a way that reflects the practical issues facing farmers in Ireland.
- Land areas and on-farm features that protect water quality, promote biodiversity or mitigate emissions should be eligible under CAP and remain eligible for Nitrates calculations.
- A 60% grant should be made available to all farmers for all environmentally related farm investments.
- The creation of an agri-environmental scheme that includes measures applicable to commercial farming systems with a duration of longer than five years.
- On-farm Capital Investments that protect the environment should not incur County Council development charges.
- Realistic and meaningful incentives for renewable energy schemes at farm level.
- A review of all EU Environmental Designations to simplify the restrictions placed on farms designated as SAC, SPA and NHA.



Farming and Finance:

- The introduction of a Government-supervised Farm Management Deposit Scheme that will assist farmers in addressing the excessive year-to-year income volatility evident right across the farming sector.
- That the State must actively increase competition in the banking sector and specifically address the inflated interest rates charged by Irish banks by comparison to the rates charged in other comparable EU countries.
- The reduction of banking and legal charges so that farm customers can change banks, specifically the requirement to retain multiple solicitors for certain land transactions needs to be abolished.
- The speedy finalisation of the Fair Deal Scheme legislation capping at three years assessable assets such as land.
- The setting of fertiliser and energy prices in Ireland must become more transparent and comparable with similar markets.
- Income tax relief on land leases should be extended to family members.
- The Earned Income Credit for the self employed should be equal to the Employee Tax Credit.
- A net metering system must be introduced to allow producers of renewable energy to sell surplus energy to the national grid.
- Occupational Injury Benefit should be extended to the self-employed.
- The VAT rate for environmental related farm investments should be set at zero.



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