

# **Green Party**

# **Agriculture Policy**



**January 2020**

# Agriculture Policy

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## 1. Summary & Key Points

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The Green Party believes that the agricultural sector, its outputs, supporting structures and stakeholders are at the heart of creating a sustainable society and a successful national economy. At the core of this sector, which is so fundamental to our national identity, are our farming community and their families. We believe in viable livelihoods for those that farm the land. In an era of increasing greenhouse gas emissions, volatile international markets, product competition and new climate change agreements we believe the following policies will support farmers to craft a more secure future for their farm holdings, their local areas, their trade networks and the country as a whole.

Ireland has a unique and valuable asset in our farming sector, and compared to many other nations a large proportion of farming is carried out by small to medium land holders. This is one of Ireland's greatest strengths, and one of our best opportunities for economic growth. The Green Party believes that the agricultural sector has been misdirected by recent governments to follow the lead of larger European nations in their focus on mass production and large-scale agriculture. We believe that this outlook threatens the current and future livelihoods of Irish families who have farmed the land for generations. We also strongly believe that sustainable farming methods that focus on smaller scale, quality-based production will provide greater financial security to those in the agriculture sector and safeguard the use of farming land, marine environments and forests for future generations. The recent crisis in beef price, and the volatility that exists within global milk price, clearly demonstrates that focusing purely on maximising levels of production is a dangerous and flawed gamble, and that we are entering a new era where farmers' interests and that of the sustainable lobby may coincide to the benefit of everyone.

The Green Party proposes that sustainable agricultural output operates at a local and global level where international trade agreements and commodity values must not override strong local supply chains and regional networks. However, this challenge must be managed and supported by informed and ambitious engagement at a national level.

The provision of food, building materials, energy sources and the other outputs of the agriculture sector are ultimately global concerns that must be balanced and negotiated internationally in a fair and ethical manner. Through intelligent liaison with the EU and sustainably-focused domestic policies, we believe that the Irish government can make farming work for all.

The Green Party proposes to focus on a number of key areas to optimise our nation's agricultural sector:

- One of the Green Party's core beliefs is that environmental progress must be matched by economic stability and social progress. The strongest attribute of Ireland's agricultural sector are its roots in cohesive and committed local, farming communities. We believe that the generational nature of Irish farming should be nurtured and protected while providing opportunities for new farmers and producers to enter the sector in financially viable way.
- The Green Party believes that good long-term economic strategy calls for greater diversity within the agricultural sector to equalise the share of the sector from dairy and meat products to one that includes tillage, forestry, the marine industry and new outputs still in development.
- The Green Party believes that while the Common Agricultural Policy has greatly benefited Irish Farmers it is now in need of large-scale revision. We also believe that national agricultural strategies of the last two governments, namely Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025, have been a disastrous undertaking for the economic stability of the agricultural sector, the long-term security of small to medium farmers and the possibility of Ireland meeting its emissions targets as agreed with the European Union.

- The Green Party believes that a nationwide strategy to increase the diversity of productivity of our agricultural land is crucial to further development of the sector. and must be underpinned by dedicated research and information gathering and dynamic interface with the farming community. We support the continued development of a national soil research that prioritises soil protection and regeneration, and examines the biological components of soil, as well as the chemical components, and explores appropriate practices for best management of this valuable resource. We call for the expansion of this initiative to fund a fully national Soil Plan.
- The Green Party supports a refocus of the dairy and meat sector on quality production over scale of output, and advocates measures that support high quality meat and dairy production. We call for the promotion of Ireland as a producer of grass-fed-only meat and dairy products with a significant increase in native breed types and quality. We support the redirection of CAP and national funding towards farm practices which lower carbon emissions, enhance biodiversity and the wider environment, increase carbon sequestration, and improve animal welfare, and measures to support and enable farmers to scale back their dependency on livestock overall and facilitate the introduction other output streams such as tillage, forestry or horticulture.
- We support an increase in the supports provided to organic farming across all sectors, particularly horticulture, and we support an increase in the area of land farmed organically to 20% by 2030.
- Targeted market research is essential, and meeting the demands of the ever-increasing cohort of environmentally conscious consumers, both at home and abroad, will be vital in any future developments within the sector.

## 2. Policy

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### 2.1. Introduction

Agriculture is wholly dependent on the natural environment and its associated functions/services for the delivery of agricultural goods. Our natural landscape and its biodiversity, e.g. land, soil and soil biota, seeds for crops, water sources, trees and hedgerows for stock proofing and shelter, sources of predators for natural pest control, provide the backdrop and the resources for agriculture. The natural environment in Ireland faces several challenges from current government policy in relation to the agricultural sector. Increasing intensification of agriculture, prompted in recent years by the active promotion of the industry-led, government-supported, Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025 strategies continue to exert considerable pressure on our environment<sup>1</sup>.

Increasing cattle numbers in particular, caused by the rapid expansion of the dairy sector, has and will continue to result in increasing methane emissions. The Environmental Protection Agency has consistently warned that Government's targets for increasing the output from the Agri-Food sector cannot be met without serious environmental consequences<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the expansion of farm holdings could lead to the loss of biodiversity in marginal land, hedgerows, field margins and trees.

The EPA's 'State of the Environment Report 2016' notes that Ireland is still a long way from meeting the full legal requirements of the EU's Water Framework Directive<sup>2</sup>, against which water quality is measured. An examination and assessment of the application of the Nitrates Derogation is essential.

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<sup>1</sup> Schmitz, Christoph, et al. "Trading more food: Implications for land use, greenhouse gas emissions, and the food system." *Global Environmental Change* 22.1 (2012): 189-209.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/indicators/SoE\\_Report\\_2016.pdf](http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/indicators/SoE_Report_2016.pdf)

These strategies are being launched at a time when similar attempts to increase outputs has increased instability within global foods markets and resulted in an unprecedented level of insecurity and economic disadvantage for small to medium farmers within the EU<sup>3</sup>. The way in which we produce food and other natural resources must change for both the benefit of the consumer and the producer and for the future well-being and security of Europe's next generations. The policy of the Green Party sets out a pathway towards integrated, economically-viable, sustainable agriculture that offers secure livelihoods to farmers and safe, ethical and responsible products to consumer nationally and internationally.

## 2.1.1. Vision Statement

### Less and Better

The Green Party believes that the current focus on increasing output in the agricultural sector does not support farmers in achieving long-term economic stability and does not lay the foundations of a strong marketplace into the future. Ireland is in a unique position to develop a high quality, sustainably produced, agricultural product base for consumers at home and abroad. Our natural resources could allow us to evolve a strong, valuable and nationwide farming sector that is synonymous with high ethical and environmental standards. This method of farming will focus on the standard and quality of produce over the levels of production or quantity. Quality output such as this will always be at a premium within Europe<sup>4</sup> and beyond and would allow the agricultural sector to expand as an integral part of the Irish economy. The Green Party proposes in this document a number of strategic investments in Irish farming to achieve this goal.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.rte.ie/news/2015/0907/726179-farmers/>

<sup>4</sup> Deselnicu, Oana C., et al. "A meta-analysis of geographical indication food valuation studies: What drives the premium for origin-based labels." *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics* 38.2 (2013): 204-219.

## Secure and Local

Products and the production methods of the agricultural industry must be ecologically responsible, socially responsive and economically viable. The Green Party believes that openness to the international market place is not a substitute for creating sustainable, national, food policies that provide more security to the Irish people in terms of fuel, food, fair-pricing and choice. Actively developing our output across the tillage and horticulture sectors would contribute to a higher percentage of locally grown produce in the Irish food market, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and savings in transport emissions<sup>5</sup>.

The Green Party proposes to optimize our national resources in producing food, fuel and other commodities from our land by supporting the creation of a variety of new output streams. We enjoy a number of key advantages in Ireland including our temperate climate and productive soils. These allow us to produce a diversity of goods and products but we still rely almost exclusively on farming outputs developed over the last century. Where once every town and city had a proliferation of local food products, artisan producers, mills, creameries and abbatoirs, we have now focused on a model where we produce two or three foodstuffs in great quantity for export, and simply import the food we actually eat. This method of feeding our nation's families exposes us excessively to global food price variations in our day-to-day food purchases. It also leaves farming families vulnerable to the same market forces. A more national and local marketplace would remove some of this uncertainty and allow Ireland to focus on delivering high quality, nutritious food into Irish homes.

### 2.1.2. Principles

- The Irish agricultural sector should be encouraged to diversity from a mostly animal based model to one that produces grains, vegetables, fruit, nuts and

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<sup>5</sup> Stavi, Ilan, and Rattan Lal. "Agriculture and greenhouse gases, a common tragedy. A review." *Agronomy for sustainable development* 33.2 (2013): 275-289.



plant-based products. This move to refocus the sector will support Ireland's reduction of emissions as part of our EU climate change commitments.

- This new and more diverse sector should focus on issues of ethical food production, food security and integrated, market practices that put the social and economic well-being of rural communities at the heart of agricultural policy
- Ireland must meet its emissions targets under the current and any future international climate agreements and the agricultural sector must act accordingly to curb its environmental impact. Ireland should undertake no further lobbying to attain any manner of exemptions for this sector from those agreements.
- Current government and European policy and future policy proposals, such as Food Harvest 2020 & Food Wise 2025, that have focussed on increasing production with little or no targets for the reduction of agricultural emissions, should be immediately discontinued or remain unimplemented. These policies have already proved to be economically ineffective, with average farm incomes continuing to plummet, and utterly reckless in meeting our climate change responsibilities.

## 2.2. Policy Details

### 2.2.1. Meat and Dairy Production

Meat (beef, pork, lamb, etc) and dairy production in Ireland currently occupies a dominate role in the Irish Agricultural sector. Previous governments have championed the meat and dairy market as one suited to our nation's farmland, profitable for small to medium farmers and highly suited to the lucrative export marketplace<sup>6</sup>. However, the tenure of the last government failed to capitalize on these attributes and have seen many farm incomes plummet just as farmers came under increased pressure to meet a variety of

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<sup>6</sup> Food Harvest 2020- A Vision for Irish Agri Food and Fisheries. DAFM 2014

regulatory standards<sup>7</sup>. Pressure on productive land due to flooding and other environmental challenges<sup>8</sup> along with increasing production outputs internationally have severely damaged the long-term viability of many of Ireland's farming families. The Green Party proposes to set a clear path through these many conflicting demands, to develop farm management in the meat and dairy sector that is efficient and ethical, and to raise production standards across all producers to that of the highest international quality.

## Quality

The Green Party supports a new national code for meat and dairy production that would provide leadership to the sector on the development of higher value production streams, using regenerative farming techniques, sustainable strategies and environmentally responsible production facilities and methods. This new 'Ethical Irish Meat' code should carve out a specific market share for minimum standards in livestock farming output across Ireland and should build upon our existing strengths to identify our country as an international, key innovator in sustainable meat and dairy production worldwide.

We believe that the current Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) efforts to increase the standard of dairy and beef herds must be further supported to achieve set targets and concentrate on both quality and the reduction of GHG emissions. While we appreciate that highly productive herds represent a carbon saving on emissions<sup>9</sup>, these carbon savings become redundant if the size of the herd continues to increase. A recent EU audit of the DAFM's Beef Data and Genomics Scheme (BDGP) questioned its

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.independent.ie/business/farming/milk-price-drop-set-to-slash-farm-incomes-30794241.html>

<sup>8</sup> Meat and Livestock Review, 2013/2014. Bord Bia. Available at: <http://www.bordbia.ie/industry/manufacturers/insight/publications/MeatLivestockReview/Meat%20and%20Livestock%20-%20Review%202013-14.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Breeding the Dairy Cow of the Future. Berry, Donagh, P. Sept. 2014 Animal & Bioscience Research Department, Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc

environmental benefits<sup>10</sup>, so an assessment of the benefits of any such programmes must be considered.

The Green Party would like to see a focus on supporting the breeding of early maturing cattle that would be exclusively grass-fed, and would reduce the demand for the grain that currently goes to livestock feed. The Green Party proposes to end the practice of providing fishmeal for farming stock feed.

We support the establishment of a *Beef Price Partnership* between members of the farming community and beef processing plants to provide a long-term, transparent route to price certainty for all parties involved that is based on quality rather than price or output. Income security will support farmers in focusing on quality and sustainable strategies rather than a fluctuating profit margin. We propose a number of measures in this regard, including a Bord Bia supported premium price for beef that remains on the farm of origin until slaughter, and a removal of weight penalties on beef exports.

The decline in the availability of local abattoirs is has significantly reduced the market opportunities for livestock farmers. This has implications for animal welfare also, as animal have to travel further for slaughter. The Green Party would support the re-establishment of more local abattoirs, which could supply local meat to local communities. The benefits of mobile abattoirs should also considered<sup>11</sup>.

## **Sustainable Strategies**

The Green Party supports collaboration with livestock farmers to lower the environmental impact and emissions incurred from meat and dairy farming. Sustainable farming

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.independent.ie/business/farming/beef/eu-audit-questions-environmental-benefits-of-beef-data-scheme-38175863.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-46958906>

practices, with a focus on strategic management and careful use of natural resources, have been shown to result in an increased profit margin for farmers<sup>12</sup>.

- We support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from livestock. We recognise that livestock farming is crucial to the rural economy of Ireland, therefore this strategy would be developed in conjunction with farmers to ensure its economic viability and the growth of farm incomes. This would be carried out over the long term through broadening the agricultural base away from an overreliance on cattle production.
- We support the promotion of biomass and anaerobic production plants as a source of energy and revenue within the agriculture sector. This method of processing animal byproducts can reduce waste and offers a route towards lower emission, farm management. We propose to encourage such systems on a co-operative basis and allow farmers, supported through subsidy, to harness local resources and existing buildings to optimize their effectiveness.
- There are a number of strategies available to reduce the emissions from slurry and fertilizer which the Green Party supports enacting<sup>13</sup>.
- We support the establishment of an 'Energy Efficient Farming' scheme to include a farm efficiency rating overseen by the SEAI, educational support and grant subsidies for onsite renewable energy options and the promotion of energy efficient technology for farm use.
- We advocate for the development and promotion, through market support, education and research of the promotion and use of dual-purpose breeds for the

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<sup>12</sup> Farmer Case Studies. How to Reduce Costs and Cut Greenhouse (GCG) Gas Emissions. Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland. 2011

<sup>13</sup> Guideline Catalogue for a Sustainable Use of Manure and Manure-Based Fertiliser Products for Farmers. Schick, J., Haneklaus, S. Schnug, E. Oct 2015

dairy sector. This is an aspect that should be considered, and would deliver favourable outcomes for animal welfare, and for beef from the dairy sector.

- We support initiatives that encourage farmers to move to a polycultural grazing systems which reduce carbon emissions and help pollinators, and improve soil biodiversity.

### 2.2.2. Organic Farming

The Green Party believes that the agricultural sector in Ireland is uniquely placed to become a world leader in the organic farming marketplace. Conversion to organic farming is possible, economically viable and environmentally beneficial if it is supported sufficiently through funding, research and knowledge transfer<sup>14</sup>. The scale of our industry, mixed output profile and environmental advantages allow for a dynamic response to the demand for sustainable, healthful food production. As a result the Green Party sees this aspect of our policy as fundamental to the agriculture sector's response both to climate change and viable economic forward planning. Organic farming currently accounts for 3-5% of total agricultural output - a percentage that lags far behind our European counterparts and that signifies an underperforming sector that could be transformed into a significant economic output for the state<sup>15</sup>.

- We support, through market support, education and research a 20% share of agricultural land for the organic sector by 2030.
- We support a strategic increase in the support and funding of the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS). As a result of inadequate funding and support this scheme has been largely unavailable to the farming community since 2015. As our European neighbours increase their organic agricultural output in the face of

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<sup>14</sup> Conversion to Organic Farming: Case Study Report. Brendan Howlett, Liam Connolly, Cathal Cowan, Hilary Meehan, Robert Nielsen. Working Paper DL 3.1

<sup>15</sup> An Analysis of the European Organic Sector. European Commission Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development. 2010

increased consumer demand, Irish farmers are falling behind in this growing marketplace. We propose that the OFS is managed in a more strategic way, to bring new entrants into the scheme, in a steady and regular manner, rather than the sporadic way that has been the norm with this sector in the past.

- We advocate a 5% increase in subsidies to existing and new participants on the Organic Farming Scheme for produce in cereals, fruits, vegetables, legumes and other non livestock-based outputs. The OFS should also increase support for organic crop hops and other cereals for the alcohol industry.
- We support the launch of a major marketing initiative to encourage consumers to buy locally-grown, pesticide free produce with a particular focus on crops and horticultural produce.
- We call for the establishment of a price control mechanism to support local supply chains of organic food from the organic farming community.

### **2.2.3. Supporting All Sectors**

The Green Party believes that one of the key strategies in developing an agricultural sector that is ethical, financially secure and fair to farmers is to actively work towards a more diverse model of output streams. Ireland is hugely dependent on both livestock-based farming and the export market. We believe that local supply streams, serviced by various agricultural products, offering a comprehensive choice to food consumers would allow Ireland to evolve a self-sufficient and high-quality indigenous marketplace into the future. While a complete equalization across the sector may not be appropriate in the near future, clear targets for increasing the market share of tillage, horticulture and other outputs should be acted on as a matter of urgency.

## Developing Horticulture and the Tillage Sectors

- We propose the establishment of a National Action Plan on Biodiversity in agriculture to promote strategies for companion planting and polycultural growing methods in previously mono-cultural crops in order to optimize flexibility in land use and to facilitate a dynamic response by the sector to changing consumer preferences<sup>16</sup>.
- The Green Party advocates a target for grains, horticulture and tillage crops (including bio-fuels) of 3% above the annual EU average output.
- A key policy objective for the Green Party is to redress the imbalance between food producers and large retail groups. The practice of below cost selling undermines product profitability and, in turn, the ability of producers to plan and develop their businesses. It is also detrimental to small scale and privately-owned retailers. The Green Party supports phasing out below-cost selling and working with all sector stakeholders to provide fair and reasonable price structures to farmers, retailers and the public.
- We support a 20% increase in funding for sustainable horticulture research in Teagasc from the level of primary production to post farm-gate value-added outputs.
- The Green Party supports an increase in the current VAT flat rate compensation scheme to farmers on the growth of organic crops and timber to 6.5% with an upper limit of €100,000 of annual income on goods traded within the state
- We support the establishment of a National Action Plan 'Eating Well, Eating Green' to promote a less but better approach to meat consumption, and

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<sup>16</sup> Bio-diversity for Food and Agriculture: Contributing to Food Security and Sustainability in a Changing World. Outcomes of the Expert Workshop held by FAO and the Platform on Agri- Biodiversity Research. April 2010

increased consumption of fruit and vegetables. This strategy would be rolled out to all schools and to all public bodies.

- We support scrapping green/marked diesel regime in favour of a tax rebate payable to farmers or other persons now entitled to use marked fuel.

## **2.2.4. Fisheries**

The Green Party advocates that:

- All fisheries stakeholders participating in the Organic Farming Scheme are eligible for 5% increase in subsidies.
- Any increase in real fishing outputs must correspond to commitments to sustainable strategies for the sector. Government funding available for investment in fuel subsidies, vessel modification and fish processing upgrades must also only be undertaken in conjunction with a corresponding commitment to sustainable strategies
- We support an end to the licensing of offshore salmon.
- All processing plants and boats over an agreed size should be Marine Stewardship Council certified.
- We support the enactment of the recommendations from the 2015 European Red List of Marine Species to protect endangered and critically endangered fish in Irish waters.
- The Green Party advocates lobbying, at EU level, for all members countries to enact the recommendations from the most recent European Red List of Marine Species.



## 2.2.5. Land and Soil Management

Central to the Green Party's vision for a sustainable future in the agricultural sector is an increase in the productivity, and in our appreciation of, our rural landscape. We believe that equitable and responsible management of rural land will result in a more productive and sustainable landscape for all citizens to enjoy. Mono-cultural crop development and intensive farming methods can strain the quality of soil and damage the nutrient standards of the outputs which rely on it- many Irish farms are already working on land that is not operating with optimum soil conditions<sup>17</sup>.

Human agricultural production is intimately tied to the quality of our nation's soil and the environmental cycles of the essential plant nutrients that sustain it. Nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium are the primary nutrients in plant growth and therefore constitute the central components of soil fertility and crop production. However, the biological components of the soil have been largely ignored, and advances in agricultural science have shown the soil microbiome to be a key aspect for the conservation of soil under climate change.<sup>18</sup> Farming practices which promote multi-species grasslands and permaculture, and promote minimal interruption of the soil in arable enterprises must be supported. In addition, the widespread use of pesticides, and inappropriate application of slurry and other fertilisers, can destroy the microorganisms that contribute to soil health and fertility. Ireland, with its temperate climate and fertile land, is capable of high yields in crop production and as such our soil quality must be treated as a precious resource<sup>19</sup>.

We believe that further funding and research is required for a nationwide solution to this challenge.

- All farmers within the state should maintain all their land holdings to the national GAEC benchmarks (Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition).

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<sup>17</sup> Nine out of Ten Grassland Soils Outside Optimum Ranges. Mark Plunkett & Stan Lalor, Teagasc, Johnstown Castle, Wexford. 2014

- ‘Greening’ measures (i.e. crop diversification, permanent grassland, Ecological Focus Areas), which form part of the Basic Payment Scheme, should be fully implemented on farms, and monitored to ensure that they are effective in achieving environmental enhancement on farms.
- We propose to undertake an in-depth study of current land use with an emphasis on growing opportunities and enhancing bio-diversity.
- We propose to support and develop further the nationwide sample study of agricultural soil quality to analyse nutrient deficiencies that may be a barrier to the maximization of productivity and the long-term sustainability of the soil.
- We support the establishment of a soil biology focussed knowledge transfer scheme, to support farmers and growers in adopting soil friendly farming practices.
- We propose to identify land in decline due to soil degradation and support farmers to adopt regenerative practices to restore this land.
- We call for the devising of a national soil management strategy integrated with a new national flood policy and new land use plan.
- We propose to provide environmentally responsible nutrient subsidies to farm holders where soil deficiencies have been identified.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10531-019-01760-5>

<sup>19</sup> Soil Fertility Management on the Teagasc Tillage BETTER Farms. Mark Plunkett and David Wall, Teagasc, Crops Environment and Land Use Centre, Johnstown Castle. June 2012

## 2.3. Reframing Previous Policies

### 2.3.1 Common Agricultural Policy

The Green Party supports the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in its aim to further the social, environmental and economic well-being of those involved in the agricultural sector within the European Union. The CAP is one of the European Union's longest running and most well-established policy instruments. Developed over the course of several decades, we believe that the aims and objectives of the CAP need to be renegotiated and clarified to recognize current market realities, such as farm size, and future challenges, such as climate change.

The CAP no longer services the current and future needs of European citizens<sup>20</sup>. There are two key areas where CAP has failed to respond and adapt to developments in the agricultural sector. Firstly, policies have been slow to account for changing scales of production resulting in a significant stream of income finding its way to large-scale agri-producers.<sup>21</sup> The Green Party believes that the original principles of CAP focused on supporting small scale farmers and their surrounding communities not increasing profit margins for large companies. Secondly CAP has operated in the past as an instrument of reform and development and it must be employed in this capacity again to meet the challenges of sustainable development. Linking any subsidies or farm payments explicitly to sustainable farming practice, rather than land holdings or other mechanisms will increase production and future proof the sector and must be the next major reform of the CAP<sup>22</sup>.

The Common Agricultural Policy has historically been very effective in supporting European farmers and promoting production rates of food, forestry and other outputs. However in a changing global market and with the increased pressure of climate change

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<sup>20</sup> [http://www.greens-efa.eu/fileadmin/dam/Documents/Publications/CAP\\_reform/CAP\\_reform\\_EN.pdf](http://www.greens-efa.eu/fileadmin/dam/Documents/Publications/CAP_reform/CAP_reform_EN.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Howarth, C., Kullman, A., and Swidlicki, P. (2012), *More for Less: Making the EU's farm policy work for growth and the environment* (London: Open Europe).

<sup>22</sup> Dwyer, J. (2013), 'Transformation for sustainable agriculture: what role for the second Pillar of CAP?', *Bio-based and Applied Economics*, 2(1): 29-47, 2013

the Green Party believes that the European Union must begin to work together with international partners to support agricultural sectors in developing countries to ensure fairness and opportunity to trade where appropriate. We do not support general price protection policies that unfairly disadvantage agricultural sectors from emerging economies.

It is widely accepted that future CAPs must have greater focus on environmental outputs. We are in a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency, and our farmlands and the farm families who work this land are key to our response in dealing with these crises. Results based rather than action based schemes will have to be the new norm.

### **From Greening Measures to Environmental Leadership**

The Green Party seeks to expand the definition of what is currently referred to as 'Greening Measures' within the Common Agricultural Policy to include issues such as stocking density, biodiversity support, carbon sequestration measures, and soil management. We support re-organisation of the direct payment scheme to focus on these issues exclusively while transforming any other capital payments to tax rebate schemes or similar equal.

### **Money to Those that Need it Most**

The Green Party supports reform of the current CAP payments, to ensure funds are not distributed unfairly to large-scale agricultural enterprises, payments from the top down, and a ceiling of 100,000 euro earnings cap on Pillar 1 payments to an individual farm.

### **Long-term future of Farming**

We recognise the difficulty young farmers without their own land have getting access to land. Therefore, we call for legislative, legal and financial mechanisms to facilitate lease agreements between farmers and possible long-term agricultural tenants.

## 2.3.2 National Policies

Government Sector Targets: The Green Party believes that production focused policy such as proposes Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025 have not only been ineffective in promoting food standards, but also hugely detrimental to our climate change targets, and disastrous in providing farmers with long term economic stability. This strategy of production focused development for the agriculture sector means that containing agricultural GHG emissions may be an unrealistic aspiration in an Irish context<sup>23</sup>.

The Green Party does not support the Government's continued strategy to expand of the Agri-Food sector, by even greater intensification of agricultural production in Ireland with an associated exacerbation of environmental damage. A new holistic approach is needed to food production in Ireland, one that envisages our agricultural model as one that can restore Ireland's biodiversity and natural environment, while at the same time enhance farm incomes. It is about working with nature and seeing agriculture as only one a part of a thriving, biodiverse, nature-filled ecosystem.

## 2.3.3 Greenways

Farmers First on Greenways: The Green Party proposes to place the farming community at the centre of decision making in the future development of greenway routes across the island of Ireland. Greenways have, in recent years, proved to be an unprecedented success in a number of counties, offering employment and business opportunities to local communities while welcoming visitors to our countryside<sup>24</sup>. They are a key local amenity and also an opportunity to improve biodiversity, allowing farmers to optimise the use of targeted areas of land as funding streams. However, we also recognise that new initiatives can generate concern for local stakeholders as development are announced

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<sup>23</sup> Background Paper Drivers and Scenarios of Land Use Change in Ireland. Prepared by Teagasc. November 2014

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.independent.ie/life/travel/ireland/green-light-irelands-longest-greenway-opens-in-waterford-35562434.html>

with minimal consultation to communities. With this in mind we propose the following measures:

- The process of seeking funding for greenways will require a consultation process with local representatives, landowners and interested bodies such as local IFA groups as minimal requirement for applications.
- All developments granted are subject to the provision of supports and funding for the following items to landowners:
  - provision of all materials and set aside fencing or funding for same, to protect both farms and greenways where appropriate as a condition of development
  - consideration of services for the movement of livestock and machinery and a review of farm security issues around public access to greenways
  - indemnification of landowners from liability and claims from public usage of routes by the local authority
  - any loss of current grants or payments to be compensated in conjunction with access to a Knowledge Transfer Hub on how to utilise greenways as biodiversity corridors suitable for grant schemes

**ENDS**