



Mapping of the EU CAP Recommendations for Rural Ireland and the potential role of LEADER

FUTURE LEADER WORKING GROUP

MAY 2021



CAP Objective	Interconnected – Economic, environmental / climate and social challenges	Related EU CAP Recommended Priorities for Ireland	Securing Objectives through LEADER
<p data-bbox="143 180 315 204">Farm Economic</p>  <p data-bbox="80 571 360 794">1 To ensure a fair income to farmers - support viable farm income and resilience across the Union to enhance food security.</p>	<p data-bbox="394 180 958 248">1.1 Foster a smart, resilient and diversified agricultural sector ensuring food security</p> <ul data-bbox="409 256 994 675" style="list-style-type: none"> • “the share of Irish farmers in the food value chain fell from close to 20% in 2008 to just around 18% in 2016, well below the long-term EU average @25%” • “Agricultural income fluctuates considerably, partly due to the predominant specialisation in livestock. There is a need to better target farms with higher income support needs and territorial differences such as smaller farms and farms in areas with natural constraints” <p data-bbox="409 722 517 746">Analysis:</p> <ul data-bbox="409 762 1016 1417" style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2017, most people in Ireland lived in rural areas (60%), followed by urban areas (28%) and intermediate areas (12%). • While Agri-food sector exports have grown by 63% since 2010 to approximately EUR 14.5 billion in 2019, accounting for 9.5% of Irish exports, over 52% of farm households had an off-farm income employment source in 2018 • The share of total farm managers accounted for by young farmers in Ireland fell from 10.7% in 2005 (of which 9.8% men, 0.9% women) to 6.1% in 2016 (5.6% men, 0.5% women) • In Ireland, the average agricultural income is about 39% of income in the whole economy (2005 to 2019) 	<ul data-bbox="1032 156 1570 1449" style="list-style-type: none"> • In respect of moving farmers up the food value chain the Commission see this being achieved through cooperation and collective action, how or by whom all of this is going to be made happen is not clear. <i>(Commission Staff Working Document SWD (2020) 93 final)</i> • Support farmers in capturing higher share in the value chain by assisting innovation and diversification of products and markets (ranging from exports to local and agro-tourism), investments in quality aspects (including environmental labelling, EU and other quality schemes, organic farming) and by encouraging the recognition of Producer Organisations as well as the formation of new ones where relevant. • Support the ability of Irish farmers to invest in sustainable practices, by improving access to finance, including through supporting new or improved financial instruments. • Improve the viability of farms, especially medium-sized farms and farms in areas facing natural constraints by increasing the fairness and the efficiency of income support, in particular via internal convergence and by applying, for example, the complementary redistributive income support for sustainability and the reduction of payments. 	<ul data-bbox="1608 148 2145 1481" style="list-style-type: none"> • LEADER’s impact on rural job creation in Ireland is not fully recognised in EU analysis. LEADER continues to be a key enabler of stimulating enterprise development and job creation in rural areas. In the context of a COVID recovery for our rural communities, this capacity was never so important. • LEADER support to initiatives for shortening local food supply chains, inc analysis of local food production, gaps and business opportunities identified. Assisting primary producers in identifying added value opportunities for local produce, i.e. opportunities for direct milk / meat sales, bio economy, marketing / digital presence. • Smaller farms are more vulnerable and need specific supports to help them manage and maintain a viable household income. A lot of small to medium farmers access off-farm employment, but as a result of COVID, this has been curtailed, and support will be needed to help them align their skills base with local job market opportunities. • Through LEADER we could provide a Local Farmer Recovery Service. This could include assisting farmers with skills development, linking them with local job opportunities, helping with form filling and compliance. The service could also advise the farmers on alternative farm enterprise opportunities and funding sources. This would be particularly relevant to supporting women in farming and building their innovation capacity and potential for on an off form enterprise.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% of the beneficiaries farmed about 49% of the land and received 56% of direct payments due to specialisation in livestock sector. • Cattle and sheep farms have the lowest income and the lowest direct payment per hectare while their factor income would on average be negative without support. • Vulnerabilities due to specialisation: - Agricultural production in Ireland is dominated by animal products - 78% of output, with just 10% of output in cereals (4%), potatoes (1,6%) veg and horticulture (3.6%) and fruit (0.7%) • 90% of Irish beef and milk (milk equivalent) output is exported. • 55% of beef exports are sold to the UK & 22% of Irish dairy products are sold in UK • The average income on cattle rearing farms in 2018 was just one-eighth of the income on dairy farms • Bord Bia/Irish Food Board is a state body with the functions to promote, assist and develop the marketing of Irish food and livestock and the production, marketing and consumption of horticultural product • Regarding EU Quality labels, there are 11 protected quality signs. The use of EU quality labels scheme seems underexploited and could be further considered in view of improving the position of farmers in the value chain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of women in farms needed to be strengthened (ensuring equal pay and, where appropriate, through access to co-ownership of farms, increasing the occupancy rate), stressing that, as for any other European policy, equal opportunities must be an essential part of the CAP. (EESC – April 2021) • The green deal in achieving its objectives must be imbedded in rural communities in respect of its impact on food systems and sustainable food production, it must also be imbedded in rural food businesses and in business in general, we have a successful track record in working with the small and not so small food business sector. Support will be required for the development of smart specialisation strategies. <i>(Commission Staff Working Document SWD (2020) 93 final)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and facilitated workshops could be delivered, similar to what LDCs do for unemployed who want to pursue self-employment. This approach is very successful with strong outcomes and could be equally beneficial to under-employed farmers. • LEADER can support the closing of the gender gap in farming, improving equality and with associated increases in innovation, entrepreneurship, diversification and overall GDP of the sector. • LEADER can play a key role in embedding the Green Deal concepts, objectives and opportunists among wider rural community. • There is an important piece of work in support rural businesses in general to tap into the opportunities of the Green Deal. • Smart Specialisation requires unique skillsets and approaches which can be facilitated through the LEADER Cooperation measure across multiple LAG territories. • LEADER can provide critical complementarity to the mainstream CAP objectives through facilitating important bottom up meets top down solutions in areas like climate transition, farm diversification, circular economy and on attracting new entrants. • A 'Grow Local initiative' supported through LEADER, with technical advice and support from Bord Bia/Irish Food Board to LDCs. • LEADER support for the further development of locality based protected quality signs for locally produced food produce.
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<p data-bbox="136 177 327 204">Farm Economic</p>  <p data-bbox="91 536 367 970">2. To increase Competitiveness and agricultural productivity in a sustainable way to meet the challenges of higher demand in a resource-constrained and climate uncertain world.</p>		<ul data-bbox="1048 612 1570 1102" style="list-style-type: none"> • The CAP should support initiatives aimed at organising the upstream part of the supply chain or producers' organisations which allow farmers to have more bargaining power (EESC – April 2021) • The CAP should focus more on job creation by contributing to a more diversified rural economy in rural areas, and support the settlement of people in rural areas, generational renewal of farmers, which continues to be an important issue, or people with new projects like food processing activities or tourism. (EESC – April 2021) 	<ul data-bbox="1612 145 2152 1481" style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing Knowledge and Innovation is strongly linked to a fair income and increased competitiveness, associated with this is cost reduction and well managed farming practices with generational renewal acting as a catalyst for change. There is scope for LEADER to play a role in addressing these objectives through an engagement friendly initiative such as A Sustainable Future For Young People in Rural Ireland. • The EU policy of moving to offer social and economic incentives to promote alternative land use is ready made for LEADER objective, apart from mainstream afforestation. • LEADER has significant potential to getting closer to or inside the farm gate, in this context support for product diversification and alternative farm enterprise is critical. In addition, support around sustainable energy technology, climate transition, carbon farming and ecological farmland management could be supported. • LEADER has traditionally been focused outside the farm gate. The challenges facing farm sustainability are significant and require a reimagined role and potential for LEADER in supporting areas like farm shops (both on farm and in towns) for the sale of produce i.e milk, meat, vegetables. Linked strongly to EU policy objective of shortening the food supply chain, LEADER can make a real impact in assisting farming entrepreneurs regain a competitive hold in their sector. • LEADER support for local farmers markets and local primary and added value food producers.

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 <p data-bbox="91 432 367 879">3. To rebalance the power in the food chain -strengthen the position of farmers through such measures as strengthening cooperation among farmers, increasing market transparency and mechanisms against unfair trading practices.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1615 145 2130 331">• LEADER needs to support; direct to the consumer sales through the primary producer and through local ingredient and food preparation enterprises, automatic dispensing of product is now a well proven technology. <li data-bbox="1615 376 2145 754">• The short supply chain objective is closely linked to the exploitation of the circular economy in a territorial context, the availability of a secure and nutritious food supply and moving farmers up the value chain. In respect of the value chain farmers need a greater share of the retail price or to escape from raw product price determination based on whats left when all others have taken their cut. Supporting innovation inside the farm gate is critical in realising shorting food supply chains <li data-bbox="1615 799 2141 930">• There is a critical role for LEADER in stimulating cooperative approaches for new dynamic opportunities in rural areas, involving diverse stakeholders. <li data-bbox="1615 975 2101 1066">• LEADER support for farming cooperative structures in relation to a range of new farm-based business opportunities. <li data-bbox="1615 1110 2136 1201">• LEADER support to develop and enhance Digital skills to support collective direct selling of primary and added value produce. <li data-bbox="1615 1246 2145 1337">• There is an emerging groundswell of interest in horticulture and local food production which needs urgent support. <li data-bbox="1615 1382 2145 1473">• There is scope to simplify the application of Public Procurement requirements in LEADER., given the nature of the small investments.

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<p data-bbox="136 177 322 240">Environment & Climate</p>  <p data-bbox="91 539 338 783">4. <u>Contribute to climate change - mitigation and adaptation, as well as sustainable energy.</u></p>	<p data-bbox="394 145 987 240">1.2 <i>Bolster environmental care and climate action and contribute to the environment- and climate-related objectives of the Union</i></p> <ul data-bbox="412 288 987 746" style="list-style-type: none"> • “Nutrient discharges into water are a major problem. Many habitats and species are also suffering – in part from growth in livestock numbers” • “A need to halt the deterioration of Irelands peatlands – large stores of carbon which are also important for biodiversity” • “The uptake of organic farming is very low compared to what it is in the rest of the EU” and “is a target in the farm to fork strategy” <p data-bbox="439 815 546 842">Analysis:</p> <ul data-bbox="412 874 1016 1406" style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture accounted for more than a third of all GHG emissions in Ireland in 2018 compared to EU average of 9.8%, expanding dairy herd is a major contributor to increasing emissions, up 40% since 2010. • Agriculture accounts for virtually all (99.1%) of ammonia emissions in Ireland. • Agriculture is the most common pressure effecting habitats, with more than 70% of habitats being impacted by pressures relating to agricultural practices. • Ireland still has a small share (below 3%) of agricultural land under organic management compared to the EU-27 average of 8% 	<ul data-bbox="1032 177 1570 1366" style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage improvements to the efficiency of enteric fermentation in farmed livestock in line with the Methane Strategy, including through support for advice, innovation and management practices, as appropriate. • Make significant efforts to increase the area farmed organically thereby helping to achieve the Green Deal target on organic farming (as well as other targets and objectives). Support for conversion to and maintenance of organic farming may be appropriate, but steps to develop the market (whether supported through the CAP or not) may also be needed. • Encourage a general move towards more sustainable farming practices by improving the environmental and climate-related performance of income support – through appropriate requirements and schemes, including support for carbon farming. • Ensure a widespread improvement in nutrient management, thereby helping to achieve the Green Deal target on reducing nutrient losses – through optimised fertilisation, improved manure management and a wider transition to precision farming. 	<ul data-bbox="1608 145 2145 1485" style="list-style-type: none"> • LEADER animation with local farmers on taking charge of environmental protection measures. Involving farmers in biodiversity best practice, encouraging ownership and proactivity. • Advisory services, information provision and capacity building on carbon products, inc biogas and general energy saving advice for farms and rural businesses. • LEADER can proactively work with rural dwellers and in particular farmers and farm family members in actions to reverse biodiversity loss and support the development of well-planned actions in the move away from a compliance model to one built on results and performance. A collaborative approach with Agri would be helpful in this effort. • Scope for financial incentives through LEADER for farmers to engage around local environmental actions • A focus on skills enhancement for women in farming and in rural areas. Entrepreneurship capacity of rural women should be supported through LEADER • Potential for LEADER animation to support local organic farming skills development, marketing, better coordination of local food supply chains. Greater use of ICT for direct marketing - farm to customer (e.x.

Environment & Climate



5. [Environmental care](#) -foster sustainable development and efficient management of natural resources such as water, soil and air.

Analysis:

- As a source of renewable energy, Biogas and biomethane sector in Ireland is seen as being still at an early stage of development
 - Forestry & woodlands are excellent carbon sinks. Irelands forest cover is only 11% compared to EU avg of 40%
 - Low levels of tree cover forms part of the picture of modest production of renewable energy in IR from agriculture and forestry at just 2.6% of RE production came from farming (EU: 12%) and 19% from forestry (EU:41%).
 - Ireland's forests are not expected to keep pace for much longer with the combined needs of the national wood panelling and wood-based energy sectors
 - Irish agriculture is seen as vulnerable to climate change because of farmers' growing specialisation.
 - The quality of Ireland's rivers is falling: there was a net decline in status in 128 river water bodies (5.5%) between the periods 2010-2015 and 2013-2018 - a third of rivers and a quarter of estuaries failing to meet nutrient-based environmental quality standards, due mainly to increased agriculture pressure.
- Future farm diversification is set to include the processing of feed residues, farm waste and other bio based resources for the production of textiles, natural packaging and clean energy such as biogas. (*Commission Staff Working Document SWD (2020) 93 final*)
 - Improve the conservation status of grasslands and heathlands. Take steps to maintain extensive grazing, extend the area of species-rich grasslands, adapt mowing practices to habitat needs and prevent harmful burning of vegetation
 - Improve the resilience of the farming sector to climate risks such as water stress on grassland and fodder crops - for example, by supporting partnerships between livestock and arable farms and the creation of fodder reserves.
 - Make significant efforts to increase the area farmed organically, thereby helping to achieve the Green Deal target on organic farming. Support for conversion to and maintenance of organic farming may be appropriate, but steps to develop the market.
 - A majority of farmers are unconvinced by possible benefits of diversifying on the farm for the time being.
- Organic Producers Network in Sweden – pre-ordering of local produce on Facebook – by customers and picking up at farmers market, a form of click and collect).
- Links to section 1 above, the use of LEADER to support farmers and rural entrepreneurs in pursuing alternative farm production in the such as biomass, biogas, Algi Farms and solar energy production.
 - Significant demand is emerging for raw material for various forms of renewable energy. LEADER could provide important awareness raising and animation around the potential for farm diversification in this area, while also addressing the CO2 emissions from more traditional products
 - LEADER can provide an important impetus for Community led renewable energy project (inc wind, microgrids) using a community ownership model, Including local support for Sustainable Energy Communities.
 - There are elements in Ireland's National Energy and Climate Plan around diversification within agriculture and expansion of forestry which LEADER may be able to assist with. This will require greater flexibility in the eligibility rules for farmers for LEADER funding.
 - There is scope for Local Development Companies to facilitate and support the development of Operational Groups under EIP for to address issues around water and soil quality.

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<p data-bbox="136 213 322 272">Environment & Climate</p>  <p data-bbox="91 608 367 916">6. Preserve landscapes & Biodiversity - contribute to the protection of biodiversity, enhance ecosystem services and preserve habitats and landscapes.</p>	<p data-bbox="394 177 499 204">Analysis:</p> <ul data-bbox="409 252 1016 1385" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="409 252 1016 395">Ireland is home to very extensive peatlands, which cover more than 20% of total land surface area. This means that Irish soil is a huge store of carbon <li data-bbox="409 448 1016 703">Pressures from growing livestock numbers are added to by long-established habits in the management of Ireland’s peatlands. These have been drained on a large scale over the years – for the purposes of peat extraction, farming and afforestation - to the point where 80% are degraded. <li data-bbox="409 756 1016 938">Ireland’s total net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from farming (including non-CO2 and CO2 emissions) have been rising in absolute terms since 2011, reaching 26.2 million tonnes CO2 equivalent in 2018 <li data-bbox="409 991 1016 1134">It is clear that the ongoing expansion of the cattle herd, especially dairy cattle is pushing emissions higher, as are to some extent increases in the use of synthetic fertiliser <li data-bbox="409 1241 1016 1385">There has been a long-term decline in populations of pollinators: 30% of bee species are now considered threatened with extinction in Ireland 	<ul data-bbox="1032 145 1570 1401" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1032 145 1570 384">Halt the deterioration of Irish peatlands and encourage their restoration – including through appropriate design of elements of conditionality, and potentially through funded schemes for carbon farming and more extensive grazing. <li data-bbox="1032 437 1570 858">Step up efforts to encourage tree-planting in various configurations – including agro-forestry systems – and with species mixes which are appropriate in terms of biodiversity, adaptation to climate change, carbon sink capacity and resistance to pests and diseases. Support may be necessary not only for afforestation but also for advice on species selection and on effectively integrating woodland into farm management. <li data-bbox="1032 906 1570 1182">Eco schemes are to be developed through the bottom up approach and may be funded under Pillar 2, eco schemes can be implemented and operated at the local level through a collective or group approach. <i>(Commission Staff Working Document SWD (2020) 93 final)</i> <li data-bbox="1032 1230 1570 1401">The protection of the environment includes water, soil, biodiversity, landscapes, ecosystems and air, LEADER has already supported dirty air filtration and noise reduction (<i>ibid</i>) 	<ul data-bbox="1597 145 2136 1508" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1597 145 2136 427">LEADER to start a conversation with farmers on opportunities for carbon farming, provide awareness raising among farmers on the importance of peatland as a carbon store. Initiatives around rewetting of marginal land could be developed and supported by land maintenance and restoration schemes. <li data-bbox="1597 475 2136 639">LEADER can be a much needed local ‘honest broker’ for collective approaches to climate transition and benefiting from environmental opportunities. Bring key stakeholders together to problem-solve. <li data-bbox="1597 687 2136 1002">Support development of communication skills to facilitate education and curriculum linked opportunities for greater numbers of people to visit, experience and understand family farm living, local food production and the environmental benefits that farmers create through managing and being the custodians of the land. <li data-bbox="1597 1050 2136 1294">Through LEADER, explore the potential for collective or group Eco scheme bottom up approaches. i.e. for under-employed farmers in areas of community environmental protection, exemplar projects, training schemes for home retro-fitting etc. <li data-bbox="1597 1342 2136 1508">Young people should also be targeted in respect of, carbon removal, reversal of biodiversity loss, restoration of habitats both on and off farm with bio friendly planting schemes and filtration capable

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ireland’s native woodlands are in some respects in a poor state: small and fragmented, they lack full ecological functionality. • Grassland habitats of EU interest, affected by agriculture and reported on under the Habitats Directive, have not improved in status for the most recent reporting period (2013-2018): none (of the six) has favourable conservation status, 17% have “unfavourable – inadequate” status and for the remaining 83% the designation is “unfavourable – bad” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make significant efforts to increase the area farmed organically - thereby helping to achieve the Green Deal target on organic farming (as well as other targets and objectives). Support for conversion to and maintenance of organic farming may be appropriate, but steps to develop the market (whether supported through the CAP or not) may also be needed. • However, the establishment of native woodlands are supported through national scheme • Key pressures on grasslands and heathlands include land use intensification and or inappropriate practices, ie mowing, burning. • There is also a need to ensure consistency and complementarity of the CAP with overarching policy frameworks such as the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). (EESC – April 2021) 	<p>and embankment supporting tree and other plantings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEADER led action will be required to drive an all of community initiative to address: disimproving river and ground water, farmland birds rapidly disappearing and 30% of bee species set to go, wood and shrubland birds also disappearing. • LEADER support for rural enterprise development and modernisation with the use of more sustainable technologies. • Awareness raising amongst rural populations on the importance of protecting and encouraging pollinators could be supported through LEADER • LEADER can deliver at the local level through supporting communities in bolstering environmental care and climate actions as per Climate Objectives of EU. CAP direct payments may fund such actions on farms.
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<p data-bbox="136 209 322 233">Socio--Economic</p>  <p data-bbox="91 536 360 983">7. To support generational renewal – Structural change & Generational Renewal. Modernise the agricultural sector by attracting young people and improving their business development.</p>	<p data-bbox="456 352 1010 416">1.3 Strengthen the socio-economic fabric of rural areas and address societal concerns</p> <ul data-bbox="443 536 1003 1321" style="list-style-type: none"> • “the decrease of the young farmer population is very significant (over 40%) and the trend remains negative, despite the implementation of a multifaceted set of EU and nationally financed measures” • “Improving generational succession and entrance of young farmers depends on more favourable conditions for access to land and finance – the main challenges for young farmers” • “89% of country is classified as rural, double the EU average, with 60% of people living in rural areas. The purchasing power of urban areas is double EU average” • “There is scope to further develop the bio-economy, renewable energy and Tourism sector to better balance the urban/rural territory in Ireland. 	<ul data-bbox="1032 193 1570 1161" style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue improving access to land and finance for young farmers and new entrants, including by targeting inheritance constraints and supporting cooperation between farmer generations. • Strengthening the role of civil society organisations would allow them to develop enough resources to be more present at different stages (from planning to implementation and evaluation).....The recognition of the individual needs and characteristics of the different regions in each country can only be widely facilitated by the local organisations that are part of each community. (EESC – April 2021) • Develop the bio economy by supporting renewable energy production from agriculture and forestry as well as supporting diversification into other non-food areas. 	<ul data-bbox="1597 169 2145 1481" style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a longstanding issue around limitations of the farming sector in being eligible for LEADER funding and double funding that needs to be reconsidered. Ways must be found that facilitate farmers accessing LEADER supports for their enterprise. • Generational renewal, calls for the retention of young people in rural areas and on farms are a priority. LEADER must be able to fund on or off farm developments capable of addressing the ambitions of young people in preparation for generational change. • The barriers for young people entering farming are evident. This coupled with a need to keep rural areas vibrant as places to live and work points to a need for LEADER support to help young people address the challenges. • The role of LDCs as strategic partners with Government in the delivery of LEADER needs to be streamlined – in line with PFG commitments 2021. In this respect, a cost effective short supply chain for LEADER delivery is critical, with LDCs working directly with DRCD as the LAGs. • Farmers need support in exploring new markets for farm alternative products for green business. There is a need to increase knowledge of current state-of-the-art technology development and profitability for fossil-free energy. Experiences and inspiration from companies producing fossil-free energy in rural areas across Rural Europe needs to be drawn on. One example here is the use of biogas / biofuel to meet local energy needs (Sweden and Germany)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The future CAP and other policies affecting rural areas need to focus on raising the attractiveness of rural areas. This requires ensuring job opportunities, decent working conditions and high quality services in areas such as education, housing, culture, employment and social support, and communication measures to reach out. (EESC – April 2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Link here to LEADER supports under Objective 1 above. A specific Local Farmer Recovery Service to work with small to medium farm households around upskilling, alternative farm opportunities and linking with local labour market opportunities. Through the provision of this holistic farm household service, transition can be facilitated and access to land improved.• There may also be scope for the use of financial instruments for supporting young farmers, women and new entrants.• There is an important role for LEADER in supporting the concept of ‘Rural Attractiveness’. Rural population decline leads to cycles of decline. Therefore, attracting new people with a variety of skills into rural areas is critical to the sustainability of our rural communities. There is a case for a new LEADER sub-theme for Rural Attractiveness.• This includes non-traditional entrants into rural areas who are looking to try new livelihoods and live in a rural setting, embracing the working from home potential and working to maintain a balanced rural demographic.• Continued LEADER supports for local communities in building social capital, empowering existing and future leaders to identify and effectively respond to the needs of their communities.
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<p data-bbox="129 204 322 229">Socio--Economic</p>  <p data-bbox="85 533 349 948">8. Vibrant rural areas – Jobs & Growth. Promote employment, growth, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including bio economy and sustainable forestry.</p>	<p data-bbox="389 169 927 271">1.4 Modernising the sector by fostering and sharing of knowledge, innovation and digitalisation, and encouraging their uptake</p> <ul data-bbox="403 306 994 1477" style="list-style-type: none"> • “A well-functioning agricultural knowledge and innovation system (AKIS) should deliver knowledge flows between its actors responding to the growing information needs inc regular and structural interplay between information, knowledge, advice, innovation, training, education/research” • “There is a need to put innovation support services in place to help to garner individual grassroots innovative ideas...” • “AKIS does not only cover agriculture, since farming and rural activities by nature relate to: the environment, climate, biodiversity, landscape, food and non-food systems including processing and distribution chains, consumers and citizens, to name a few” • “The current 23 Irish operational groups under the EIP are focusing mainly on biodiversity, nature and landscape management, Further diversifying EIP calls – continuous calls” • “Very high capacity broadband coverage is at 21% in IR, compared to EU at 44%. In rural Ireland this is only 7% compared to 20% in EU” • The Irish rural area proportion is double compared to the EU-27 average: 89% of the Irish territory is rural, 10% is intermediate regions and 1% urban 	<ul data-bbox="1039 146 1568 1516" style="list-style-type: none"> • Support further integration of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System, strengthening links between research, advisors, education, the farming community and interactive innovation projects, in particular organise innovation support services, support peer-to-peer learning and dissemination to all Irish advisors. • “LEADER has been in operation in Ireland since 1991, on rural communities across the country. The current implementation is going well. Long-term impacts refer to a positive change that has resulted due to LEADER investments that may have not been possible otherwise” • An improvement of the quality of life in rural areas is essential. In order to maintain competitiveness of rural economies it is important to fight youth unemployment in rural areas, guarantee proper remunerations for workers, and provide sufficient infrastructures (transportation, digital services, etc.). The CAP alone is not enough to meet all the challenges that rural areas face..... there is a need to develop a holistic EU approach to rural areas, of special importance in the context of post-COVID recovery. (EESC April 2021) • Increase social inclusion in rural communities by supporting improvements in basic services and their accessibility. In doing so it will be 	<ul data-bbox="1594 162 2145 1509" style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting sustainable community development, particularly in the context of environment / climate change. • There is less opportunity for small to medium farmers to access the full range of AKIS services, especially private advisors. There is scope for more wrap around supports and links for small holders and vulnerable farm families. Link here to section 1 above (Local Farmer Recovery Service). • The LEADER support for encouraging and stimulating rural enterprise was never more important, inc the bio-economy. Sustainable rural areas need enterprises and local jobs to combat the trend toward rural decline. This includes support for social enterprises. • LEADER to provide the general rural development social innovation supports through the Smart Villages approach, supporting bottom up village planning. Ireland’s adoption of the CLLD multi-fund approach across the deployment of the EU Funds would be very beneficial in addressing the broad quality of life issues in rural areas. • LDCs already provide business start up advice and guidance to an unemployed cohort of the open labour market. This approach could also be applied to vulnerable farm families and in supporting access to local employment and to alternative farm enterprise, ie tourism, food, bio-based, renewables and carbon products. • There is considerable scope for greater involvement of small to medium farmers in a broader range of use of EIPs Operational Groups in Ireland, particularly in the areas of environment, climate change and biodiversity.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban areas are 3 times more densely populated, with 2 out of 5 Irish residents now registered in the Dublin area. This trend is projected to continue to deepen. • While rural employment rates in rural Ireland are on par with EU, rates for females reaching 10-12 percentage points lower than males. • Youth unemployment rates in rural Ireland in 2017 @13.7%, were almost double that of the general population at 6.3%. • In Ireland, the agricultural, food and tourism sectors together provide 15% of employment. • The bio-economy – consisting of the sectors agriculture, forestry, food and beverages, paper, wood and bio-based chemicals/pharmaceuticals – provides in Ireland around 8% of all jobs. • Almost one third of SMEs find the lack of IT infrastructure in Ireland (vs 19% EU-27) an obstacle to expansion or relocation, and less than half the EU average for quality broadband i.e VHCN, rural areas fair poorly for fast broadband @7%. • There is a relatively low level of ‘Digital Skills’ in rural areas, creating barrier to rural innovation in jobs generally and agriculture. 	<p>important to ensure synergies with other EU and national funds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A holistic approach to rural development is needed; therefore, the CAP must be linked with other existing policies: among others, decent work conditions, mobility, training courses, social inclusion, funds and plans (European Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy, Next Generation Europe). (EESC April 2021) • The opportunities offered by the CAP need to be made more accessible at local level (less bureaucracy, simpler conditions). (EESC April 2021) • Irelands national policy statements on the development of the bio-economy outlines potential of new bio-based products and their markets. 	<p>LEADER is well placed to facilitate and support this expanded and enhanced role for OGS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEADER needs to support local initiatives for broadband in areas not sufficiently reached by national high speed coverage. In addition, LEADER needs to continue to support the development of improved digital skills. • LEADER can provide specific support for rural youth activation, participation and engagement in a broad range of opportunities in entrepreneurship and climate action. • LEADER support for Smart Villages needs to include financial support for resource of ‘community navigators’. Through LEADER project funding, the navigator would be assigned to a village or group of villages /towns as part of a package of Smart Village supports to develop and implement a plan. • The COVID pandemic has highlighted the importance of balanced regional development. Through LEADER approaches, there should be a pro-active approach to both maintain rural population and to attract new entrants (including young people), fostering the concept of ‘Rural Attractiveness’. • The agricultural, food and tourism sectors @ 15% employment are critical to their communities and support significant spill over in rural economies. LEADER is critical to supporting further expansion of artisan food and tourism potential of rural areas. • Support the rural enterprise digitisation transition in fostering local economic self-sufficiency. • LEADER could be equipped to support the development of start-ups in the bio-based products sector.
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<p data-bbox="129 204 322 229">Socio--Economic</p>  <p data-bbox="85 596 360 1043">9. To protect food and health quality - Improve the response of EU agriculture to societal demands on food and health, including safe, nutritious and sustainable food, reducing food waste, as well as animal welfare.</p>	<ul data-bbox="405 683 1003 820" style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to give more attention to food loss and waste occurring at the primary production level and the early stages of the supply chain in Ireland. 	<ul data-bbox="1046 145 1559 858" style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve animal health and welfare in line with consumer expectations, by putting in place more ambitious measures to support farmers to improve livestock management practices, especially for pigs and male dairy calves. • Contribute to the Green Deal target on reducing the use and risk of pesticides via schemes fostering a switch to sustainable farming practices (including integrated pest management). • This could be tackled in the future national food waste prevention programme, as required by Article 29(2a) of the Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC. 	<ul data-bbox="1592 671 2141 826" style="list-style-type: none"> • LEADER is very well placed to support local Circular Economy potential and initiatives, working with local entrepreneurs. This can be supported both through private and social enterprise.