



## **Inishowen Upland Farmers Project**

Update: 31 January 2019

<https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/inishowen-upland-farmers-project>

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### **Geographical location:**

Ireland

### **Main geographical location (NUTS3):**

Border

### **Other geographical locations (NUTS3):**

West

### **Keywords:**

Agricultural production system

Farming practice

Animal husbandry and welfare

Plant production and horticulture

Pest / disease control

Fertilisation and nutrients management

Soil management / functionality

Forestry

Water management

Climate and climate change

### **Internal keywords:**

high nature value farming

Biodiversity and nature management

sustainability

### **Main funding source:**

Rural development 2014-2020 for Operational Groups (in the sense of Art 56 of Reg.1305/2013)

### **Project type:**

Operational group

### **Starting date:**

2019

### **End date:**

2023

### **Project status:**

Ongoing

### **Title (in English):**

Inishowen Upland Farmers Project

### **Objective of the project (native language):**

This project aims to improve the economic sustainability of farming High Nature Value (HNV) land in Inishowen through the implementation of a range of innovative measures which also deliver on environmental sustainability by increasing biodiversity, improving water quality and combating climate change.

To achieve these goals, the project will pursue the following specific objectives:

- Provide a best practice management template to Increase farm profitability.
- Demonstrate that by adopting a whole farm approach that addresses both the economic and environmental aspects of mountain upland and improved lowland on the farm will lead better long-term outcomes.

### **Objective of the project (in English):**

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### **Description of activities (native language):**

Participating farmers will have a farm plan created using data collected from spatial mapping of their farm to:

- Integrate suitable broadleaved woodland into their improved land to best improve the hydrology of the area.
- Plant trees and hedges to provide shelter belts.
- Incorporate clover and trial alternative legumes, apply lime to build soil fertility to reduce the use of chemical fertilisers.
- Trial red clover swards for silage production.
- Create multi-purpose ponds
- Trial experimental grazing regimes with cattle, where sheep are traditionally grazed, to establish ideal conditions for optimum management and production of biodiverse upland vegetation.
- Prescribe wetland restoration.

## **Description of activities (in English):**

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## **Total budget:**

989500

## **Short summary for practitioners**

### **Practice abstract 1**

#### **Short summary for practitioners (in English):**

Farming in Inishowen is currently facing many difficulties with lack of income, lack of succession planning, over regulation and lack of incentives being just some of the difficulties cited. Many farmers are part time farmers who see no return for their farming activity and see farm basic payments, ANC payments and Environmental schemes like GLAS as their only form of income. Returns from producing suckler cows and sheep are minimal at best and in many cases is subsidised by farm direct payments. The role and purpose of the part time farmer needs to be redefined and appreciated. The reality is that most of the farms in the Inishowen Peninsula and indeed throughout Ireland are not capable of generating a sufficient income. However, if there is some tangible return for the production of public goods the long-term sustainability of these farms could be improved.

This project will trial innovative measures which deliver for Inishowen farmers in terms of economic returns while also giving returns in terms of water quality, climate change and flood mitigation and biodiversity.

#### **Short summary for practitioners**

**(native language):**

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**Project coordinator**

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**Partner category:** Adviser

**Further details****Description of the context of the project:**

The Inishowen peninsula sits on the North-West coast of Ireland. It has a population of approximately 40,500. There are 2688 farmers in inishowen. The area is dominated by High Nature Value farmland (HNV).

The average size of farm in Inishowen is 27 hectares and many farmers have off farm income.

The age profile of farmers and lack the of a successor is a concern. It is becoming clear that, in a shift from earlier generations where a son was expected to take over the family farm, farmers are now encouraging their sons to look elsewhere to provide a living for employment citing long hours, over regulation and non-existent returns.

While tradition and culture mean that farming will continue, for the benefits and positive

externalities that follow from it to be fully exploited, whether they be the provision of public goods or the landscape and amenity values that are provided, new thinking is required.

The role and purpose of the part-time farmer must be redefined. The reality is that most of the farms in the Inishowen peninsula are not capable of generating a sufficient income. However, if there is some tangible return for the production of public goods the long-term sustainability of these farms could be improved. Much of the uplands and mountains in Inishowen are covered in blanket bog. While conservation of raised bogs receive greater attention, the fact is, that blanket bogs are the rarer ecosystem in an international context. Ireland has the largest covering of blanket bog within Europe, conservation and proper management of this blanket bog coupled with climate mitigation measures on improved low land would yield important environmental benefits such as good quality water, carbon sequestration, high-quality biodiversity and flood mitigation.

### **Additional information:**

Expected Results:

- Increased profitability for farmers participating
- Reduced dependence on chemical nitrogen fertiliser
- Improved upland habitat condition.
- Flood resilience and water infiltration will be increased.
- Increased Carbon sequestration.
- Enhanced nutrient management and capture.
- The biggest benefit of the entire project will be the retention of people to continue to farm and manage the land. We intend to demonstrate that there is a real benefit in this to the local economy and to the country as a whole.

Practical Recommendations will be generated for:

- The inclusion of Agroforestry in Irish agriculture.
- The establishment of red clover as a high-quality feed source to reduce the reliance on artificial chemical nitrogen fertilizers.
- The inclusion of white clover varieties to increase the quality of grazed swards and reduce the dependence on artificial chemical nitrogen.
- The introduction of flood mitigation measures to increase the resilience of Irish landscapes to flood damage
- The development of shelter belts and wind breaks to increase soil temperatures, increase grass growth and lengthen the grazing season.

- The use of spatial mapping for the development of high return environmental schemes. The project will also give practical examples of how data sets collected by different agencies can be used in a cohesive way which benefits farmers.
- The role ponds can play in farm situations for flood mitigation, supporting wildlife, biodiversity improvement and provision of water supply to farms.
- Best practice for grazing of uplands.
- The concept of share farming.
- Pond creation and maintenance.
- How the concept of nutrient capture can be used going forward to improve economic returns and provide environmental goods

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## **Links**

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