

## IRELAND

### Biodiversity's restoration, preservation & enhancement

#### Location

Nationwide

#### Programming period

2014 – 2020

#### Priority

P4 – Ecosystems  
management

#### Measure

M10 – Agri-environment-  
climate

#### Funding (EUR)

Maximum Livestock unit's  
payable under GLAS is 10 LU  
at a rate of EUR 200/LU/year

#### Project duration

2014 – 2020

#### Project promoter

Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine

#### Contact

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#### Website

[www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmerschemespayments/glas/](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmerschemespayments/glas/)

Offering support to maintain and possibly increase populations of specific rare breeds under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 of Ireland.

### Summary

Ireland's farmers have introduced more profitable / efficient breeds, e.g. the Holstein-Friesian, at the expense of Irish indigenous (native) stock. These now rare breeds, however, may have genetic traits that, if targeted, could potentially offer added benefits or essentially become a game-changer for the agricultural industry.



The Irish Green, Low-Carbon, Agri-Environmental Scheme (GLAS) offers farmers an option to choose rare breeds as part of their on-farm GLAS Plan. The objective of this action is to encourage the maintenance of – and where possible increase – populations of specific rare breeds to ensure their long-term survival.

### Results

Currently, there are 49 119 active GLAS participants, and 2 % of farmers active in GLAS have selected the rare breed option as part of their GLAS Plan (approximately 980 farmers).

### Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Support schemes such as GLAS are a useful tool to raise both the public and farmers' awareness as to the importance of maintaining rare breeds and to encourage the farming of these animals.
- ❑ Development of a market for the specialty products from farms investing in rare breeds, e.g. where farmers are paid a premium, is key to their viability.

## Context

'Rare breeds' are breeds of livestock or poultry that have a very small breeding population left. Due to their small population numbers, the conservation status of the rare breed can be identified as high. Some indigenous, native or rare breeds associated with Ireland are:

- Equines (Horses), such as the Connemara Pony, the Kerry Bog Pony and the Irish Draught;
- Bovines (Cattle), such as Irish Moiled, Kerry cattle and Dexters;
- Ovines (Sheep), such as the Galway.

It is often thought that rare agricultural breeds are non-profitable and non-viable to keep. Improvements in genetic information have shown time and again, however, that rare breeds, which have previously been deemed useless, may have genetic traits that could potentially have added benefits if targeted towards certain issues faced by mainstream breeds. Capitalising on this diverse genetic pool may essentially become a game-changer for the agricultural industry.

## Objectives

Rare breeds often have many genetic traits which are beneficial, e.g. specifically adapted to the local conditions. It is important to protect and conserve these rare breeds as we do not know the full potential their genetics might hold, which may be useful for breeding or other scientific breakthroughs in the future.

## Activities

Under the current Irish Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020, the Green, Low-Carbon, Agri-Environmental Scheme (GLAS) offers an option to choose rare breeds as part of farmers' on-farm GLAS Plan. The objective of this action is to maintain – and where possible increase – populations of specific rare breeds and ensure their long-term survival.

Cattle	Horses & ponies	Sheep
Kerry	Connemara Pony	Galway
Dexter	Irish Draught	
Irish Maol/Moiled	Kerry Bog Pony	

The livestock units considered for payment are calculated as follows: the maximum livestock units (LU) payable under GLAS are 10 LU at an annual payment of EUR 200/LU/year for the five years of the scheme.

All farmers participating in GLAS must comply with a list of mandatory core requirements, which aim to ensure that farmers have an enhanced level of environmental knowledge. Farmers must keep records of relevant actions delivered and must also have a plan for nutrient resource efficiency on their holding. They must also undergo training in environmental practices and standards. Farmers must commit to a GLAS Plan for a minimum of five years.

Bovines six months to two years	0.6 LU
Bovines over two years	1.0 LU
Equines over six months of age	1.0 LU
Ewe (+/- lambs at foot)	0.15 LU
Ewe lamb (six months – one year)	0.10 LU
Ram	0.15 LU

## Main results

Currently, there are 49 119 active GLAS participants, and 2 % of farmers active in GLAS have selected the rare breed option as part of their GLAS Plan (approximately 980 farmers).



## Key lessons

Farmer Mark McConnell, a GLAS participant and Chairman of the Rare Breed Society, indicates that featuring rare breeds as part of the scheme has perhaps got people thinking about rare breeds. Ultimately though, development of a market for their products is the only way to encourage the farming of these animals. Anyone farming rare breeds tends to be farming in small numbers as it is not viable to farm these breeds on a large scale. Thus, the development of a niche market for rare breed products, where farmers are paid a premium, is key to their continued viability.

## Additional sources of information

[www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/biodiversity-case-studies/irelands-rare-breeds/](http://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/biodiversity-case-studies/irelands-rare-breeds/)