

## The new REAP (Results based Environmental Agri. Program) Scheme

There has been much interest from dairy farmers about this newest Agri-Environmental Scheme. While it falls short of the 'all inclusive' REPs 4 scheme, this new program does have much to offer dairy farmers, particularly those interested in using multi-species swards. This new program (Results-based Agri-Environmental Program) is similar to the previous GLAS and AEOS programs in that participants do have a choice of the actions they undertake, but there ends the similarity. Unlike its predecessor schemes, participants will be rewarded for previously improving biodiversity on their farm.

### How does it work?

Essentially the program gives the participant the option to either:

- 1) Maintain already present grassland habitats such as species rich grassland or hay meadows, which is defined as 'low-input grassland' or
- 2) Introduce multi-species swards or lays which is defined as grazing mix consisting of grass, herbs and legume species, with a minimum of 7 species present, (though the more the better from a points perspective) (?)



(Above – Multi-species sward in 2<sup>nd</sup> year of growth)

Once participants have chosen one of these options, the boundaries surrounding the plots in which the low input grassland (LIG) or multispecies lay (MSL) are assessed, essentially to measure how much biodiversity these boundaries currently support. The more diversity friendly the boundaries are, the higher the scoring and conversely the higher the payment will be for the LIG/MSL area.

Participants who wish to improve their boundaries are also offered the opportunity, under this scheme to increase the biodiversity through a number of actions. One action includes planting trees or hedgerows along the boundary or along gaps in the existing hedgerow of the boundaries. Participants can attain a supplementary payment if they undertake hedge or tree planting.

### Other actions that will increase the biodiversity include:

- Improving the quality of the boundary hedges from a biodiversity perspective i.e. side trim/flail it only so that hedge is high and full of flowers annually
- Increasing the width of the fenced-off buffer area of the plots i.e. fencing out 2 or 3 m from the hedge row, rather than the required 1.5m
- Increased fenced off area of a buffer adjacent to a water-course

If low input grassland is chosen, an extra top-up to the payment can be availed off if mowing is delayed until after 1<sup>st</sup> July . (Suitable of hay or haylage making)

The plots will be assessed each year of this two year pilot and the score can be increased from one year to the next if they improve the biodiversity value of the plots.

### Payment Available & Structure

#### The payment is split into 3 distinct sections:

1. All participants will receive a **fixed payment** of €1,200 per holding per annum.
2. **The Environmental Payment** is based on a points system whereby the more biodiversity friendly the plot, the higher the points and the higher the payment is as illustrated in below tables:

#### The payment rate structure for the Low-Input Grassland (LEG) plots is:

	Score							
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	<4
Rate per ha	€400	€375	€350	€325	€300	€275	€250	0

A payment-top up of €50 per Ha is available to farmers under the “Late Meadow cutting” action also

#### The payment rate structure for the Multi-Species Ley (MSL) plots is:

	Score							
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	<4
Rate per ha	€275	€250	€225	€200	€175	€150	€125	0

A maximum of 10 Ha will be paid for under this program. A minimum of 2 Ha is required to apply for the program.

### 3. Complimentary Actions Payment

This is a once off payment with a maximum limit of €1200 to be claimed under this payment

The payment can be used to fund tree or hedgerow planting at the below rates:

- a. Tree planting €9.20 per tree
- b. New hedge planting €15.80 per metre
- c. Hedge planting infilling of gaps €15.80 per metre

### **Example of payment Scenarios:**

**Scenario:** Farmer chooses 4 Ha (10 acres) of Multispecies Lay and plants 100m of hedging

**Payment:** Under this scheme he/she will receive €1, 200 flat rate payment + (between €500 and €1100 provided he/she meets the basic biodiversity management requirements) + €1,200 once off payment for maximum length of hedging planted (76m is max amount paid for) in year 1 =

Year 1 Total Payment = €2900 to €3,500

Year 2 Total Payment = €1700 to €2,300

### **Important facts to Note about this New Program**

- **The closing date is 10<sup>th</sup> May!** Not all advisors have been trained to complete these REAP applications or complete the field scoring assessments therefore you might have to contact a new advisor and there may be a waiting list. If interested in joining this program, you should contact your advisor as soon as possible.
- **Places are limited.** The Dept. of Ag. say that funding is limited for this 2-year program and so all who apply for the scheme may not be excepted. They have stated that they want to have participants from groups of farms both greater and less than 140 kg N/Ha stocking rate to ensure a large geographical and wide range of enterprise participation. If oversubscribed, water quality status, ANC and Natura lands will be taken into account. Funding will only be provided for an estimated 2000 to 2200 participants in total.
- **The Advisor drawing up the plan must be paid for by the farmer.** The cost of drawing up the plan is likely to vary depending on the area of land being applied for, however anecdotally plans are likely to cost between €400 to €800 per annum.
- **If you choose multispecies swards, they do not have to be currently in place, however they must be planted before 15<sup>th</sup> August or before the land inspection, whichever is sooner.** This allows for participants to establish if they are accepted into the scheme before reseeding.
- If the mowing top-up is chosen, a geo-tagged photo showing the area mowed must be submitted to the Dept. of Ag. within 5 days of cutting of the payment will not be provided.
- The margin of all plots must be managed by either mowing/flailing or mulching at least once per year. This management can only take place between the 1<sup>st</sup> of September and the 28<sup>th</sup> of February
- If you have participated in GLAS or are currently participating in one of the EIP schemes, then you are ineligible to join this program

For more information about this project including a list of qualified advisors, log onto

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/64388-results-based-environment-agri-pilot-programme-reap/>