



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Agri Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES): An Overview for Farmers

Signpost Farm Series – 7th Oct 2022

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Structures Division

What is ACRES?



Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme

Replaces the Green Low Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS)

Builds on learnings from GLAS, the Results-based Environment Agri Pilot Project (REAP) and EIP projects

Payment Rates and Funding for ACRES



**€1.5bn
2023 – 2027
50,000 farmers**

**ACRES General ~ 30,000
@ Max €7,311 (Ave €5,000)**

**ACRES CP ~ 20,000
@ Max €10,500 (Ave €7,000)**

How ACRES differs from GLAS?



- ACRES Co-operation - zones identified on basis of certain environmental criteria
- ACRES General - available nationally outside zones
- Prescription actions like GLAS, where set payment was made for satisfactory completion of task(s)
- Results-based actions – where rate of payment will depend on score achieved

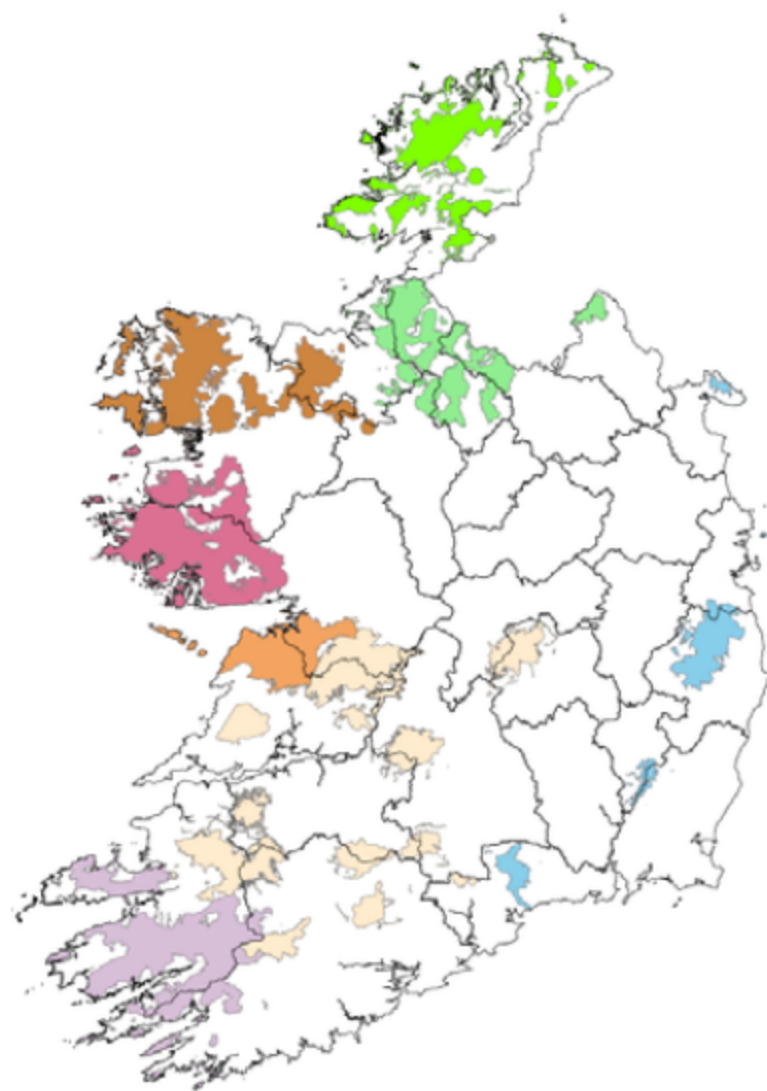
What are ACRES General actions?



31 Actions available

- Area Based (14)
 - *Low Input Grassland*
- Linear (10)
 - *Riparian Buffer Strip*
- Unit Based (5)
 - *Tree planting*
- Whole Farm (2)
 - *LESS*





ACRES Donegal



ACRES Breifne



ACRES West Connacht



ACRES West Connacht



ACRES Burren Aran



ACRES Munster South Connacht



ACRES Kerry West Cork



ACRES Leinster

ACRES

How can I find out which ACRES is for me?



Log into AgFood and go to 'ACRES Access Agreement'

Send a text saying "DAFM ACRES" followed by your Herd ID to 50124 and response will indicate eligible approach for ACRES
For example "DAFM ACRES A1234567"

Your advisor can log onto Agfood and see under the 'ACRES EOI' tab which approach you are eligible for.

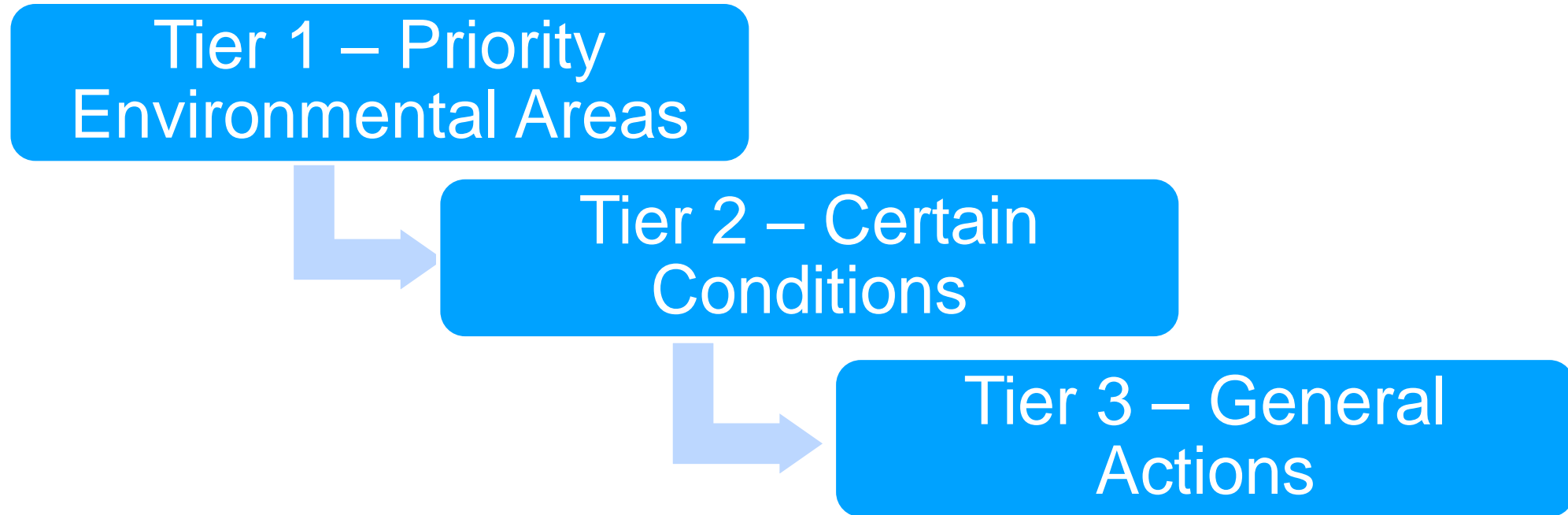
Core requirements for ACRES



1. Engage an approved ACRES advisor.
2. Farm Sustainability Plan
3. Participants in the ACRES Co-operation approach must engage with the ACRES Co-operation Project (CP) Teams
4. ACRES Training
5. Record Keeping



Structure of ACRES General



Intake on a phased basis via tranches subject to DAFM and advisor capacity,
Tranche 1 open Q4 2022, Tranche 2 Q4 2023, Tranche 3 possible depending on uptake.

Ranking and selection will apply if over-subscribed.

Co-operation Measure – structure and actions



Results-based payments: Typically scorecards are used for the following habitats:

- peatlands
- grasslands
- woodlands

Non-productive investments (NPI):

- Water provision for livestock
- Grazing infrastructure
- Invasive species
- Shepherding (on the basis of timesheets)
- Introduction of new grazers i.e. cattle
- Bracken management

Cooperation actions:

- fire prevention
- targeted water quality projects
- and flood prevention measures
- and participation and involvement in actions within commonage management groups.



Example

Landowner: _____ Plot: _____ Surveyor: _____ Date: _____

Total Marks: _____ Final Score: _____

A. Ecological integrity and species composition

A.1. Number of positive indicators present in the grassland (circle ALL present on list below)

No. of indicators	6+	8+	10+	12+	14+	16+	20+
Marks	4	6	10	11	20	25	30

A.2. What proportion of the meadow are positive indicators ABSENT from?

ABSENT from	>90%	75-90%	50-75%	25-50%	<25%
Marks	-20	0	15	20	30

A.3. What is the cover of DENSE Meadowsweet and/or DENSE grass in the sward?

DENSE COVER	Very high (>90% cover)	High (70-90% cover)	Medium (35-70% cover)	Low (<35% cover)
Marks	-20	-10	0	10

A.4. Cover (total) of negative indicator species &/or agricultural 'weeds' (ignore docks on rise near riverbank if rest of meadow is fine)

Cover	Rye grass	Nettles	Thistles	Docks	Bindweed	Other (specify):
Marks	High >50%	26-50%	11-25%	<10%	Negligible (<1%)	
	-30	-20	-10	0	10	

B. Threats, pressures and future prospects

B.1. What is the level of dead vegetation (litter)? Identify main rank/woody species:

LEVEL	High (rank veg., with brambles & woody plants)	Mod-High (Dead vegetation thick throughout (not mown & collected last year))	Dead vegetation negligible (mown annually)
Marks	-20	0	10

B.2. Are there any damaging activities to vegetation, soil or water? If yes, list all activities:

High Level CoOp team roles



- Development of local action plans
- Liaise with relevant organisations e.g. NPWS, LAWPRO, farming organisations, NGOs
- Capacity to engage locally with farmers to support the provision of public good at landscape level related to biodiversity, water quality and climate action.
- To improve two way communication and dissemination of local level conservation objectives between farmers and ‘policy makers’.
- To better support farmers deliver environmental goods in these sensitive landscapes and
- To act as advocates of what farmers do to protect the environment with local communities – the importance of an active living farming community.
- To Monitor and Evaluate quality of farm plans, Habitat scoring and Outputs



Payments for Environmental Quality



What if farmers got paid for producing ecosystem services the same way they get rewarded through markets for producing quality of their livestock?

€€€€€€



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Results-Based Concept ?



- ▶ Quality based payment system for environmental goods
- ▶ Scorecard based
 1. Low Input Grasslands (LIG)
 2. Low Input Peat Grassland (LIPG)
- ▶ Higher scores = higher payments

FIELD SCORE	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	<4 (3,2,1)
PAYMENT RATE per ha	€400	€375	€350	€325	€300	€275	€250	0



- Farmer earnings => environmental services market value
- “Flexibility to farm according to local /individual needs”

Like cattle and sheep - quality pays



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ACRES - Training

Advisor Training

More results based in-field training

Training videos for later playback

Video guide on suitable /
unsuitable fields

Species identification guide &
Booklet





ACRES *Cooperation*

Complementarity with General Actions

Use of results based scoring prioritised on lands in CP zones but where less than €7,000 is utilised for results based scoring;

- Applicants can apply for 3 General Actions on CP zone land
 - Stonewall maintenance
 - Rare breeds
 - Low emission slurry spreading
- Applicants can apply for other General Actions on non-CP lands

Commonage in ACRES



- **Mandatory action for all commonage**
- **Tier 1 access:**
 - **>0.50 Ha declared in 2021 BPS**
 - **continue to farm in 2022 BPS**
- **Min. stocking rate – CMP process in GLAS- subject to review by CP teams**
- **Agreement not to hinder or block works**
- **In CP zones – additional actions applicable to aid habitat restoration – NPI's, landscape actions**



Non Productive Investments (NPI's) & Landscape Actions (LA's)

- **Budget €3,500 for NPI's and LA's per farmer per year**
- Advisor will apply for NPIs through GLAMS –application window in Autumn each year from 2023 on
 - NPIs can be updated annually
- List of approximately 50 different NPIs
- CP team will screen proposed NPI and produce a Works Plan
- Approval for Authorised actions will be time limited,
- LA's will be developed locally by CP Project Officer and local farmers based on local objectives
 - Approx 10-12 Standard LA's
 - Bespoke LA's developed locally
- Applications for LA's all year round
- CP will screen actions
- Landscape Actions can be updated annually

Local Area Partnership



- Each CP will organise a number of Local Area Partnerships.
- The partnership will determine training priorities, organise open days and outreach events.
- Advisors and farmers will deliver some of the training at these events.
- They will be paid by the Project team for this work.
- Advisors and farmers will be rotated annually to ensure that the maximum number of people get an opportunity to participate.

Payments



- DAFM will make all payments
- First instalment in Q4 2023, 2nd instalment in Spring 2024
- Payments for NPI and LA's will issue at regular intervals through the year
- Provision for frontloading of NPI and Landscape Actions under consideration
- Supports for farmers facing exceptional challenges under consideration

ACRES & Organics



- Organic farmers – Tier 1 access
- Registered with and approved as an organic operator by one of the Organic Control Bodies by the closing date for applications for the relevant Tranche.
- Applicants who have commonage on their land must undertake the mandatory commonage action.
- The organic farm payment will be reduced accordingly to avoid a double-funding situation.

CP Area	Contact	CP Team	Contact Details
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YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/DepartmentofAgricultureFoodandtheMarine>

Twitter: @agriculture_ie



Thank You

www.gov.ie/ACRES

Example of Commonage Landscape Actions



Landscape Actions	NPI	
Landslide Recovery	Fencing (external only)	Commonage Governance
Wildfire Resilience	Gates (external Boundaries)	Peatland restoration follow up
Peatland Restoration	Roads and Tracks	Specialist training
Invasive species	Targeted Grazing	Invasive Species follow up
Drainage Networks	Track Maintenance	
Post Fire Recovery		
Recreational Landscapes		
Archaeological Landscapes		

Post Fire Recovery



Landscape Actions	NPI	
Drain blocking	Wader Scrapes	Specialist Training
Engineered Ditches	Wildlife Ponds	Peatland restoration follow up
Fire Ponds	Fencing (all types)	
Vegetation Management (permanent)	Water Troughs	
Vegetation Management (temporary)	Water Piping	
Targeted Grazing (Equines on Gorse)	Gates	
Targeted Grazing (Equines on Autumn Gorse/ Molinia)	Track Maintenance	

Specialist Wildlife Support – Hen Harrier



Landscape Actions	NPI		
Conifer tree line removal	Wader Scrapes	Winter stubble	Specialist Training
Exclosures	Fencing (all types)	Unharvested headlands	Invasive species follow up
Wildfire resilience	Water Troughs	Hedgerow rejuvenation and infill planting	
Post fire recovery	Pasture Pumps	Track Maintenance	
Drain blocking	Water Piping	Riparian woodlands	
Check Dams	Solar Pumps		
Leaky Dams	Planting new hedgerows		
Invasive Species (all types)	Strips of Wild bird cover		
Wildlife Ponds	Wild bird cover plots		