LIFE Carbon Farming

Newsletter #9- February 2026

Welcome to the ninth issue of the Irish newsletter for LIFE Carbon Farming.

In this edition, we highlight recent project activities from late 2025 and early 2026, including the Fourth European LIFE Carbon Farming Network Meeting in Córdoba, Spain, Ireland's public consultation on the draft principles for developing a national carbon-farming framework, and the European Commission's workshop on the pilot livestock methodology under the EU Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming Regulation (CRCF). These articles provide an overview of the key discussions, emerging directions, and contributions from Irish and European partners as the project continues to develop tools, evidence, and collaboration for low-carbon livestock farming across Europe.

Fourth European LIFE Carbon Farming Network - Spain

Anaïs L'Hôte (IDELE) pictured giving an update on the progress of LIFE Carbon farming and baseline results at the Rectorate of the University of Córdoba, Spain

Day 1: Morning session - Seminar

The LIFE Carbon Farming partners met in Córdoba, Spain, on the 3rd and 4th of November 2025 for the next in the series of European networking meetings. The event brought together project partners from the six participating countries for a day of presentations, followed by a technical working session. On the first day of the network at the Rectorate of the University of Córdoba, the Spanish partners ASOPROVAC and COVAP hosted a seminar dedicated to "Investing in the decarbonisation of livestock farming."

The session opened with an introduction from Matilde Moro (ASOPROVAC), followed by Irene de Tovar Hernández (COPA COGECA), who outlined recent developments in the EU's Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF) and the Commission's ongoing work to develop methodologies for certifying emission reductions on livestock farms. Her presentation prompted discussion among attendees on the challenges of defining eligible practices, ensuring methodological consistency, and estimating greenhouse gas emissions and carbon storage in practical farm settings.

This was followed by Javier Piquer (MAPA), who described Spain's national environmental obligations for the cattle sector, and Anaïs L'Hôte (IDELE), coordinator of LIFE Carbon Farming, who provided an update on progress across the project, including the first results from the carbon audits and actions underway on pilot farms. Further presentations were delivered by Roberto Jiménez (ASOPROVAC), who shared findings from the Spanish farms participating in the project, and Rafaela Herrera García (COVAP), who presented COVAP's wider sustainability strategy within the region.

Roberto Jiménez Soria (ASOPROVAC) pictured, presenting mitigation actions farmers are prioritising in their carbon plans

Roberto also gave an overview of the mitigation actions farmers are prioritising in their carbon plans. On Spanish dairy farms, there is a strong interest in adopting 3-nitrooxypropanol (Bovaer®), a methane-reducing feed additive. Around 70% of participating dairy farms have already incorporated the additive or plan to do so, with a recommended dose of 10 g per cow per day at a cost of approximately 0.35 cents per cow per day. This additive is one of the few approved under EU feed legislation and is seen as a practical option for reducing enteric methane emissions in intensive dairy systems.

Alongside methane-reducing additives, several other mitigation levers are being prioritised by Spanish farmers. These include:

- Optimising concentrate composition and improving diet formulation, particularly where feed costs and nutrient efficiency can be balanced to reduce emissions without adding financial pressure on farms.
- Enhancing forage quality, including the incorporation of legumes to improve digestibility and reduce reliance on purchased protein sources.
- Improved manure management practices, particularly through frequent manure removal and best available techniques, such as forced aeration, composting, or biogas, where feasible. The latter offers emission reduction benefits and generates renewable energy.
- Planting hedgerows and implementing biodiversity actions that contribute to carbon sequestration and are compatible with existing land management objectives.

These early choices reflect both the technical feasibility of these actions in Spanish production systems, and the economic considerations farmers must weigh when selecting measures. Many of the options being adopted—such as improved forage quality, nutrient-efficient feeding strategies, and biodiversity measures—offer practical pathways to reduce emissions without imposing high additional costs on the farm business.

Day 2: Technical session

On the second day of the network, partners met at the Fundación Universitaria para el Desarrollo de la Provincia de Córdoba (Fundecor) for a technical session. The morning focused on reviewing progress across project actions, while the afternoon workshops covered communication and dissemination activities and preparations for the pilot livestock emission reduction methodology, including coordination across countries for the follow-up reports and second carbon audits.

Developing Principles for Carbon Farming in Ireland

In late 2025, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) launched a public consultation on the draft principles for developing a national carbon-farming framework. These principles are intended to guide the design of a system that recognises and rewards land-based actions that reduce GHG emissions or increase carbon sequestration across Irish farms.

The draft principles published by DAFM align closely with the six core principles of the EU Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF) and include three additional Irish-specific principles to reflect national conditions. Overall, they aim to ensure that Ireland's emerging carbon-farming framework is scientifically credible, transparent, and integrated with wider sustainability goals. The principles cover topics such as quantification, additionality, sustainability, verification, public registries, just transition, and the integration of existing initiatives.

A number of these themes were also highlighted during the Farming for a Better Climate – Practical and Emerging Solutions event held on 11 November 2025, where a dedicated workshop explored how a carbon-farming framework might operate across Irish farms.

Teagasc Submission to the Consultation

Teagasc submitted a detailed response to the consultation through the virtual Climate Centre that highlighted several key considerations to ensure that carbon-farming initiatives are workable and credible. It emphasised the need for a framework that is:

- Simple and farmer-friendly, minimising administrative burden and ensuring ease of participation.
- Scientifically robust, with proportionate, hybrid MRV approaches that balance accuracy with practicality.
- Cost-effective, ensuring transaction costs are kept low so funding is directed primarily toward on-farm climate actions.
- Fair and inclusive, recognising both the creation of new carbon removals and the protection of existing carbon stocks so that early adopters are not disadvantaged.
- Digitally integrated, linking administrative datasets such as the land parcel information system (LPIS), the National Fertiliser Database through platforms such as AgNav to streamline reporting and verification.
- Consistent with EU CRCF activity-period guidance, with clear mechanisms to manage obligations during leasing or succession.

The submission also noted Ireland's strong starting position, given its extensive national datasets, advisory capacity, and long-running measurement infrastructure. It emphasised that integration of these datasets will be essential for the credible scaling of carbon-farming activities, particularly within a national MRV system. Teagasc further highlighted several areas where strong scientific evidence already exists to support potential carbon-farming activities — such as hedgerow establishment, forestry and agroforestry, peatland rewetting, preservation of permanent grasslands, precision fertiliser management, and manure-management measures. These actions are well-documented in Teagasc research and

in the mitigation, options identified in the Teagasc Marginal Abatement Cost Curve (MACC), providing a sound evidence base for developing robust carbon-farming measures.

Teagasc underscored the importance of demonstration farms, particularly within the Signpost Programme, to act as "living labs" for applying carbon-farming practices, testing MRV systems, and supporting farmer engagement. With the consultation now closed, DAFM will consider submissions as it continues to shape the national carbon-farming framework. Teagasc will continue to contribute research, advisory expertise, and digital infrastructure to support the development of a credible and workable system for Irish agriculture.

EU Workshop on the Pilot Livestock Method under the CRCF

On the 4th of February 2026, the European Commission (DG CLIMA) held a workshop to present progress on the development of a pilot EU certification methodology for livestock emission reductions. The session is part of the Commission's ongoing analysis of whether emission-reduction activities from livestock systems should be included within the scope of the CRCF. The workshop provided an overview of the Commission's draft Technical Assessment Paper and summarised feedback from the recent EU stakeholder survey.

A technical consortium led by Ricardo, contracted by DG CLIMA to support this work, presented survey findings and outlined preliminary recommendations for how the pilot method could address several key design questions. Their input was based on background research, stakeholder responses, and discussions with relevant EU projects. The workshop considered how a certification method could apply to the main livestock categories contributing to agricultural GHG emissions. Ricardo recommended that the initial scope include bovine animals, sheep, pigs, and poultry, reflecting stakeholder views and the availability of recognised emission-accounting approaches. In line with CRCF requirements, the method would focus on on-farm emission reductions within the control of the operator, while upstream and downstream emissions would be accounted for but would not generate certified units. Indirect emission changes could be reported as co-benefits.

Workshop discussions also addressed how mitigation practices should be identified. Ricardo recommended using an open list of eligible activities, provided that appropriate emission factors exist under the IPCC Guidelines or national GHG inventories. Stakeholders generally agreed that most practices could be verified on the farm but noted that some would require specific safeguards where uncertainty is higher. There were strong views that the use of generic data should be limited and transparently justified. Nevertheless, stakeholders also recognised the need for generic input data where farm-level measurements are impractical, such as nitrogen excretion rates or standard live-weight values. Project-specific data should be prioritised where practical, but some generic data may be unavoidable.

One of the most significant points raised concerned how certified emission-reduction units should be quantified. The technical team advised that units should be based on absolute emission reductions, but only where two conditions are met:

- no decline in production that could lead to emissions leakage, and
- no worsening of the reactive nitrogen balance at the farm level.

These conditions were presented as key safeguards supported by many survey respondents. The workshop also discussed the CRCF requirement for carbon-farming activities to generate

co-benefits for biodiversity and ecosystems. Feedback from the survey and stakeholder consultations indicated that many livestock-emission reduction practices do not naturally deliver biodiversity benefits. Participants agreed that such practices should not be excluded on this basis; however, no consensus was reached on whether an alternative minimum co-benefit should be required. It was suggested that better integration of the livestock method with the CRCF agriculture approach, which already addresses biodiversity considerations, may offer a pathway to meeting this requirement. This issue will need further consideration as the pilot method develops. DG CLIMA will continue refining the pilot methodology during 2026, drawing on the Technical Assessment Paper, survey results, and workshop discussions. A draft version of the pilot method is expected later in the year, after which the Commission will assess whether livestock emission-reduction activities should be formally included within the CRCF framework.

Upcoming Events

The next EU networking of LIFE carbon farming will be held in Strée, Belgium, from March 2-4, 2026. The event will gather advisors, researchers, farmers, and policy actors from across the country. The activities of this event will include farm visits, seminar presentations by researchers and other stakeholders, and short testimonies from project participants.

See you in the next issue

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