

Good Practices – EAFRD projects' template

Project name/title

Green Low- Carbon Agri- Environment Scheme (GLAS)

Context

Why was the project needed? What was the situation to begin with? Do not start talking about the objectives. Just the context. (max.300 words)

Ambitious growth targets for the agricultural industry outlined in the Food Harvest 2020 and Foodwise 2025 reports are likely to impact on biodiversity, water quality and climate change. Modern intensive farming practices resulting in enhanced productivity will be required to meet growth targets. It is perceived that environmental damage resulting from increased output will impact on water quality, biodiversity, and climate change.

The intensification of farming has led to changes in land use which has decreased biodiversity within farms. As farms become more intensive hedgerows and ditches are removed and fields are amalgamated for ease of modern machinery. Unproductive wetland has been drained and brought back into production. This has led to a decline in plants species, mammals and insects. Biodiversity needs to coexist with agriculture.

Agriculture is one of the main sources of nitrates in groundwater and contributes to nutrient enrichment of water from run-off from slurry, manure, and fertiliser application. Increased agricultural production targets will impact on water quality. There is a particular challenge to deliver the growth targets in a manner that protects water quality. Ireland must comply with the EU Water Framework Directive which sets strict deadlines for meeting water quality objectives.

It is estimated that agriculture contributes up to 34% of Irelands greenhouse gas emissions this compares with an average of about 9% from our European partners. Agriculture's high proportion of greenhouse gases is a result of our mild climate with long growing season, ideally suited to grazing livestock and the relatively low level of industrialisation and heavy industry in our economy.

Reaching the growth targets outlined in the Industry vision while maintaining biodiversity, water quality, and reducing GHG emissions will be a particular challenge. Sustainable agriculture production systems will have to evolve such as establishing farming practices and production methods that reflect the increasing concern for biodiversity, water quality and GHG emissions. Appropriate land management, livestock management and nutrient management must deliver these objectives of sustainable farming.

The GLAS scheme has been designed to respond to the environmental problems caused by modern intensive farming practices. It aims to address some of the environmental damage resulting from increased output.

GLAS the new agri- environment scheme which is funded by the (RDP) has a number of specifically designed measures which address water quality, climate change and biodiversity.

The GLAS Scheme has funding of approximately €1.4 billion over the course of the Rural Development Programme. This will provide funding for 50,000 farmers to join the scheme.

Objectives

In response to the context set out above, what did the project hope to achieve and what was its overall approach for doing this? Do not simply list planned activities, which will be covered below. (max 300 words)

GLAS stands for Green Low- Carbon Agri- Environment Scheme. GLAS aims to address the cross cutting objectives of climate change, water quality and biodiversity. It aims to improve water quality, mitigate climate change and promote biodiversity. According to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) the scheme is “green as it preserves our traditional hay meadows and low-input pastures; low-carbon as it retains the carbon stocks in soil through margins, habitat preservation and practices such as minimum tillage; and, agri-environment as it promotes agricultural actions, which introduce or continue to apply agricultural production methods compatible with the protection of the environment, water quality, the landscape and its features, endangered species of flora and fauna and climate change mitigation.”

GLAS is a targeted Agri- Environment Scheme that identifies key Priority Environmental Assets and links them with farmers who possess them. Participation is voluntary and the entire farm is not covered by the scheme just identified areas within the farm where specific actions are undertaken. Entry into GLAS is divided into 3 tiers. Tier 1 consists of farmers who have Priority Environmental Assets on their farms e.g. Farmland habitats, Farmland birds, Commanges, Rare breeds, and High Status Water Area. Applicants with PEA are guaranteed access to the scheme. Tier 2 consists farmers who don't have PEA but who are in a vulnerable water area they are guaranteed access to the scheme. Tier 3 is for farmers who don't have a PEA or are not in a vulnerable water area. These farmers can increase their chances of access to the scheme by picking an option such as

- Minimum tillage
- Low emission slurry spreading
- Wild bird cover
- Catch crops

GLAS actions designed to improve water quality are;

- Arable grass margins
- Riparian margins
- Protection of watercourses from bovines
- Low –Input Permanent Pasture/traditional hay meadows
- Minimum tillage
- Low emission slurry spreading

GLAS actions designed to mitigate climate change are;

- Catch crops
- Minimum till
- Planting of hedgerow/grove of native trees/traditional orchards

GLAS actions designed to enhance biodiversity are;

- Conservation of farmland birds
- Environmental management of fallow land
- Bird/bee/bat boxes
- Wild bird cover

Farmers can receive a maximum annual package of €5,000 depending on the actions undertaken.

GLAS is a five year scheme.

Approximately 38,437 farmers have been accepted into the GLAS scheme in Tranche 1 & 2 and Tranche 3 is expected to open in autumn 2016.

Activities

What did the project do and in what order did it implement its activities? If possible, include: a timeframe; who/which stakeholders were involved; the reasons and logic of the approach taken. The aim is to enable readers to really understand what the project did and how. Do not provide a simple list of bullet points but briefly explain each activity. (max 600 words)

All GLAS plans must be drawn up by a professional GLAS advisor. In order to be approved as a GLAS advisor, an advisor must also be approved as an advisor under the Farm Advisory System (FAS) operated by the Department of Agriculture. The Farm Advisory System is governed by EU Regulations, which requires that advisors are suitably qualified and regularly trained. All GLAS advisors must have attained a FETAC Level 8 Bachelor Degree in Agricultural Science/Land Management in Agriculture and must have taken soil science and an animal or crop production subject to a level 8 degree standard. The DAFM devised a specific GLAS training programme for professional advisers in the public and private sector. DAFM provided intensive training workshops nationwide. GLAS training was delivered by DAFM staff and provided an overview of the objectives of the GLAS scheme, and covered the following topics environmental benefits of the scheme, scheme funding, how the scheme will work, detailed the actions, timelines, and scheme requirements. 548 Advisors undertook the training and are now approved GLAS advisors. The training provided advisors with an understanding of the objectives of the scheme and the requirements of the scheme.

In order for the successful roll out of the GLAS scheme interaction between GLAS advisors and the DAFM was necessary. The DAFM publicized the GLAS scheme nationally through press releases in the farming media and published a list of approved GLAS advisor on the DAFM website. The

GLAS scheme opened in February 2015. There was huge interest in the scheme among farmers. GLAS advisors were inundated with calls from farmers who wanted to join the scheme.

A Client of GLAS Farm Planners Thomas O'Halloran provided the following account of his participation in the GLAS scheme.

"I farm 7.28 ha, I have a mixed livestock enterprise. My farm is located in Ballyhugh Gort Co. Galway. I operate an extensive grass based farming system. I buy in store cattle and sheep and graze them during the summer months. I heard about the GLAS scheme through the farming media and contacted GLAS Farm Planners. My GLAS advisor arranged an on farm consultation with me and conducted a farm walk and an assessment of my farm and worked closely with me to advise me and discuss suitable actions for my GLAS plan.

The 5 year plan was drawn up setting out details of my participation in the scheme and gave me an overview of the planned actions for my farm. The farm plan is a short document containing all the required information with an accompanying colour coded map which identifies the actions undertaken and pin points the location of where the actions should be undertaken such as dry stone wall maintenance."

Thomas undertook the following actions as part of his GLAS Plan

- Wild Bird Cover
- Low Input Permanent Pasture;
- Traditional stone wall maintenance;
- Bird boxes,
- Conservation of Solitary Bees;
- Traditional Hay Meadow;

The deadline for completion of wild bird cover was 14th June 2016. 1.87ha of wild bird cover was sown. The field chosen was selected because it contains some Ash trees and there is a dense hedgerow along the boundary of the field. The dense cover that surrounds the field is home to many birds.

The wild bird cover was sown on the 14th May. Thomas decided not to spray off the land in advance of cultivation because the field adjoins a river. A contractor was employed to sow the Wild bird cover. The land was not ploughed. The land was disced several times. The process of discing broke up the sod and turned up enough soil to form a seedbed. The land was then harrowed using a power harrow to produce a seedbed. The seed was sown and the land was rolled. Rolling helped to bury the seed. Fertiliser was not used because wild bird cover is not a hungry crop.

The mix used contained oats and Linseed. The mix was sown at 75kg/ha oats and 15kg/ha Linseed. The linseed became a vibrant blue colour which helped to attract bees for pollination. The linseed and oats are now turning a golden colour. The crop is well established now.

Results

What did the project achieve? What has changed and how was the initial identified need met? Include quantified improvements where possible. Unquantifiable progress can also be described (e.g. increase in revenue, jobs created, number of participating businesses, increase in sales, increase in visitors, etc.). Keep it short – a list is fine (max 300 words)

Thomas has noticed an increase in pheasants on the land since the wild bird cover crop was sown. There has also been an increase in butterflies and bees on the area planted in wild bird cover. It is envisaged that there will be a noticeable increase in the number of birds present in the winter because they will use the wild bird cover as a food source. The bird boxes and the conservation of solitary bees are enhancing biodiversity on the farm. The payment for the maintenance of Traditional Dry Stone Walls has incentivised Thomas to maintain the dry stonewalls that are a feature on his farm. This is a very labour intensive operation but it will enhance the network of traditional freestanding drystone walls throughout the farm and will enhance biodiversity. (***) Agri-environment payments are not income supports and should not be noted as such. (***)

but it also helping to maintain and enhance biodiversity, maintain water quality and mitigate climate change. GLAS is adding an environmental value to the farming operation. Thomas finds his GLAS plan very easy to follow as it is short and concise.

Lessons

What factors should be taken into account when transferring the example? What was interesting, unexpected, surprising about implementing the project? What could be done better? Keep them short and to the point. (Max 300 words)

The wild bird cover was sown when conditions were very dry. Crows attacked the Wild Bird Cover and picked at the seed. Thomas said he would sow the Wild Bird Cover when some rain was forecast. Sowing in dry conditions meant the seed was visible and the depth the seed was sown might need to be increased to prevent crows picking the seed. Thomas used scarecrows and hung ribbons on the gate to deter the crows. 13,779 ha of wild bird cover has been sown as a result of farmers undertaken this GLAS action. This indicates that the GLAS scheme will be effective in preserving and enhancing biodiversity on Irish farms. However site specific management is important when choosing GLAS options. If a large area of the land devoted to wild bird cover goes back into production upon completion of the GLAS scheme the benefit to biodiversity will only occur in the short term. The role of farmers in maintaining the environment is recognised and payments made to farmers through the GLAS scheme is promoting farming practices which are compatible with the improvement of water quality, enhancing biodiversity and mitigating climate change. A core priority of Ireland's RDP programme is restoring, enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture. The GLAS scheme has been designed to restore and enhance ecosystems.

Project general info

Name (project title or short name)	
Dates ¹ (Indicate both start and end dates ²)	
Member State (or region if regionalised RDP)	
Type of beneficiary (public/SME/farmer/NGO etc.)	
Measure ³ (or measures)	
Priority & Focus Area ⁴ (for 2014-2020 projects)	

Funding^{4,6}

Total budget in EUR	
EAFRD contribution in EUR	
National/regional co-financing in EUR	
Private funds in EUR	
Other sources (in EUR)	

Contact details

Project beneficiary name/organisation	
Contact person	
Contact Email	
Telephone	
Other contact details	

Further information

Website	
Additional info sources, links	

Quotes from beneficiaries/participants

(if available) Obviously choose ones that really highlight the key message of the project

"I expect to see an abundance of birds in the field during the winter when the crop falls down and the seeds will provide a valuable feed source to birds. The linseed became a beautiful vibrant blue colour

that seemed to attract bees and butterflies. The Linseed was in flower over a long period over the summer and gave a nice visual appearance to the crop.”

Project photos with information on copyrights

A number of 2-3 photos, as available, would be sufficient. Copyrights maybe the name of the photographer, or in general the owner of the photos' copyrights as indicated by the provider of the project's content.

Additional note

¹ Both a starting and end date are needed.

² On-going projects are not eligible.

³ Always indicate which measure(s) were used.

⁴ Both the Priority & Focus Area are needed for the 2014-2020 programming period projects.

⁵ In case more than one measures where used then please provide the above financial data for all measures involved.

⁶ The total and EAFRD budget are required as a minimum.