An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

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EIP-AGRI Operational Groups

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas

National Rural Network

Inishowen Upland Farmers Project

Geographical Location	IE 041 Border Region
Keywords	Uplands, Bovines, Grazing, Red Clover, White Clover, Ponds, Trees, Agroforestry, Hedges, Biodiversity, Climate, Water, Nitrogen
Project Leader	Henry O'Donnell (email: henryodon@gmail.com)
Project Type	Operational Group
Starting Date	2019
End Date	2023
Project Status	Ongoing
Main Funding Source	Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020
Total Budget	€989,700

Project Rationale

Farming in the Inishowen Peninsula, Co. Donegal is currently facing many difficulties with lack of income, lack of succession planning, over regulation and lack of incentives being just some of the difficulties cited. Many farmers farm part time and see farm subsidies as their only form of income and there is little return on their farming activity. The role and purpose of the part time farmer thus needs to be redefined and appreciated. The reality is that most of the farms in Inishowen and indeed throughout Ireland are not capable of generating a sufficient income. However, if there is some tangible return for the production of public goods the long-term sustainability of these farms could be improved.

Project Aims & Ojectives

This project aims to improve the economic sustainability of farming High Nature Value (HNV) land in Inishowen through the implementation of a range of innovative measures which also deliver on environmental sustainability by increasing biodiversity, improving water quality and combating climate change.

To achieve these goals, the project will pursue the following specific objectives with farmers, farming both improved lowland and mountain uplands:

(i) Provide a best practice management template to Increase farm profitability and ensure that the farming activity being carried out is contributing to overall household income;
(ii) Demonstrate that by adopting a whole farm approach that ad-dresses both the economic and environmental aspects of mountain upland and improved lowland on the farm will lead better long-term outcomes &
(iii) Demonstrate that economic returns can be improved by using innovative measures such as agroforestry and climate smart innovation which also simultaneously deliver on environmental public goods.

Project Activities

Participating farmers in conjunction with project staff will create a farm plan using data collected from a spatial mapping exercise of their farm to:

- Integrate suitable broadleaved woodland into improved land at pre-defined locations to improve hydrology.
- Strategical planting of hedgerows and coppicing and continous managment of existing hedging at landscape level to create biodiversity corridors.
- Plant trees and hedges to provide shelter belts, which has been shown to improve daily liveweight gain in livestock.
- Incorporate clover and apply lime to build soil fertility to reduce chemical fertilisers.
- Trial red clover swards for silage production to reduce feed costs.
- Trial alternative legumes for forage
- Create ponds with dual purposes of habitat creation, flood mitigation, and farm water supply.
- Trial experimental grazing regimes with cattle , where sheep are traditionally grazed, to establish ideal mix and density for optimum management and production of biodiverse upland vegetation.
- Plan for scrub removal on the uplands.
- Locate temporary fencing on the uplands to achieve required grazing outcomes.
- Prescribe wetland restoration where suitable areas identified in the uplands to slow water flows and alleviate flooding in lower catchments.