



**EIP-AGRI**  
NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2022



National Rural Network

# EIP-AGRI NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2022

## Conference Report



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



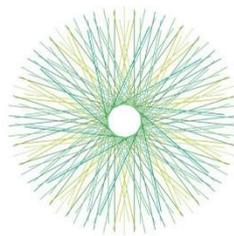
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# EIP-AGRI

NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2022

## AGENDA



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National Rural Network

Date: Monday, Nov 28th, 2022

Time: 9.30am – 4.00pm

Venue: Athlone Springs Hotel

Chair: Mary Coughlan

9.30am-9.45am – Welcome – Dr Maura Farrell, University of Galway & the National Rural Network

9.45am-10.00am – Opening Address – Pippa Hackett, Minister of State for Land Use & Biodiversity

### Session 1: EIP-AGRI - Innovative Practices and Impact

10.00am-11.00am

Gillian Westbrook, **MOPS (Maximising Organic Production Systems) Project**

Seán Finan, **Small Biogas Demonstration Project (SBDP)**

Caroline Lalor, **FarmPEAT Project**

Bernard Carey, **Biomass to Biochar for Farm Bioeconomy (BBFB)**

Dr Patrick Crushell, **Pearl Mussel Project**

Declan Byrne, **SUAS (Sustainable Uplands Agriculture-environment Scheme) Project**

To Include Q&A Session Facilitated by Dr Shane Conway, University of Galway & the National Rural Network



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11.00am-11.20am – Coffee/Tea Break & EIP-AGRI Projects Exhibition

### Session 2: EIP-AGRI - Experiences 'On the Ground'

11.20am - 12.00pm

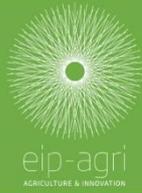
Dr Patrick McGurn & Participating Farmer, **Caomhnú Árann Project**

Niamh Nolan & Participating Farmer, **Farmers4Safety Project**

Dr Saorla Kavanagh & Participating Farmer, **Protecting Farmland Pollinators Project**

Dr Daniel Curley & Participating Farmer, **Farming Rathcroghan EIP Project**

Ruairí Ó Conchúir & Participating Farmer, **Inagh EIP Project**



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12.00pm-12.30pm – Update from the DAFM on where EIP-AGRI sits within Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) for the period 2023-2027

12.30pm-1.15pm – Lunch & EIP-AGRI Projects Exhibition

1.15pm-2.45pm - Session 3: EIP-AGRI – 'Inspiring the Future' Breakout Groups & Feedback

2.45pm-3.00pm – Closing Remarks - Donal Sheehan, BRIDE (Biodiversity Regeneration in a Dairying Environment) Project

3.00pm-4.00pm – Networking Opportunity & EIP-AGRI Projects Exhibition

Organised in conjunction with the  
the Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine (DAFM)



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



National Rural Network





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

## EIP-AGRI National Conference 2022 Report

On Monday, the 28th of November 2022, the National Rural Network (NRN) hosted an EIP-AGRI National Conference on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), which brought farmers, researchers, community groups, farm advisers and policymakers together to discuss successful innovative approaches towards agri-environmental protection and sustainability of farms across Ireland through EIP-AGRI's locally-led, farmer-centred approach, and to extract the numerous lessons learned to date over the course of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020 (extended to 2022).



### National EIP-AGRI Conference 2022

Date: November 28th, 2022  
Location: Athlone Springs Hotel  
Chair: Mary Coughlan



The conference was broken into three sessions. The first heard about the innovative practices and impact of six EIP-AGRI projects located throughout Ireland. The second provided attendees with an insight into the experiences 'on the ground' of another five EIP-AGRI projects. This was followed by a representative from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) explaining the role of EIP-AGRI within the new CAP Strategic Plan (2023-2027). The final session invited attendees into breakout sessions to discuss the future of EIP-AGRI in Ireland.

This report draws together the key messages emerging from the event.



Some members of the NRN team with Pippa Hackett (Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine) and conference chair Mary Coughlan (Former Tánaiste)

### Welcome Address

**Kicking off the conference, Dr Maura Farrell, of the University of Galway and the NRN, welcomed attendees and began by giving an overview of EIP-AGRI and its journey in Ireland in recent years.**

*"The European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture Productivity and Sustainability programme was launched by the European Commission in 2012. It was launched as a suite of innovation across Europe. It is an interactive, innovative model that goes much beyond the linear innovation models of the past.*

*"EIP-AGRI is a multi-actor approach which brings together farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs, community groups to form Operational Groups, and allows them to build the bridges between research and practice."*



Dr Farrell highlighted the involvement of the NRN in disseminating information pertaining to EIP-AGRI projects since 2016, via Action Weeks, themed publications and farmer-centred video blogs, to name but some.



*“The NRN exists to improve the dissemination of the RDP, to promote all the elements of the programme and to facilitate the networking of groups that need to know about the programme.*

*“My learning from the very beginning of EIP-AGRI in Ireland was that farmers were really central to these projects... These were the people who had the ideas of how these projects would work. Giving farmers a forum to speak is something that the NRN has tried to do.”*



**National Rural Network Supporting the EIP-AGRI Initiative through innovative multi-method communication strategies**



Dr Farrell went on to cite recent research carried out by the University of Galway in the area of EIP-AGRI which focused on a range of key issues including: (i) the most challenging aspects of setting up an EIP-AGRI Operational Group (OG); (ii) the least challenging aspects of setting up an OG; (iii) the level of interaction within OGs; (iv) the most innovative aspect of EIP-AGRI projects; (v) the transferability of current EIP-AGRI projects; (vi) the greatest success of EIP-AGRI projects; (vii) the level of

collaboration between farmers, researchers and advisers; (viii) funding for EIP-AGRI projects; and (ix) future EIP-AGRI themes.

Some of the main learnings presented by Dr Farrell, from the NRN team’s research at the University of Galway, are detailed below.

## Key Learnings

EIP-AGRI still **relatively new** – success of projects lies in the innovation of the projects, but also OG’s **ability to engage** with the multi-actor approach.

- High level of potential **transferability**
- Lasting legacy: networks formed and **communities brought together** to work on a shared problem, issue or interest.
- Knowledge exchange** between all rural stakeholders – bottom-up rather than a ‘top-down’
- Building **trust and respect** between all actors involved
- Merit and Impact of a **Results-Based Approach**
- Boosting innovation** in agriculture and the revitalisation of rural areas.
- Value of **flexible, practical, locally adaptable, locally relevant measures**

**Dr Farrell’s presentation is available to view [here](#).**



## Opening Address

**The NRN was delighted to welcome the Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Pippa Hackett, who gave the opening address at the EIP-AGRI National Conference 2022.**



Minister Hackett began by contextualising the EIP-AGRI programme in Ireland in 2022.

*“We are at a very interesting point in the development of European Innovation Partnerships within Irish agriculture as we move from the Rural Development Programme to the CAP Strategic Plan. Today’s conference will take stock of the last six years of successful EIP projects and will look forward to the next five-year programming period.*”

*“I am excited to see the themes that will arise from today and I will watch with interest at these themes hopefully being developed to become fully fledged calls for proposals and ultimately working projects which we all hope will be a great success over the coming years.”*

The expertise and reach of the NRN was then acknowledged by Minister Hackett as being invaluable in encouraging the involvement of farmers, and other stakeholders central to the EIP’s successes, which has in turn maximised access to funding, education and innovation.

Minister Hackett continued:

*“Ireland’s approach to EIPs has been one of the most ambitious and successful in Europe and other member states look to us as an example of how best to approach the EIP model. We have had a mix of large and small scale projects, all locally led extending over diverse landscapes across the country.”*

The vital role of local ownership and participation to the success of EIP projects in addressing a wide range of issues was then highlighted by Minister Hackett.

*“EIPs demonstrate a genuine bottom-up approach – local communities getting involved to provide solutions to environmental challenges in their own areas.*”

*“While many of the projects my Department supported were aimed at the environment and biodiversity, other EIP projects were targeted at farm safety, health and wellbeing of farmers and succession challenges in farm families.”*

Minister Hackett concluded with an important message for conference participants:

*“To those of you that are here, this is an opportunity for you to showcase your hard work over the lifetime of the project. We are keen to learn from your work, and to take those learnings into the next programming period.”*



## Session 1: EIP-AGRI – Innovative Practices and Impact



***Dr Shane Conway, of the University of Galway and the NRN, introduced the first session of the day which was focused on extracting the lessons learned from the innovative practices and impact of featured EIP-AGRI projects to date.***



Opening the session, Dr Conway acknowledged the diversity of EIP-AGRI projects on the ground.

*“In selecting the diverse line up of speakers today, we were very cognisant that EIP-AGRI is much more than an agri-environmental initiative, and I was delighted to hear the Minister acknowledge this. Innovation has no boundaries; it knows no boundaries.”*

Before inviting the first of the guest speakers to the podium, Dr Conway presented an interactive map to those in attendance, produced by the NRN team, containing the locations of the lead partners in each of the 57 EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects throughout Ireland, which serves to highlight their impact and geographical spread.



### Session 1: EIP-AGRI – Innovative Practices and Impact Speakers

- Gillian Westbrook, **MOPS (Maximising Organic Production Systems) Project**
- Seán Finan, **Small Biogas Demonstration Project (SBDP)**
- Caroline Lalor, **FarmPEAT Project**
- Bernard Carey, **Biomass to Biochar for Farm Bioeconomy (BBFB)**
- Dr Patrick Crushell, **Pearl Mussel Project**
- Declan Byrne, **SUAS (Sustainable Uplands Agriculture-environment Scheme) Project**

### Gillian Westbrook, MOPS (Maximising Organic Production Systems) Project



**Gillian Westbrook, CEO of the Irish Organic Association, gave a presentation on Maximising Organic Production Systems (MOPS), an EIP project for organic horticulture in Ireland and one of the first EIPs in Europe to examine market orientation.**

The project involved 11 horticultural farms, all certified organic varying in sizes from one hectare up to 110 hectares.

*“The key point here was to look at these farms and basically to develop a series of cropping plans, and for anyone who doesn’t know, a cropping plan is a series of planting techniques; scheduling when you should plant things, at what distances and how it should be done in order to maximise your production.*

*“Most of these farms were competing with one another in one way for the same space on the same shelf so it was very important that we started to work together. We needed to extend the growing period.”*

Gillian outlined some of the main innovative aspects of the project:

- 1) A green manure trial was conducted to ensure soil fertility.
- 2) Monitoring was carried out for Relative Humidity (RH), soil and air temperature. This was a historical analysis. For example,

if it was clear that certain crops hadn’t performed well in the past, this monitoring made it possible to look back and analyse if there had been any climatic influences.

- 3) A market report was carried out for 2020, which had never been done before. This incorporated all products grown in Ireland. Stemming from this, a projected volume was calculated for main organic vegetables in Ireland in 2021.
- 4) A series of videos were produced showing other growers some of the less technical aspects. These videos clearly demonstrated what was working and what was not.

Concluding her presentation, Gillian detailed some of the main quantitative results of the project. For example, sales on participating farms had increased significantly by 112%.

*“It proves for us if you can get organics to the shelf, it will sell.”*

**Gillian’s presentation is available to view [here](#).**

### Seán Finan, Small Biogas Demonstration Project (SBDP)



**Seán Finan, CEO of the Irish Bioenergy Association, presented on the Small Biogas Demonstration Project (SBDP), an EIP which encourages the mobilisation of small scale biogas in Ireland.**

A key aspect of the EIP-AGRI project from the outset was raising awareness among the farming community of what biogas is.

*“We learned that there was huge confusion around the different scales that potentially exist in Ireland. Based on that, we developed a table to distinguish between farm scale and medium-large scale biogas plants. The farmer role is central but very different in both cases, and the Animal By Products Regulations determine what scale and size of biogas plant a farmer can build in terms of its location, its feedstock, types of feedstock, energy output and supports.”*

According to Seán, the project’s aim is centred on demonstrating farm biogas to complement existing farm enterprises. SBDP received capital support to build three farm biogas demonstration plants (which is ongoing), utilising on farm feedstock such as slurry, silage, FYM, crops, and satisfying an on farm / or vicinity energy demand. The key issues the project aspires to address include nutrients recycling, reducing emissions, runoff and odours.

Initially, the project held seven workshops to disseminate key information to farmers, which were attended by 461 people. In addition, an Expressions of Interest process was carried out. 260 farmers expressed interest in the three capital grants (which was over 10 times the expected farmer response).

All applicants were assessed based on feedstock available and energy demand and were divided into three categories:

- **Category 1** (No potential – No Feedstock). 130 farms were identified.
- **Category 2** (Medium Potential – Some feedstock and energy demand). 100 farms were identified.
- **Category 3** (High Potential – Both feedstock and energy demand). 30 farms were identified.

There was subsequent engagement with category 3 farmers to develop proposals, feasibility studies and select demo sites, and after a rigorous shortlisting process, three projects ultimately progressed in Co. Tipperary, Co. Galway and West Cork which are currently at different stages of the planning process.

A selection of the key learnings of the project to date presented by Seán are listed below.

**Small Scale Biogas EIP - Key learnings to date**

Huge level of farmer interest in biogas – information meetings and enquiries verify this.  
Lack of information and technical knowledge exists about biogas at all levels.  
Biogas spoken about very simplistically.  
Significant farmer confusion about the different scales possible – Small v/s Medium/Large.  
Very clear distinctions between the different scales and requirements and farmers specific roles.  
Farmers role at farm scale – run the plant and use energy output on farm  
Farmers role at industrial scale – provide feedstock for generation of energy output transmitted to a grid (elec or gas) or as a heating or transport fuel  
Farm biogas suits enterprises with year round slurry availability and continuous energy demand.  
Beef finishers have slurry but no energy demand – solutions being explored.



Some of the priority actions for the coming year are outlined below.

**Priority Actions in 2022 and 2023 to completion**

Finalise extension details for the project with DAFM following Covid delays, other impacts beyond the control of the project and mention for extension in 2021 Climate Action Plan  
Assist farmers to: secure planning permission for projects, procure technology and progress construction  
Progress proposed dairy farmer and Coop collaboration to work on an additional trial small scale demo on a dairy farm  
Gurteen college demo project to be progressed (small scale containerised system)  
Establishment of a panel of AD / Biogas technology providers which will act as a pre-qualification for a later tender process by each farmer with assistance from IRBEA  
Animal By Products (ABP) discussions have taken place with DAFM – Initial meeting held and no issues arising  
Draft SSRH application to be started and engage with SEAI  
Teagasc –Life Cycle Analysis to be progressed  
Progress Feedstock analysis – Samples tested by Celignis  
Online tool for farmers – investigate pricing and options.



Seán’s presentation is available to view [here](#).

### Caroline Lalor, FarmPEAT Project



**Caroline Lalor, Project Manager, FarmPEAT, gave a presentation on this two-year EIP which is developing new ways to practice agriculture within the peat landscape.**

Caroline began by detailing some of the main aims of the project, which include:

- To work with farmers to design and trial a locally adapted results-based scheme for the Irish Midland Landscape.

*“Really our focus is on the peat soils. All of our farmers have land that is adjacent to a raised bog, predominantly a protected raised bog as well. We’re essentially incentivising them to raise their water levels in their fields. In other words, slow the flow of water in the drains that they have spent generations trying to increase. It is a big change for our farmers.”*

- Design a scheme that will incentivise improved management of habitats on peat soils, benefitting climate, biodiversity and water.

*“It’s a holistic approach, so we’re focusing on biodiversity and water quality as well, and they’re so interlinked. If you slow the flow in a drain, you are reducing the amount of sediment that is going into the water courses, so that’s a benefit for water quality and obviously the plants that are dependent on high water levels...”*

- Reward farmers for maintaining and improving the local environment.

*“The one thing I really love about the results based approach is that your rewarding farmers from the get go for their past management – so if a farmer has been managing their land in a way that is conducive to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and keeping the peat soils wet, they get a reward straight away... The higher the score, the higher the payment and because our project is very focused on the water level in the peat soils, we put a very strong weight on our scorecard for where the water is in the drains. So, the higher the water level in your*

*drains, the higher the score you’ll get and the higher the payment.”*

- Increase the awareness of farmers and the community (i.e. schools, community groups) not only of the importance of the raised bogs but also the impact that the peat soils (on which these farmers are farming), have on the environment, depending on how they are managed in these areas.

Next, Caroline elaborated on five of FarmPEAT’s key innovations.

### 1) Bottom-Up Approach

*“... If a farmer has an idea on their farm that they want to implement and it’s in line with our objectives and we feel it’s going to have an environmental benefit, then we are very supportive of that.*

*“Similarly with the communities, as part of our FarmPEAT ‘Love Your Wellies’ initiative, we are approaching schools explaining what we are about, what we are trying to achieve and then asking them what they are trying to achieve and what we can do to help them reach those objectives...”*

### 2) Affiliate Members

*“We are working with farmers who have peat soils and who have drains. One of the impacts of slowing the flow of water in those drains, in a lot of cases, is that it is going to have an impact on an adjacent farmer who might not be in the project. We are trialling an approach whereby we will calculate / estimate the area that would be impacted on these adjacent farms and will offer them compensation if they will allow us to do the works in the farmland that’s within the project... It will be a lesson learned, whether it works or whether it doesn’t...”*

### 3) Participant Farmers Involvement

There are 51 farmers in the FarmPEAT project and some of these farmers have additional

responsibilities including (i) representation on the project steering group and (ii) involvement in carrying out water level monitoring. These farmers benefit from increased exposure to the project while the project gains from the local knowledge and first-hand perspectives of these farmers.

#### 4) Hydrology

*“Hydrology is key to the project. We are working with RPS consultants. They have a lot of experience in working with high, raised bogs and trying to control the flow of water there, to raise the water level in the peat. So they’re working with us now, moving that expertise onto the agricultural land.”*

The project is currently trialling putting in dams on permeable substrates and additionally, it is trialling a Hydrology Assessment Scorecard.

#### 5) Community Outreach

*“The ‘Love Your Wellies’ initiative brought a smile to people and it gets people engaged... It’s all about awareness raising, working with communities, and schools and the farmers. We had great success with our ‘Love Your Wellies’ Art’s Competition which ran for the first time this year and we will run it again next year. Over 1,000 schools were involved in our area and it expanded and included entries from all over the country, from England and America. The social media reach was over half a million...”*

Caroline concluded by acknowledging some of the project’s quantitative achievements to date, which include:

- 97 per cent of participant farmers have said that they are willing to change the management of their peat soils for the better.
- 20 per cent of participant farmers have said that they would be willing to re-wet their peat soils in the future.

**Caroline’s presentation is available to view [here](#).**

#### Bernard Carey, Biomass to Biochar for Farm Bioeconomy (BBFB)



***Bernard Carey gave an overview of Biomass to Biochar for Farm Bioeconomy (BBFB), an EIP which aims to demonstrate how unwanted or underutilised agricultural biomass such as rushes, gorse, bracken and hazel, can be used to produce biochar through a life cycle approach for current management practices and farm vegetative control.***

A key part of this project, according to Bernard, is the Mobile Pyrolysis Unit (MPU), a machine used to convert biomass saved by the land owner into biochar. The bales of biomass, such as rushes, are loaded onto a hopper, and then pass through the MPU at a set temperature and residence time.

Bernard explained some of the reasons why biochar is so important today.

*“... It can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve the quality of slurry and there is a possibility for farmers to get carbon credits in the future and that’s a rapidly developing market at the moment.”*

Bernard outlined a number of trials and studies that are ongoing as part of the project which are directly linked to biochar and its benefits. In addition, he cited a survey which was created and circulated by the project for the purpose of answering the question: *How many rushes are out there?* This survey received responses from 125 farms across 21 counties.

Among the notable findings, according to Bernard, was that 65 per cent of respondents said they that were actively managing rushes and putting energy into this activity but not getting any reward / compensation for it.

Next, Bernard noted some of the products that have been generated by the Biomass to Biochar for Farm Bioeconomy (BBFB) EIP which include: dry rushes, chopped rushes, briquettes and pellets made from hammer milled rushes, biochar made from chopped rushes, and torrefied pellets.

Concluding his presentation, Bernard listed a wide array of opportunities for biochar usage moving forward, such as to improve water quality and for energy generation.

*“The opportunities are vast for biochar.”*

**Bernard’s presentation is available to view [here](#).**

### Dr Patrick Crushell, Pearl Mussel Project



**Dr Patrick Crushell, Project Manager, Pearl Mussel Project EIP, gave a presentation on this community-led project striving to protect freshwater pearl mussel in Ireland.**

Dr Crushell began by highlighting the uniqueness of the project.

*“This is one of the larger EIPs with a budget of 10 million euro. It is a five-year project. What’s innovative about our project was to see if you could adapt the results-based approach that*

*was tried and tested on terrestrial habitats and species. The challenge was to see if you could adapt it and target freshwater aquatic species and associated water quality and river habitat. That was the main challenge.”*

Dr Crushell elaborated on the freshwater pearl mussel and some of the main challenges associated with the protection of this species.

*“Freshwater pearl mussel occurs in extremely pristine river systems in Ireland. It’s probably extinct from 90 per cent of rivers it once occurred in in the country. It has undergone massive decline in the last 30-40 years. A lot of that decline is down to land use change, typically agriculture and forestry...”*

*“Flow, sediments and nutrients are the main issues impacting on the freshwater pearl mussel and the habitat. These are the pressures that we are trying to address through our results-based model.”*

The project is operation in eight catchments in the West of Ireland with a total number of 470 participant farmers, covering over 30 hectares.

The results-based approach is a fundamental aspect of the Pearl Mussel EIP.

*“The results-based approach is all about rewarding quality – the higher the quality, the higher the payment. It’s cost-effective, makes sense, rewards and incentivises improvements.”*

Some of the main achievements of the project to date, mentioned by Dr Crushell, included: (i) Advisor training and support: The project has worked with, trained and upskilled 61 farm advisors throughout the programme and; (ii) Farmer training: Attendance is mandatory as part of the programme. Frequent engagement with, and feedback from farmers has proved vital.

**Dr Crushell’s presentation is available to view [here](#).**

## Declan Byrne, SUAS (Sustainable Uplands Agriculture-environment Scheme) Project



**Declan Byrne, Project Manager, SUAS Project, presented on this EIP which aims to address complex challenges associated with the land management of commonages and hill farms in the Wicklow/ Dublin uplands.**

Declan began by highlighting the key role of the EIP's Operational Group.

*"When we were putting together our Operational Group, we targeted what skills we needed to deliver the project... We ended up with a very proactive Operational Group, very open to trying new things and very supportive in everything that we were trying to do."*

Declan outlined a selection of the project's main innovations to date, which included:

### 1) Dealing with commonage farmers

*"Up to now, these farmers have always been dealt with as individuals. What we did was we brought them together and dealt with them as a collective... We've also developed a blueprint on how to form these commonage groups for use in other areas."*

### 2) Habitat management

*"Grazing is our number one management tool in the uplands..."*

One example of grazing, mentioned by Declan,

was the introduction of cattle to a number of upland areas as part of the project.

*"Most of our mountains are open, without any fencing. To make it possible for farmers to find their animals, we started using GPS collars."*

### 3) Controlled burning

*"We carried out controlled burning on a number of sites... What we learned is that controlled burning is not just about lighting a fire. We need to move on our conversation and talk about where is it appropriate, how to carry it out, what are the results of it..."*

Declan also highlighted the need to offer alternatives to farmers to eradicate the issue of burning.

### 4) Mobile phone app

*"If something is easy to do, farmers are more likely to do it. We developed a mobile phone app. We wanted to be able to capture what was happening with the sheep numbers on the hills... Also, we built in a facility where farmers could claim for their actions completed..."*

Next, Declan promoted the practice of trying new things.

*"If something works, it's a success. If it doesn't work, it's a lesson learned and not a failure... For me, the only failure from EIP projects is being afraid to try something new."*

Declan concluded with one of the key messages of his presentation: 'People Working Together'.

*"This is about farmers working together in commonages, with our ecologists, NPWS and our Operational Group. These relationships do take time to develop and to grow. For us, the first couple of years were spent building up those relationships. These projects are very short term; if you're trying to change farmer attitudes, you have to think long term."*

**Declan's presentation is available to view [here](#).**

## Session 2: EIP-AGRI – Experiences ‘On the Ground’



*The second session of the day was chaired by Mary Coughlan, former Tánaiste. Mary was joined by key stakeholders from featured EIP-AGRI projects including project managers, participating farmers and mentors to share their experiences on the ground with those in attendance.*



### Session 2: EIP-AGRI – Experiences ‘On the Ground’ Speakers

- Dr Patrick McGurn & Gráinne Ní Chonghaile (Participating Farmer), *Caomhnú Árann Project*
- Niamh Nolan & Ned Kearney (Participating Mentor), *Farmers4Safety Project*
- Dr Saorla Kavanagh & Andrew Bergin (Participating Farmer), *Protecting Farmland Pollinators Project*
- Richie Farrell & Gerard Healy (Participating Farmer), *Farming Rathcroghan EIP Project*
- Ruairí Ó Conchúir & Ragna Gruendler (Participating Farmer), *Inagh EIP Project*

#### Dr Patrick McGurn & Gráinne Ní Chonghaile, Caomhnú Árann Project

##### Caomhnú Árann Project

• This project aims to protect and restore priority habitat on the Aran Islands at lower costs and greater efficiency through the exploration and development of innovative methods of habitat improvement and conservation, and also to meet the phosphorous requirements of the grazing animal without affecting overall plant diversity.



Dr Patrick McGurn, Project Manager, Caomhnú Árann Project, began by providing some context.

*“We looked at using auto imagery, multispectral analysis and drone footage to see if we could come up with a score for a field instead of walking every field. That worked well.”*

The project developed a scoring system from 1-5 and organised training courses for participating farmers to create a collective understanding of how these scores were reached. As well as using drone footage and auto imagery, fields were visited in person as part of the project, to ensure accuracy in scoring.

A major innovative part of the project was the ‘farmer self-assessment’. The training course equipped participating farmers with the tools to score their own lands. Farmers tended to be harder on themselves than what was the reality, for example giving themselves a 4 in some instances rather than the 5 that they may have merited.

*“Instead of the consultant or the agricultural advisor doing it, the farmers scored the land themselves.”*

Other innovative practices, mentioned by Dr McGurn, undertaken as part of the project, included: (i) adopting different methods of gathering seed and; (ii) applying phosphate to the species-rich grasslands.

Gráinne Ní Chonghaile, administrator and participating farmer on the Caomhnú Árann project then offered insight from her experiences.

Gráinne highlighted the results-based payments model as one of the most positive things to have come from the project, which has in turn created a direct link between practices to improve grazing and the payment received by farmers.

Reiterating Dr McGurn’s earlier comments, Gráinne stressed the importance and success of the training rolled out to farmers to assist them with scoring their own fields.

*“One of the best outcomes of this project is the farmers realising the importance of the habitat and what they’re doing on the ground.”*

**For more information, visit the Caomhnú Árann Project [website](#).**

### **Niamh Nolan & Ned Kearney, Farmers4Safety Project**

#### **Farmers4Safety Project**

- This project adopts an innovative, peer-to-peer mentor approach to engage the entire farming community, both young and old, in attitudinal and behavioural change towards farm safety, health and wellbeing. Such an approach provides strong networking benefits for farmers and their families, enabling the creation of a co-learning environment that allows them to share their needs and concerns with their peers.



Niamh Nolan, Project Manager, Farmers4Safety Managing Risk Together, provided a brief overview of the EIP-AGRI project to begin.

*“It is one of eight farm safety, health and wellbeing EIP-AGRI projects... Our project focuses on counties Cork, Tipperary and Wexford. Unfortunately, the reason why these counties were picked is based on Health and Safety Authority data - they have the highest number of farm fatalities.”*

The Farmers4Safety project adopts a peer-to-peer mentor approach and highlights the value of farmers engaging with each other and learning from each other to overcome and address farm safety, health and wellbeing.

Niamh elaborated on some of the main activities undertaken as part of the project.

*“We attended eight agricultural shows and events within the catchment areas, the National Ploughing Championships, along with engaging with 1,578 farmers. 60 subjects were*

*discussed with farmers whether that was the weather, the war, the costs, the prices, the marts..."*

Additionally, the project distributed surveys to farmers and farm families, partners and service providers enabling it to gather a wide range of perspectives of attitudes and behaviours towards farm safety, health and wellbeing.

Regional WhatsApp groups were also set up notifying participating farmers of upcoming events and workshops in their areas.

Ned Kearney, a farm mentor in Co. Cork, added his reflections on the Farmers4Safety Project to date.

*"Farmers were more than willing to engage with this project on a one-to-one level especially. Farming is becoming more and more isolated all the time, farmers are more and more working on their own... They felt alone, they wanted to get ideas and a direction on how to go forward."*

Ned noted the huge attitudinal change among farmers on the ground during the period of project. A key factor, he said, was increasing awareness of issues related to farm safety by conversing with farmers, which is often most effective on a one-to-one level, with farmers more likely to be forthcoming with their views.

Ned highlighted two of the major successes of the project: (i) the regional WhatsApp groups which provided a vital means of connecting with participating farmers and keeping them up to date and; (ii) a buddy system which was set up to support farmers particularly when undertaking a dangerous task.

Ned concluded:

*"It was a fabulous project to be involved with, it worked really well and we got loads of ideas."*

**For more information, visit the Farmers4Safety Project [website](#).**

**Dr Saorla Kavanagh & Andrew Bergin, Protecting Farmland Pollinators Project**



Dr Saorla Kavanagh, of the National Biodiversity Data Centre in Co. Waterford, began by giving a brief overview of the EIP-AGRI project to date.

*"We set out wanting to identify actions that farmers could take that would help biodiversity of pollinators on the farm. Essentially, we are using pollinators as a proxy to biodiversity – to identify actions that farmers can take on the farm that will not negatively impact on farm productivity. We worked with farmers to identify what these actions would be."*

*"We got a group of 40 farmers involved from a range of different farm types, farm intensities, farm sizes and even household incomes. These 40 farmers fed into the development of the project as it went on and still to this day there is plenty of feedback from them."*

A scorecard was created as part of this project, containing 19 actions. Each year, the farmer fills in this scorecard, essentially scoring themselves on how pollinator friendly they think their farm is.

*"Depending on the quantity and quality of the habitat that the farmer is maintaining or creating, they receive pollinator points. We are operating a results-based payments system so depending on how high your pollinator points are, the higher the monetary reward. It's completely optional for the farmer what they want to do."*

Between year one and year three of the project, over 30 of the participating farmers

have taken more actions to help pollinators on the farms resulting in increased monetary rewards.

Andrew Bergin, a participating farmer on the Protecting Farmland Pollinators Project, added his thoughts.

*“This has been a great collaboration between the farmers and the staff at the National Biodiversity Data Centre... All the farms involved have learned an awful lot about pollinators as most of us knew practically nothing about them and didn’t realise the habitat we already had and the simple ways we could improve that habitat very, very significantly.”*

In particular, Andrew promoted the benefits of the results-based approach, which is at the core of this project.

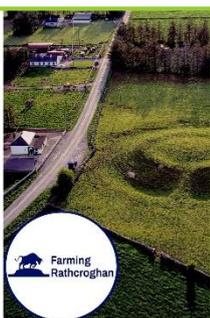
*“The results-based structure is a big incentive because you immediately get feedback with information and monetary feedback on improvements in your habitat.”*

**More information on the Protecting Farmland Pollinators Project can be found [here](#).**

### Richie Farrell & Gerard Healy, Farming Rathcroghan EIP Project

#### Farming Rathcroghan Project

- This project aims to improve the socio-economic circumstances of farming in Rathcroghan whilst also conserving and enhancing the internationally significant archaeological landscape through the deliverance of interventions which provide co-benefits for a range of services – including biodiversity, carbon sequestration and water quality.



Richie Farrell, Project Manager, Rathcroghan EIP Project, began by providing an overview in his own unique way.

What: *“The project is providing sustainable management of the Rathcroghan landscape by balancing the archaeological needs with the farming needs.”*

Why: *“Local people getting involved in something from the bottom-up. Of course, there are legal and statutory requirements to protect the landscape under the National Monuments Act and that presents its own challenges...”*

When: *“We are in year four of a five-year project... We are on the ground on a weekly basis, doing six-eight farms per week.”*

How: The project has a strong, multi-actor Operational Group with diverse representation.

Where: *“In a complex that is highly archaeologically sensitive. The area comprises six-and-a-half square kilometres with 240 archaeological features, 17 national monuments and where farming has been actively carried out for over 5,000 years. The project is based around a two-and-a-half kilometre radius around the Rathcroghan mound itself...”*

Who: Proactive relationship with 31 project farmers, with an additional 12 on standby. Their support, involvement and contribution is vital to the success of the project.

Some of the interventions delivered as part of the project to date include resting frames, non-intrusive fencing, training courses in high stone walling, hedge laying, precision farming and compaction.

Gerard Healy, a participating farmer on the Rathcroghan EIP Project, offered insights from his experiences to date.

Gerard highlighted the farmer-led nature of the project.

*“The farmer is the core of the EIP. You decide with your Project Manager and the Department, in our case, what you can or can’t do with the land... Everybody involved has a scorecard... You have been told and shown how to protect the archaeology.”*

Gerard acknowledged some of the restrictions faced by participating farmers because of the

nature of the land and the need to be innovative in response to this.

Among the innovations that have been successful include non-intrusive fencing, stoning around water troughs, and carefully managing where cattle is fed.

*“A lot of it is about management... I have trialled a few things that didn’t work but it doesn’t mean you’ve failed, you’ve just tried. As someone else said earlier today, sometimes innovation is about doing nothing – so if you fence off an area of a mound and let it grow back naturally, sometimes that’ll work.”*

Gerard concluded:

*“EIPs can be hard to set up and to keep going... It would be a shame if just after the five years, we stopped... We need to continue on in some shape or form. The archaeology has been there for thousands of years and it isn’t going anywhere soon.”*

**For more information, visit the Farming Rathcrogan EIP Project [website](#).**

### Ruairí Ó Conchúir & Ragna Gruendler, Inagh EIP-AGRI Project

#### Inagh EIP Project

- This project is designed to deliver a new approach to address the joint concerns of biodiversity and habitat loss and concurrent loss of high ecological status water bodies in the Upper Inagh River Catchment, West Clare, by developing farming for nature and catchment sensitive farming and forestry practices.
- The overall aim is to demonstrate that biodiversity loss can be minimised, and site-specific mitigation measures can be implemented by farmers, scientists and advisors working together on a catchment scale.



Ruairí Ó Conchúir, of the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), provided a background on the EIP-AGRI project.

Focusing on the Upper Inagh River Catchment in West Clare, the project developed 36 site-specific mitigation measures which were open to individual farmers to select from.

*“This is the second largest catchment in County Clare and it highlights all of the significant*

*pressures that are on our water quality: agriculture, forestry, hydromorphology and inadequate waste water treatment facilities.”*

Ruairí outlined three of the most innovative aspects of the Inagh EIP-AGRI Operational Group:

1) The project utilises tools that already exist such as PIP (Pollutant Impact Potential) maps to break the pathway of: where the pollution is coming from, how it is travelling and how it is getting into the Inagh River. Various measures such as putting in ponds, networks of ponds and corridors have been adopted.

2) The project works with contractors who are experienced at carrying out land drainage works. The concept of draining the land is replaced with the concept of holding this water on the land via various retention measures.

3) More than 35 meetings were held in the houses and sheds of farmers, giving them an opportunity to share and exchange ideas.

Ragna Gruendler, participating farmer, who was also involved in the implementation of the project, added her reflections on the Inagh EIP.

From the outset of the project, Ragna said that she was “emotionally touched” at the response of the community.

*“The project has brought us together. It has a taught us a lot more about water quality... Everybody has pride in with they have done on their farms... A lot of sharing has happened.”*

There is now a real willingness from those involved to continue with the good work. Ragna’s concluding comments were very much in keeping with the sentiments of all of the other panellists.

*“It has been a very, very rewarding experience. Anyone who’s involved in a farmer-led EIP would say the same, it is the way forward for all of us.”*

**More information on the Inagh EIP-AGRI Project can be found [here](#).**

## Update on where EIP-AGRI sits within Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) for the period 2023-2027

**Colm Hayes, Assistant Secretary General at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) outlined EIP-AGRI priorities within the new CSP.**



Colm began by acknowledging the importance of communicating the successes of EIP-AGRI projects to date and hailed the positivity in the presentations and discussions earlier that day as “inspiring”.

Looking ahead to where EIP-AGRI sits within Ireland's CSP 2023-2027, Colm stressed that it was currently a blank page and that all relevant stakeholder feedback is encouraged and will be taken on board.

*“The Department's perspective - and the Minister mentioned this earlier - will not be top-down next time around... The success comes from the bottom-up. It comes from the farmers, the scientists, the ecologists, all working locally.”*

Colm then presented a non-exhaustive list of potential EIP themes included in Ireland's CSP 2023-2027 and cited the environment as the biggest challenge in agriculture currently.

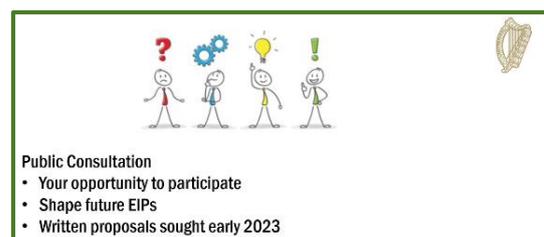


Building on this, Colm offered some advice to those considering an EIP in the future.

*“It is very useful for anyone in the room thinking about a future EIP, think about what the big national priorities are, think about the Government priorities of the day, think about the direction the EU is moving in... Make the case around how you are aligned with those high-level priorities.”*

Colm earmarked EIPs set out in the new CSP which are considered to be priority issues. Among those mentioned under the theme of the environment were Shannon Callows and Breeding Waders. The recently launched €50 million flagship Water EIP, which is separate from the general EIP budget, was also mentioned.

Next, Colm outlined the next steps for DAFM which will incorporate a consultation in early 2023 for a number of weeks for anyone interested to help shape the future of EIPs.



Concluding his presentation, Colm offered some further advice for future applicants.

*“Every EIP applicant, and there are lots in this room I'm sure for next time around, when you apply, we are going to be looking at these (applications) and thinking: where is that group going to be in 4-5 years' time? what are they going to have delivered? is it something that can possibly be scaled up? is it something that is local? does it fit within the themes?”*

## Session 3: EIP-AGRI – ‘Inspiring the Future’ Breakout Groups and Feedback

*Conference participants were given the opportunity to attend a breakout session in the afternoon which was facilitated by a member of the NRN team and supported by a note taker with involvement in an EIP-AGRI project on the ground.*

### Workshop 1

- **Facilitator:** Dr Lorraine Holloway, NRN
- **Note Taker:** Emma Byrne, FarmPEAT Project

### Workshop 2

- **Facilitator:** Johnny Sheehan, NRN
- **Note Taker:** Peter Rose, Blackstairs EIP

### Workshop 3

- **Facilitator:** Evelyn Slevin, NRN
- **Note Taker:** Bridget Murphy, Talamh Beo

### Workshop 4

- **Facilitator:** Declan Phelan, NRN
- **Note Taker:** Kate McAney, Mulkear EIP

### Workshop 5

- **Facilitator:** Fintan McCabe, NRN
- **Note Taker:** Alyssa Alderson, University of Galway student

### Workshop 6

- **Facilitator:** James Claffey, NRN
- **Note Taker:** Brendan O’ Malley, Forum Connemara

Discussions in each of the six workshops were focused around two key questions.

### 1) What lessons can we take from the current EIP-AGRI programme that could help shape the new programme?

The main responses to this question have been categorised under four themes: Knowledge Exchange; Education; Duration of EIP-AGRI Projects; and Policy Implications.

#### Knowledge Exchange

- The consensus was that events such as the EIP-AGRI National Conference 2022 provide an ideal opportunity to promote the successes of EIP-AGRI projects. There is a clear willingness from actors within EIP-AGRI projects, generally, to connect with, and learn from each other’s experiences on the ground. A number of participants indicated their desire for more opportunities to network.
- It was mentioned that increased attention in print and digital media of the great work undertaken to date, potentially via a weekly column in the Irish Farmers Journal, would be beneficial, to capture the interest of all rural stakeholders.
- The many benefits of EIP-AGRI projects in terms of their impact and innovation were widely acknowledged but concerns were raised over the subsequent learnings on completion of a project. Many participants stressed the need for projects to document their results (i.e. what worked well and what did not) and to make this information freely available for new EIPs to learn from.
- To ensure that relevant knowledge is being fully utilised, it was suggested that an advisory group be set up, consisting of actors from current EIPs, to help and provide advice to future EIPs, sharing the lessons learned and helping to create a pathway for future ideas to develop.



- Another participant put forward the idea of creating an 'honest broker' role, to flesh out project ideas with farmers or community groups who have limited or no previous experience of the EIP-AGRI initiative. Responsibilities could also include partially writing the proposal alongside the group. It was acknowledged that, although the National Rural Network (NRN) is currently already engaging in some of these activities, there is potential for a greater role in the next programme for a cohesive unit to be established within the NRN to help with EIP-AGRI partner searches, idea generation and development.

### Education

- The importance of education and regular training targeted at participating farmers within EIP-AGRI projects was widely acknowledged, particularly in relation to the scoring of fields. It is important to ensure that this training is delivered in a manner that is straightforward and easy to understand.
- Peer-to-peer sharing and learning among farmers in these projects is a fundamental benefit of the EIP-AGRI initiative.
- There was a strong emphasis across the breakout groups on the need for EIP-AGRI projects to improve levels of engagement with schools and community groups in order to maximise their impact in rural areas. It was suggested that all EIPs incorporate a primary school education element, as part of their community outreach, as a means of motivating and inspiring youths who are the future of these areas.
- One participant stressed that knowledge transfer aimed at educating and informing younger and older generations in the community should not be top-down or scientific in nature.

### Duration of EIP-AGRI Projects

- There was significant discussion across all breakout groups around the duration of EIP-AGRI projects. While it was acknowledged that the short-term nature of projects could allow for certain tests or trials to be carried out with relatively immediate results, the general consensus was that projects would benefit from a longer timescale to ensure buy-in from farmers.
- Several projects reported to have faced difficulties with time management and have found it challenging to attract appropriate staffing, such as large contractors and ecologists, because of the sporadic nature of the work. It was suggested that a five-year employment plan, for example, would bring clarity and security to roles within an EIP-AGRI project.
- Additionally, it was mentioned that if a project is progressing well, it should be extended. If this is not the case, then it is likely that another similar project will commence and will have to navigate the same level of administration as before, resulting in a waste of resources.

### Policy Implications

- The importance of maintaining two-way regular and open dialogue with DAFM was stressed.
- One participant expressed their desire for representatives from DAFM to visit the various EIP-AGRI projects in-person to experience for themselves the progress that is being made.
- Participants were encouraged to hear DAFM credit the successes of projects to date and indicate a willingness to take the lessons learned from current EIP-AGRI projects into the next programming period. It is widely hoped that project results will have a direct influence on future policy direction.



## 2) What key themes should be considered for the next EIP-AGRI call?

The most frequent responses to this question have been categorised under ten themes, listed below.

Theme	Number of mentions	Examples
<b>Food sustainability</b>	12	<p>“Development of short supply chains particularly in more remote rural areas”</p> <p>“Potential to develop regional food brands”</p> <p>“Connect people with their food – what it is and where it comes from”</p> <p>“Make consumers aware of nutritional value of food via an eco-food initiative”</p>
<b>Biodiversity</b>	7	<p>“An emphasis on biodiversity to align with current cross cutting factors such as the Climate Action Plan – everything needs to be complementary”</p> <p>“Grazing management plan on hills or sensitive areas”</p>
<b>Land management</b>	5	<p>“Coastal management and erosion – payment for farmers between high and low water mark”</p> <p>“Use and management of natural and cultural environments”</p>
<b>Carbon neutrality</b>	5	<p>“Models for carbon neutrality”</p> <p>“Reduce carbon footprint”</p>
<b>Water quality</b>	4	<p>“Smaller scale projects focusing on water quality”</p> <p>“Impacts of dairy activity on water quality”</p>
<b>Soil health</b>	4	<p>“Soil health is fundamental and further analysis is necessary in this area”</p>
<b>Native breeds</b>	4	<p>“Research needed on genetics of rare breeds”</p>
<b>Gender</b>	3	<p>“A consideration should be given to gender”</p>
<b>Invasive species</b>	3	<p>“An EIP-agri project is required on invasive species”</p>
<b>Wool</b>	3	<p>“We need to find a purpose for natural resources such as wool”</p> <p>“Peloton wool could be suitable for nitrogen use on farms”</p>

The word cloud below showcases the main themes discussed during the breakout groups - which are to be considered for the next EIP-Agri call. Unlike the table on the previous page, this word cloud also incorporates themes mentioned on one or two occasions.



## Closing Remarks

**Concluding remarks were provided by Donal Sheehan from the BRIDE (Biodiversity Regeneration in a Dairying Environment) Project.**



Donal took the opportunity to share the story of the Farming with Nature EIP that he is involved in, which received €100,000 in funding under call 5 last year. This one-year EIP set out to design and develop the Farming with Nature food brand.



Donal explained:

*“What we are hoping to do is that when a customer sees this brand on a food product, they know where it comes from... If this brand gets out there, it’s an opportunity for the public to support farmers who are supporting nature.”*

The project involved two main aspects: designing the brand itself and designing an associated web portal and app.

Using the web portal and app, the project team are able to calculate the percentage of a farm in space for nature and the quality of this space. From this, the farmer will get a rating known as the Farmland Biodiversity Index (FBI), which is their Farming with Nature certification.

*“Farming with nature is trying to put a value on all the things that have no value... It’s really a payment for ecosystem services.”*

Another feature of the project is that each prospective Farming with Nature product will have an associated QR code. This will help to directly connect the person producing the food and the consumer.

*“This is farmers telling their story – being able to say: this is what I’m doing, these are the species on my farm...”*

In his final remarks, Donal re-iterated the messages of many of the contributors from earlier in the day. He spoke of the inspiration and learnings that he has personally taken from other EIPs in recent years and of the innovation and positivity in evidence at the EIP-AGRI National Conference 2022.

*“The passion is contagious.”*



## National EIP-AGRI Conference 2022

Date: November 28th, 2022  
Location: Athlone Springs Hotel  
Chair: Mary Coughlan



#EIPAGRI22



### EIP-AGRI Projects Exhibition



## EIP-AGRI National Conference 2022 – Key Takeaways

- Events such as this provide an ideal platform for rural stakeholders to exchange knowledge and to promote and share the successes and learnings of EIP-AGRI projects to date. Opening the conference, the Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), Pippa Hackett, said:

*“To those of you that are here, this is an opportunity for you to showcase your hard work over the lifetime of the project. We are keen to learn from your work, and to take those learnings into the next programming period.”*

- The most successful EIP-AGRI projects are bottom-up, led by farmers who are passionate about the future of farming and the environment in their own local communities. Projects gain from the local knowledge and first-hand perspectives of these farmers. Additionally, the farmers themselves benefit hugely from engaging with, and learning from, each other.
- EIP-AGRI is a multi-actor approach bringing together farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs and community groups to form Operational Groups, which enables the building of bridges between research and practice.
- A lasting legacy of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups lies in the networks formed and the communities that have been brought together to work on a shared problem, issue or interest. Fundamentally, it is all about people working together. These relationships do take time to develop and grow but if we are trying to change farmer attitudes, it is necessary to think longer term.
- The results-based approach is an effective means of rewarding quality, such that the higher the quality, the higher the subsequent payment. This is widely acknowledged for incentivising improvements on farms.
- EIP-AGRI is much more than an agri-environmental initiative. It targets the environment and biodiversity, but also seeks to address issues around farm safety, health and wellbeing of farmers and succession challenges in farm families, to name a few.
- Collaboration and linkages with the broader local community (i.e. schools and community groups), and not those solely involved in farming, are required for any EIP-AGRI project to make a true impact at local level.
- EIP-AGRI projects are encouraged to try new things (i.e. if something works, it is a success, but if it does not work, it is a lesson learned and not necessarily a failure). Surveys have been a feature of many EIP-AGRI projects, frequently distributed to farmers, farm families etc. to gauge and gather a wide range of perspectives of attitudes and behaviours, while trialling new practices on farms has also been prevalent.
- Despite the relatively short-term nature of EIP-AGRI projects, an issue highlighted by many of those in attendance, there is a real willingness and enthusiasm to continue with the good work undertaken to date.
- The Assistant Secretary General at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), Colm Hayes, presented a non-exhaustive list of potential EIP-AGRI themes included in Ireland’s CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 and cited the environment as the biggest challenge in agriculture currently. Animal welfare, farm safety, gender balance, social inclusion, young farmers, modernisation and sharing knowledge were also earmarked as potential themes. Offering advice to those in attendance, Colm said:

*“Every EIP applicant, and there are lots in this room I’m sure for next time around, when you apply, we are going to be looking at these (applications) and thinking: where is that group going to be in 4-5 years’ time? what are they going to have delivered? is it something that can possibly be scaled up? is it something that is local? does it fit within the themes?”*



## EIP-AGRI National Conference 2022 - Resources

### Welcome Address

**Dr Maura Farrell, University of Galway and the NRN**

<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/1.-Dr-Maura-Farrell-University-of-Galway-and-the-NRN.pdf>

### Session 1: EIP-AGRI – Innovative Practices and Impact

**Gillian Westbrook, MOPS (Maximising Organic Production Systems) Project**

<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2.-Gillian-Westbrook-MOPS-Maximising-Organic-Production-Systems-Project.pdf>

**Seán Finan, Small Biogas Demonstration Project (SBDP)**

<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/3.-Sean-Finan-Small-Biogas-Demonstration-Project-SBDP.pdf>

**Caroline Lalor, FarmPEAT Project**

<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/4.-Caroline-Lalor-FarmPEAT-Project.pdf>

**Bernard Carey, Biomass to Biochar for Farm Bioeconomy (BBFB)**

<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/5.-Bernard-Carey-Biomass-to-Biochar-for-Farm-Bioeconomy-BBFB.pdf>

**Dr Patrick Crushell, Pearl Mussel Project**

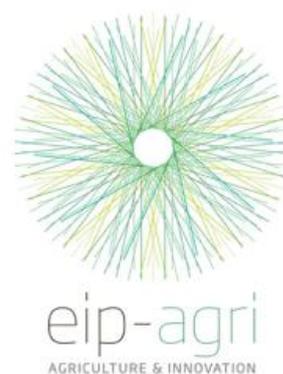
<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/6.-Dr-Patrick-Crushell-Pearl-Mussel-Project.pdf>

**Declan Byrne, SUAS (Sustainable Uplands Agriculture-environment Scheme) Project**

<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/7.-Declan-Byrne-SUAS-Sustainable-Uplands-Agriculture-environment-Scheme-Project.pdf>



National Rural Network



**Prepared by the National Rural Network team at Irish Rural Link and the University of Galway on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).**

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**Report compiled and designed by Daniel Bennett, Researcher at Irish Rural Link.**