

Just Transition
Commission of Ireland
Coimisiún na hÉireann
um Aistriú Cóir

Towards a Just Transition in Agriculture and Land Use

How can Ireland transition its food, agriculture and land-use systems in a way that is fair, sustainable and supports thriving rural communities?



Get in touch!

The Commission is keen to hear from people, communities, organisations and wider societal actors working towards a just transition. We are eager to hear about both the challenges being faced and positive examples of how social and climate goals can be integrated to support action, inclusion, justice and equality. To share your insights or stories, please email us at

info@justtransitioncommission.ie
www.justtransitioncommission.ie

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Key Reflections

The Commission believes that agriculture and land use are at a pivotal moment. The growing impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, combined with major reforms of agricultural, land-use and environmental policy, mean that decisions taken over the coming years will have consequences for generations. This convergence of environmental necessity and policy opportunity presents a critical window to establish a shared vision for the future of Ireland's food, land-use and rural systems.

The impacts of climate change are already being experienced across Ireland and are expected to intensify in the years ahead, increasing the urgency for coordinated and planned action. Ensuring that this transition is planned, fair and supported will be essential to maintaining public confidence and delivering positive outcomes for farmers, rural communities and society as a whole.

The Commission's engagements highlighted the complexity of achieving a just transition in agriculture and land use. Farmers and rural communities are being asked to respond simultaneously to climate change, biodiversity loss, changing market conditions and evolving societal expectations, while continuing to produce food and sustain livelihoods.

The Commission heard a broad recognition that change is necessary and that agriculture has an important role to play in achieving Ireland's climate and environmental objectives. Many farmers are already taking steps to reduce emissions, improve efficiency and participate in environmental schemes. However, there remains significant uncertainty regarding the future direction of agricultural policy, land-use priorities and the long-term supports that will be available to support transition.

The diversity of Irish agriculture was a recurring theme throughout the Commission's engagements. Different farm systems, regions and communities face different opportunities and challenges. As a result, the impacts of transition, and the opportunities arising from it, are unlikely to be experienced equally. Policies that fail to recognise these differences risk exacerbating existing social, economic and regional inequalities.

The Commission also heard that farmers are more likely to engage with climate and biodiversity measures where there is clarity, fairness and confidence that their contribution will be recognised and rewarded. Building that confidence will require long-term policy coherence, meaningful engagement with stakeholders and a shared vision for the future of agriculture, land use and rural Ireland.

The Commission believes that providing greater clarity on the pathway ahead is now an urgent priority. As climate risks increase and significant policy decisions approach, prolonged uncertainty risks undermining confidence, delaying investment and weakening trust in the transition process. A clear, credible and shared direction of travel will be essential if Ireland is to maintain public trust and deliver a transition that is both effective and fair.

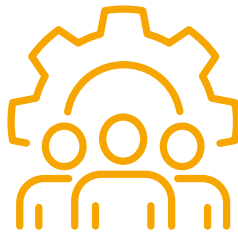
Assessing Agriculture And Land Use Through A Just Transition Lens: The Commission's Approach

As part of its review of agriculture in the context of the climate transition, the Just Transition Commission engaged with officials, experts and representatives of vulnerable or impacted groups to better understand how just transition considerations are being integrated into policy. The Just Transition Principles Framework provided a lens for this work, guiding the Commission's assessment across four key areas: strategic direction and evidence base; skills for a just transition; shared costs and equity; and social dialogue and participation.

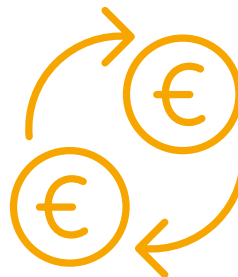
The Just Transition Principles Framework



Strategic Direction
and Evidence Base



Skills for a Just
Transition



Shared Costs
and Equity



Social Dialogue
and Participation

Key Recommendations

1. A National Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture and Land Use

The Commission recommends that the Government urgently convene a national dialogue to develop a shared long-term vision for Irish agriculture, land use and thriving rural communities, grounded in the Just Transition Principles.

4. Skills, Advisory Services and Community Capacity for a Just Transition

The Commission recommends that the Government strengthen research, advisory services and community-led capacity-building initiatives to equip farmers, farm workers, agricultural contractors and rural communities with the skills and knowledge required for the transition to climate neutrality.

2. Long-Term and Equitable Funding for Climate Action and Land-Use Change

The Commission recommends that long-term, accessible and equitable funding mechanisms be established to support farmers and landowners undertaking climate action, nature restoration and generational land-use change.

5. Strategic Land-Use Planning and Evidence-Based Policy

The Commission recommends that Government provide clarity on how the findings of Phase 2 of the Land-Use Review will inform future land-use policy and decision-making as part of an integrated approach to achieving climate, biodiversity and rural development objectives.

3. Rewarding Climate, Nature and Ecosystem Services

The Commission recommends that agricultural and land-use policies provide fair and adequate financial recognition for the delivery of climate, biodiversity and ecosystem benefits, including through payments for ecosystem services.

6. Supporting Diverse and Active Farming Systems

The Commission recommends that agricultural policies and support schemes recognise and support the diversity of active farming systems and rural livelihoods, including low-intensity farming and the provision of ecosystem services.

7. Generational Renewal and Access to Farming

The Commission recommends that the Government develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for generational renewal, including targeted supports for young farmers and measures to improve access to land for new entrants.

8. Gender Equality and Inclusive Participation

The Commission recommends that gender equality be embedded across agricultural policy, support schemes, advisory services and future CAP reforms to ensure equitable access and participation throughout the sector.

9. Diversification and Market Development

The Commission recommends that Government and stakeholders work together to strengthen market demand, develop routes to market and reduce barriers to diversification in agriculture.

10. Fair Governance, Markets and Rural Participation

The Commission recommends that governance, regulatory and market frameworks support a just transition through fair carbon farming arrangements, strengthened regulatory oversight, the use of public procurement, the development of co-operative models and enhanced local participation in food and land-use decision-making.



Towards a Just Transition in Agriculture and Land Use

Ireland's landscapes, rural communities and food system have been shaped by generations of people working the land. Agriculture and land use are central to our national identity, underpinning livelihoods, sustaining local economies, producing food, and managing much of Ireland's natural environment.

Today, however, agriculture and land-use systems sit at the centre of some of Ireland's most significant economic, social and environmental challenges, playing a vital role in food production and rural development, while also accounting for the largest share of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions.

Emissions from agricultural activities arise primarily in the form of methane from cattle and sheep farming, and nitrous oxide from fertiliser use, slurry and manure management. Under Ireland's sectoral emissions ceilings, the sector is required to reduce emissions by 25% by 2030 relative to 2018 levels, and farmers are already adopting a range of measures aimed at improving efficiency, reducing emissions and enhancing environmental outcomes.

EPA projections indicate that agricultural emissions are expected to decline between now and 2030, primarily due to a reduction in cattle numbers and lower fertiliser use. Depending on the level of climate measures implemented, emissions could fall by between 4% and 19% compared to 2018 levels. However, even under the most ambitious scenario, further action would be required to achieve the sector's emissions reduction target of 25% reduction.

At the same time, many of the ecosystems that could help remove carbon from the atmosphere including peatlands, wetlands and native woodlands, are degraded, meaning Ireland's land is currently a net source rather than a net sink of emissions.

How Ireland manages its land over the coming decades will therefore be critical to achieving climate neutrality, restoring biodiversity, strengthening food security and sustaining vibrant rural communities. Decisions about land use will involve balancing multiple and often competing demands: producing food, supporting farm incomes, protecting nature, generating renewable energy, storing carbon and creating opportunities for future generations.

Scenarios to reduce emissions from agriculture¹ concentrate on technological and management measures rather than a reduction in livestock numbers, although some scenarios acknowledge a reduction in beef cattle numbers may occur while the dairy herd size increases. Policy aspires towards diversification of farm activities into organics, forestry, renewable energy and the creation of new markets, although the route to diversification in many cases is unclear. Within the land-use sector, identified measures to store carbon include, restoring degraded peatland, increasing forestry cover and raising the water table on organic soils.

¹ A range of scenarios for reducing agricultural emissions in the agricultural sector have been modelled by Teagasc for the Climate Change Advisory Council Carbon Budget working group, and include the Marginal Abatement Cost Curve (MACC) <https://teagasc.ie/environment/climate-centre/publications/reports/marginal-abatement-cost-curve-2023/>

These pathways raise important questions about the future of Ireland's land, food system and rural communities.

- How is land used and for what purpose? How can land owners and land managers manage multiple competing demands?
- How much land should be allocated for food production, forestry or renewable energy? What types of food, and methods of food production are preferred?
- Should about 90% of the food produced in Ireland continue to be exported, and how much and what types of food should be used to feed the domestic population?
- How should land use without a direct commercial value be considered such as bogs, ancient woodlands, species rich grasslands?
- How can livelihoods be sustained on the land in rural communities in the context of an aging farmer population, increased costs of living and a shortage of housing?

All of these questions and more must be considered, balanced, and planned for. The transition ahead is not solely an agricultural transition. It is a transition of Ireland's food, land-use and rural systems. Ensuring that this transition is fair, planned and inclusive, creating opportunities for farmers, workers, landowners and rural communities while addressing climate and biodiversity challenges, will be essential to achieving a just transition.

Due regard for how land-use transitions could impact already disadvantaged regions or cohorts of vulnerable workers must form a key consideration in land-use policy. The geographic clustering of farm types presents an additional risk to transition. Allowing the transition to happen in an unplanned manner similarly risks negative impacts. A slow decline in animal numbers in the west of Ireland without an alternative will not result in a just transition.

The transition must be implemented in a way that creates opportunities for decent incomes, good working conditions and thriving rural economies. Educational opportunities for training, upskilling and diversification must be delivered alongside a strategic policy environment that provides long term reassurance and support for transition measures. And above all, a trusted and transparent mechanism to manage competing land demands will be essential.

Commission's Approach to Information Gathering and Engagement

As part of its review of agriculture and land use in the context of the climate transition, the Just Transition Commission (The Commission) engaged with Government officials, experts, farmers, representatives of rural communities, and organisations representing vulnerable or impacted groups to better understand how just transition considerations are being integrated into policy and practice.

The Commission's engagement programme included discussions with policymakers, researchers, stakeholder organisations and agricultural representatives, as well as site visits to farms and agricultural education facilities. To capture a broader range of perspectives, the Commission also sought views from stakeholders through a survey of members of the Common Agricultural Policy Consultative Committee.

The Just Transition Principles Framework provided a lens for this work, guiding the Commission's assessment across four key areas: strategic direction and evidence base; skills for a just transition; shared costs and equity; and social dialogue and participation.

The Just Transition Principles Framework

Strategic Direction and Evidence Base

Context: Why direction matters?

An Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) study *Perceptions of climate change and policy among farmers and the public in Ireland*² found that concern over climate change and willingness to act are high amongst farmers, with two-thirds of farmers reporting they are more likely than not to change how they farm in future to help stop climate change.

Throughout the Commission's engagements with farmers, students, researchers and stakeholders, there was broad recognition that agriculture and land use will need to change in response to climate change, biodiversity loss and evolving environmental obligations. Many farmers described already taking steps to reduce emissions, improve efficiency and adapt to changing climatic conditions. However, the Commission consistently heard frustration at the lack of clarity regarding the long-term direction of policy, the future shape of agricultural supports, and the practical pathways available to farm businesses.

For many farmers, the challenge is not a lack of willingness to act, but uncertainty about what actions will be required, which actions will be supported, and whether investments made today will remain viable in the future. This uncertainty makes long-term planning difficult and adds strain to the already challenging economic realities of farming.

The uncertainty expressed during the Commission's engagements is reflected at a strategic policy level both domestically, with the next version of *Food Vision 2030* in preparation, and at a European level, with the *Multiannual Funding Framework (MFF)* for 2028-2034 currently being devised and the reform of the *Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)* within this process.

Recent negotiations suggest the reduction in the CAP budget for Ireland could be as much as 22%, with reductions likely in environmental schemes and rural development programmes. However, the demand for funding within agriculture and land use is likely to remain high, with increasing ambition from a smaller budget.

The Commission believes this period of change presents an important opportunity for reflection. Rather than allowing transition to occur in a piecemeal or reactive manner, Government and stakeholders can work together to develop a shared vision for the future of agriculture and land use in Ireland. A just transition approach can provide greater certainty, support farm viability, reward environmental stewardship, and ensure that climate and biodiversity objectives are achieved alongside decent livelihoods, thriving rural communities and long-term food security.

² Economic and Social Research Institute (2025) *Perception of climate change and policy among farmers and the public in Ireland* <https://www.esri.ie/publications/perceptions-of-climate-change-and-policy-among-farmers-and-the-public-in-ireland>

Land-Use Review: Building the evidence base for land-use decisions

How land is used, and how land should be used, are critical and controversial questions in Ireland. Land is a finite resource that is under demand for a variety of purposes. Any decision that involves changes to land use requires a good evidence base. To develop this evidence base on the characteristics of land types and uses across Ireland, the Government has undertaken a review of land use.

The Commission notes the publication of *A Living Land, Phase 2 of the Land-Use Review* as an important and positive intervention and seeks clarification on the next steps and its implementation.³

The first phase of the Land-Use Review assembled evidence on stakeholders, existing policy and environmental, social and economics characteristics of land use.⁴ The second phase seeks to identify key demands on land to inform policies to address key Government objectives.⁵

Given the increasing and often competing demands being placed on Ireland's land resources, the review has the potential to become a critical tool for informing future policy decisions and supporting evidence-based planning across agriculture, climate action, biodiversity, housing, renewable energy and rural development.

The publication of this review should facilitate an informed debate and conversation on the future of land use and land-use changes in Ireland. It provides an important foundation for developing a shared understanding of the trade-offs, opportunities and choices associated with Ireland's transition.

³ Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (2026) *A Living Land, Phase 2 of the Land-Use Review* https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/ade00673/A_Living_Land_-_Report_of_Phase_2_of_the_Land_Use_Review.pdf

⁴ O'Rourke, F. et al (2023) Land Use Evidence Review, Phase 1 Synthesis Report <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/land-use-evidence-review-synthesis-report.pdf>

⁵ Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (2023), Phase 2 of Land-Use Review commences <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/press-releases/phase-2-of-land-use-review-commences/>

Strategic opportunity: A window for reform and renewal

The *Common Agriculture Policy 2023-2027* (CAP) delivers €9.8 billion to farming families and rural communities to support the production of food and to help Ireland achieve its climate and environment ambitions.⁶ In preparation for the MFF 2028-2034, the European Commission has proposed that agriculture funding via the CAP, and all cohesion and social policy will fall under one cohesive National and Regional Partnership Plan (NRPP),⁷ with Ireland allocated €12.2 billion.⁸

Under this new plan, the two existing pillars of the CAP will be merged and, in line with policy objectives, encompass a renewed focus on targeted income supports to ensure funding reaches those who need it most, such as young farmers, female farmers and family farms. Guided by European Commission recommendations, Member States will also be able to design measures fit to their local environment and conditions and will have flexibility in the proportion of funding available for different groups of farmers.⁹

The Commission believes that this reform at the European level presents a significant opportunity to align agricultural supports with the principles of a just transition. However, noting the likely reduction in the overall CAP fund, alternative national government support is likely to be required to fill the gap. If designed effectively however, future supports can strengthen farm viability, improve environmental outcomes and ensure that the costs and benefits of transition are shared fairly across regions, farm systems and generations.

The Commission welcomes the government's establishment of the Consultative Committee for CAP post-2027¹⁰ and also supports the European Commission's proposal to establish a comprehensive partnership that will support the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the new CAP. This partnership approach enhances the Consultative Committee process and supports a bottom-up approach which includes representation from regional, local, urban and rural authorities; economic and social partners; and relevant bodies representing civil society.¹¹

6 Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (2022), CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 Summary <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/summary-of-irelands-cap-strategic-plan-2023-2027.pdf>

7 European Commission (2025), The 2028-2034 EU budget for a stronger Europe: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/eu-budget-2028-2034_en

8 European Commission: Directorate-General for Budget (2025), Europe's Budget – Member States allocation <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2761/5961524>

9 European Commission (2025), Questions and answers on the CAP post-2027 proposal https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/media/news/questions-and-answers-cap-post-2027-proposal-2025-07-23_en

10 Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (2025), Minister Heydon launches Ireland's CAP Consultative Committee for CAP post-2027: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/press-releases/minister-heydon-launches-irelands-cap-consultative-committee-for-cap-post-2027/>

11 European Union (2025), Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Fund for economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and rural, fisheries and maritime, prosperity and security for the period 2028-2034 and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/955 and Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52025PC0565>

Farm Survey Data: Understanding regional and farm-level impacts

The National Farm Survey collects data on all farms with an annual income of more than €8,000.¹² The data shows that average farm size, farm income and dependency on CAP payments to family farm incomes (FFI) vary considerably across farm systems.

The average farm size is 45 hectares, and the average annual farm income is €36,256. The breakdown of income per farm system is as follows:

Farm System	Average income over 5 years (2020–24)	Average Income (2024)	Contribution of direct payments to FFI (2024)
Cattle Rearing	€9,900	€13,788	129%
Other Cattle	€16,750	€18,182	87%
Sheep	€19,000	€27,348	102%
Tillage	€45,780	€41,470	84%
Dairy	€95,529	€108,700	22%

Regional variations are also apparent through an analysis of the proportional contribution of direct payments as a share of family farm income (FFI):

Region	Average Direct Payment (2024)	Contribution of direct payments to FFI (2024)
West	€18,500	107%
Border	€18,300	73%
Midlands	€22,000	64%
Mid-East	€22,400	57%
Mid-West	€20,500	39-53%
South-East	€23,000	39-53%
South-West	€24,000	39-53%

These variations highlight the importance of recognising regional differences in the transition. Regions with a high concentration of beef and sheep farming, particularly in western and upland areas, may face different challenges and opportunities to regions characterised by dairying, tillage or forestry. Understanding these regional differences will be essential to ensuring that transition policies support affected communities and do not inadvertently deepen existing social, economic or territorial inequalities.

¹² Dillon, E. et al, Teagasc, National Farm Survey 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023; 2024 <https://teagasc.ie/rural-economy/rural-economy/national-farm-survey/national-farm-survey-reports/>

Common Agricultural Policy reform: Beyond generation renewal

The significance of the Common Agricultural Policy in Ireland cannot be overstated. Not only does it provide essential payments to sustain farm businesses all over the country, but how, where and what farmers produce is largely influenced by CAP policy and aligned incentive schemes.

There are major questions for Ireland to consider for how CAP reform should be implemented in the Irish context and how Ireland will co-fund and support land-use activities and a food production system that is fit for the future and resilient in the face of climate change.

The Commission recognises the importance of agricultural support payments as essential income for farmers, and their contribution to supporting local and rural economies. To ensure a just transition, any reforms to CAP funding and how funds are allocated across agriculture and land use must be undertaken with due consideration for the potential for impacts to be felt differently in different regions, within different farm systems and across genders.

Historically, Pillar I payments have been made to almost all farmers. Critics of the direct payments system point to the fact that many payments are made on the size of the land holding, so within any given farm system, larger farms receive proportionally more in direct payments. In general, those regions where dairying is more prevalent are generally more profitable and larger, and have a lower reliance on direct payments to supplement income.

Pillar II payments, have tended to be more important to smaller and medium sized farms, and those located in the West, Border and Midland regions, where cattle and sheep farms dominate. These regions are traditionally heavily reliant on the payments provided through schemes such as *ACRES*, *European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs)*, and a range of livestock welfare and modernisation schemes as well as direct payments to supplement farm incomes. The *LEADER* programme is also an essential rural development fund for community enterprises, tourism and rural innovation.

The impact of merging payments from Pillar I and II needs to be considered with this understanding of regional and farm system variations across Ireland and the importance of Pillar II payments on sustainability and environmental benefit. Recent discussions on amending the eligibility of

'active' farmers to access direct income supports highlights the diversity of the farmer experience in Ireland. **The Commission believes that support for active farmers must encompass the broad range of farmer experience that sustains many economic activities across rural communities in Ireland. Any definition of 'active' farmer should continue to recognise low intensity farming and include farmers providing ecosystem services and climate and nature friendly farm activities.**

Amending the current system however also provides an opportunity to improve how payments are distributed and their applicability. Conditions associated with the traditional Pillar II payments have been often criticised as being too short term, administratively burdensome and insufficiently funded, and with sometimes underwhelming environmental outcomes.

A support system that recognises additional competing demands for the land could ensure that in addition to food production, farmers are rewarded for ecosystem services, carbon sequestration, good water quality and the provision of quality habitats through longer term, reliable payments.

Government support is needed to provide clarity for farmers who choose to invest in these additional and often complementary land uses which provide a significant public good.

The Commission believes that future CAP reform should progressively shift support towards targeted measures that reward the delivery of public goods, strengthen generational renewal and gender equality, and support vulnerable farm systems and regions. While direct income support will remain important for farm viability, available public resources should increasingly be directed towards schemes that deliver environmental, social and economic outcomes in line with the principles of a just transition.

Agriculture as part of a wider food system

A just transition in agriculture cannot be considered in isolation from the wider food system. Farmers operate within supply chains that include processors, retailers, exporters, consumers and public institutions. Future discussions on agriculture, land use and CAP reform should therefore consider how value is distributed across the food chain, the role of public procurement in supporting sustainable production, changing consumer preferences, food affordability and food security. A shared vision for agriculture should be embedded within a broader vision for Ireland's food system.

The Commission also emphasises that food system transformation should be closely linked to rural development and community resilience. Transition policies should support rural regeneration, local livelihoods, community wealth building and balanced regional development. This includes recognising the important role of local food hubs, processing facilities, co-operatives and rural enterprises in retaining value within communities and creating employment opportunities beyond primary production. Resilient rural communities depend not only on agricultural output but also on strong local enterprise ecosystems, accessible services, community infrastructure and diversified economic opportunities. A just transition approach should therefore seek to strengthen the economic and social foundations of rural areas while supporting the transition to a more sustainable and resilient agri-food system.

Food Vision: Embedding just transition in Food Vision 2030

The Commission welcomes the Mid-Term Review of *Food Vision 2030* and its four missions:¹³

1. a climate-smart, environmentally sustainable agri-food sector;
2. viable and resilient primary producers with enhanced wellbeing;
3. food that is safe, nutritious, appealing, trusted and valued at home and abroad; and
4. an innovative, competitive and resilient agri-food sector driven by technology and talent.

The Commission emphasises, however, that the successful delivery of these missions will depend on embedding Just Transition Principles across all areas of policy design and implementation. This requires ensuring that climate action, biodiversity restoration, innovation and competitiveness are advanced in ways that are fair, inclusive and economically sustainable for farmers, workers and rural communities.

A just transition approach would place greater emphasis on social dialogue, generational renewal, gender equality, equitable access to supports, fair returns across the value chain, and the recognition and reward of environmental public goods and ecosystem services. In doing so, it can help ensure that the transition to a more sustainable agricultural system not only delivers environmental and economic objectives but also strengthens rural livelihoods, community resilience and public confidence in the transition.

¹³ Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2026), Public Consultation on the Mid-Term Review of Food Vision 2030: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/consultations/public-consultation-on-the-mid-term-review-of-food-vision-2030/>

Food security in a changing climate

Recent international geopolitical events have exposed vulnerabilities within Ireland's food system, particularly our dependence on imported fruit and vegetables, and animal feed. Ireland now imports large volumes of produce, including crops that were once grown extensively here, such as potatoes, apples, carrots and onions.

The sector is exposed to international market forces and trade deals, with very little control on geopolitical events that can have significant consequences.

The food sector is also highly dependent on fossil fuels, both for chemical fertiliser production and energy use throughout the food chain. This year saw the second major increase in fuel prices in four years, placing additional pressure on farmers, contractors and food processors. Looking ahead, Ireland's food security must be considered in the context of a changing climate, the health of ecosystems and our exposure to international events beyond our control.

Climate adaptation is becoming an increasingly important consideration for agriculture and land use. More frequent extreme weather events, changing growing conditions, emerging pests and diseases, and increasing pressures on water resources are already affecting farm businesses across Ireland. Supporting farmers to adapt and mitigate through advisory services, knowledge transfer, infrastructure investment and risk-management measures should form an integral part of a just transition.

Food security is not simply about producing sufficient quantities of food. It must also be considered in the context of local food needs, changing dietary patterns and the ability of farmers and agricultural workers to earn a viable living within a resilient and sustainable food system.

These challenges arise despite Ireland's considerable strengths as a food-producing nation. Ireland is recognised internationally for the quality of its beef, butter, dairy products, whiskey and beer. Ireland ranks second in the Global Food Security Index, and is a significant net exporter of food.

In 2024, Ireland exported €17.3 billion worth of food or about 90% of the food produced here, and spent in the region of €12 billion importing food. The most recent data on Irish household food choices from 2018 shows that on average 51% of the spend on our food shopping is on imported goods, while 49% is on food produced in Ireland.

There are about 130,000 farmers in Ireland. The overwhelming majority are livestock farmers; dairy, beef, and sheep. About 11% farmers have some tillage on their farms, and about 3,000 of those are specialist producers. There are 65 commercial vegetable growers operating in Ireland.

Maintaining food security into the future cannot be taken for granted. It will depend not only on food production volumes, but also on the resilience and diversity of domestic food production systems, the health of ecosystems, the availability of farmers and agricultural workers, and Ireland's capacity to withstand climate and geopolitical shocks.

Generational renewal: Supporting the next generation

The Commission heard that uncertainty regarding future agricultural policy, profitability and land-use expectations can discourage younger generations from entering the sector or investing in long-term farming careers.

Generational renewal has been a key policy objective under Ireland's CAP and *Food Vision 2030*. The Commission welcomes the recommendations of the *Commission on Generational Renewal in Farming* report and believes that any future strategies or policies should maintain generational renewal as a key objective, particularly as young farmers tend to operate at higher rates of economic and environmental efficiency and higher rates of economic viability.¹⁴

The report notes the acute issue for Ireland in terms of the next generation of farming, as only 4% of Irish farmers are under 35, while 37% are over 65, and points towards the positive aspects of young farmers who are more likely to adopt modern technologies and engage in sustainable practices, but also noted that generational renewal is still significantly impacted by tax complexities and economic/ structural barriers. To emphasise the importance of quick action, **the Commission urges the timely introduction of a scheme on land mobility to support cohorts such as women, young people and new entrants' access to land.**

Under the MFF 2028-2034, the European Commission has proposed that each Member State should adopt a strategy for generational renewal which is adapted to their domestic needs.¹⁵ This includes a proposal for a 'starter pack for young farmers'. **The Just Transition Commission believes the findings of the Commission on Generational Renewal should be central to the development of Ireland's strategy for generational renewal, including a starter pack with targeted resources and funding for young farmers.**

The Commission notes that while current CAP provides resources and funding to young farmers, Ireland only dedicated the minimum 3% of direct payments to young farmers. The Commission on Generational Renewal recommends young farmer supports increase to the maximum allowance in future. A Just Transition requires that future generations are supported to participate in and benefit from the transformation of agriculture and land use. The Commission believes that strengthening supports for young and new entrant farmers, and gender balance in farm succession should form an important component of future agricultural and rural development policy.

¹⁴ Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (2025), *Report of the Commission on Generational Renewal in Farming*: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/press-releases/minister-heydon-publishes-the-report-of-the-commission-on-generational-renewal-in-farming/>

¹⁵ European Commission (2025), Questions and answers on the CAP post-2027 proposal: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/media/news/questions-and-answers-cap-post-2027-proposal-2025-07-23_en

Women in farming: Improving equality and participation

In conjunction with generational renewal and to support a fair and equitable future in agriculture, a focus should be placed on women's access to agricultural schemes, training, advisory services and programmes. The HER-SELF report highlighted the under-representation of women in farming and pointed towards numerous barriers faced by women working in agriculture.¹⁶

Accurate data remains a challenge. As recommended in the HER-SELF report, gathering disaggregated data on gender participation across all support schemes needs to be undertaken in order to properly assess if they are achieving their intended outcomes. This recommendation is reinforced by the Government's National Equality Data Strategy 2026–2031, which commits all Government Departments to strengthen the collection, use and dissemination of equality data and to build the organisational capacity required to support evidence-informed policy making.¹⁷

The Strategy provides an opportunity for the agriculture sector to improve the systematic collection and use of gender-disaggregated data to better understand participation, access to supports and policy outcomes. In Ireland, female farmers represent 13.4% of farm holdings, with female farm ownership highest in areas where farm sizes are smaller and land values are lower. Despite having significantly lower farm holding numbers, 44% of female farm holders are deemed vulnerable compared to 31% of male farm holders. With an eye to the future, less than 20% of identified successors are female.

The Commission welcomes the *Action Plan* arising from the 2023 *National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture*,¹⁸ particularly its action to review women farmer's eligibility to schemes and to establish a process to consider this issue in the design and implementation of future schemes. The Commission supports the EU proposal to embed gender equality as a horizontal principle across EU spending programmes, including the reform of the CAP, although notes that Member States will have flexibility in the funding offered to support gender equality.¹⁹

In line with the *National Equality Data Strategy 2026–2031*, **the Commission recommends that gender-disaggregated data be routinely collected and reported across agricultural schemes and programmes to monitor participation, identify barriers to access and evaluate outcomes. The Commission further recommends that targeted supports for women farmers are offered by Ireland, and the review of women farmers' eligibility to schemes is undertaken prior to the development of any new schemes to ensure equality of access is guaranteed for all future schemes.**

¹⁶ Munster Technological University (2025), HER-SELF: Highlighting pathways to Empower Rural women to have Sustainable and Equitable Livelihoods in Farming: <https://www.mtu.ie/news/herself-report/>

¹⁷ Department of Children, Disability and Equality and Central Statistics Office 2026–2031 *National Equality Data Strategy* https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/c5b4afc0/The_National_Equality_Data_Strategy_2026-2031.pdf

¹⁸ Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture 2023 <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/publications/women-in-agriculture/#national-dialogue-on-women-in-agriculture-2023>

¹⁹ European Commission (2025), Women in farming in the EU: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/cap-my-country/performance-agricultural-policy/analytical-briefs_en

A reflection from Commissioners Vanessa Kiely O'Connor and Suresh Kumar



Vanessa is the Agriculture Pillar representative to the Just Transition Commission



Suresh is an independent Commissioner specialising in research, innovation, and public-private partnerships that drive societal impact and strengthen wider economic ecosystems.

Our engagements to date highlighted the many complex challenges agriculture will have to achieve a 25% emissions cut by 2030.

Clarity is still needed on the socio-economic impact that the transition will have on farming and rural communities. Many farmers have begun their transition journey, often posing a significant financial burden, whilst navigating the limited national and EU guidance that is currently available.

Noting the diversity of both full-time and part-time farming systems, the average income on farms in many cases falls well below the national median income. This highlights that future support and funding to address unequal cost-sharing will be required and directed towards the areas, communities and farming enterprises that will be most impacted by the Transition.

The Commission sees a significant need for a targeted dialogue within the agriculture and land-use sector, and we will continue to champion this in our advisory role to the National Dialogue on Climate Action, the Government's current main vehicle for public engagement on climate.

To ensure policy coherence, reform of CAP and national funding is necessary for equitable support that genuinely empowers farmers—making sure this transition is fair and sustainable for all.

Risk of delayed action: The cost of uncertainty

European and national legislation are requiring change in order to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change. Already the impacts of extreme weather, poor water quality and biodiversity loss are having profound impacts on agriculture. Maintaining the status quo in agriculture and land use in Ireland is not a neutral option. Climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental obligations and changing market conditions mean that transition is already underway. The question is not whether change will occur, but whether it will be managed in a planned, fair and equitable manner.

Failure to plan for transition increases the likelihood that change will occur in a reactive and disorderly manner, driven by market pressures, environmental degradation, regulatory requirements and climate impacts rather than through a managed and equitable process. The challenge is how to produce food for our own growing population within a volatile international commodity driven market. This must include a consideration of how to maintain farmer incomes and ensure quality, sustainable food production within the context of the limits imposed by the EU Nitrates Directive,²⁰ the Climate Act²¹ and EU Nature Restoration Regulation obligations.²²

Declining family farm viability in distinct geographic locations and disorderly land-use changes will not result in a just transition, but will likely result in increased hardship and social impacts with the potential for ongoing environmental degradation and climate change.

The Commission believes that agriculture and land use stand at a pivotal moment. Climate change, biodiversity loss, food security concerns and changing societal expectations mean that maintaining the status quo is not an option. Yet the Commission consistently heard that uncertainty regarding future policy, land-use priorities and support mechanisms is undermining confidence and making long-term planning difficult. A just transition requires a clear strategic direction, grounded in evidence and developed through meaningful engagement with those most affected. By providing greater certainty, supporting informed decision-making and establishing a shared vision for the future, Government can help ensure that the transition delivers environmental, social and economic benefits for farmers, rural communities and wider society.

20 European Commission Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources.

21 The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act (as amended) 2015

22 As per, Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869



Skills for a Just Transition

Context: Preparing for change

For many people, working in agriculture and land use is more than a job. It is a way of life. Generations of farmers have farmed the same land, and look forward to passing the tradition of working with the land to future generations. Today about 300,000 people work on farms in Ireland, a number which has increased over the last decade.²³

However, the reality of earning a viable livelihood within the agriculture and land-use sector is increasingly challenging and uncertain. Farmers are being asked to deliver high-quality food while also responding to climate, biodiversity and water quality obligations in an increasingly competitive international marketplace. These growing demands place significant pressure on farm businesses and farming households.

Income levels and working conditions vary considerably across geographic regions, and farming systems. Working conditions for landowners, contractors and those working in food processing can vary significantly. Certain cohorts of workers, by their very nature and location, age profile, or agricultural practice are more vulnerable to the transition than others. Changes to work practices will mean changing needs for farm labour, agricultural contractors, and processors.

Through its engagements, the Commission heard that the farming community is willing to adapt and play its part in addressing environmental crises. However, many stakeholders expressed concern about policy incoherence and the absence of a clear and consistent long-term vision for how emissions reductions in agriculture and land use can be achieved while maintaining, or improving, farm incomes. **The Commission heard that uncertainty regarding future policy and income opportunities can discourage investment in new skills, technologies and diversification opportunities.**

While this conflict is addressed throughout this report, it is worth considering again in the context of supporting the farming community to participate in training, upskilling and learning new skills.

Without deliberative planning, the impacts and opportunities of the transition in agriculture and land use will not be experienced equally and the workforce may not be in a position to benefit from new opportunities. Likewise encouraging land-use changes must be matched with policy certainty that diversification, changing farm practices or engaging with climate and environmental programmes will result in stable and reliable income and better working conditions.

The transition in agriculture and land use presents both opportunities and challenges. Ensuring workers have access to the right skills and training opportunities is a fundamental element of the just transition.

²³ Central Statistics Office (2024) Farm Structure Survey 2023
<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-fss/farmstructuresurvey2023/agriculturelabourforce/>

Developing an evidence base for workforce impact: Understanding future needs

The Commission notes that there remains a significant evidence gap regarding the workforce implications of the transition to climate neutrality in agriculture and land use. Notably the *Expert Group on Future Skills Needs* report on the skills for zero carbon does not include agricultural skills.²⁴

Without a clearer understanding of where employment growth and decline may occur, it is difficult to target training, advisory services and educational support towards those most likely to be affected by the transition.

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) also highlights the limited analysis of how employment patterns, occupational requirements and workforce characteristics may change as the sector transitions.²⁵ NESC outlines that a just transition in the agriculture and land-use system in Ireland is fundamentally different to other sectors. Rather than focusing on movement out of the sector, it emphasises continuous learning, adaptation and innovation within agriculture. NESC notes that the transition should seek to make the best use of Ireland's land and agricultural resources in support of environmental, economic and social sustainability.

International examples demonstrate the value of undertaking such analysis on skills needs. The UK Climate Change Committee examined the labour and skills implications of a transition to net zero including the pace and geographic dispersal of employment changes and the characteristics of the workers most likely to be affected.²⁶ **The Commission recommends that similar research in Ireland would provide an important evidence base to inform policy, plan training and skills needs and understand the characteristics of the workforce who have the potential to gain opportunity from the transition or be impacted by it.** This would complement the Commission's ongoing work on workforce planning and help ensure that emerging skills needs, employment opportunities and potential labour market impacts are identified and addressed at an early stage.

24 Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2021) Skills for zero carbon <https://www.skillsireland.ie/media/2eng44zf/5119-dete-egfsn-skills-for-zero-carbon-web.pdf>

25 National Economic and Social Council (2023) Just Transition in Agriculture and Land Use Report Number 162 https://www.nesc.ie/app/uploads/2023/06/162_just_transition_in_ag_land_use-1.pdf

26 UK Climate Change Committee (2023) A Net Zero Workforce <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/a-net-zero-workforce/>

Skills for diversification: Creating pathways to participate

While many diversification opportunities exist within food, land-use and rural systems, the investment in training and skills development must be accompanied by stronger policy signals and additional support where uptake is currently low. Training alone will not deliver diversification. Individuals must also have confidence that new activities can provide sustainable livelihoods and viable routes to market.

Within agriculture, there may be opportunities for diversification. Diversification may mean switching from peat extraction activities to peat restoration, or providing farm advisory services related to carbon-efficient farming, soil health, nature restoration or sustainable fertiliser management. Diversification creates opportunities for shifting from a livestock dominated system to fewer animals along with other income generating activities on the land. These activities could be outside of traditional agriculture and include renewable energy, eco-tourism or nature restoration or within more traditional agricultural activities such as organic food, tillage, or agro-forestry.

The range of new skills required for farming, land-use and rural systems are vast, and for those with the right skills there is the potential for opportunities to improve incomes, working conditions and resilience. **The transition presents opportunities to create new employment, strengthen rural economies and diversify income sources, but only if the necessary investment in skills, advisory services and market development occurs alongside policy reform.**

The Commission heard that peer to peer learning networks, demonstration farms and knowledge sharing initiatives play an important role in supporting farmers to adapt to new practices and technologies, and to understand the opportunities and available options within agri-environment support schemes. However, the Commission also heard that pilot projects, short term funding, missing targets and the lack of policy coherence does not foster confidence for new or emerging agri-environmental schemes. Many stakeholders expressed frustration that promising initiatives often remain small-scale or temporary, making it difficult for individuals and communities to commit to new skills pathways or business models.

To incentivise and de-risk diversification in agriculture, **the Commission recommends the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine work with stakeholders to build and sustain market demand for agricultural goods and to establish more routes to market for producers to access.** Creating skills without creating markets risks transferring uncertainty rather than creating opportunity. Skills development, market development and policy support must therefore progress together.

Diversification Opportunities

Ireland's National Biomethane Strategy has set a target to deliver up to 5.7TWh of indigenously produced biomethane by 2030, which has the potential to generate up to 1,800 direct jobs and 4,400 indirect jobs across rural Ireland.²⁷

Separately, forestry in Ireland, either directly or indirectly, supports 9,400 jobs and contributes approximately €2.3 billion annually to the economy. The Forest Strategy sets the ambition to reach annual afforestation targets of 8,000 hectares per annum and, to meet these targets, recognises the need to increase the capacity of the forestry workforce and to attract a more diverse range of people into forestry.²⁸

Organic farming provides a further example of an emerging opportunity within the transition. Over the last five years, the number of farmers participating in the Organic Farming Scheme has increased by 221% to approximately 5,500 farmers, while the proportion of Ireland's utilisable agricultural area under organic production has increased from 1.6% in 2020 to 5.5% in 2025, representing one of the highest growth rates in the European Union. This growth has been supported by increasing consumer demand both in Ireland and across European markets, alongside public investment in advisory services, research, education and financial supports for conversion.²⁹ As the sector continues to expand, it has the potential to provide diversified income streams, new market opportunities and sustainable employment across rural Ireland.

Nature restoration likewise presents employment opportunities within the agriculture and land-use sectors. Many of the LIFE projects of recent years have created direct rural jobs in areas like ecology, peatland restoration, invasive species control, restoration works and community and education training.³⁰ While not specifically job creation projects, many farmers are now employed on part-time basis for their contributions to the projects. For example, LIFE Wild Atlantic Nature has more than 800 farmers participating in blanket bog restoration, along with over 40 full-time jobs across Galway, Mayo, and Donegal. The Bord na Móna Peatlands Climate Action Scheme resulted in over 200 former peat workers retrained for peat restoration, along with over 30 specialist advisory environmental positions. The company anticipates almost 900 new jobs in the coming years as its climate solutions business expands.³¹

These examples demonstrate that the transition can create significant opportunities for employment and enterprise development in rural Ireland. Realising these opportunities will require early investment in skills, training and workforce planning.

27 Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2024) Ireland's Biomethane Strategy <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/national-biomethane-strategy.pdf>

28 Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2023) Ireland's Forest Strategy 2023-2027 <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/forest-strategy-implementation-plan-including-the-forestry-programme-2023-2027.pdf>

29 Oireachtas Debate (2026) Organic Farming, Parliamentary Question 64 29/01/2026 <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2026-01-29/64/>

30 Projects include LIFE Wild Atlantic Nature, CornCrake LIFE, LIFE on Machair, Aran LIFE, Waters of LIFE etc.

31 Bord na Móna Website News Release Bord na Móna delivering over 1400 Climate Solutions jobs in Midlands <https://www.bordnamona.ie/bord-na-mona-delivering-over-1400-climate-solutions-jobs-in-midlands/>

The Commission believes that the transition in agriculture and land use presents significant opportunities to improve resilience, diversify incomes, create new employment opportunities and strengthen rural economies. However, these opportunities will only be realised if farmers, workers and rural communities are equipped with the skills, knowledge and support required to participate. Skills development must therefore be accompanied by clear policy direction, accessible advisory services, viable routes to market and long-term investment. A just transition requires not only preparing people for change, but ensuring they can benefit from it.



Shared Costs and Equity

Context: Ensuring fairness in transition

The impacts from climate change on agricultural productivity are recognised as a major risk by the Irish Government.³² With about two thirds of the country currently in use as agricultural land, those working in agriculture and land use are essential in Ireland's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

Acknowledging that certain agricultural practices and land-use changes have a significant impact on carbon emissions, farmers have consistently demonstrated that where they are sufficiently supported, informed and resourced, they are valued partners in nature and climate action, trusted custodians of the land, and essential producers of quality food.

The Commission heard that while many farmers are willing to participate in climate and nature restoration measures, they require greater certainty regarding future supports, income streams and policy expectations before making significant long-term investments. Reducing livestock numbers, introducing tillage or forestry or transitioning to organics are all potential climate action measures for a farm, but are actions that require significant investment and a high appetite for risk. A distinct narrative from the farming community was an acknowledgement that climate action provides a high public good, but that an investment in climate action does not provide a sufficient individual financial return for farmers.

A just transition in agriculture and land use requires a model that fairly distributes the responsibilities and rewards of climate action.

Those who are expected to deliver climate and biodiversity outcomes should be supported to do so, and should have a realistic opportunity to maintain viable livelihoods while contributing to national objectives.

³² Government of Ireland (2024) *National Risk Assessment 2024: Overview of Strategic Risks*
<https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/national-risk-assessment-2024-overview-of-strategic-risks.pdf>

Results-based payments: Rewarding action

There are a number of Government schemes designed to influence behaviours within agriculture and land use that are aligned with the climate transition, although could be improved if considered through the lens of just transition.

ACRES is the government's flagship agri-climate rural environmental scheme. Aligned with CAP, this scheme pays farmers on a results basis for positive action for nature, water and climate.³³ However, the scheme is now closed to new applicants and includes only about 40% of farmers.³⁴ Current proposals suggest that any increased ambition for agri-environmental schemes is unlikely to be funded through traditional EU CAP funding, and the shortfall may be needed from national budgets.

The *Forestry Strategy* is designed to incentivise planting trees, provide lasting benefits for climate change and provide farm families with the opportunity to increase and diversify their income streams.³⁵ The plan aims for 8,000 hectares of new forests to be planted every year.³⁶ However in 2025 only 2,600 hectares of new forests were planted and it is unlikely the targets will be met.³⁷

Support for food production such as tillage is also an essential element in food security. The *Tillage Sustainability Support Payment* is an emergency measure to encourage growing crops such as barley, wheat and oats which was introduced when shortages became apparent on the international market after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. With crops, tillage and vegetables only present on about 11% of farms³⁸ and the 85% decline over 25 years in the numbers of fruit and vegetable growers,³⁹ more targeted support could be applied for these groups of farmers who are essential to food security.

There are many other schemes with similar objectives of encouraging a change in land use or agricultural practice by removing financial barriers to diversification and introducing financial incentives; organics, carbon efficiency, modernisation etc.

A willingness to participate in environmental schemes from those working in agriculture demonstrates the potential for the climate transition, however the Commission heard fears of uncertainty, concerns over the 'pilot' nature of many projects and stop start funding as a dis-incentive to participate. **The Commission acknowledges that long term land-use changes are generational decisions for landowners and farmers, and must be matched with generational commitments of support to ensure the opportunities for earning viable livelihoods across rural communities.**

33 Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, *Agri Climate Rural Environment Scheme* <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/campaigns/agri-climate-rural-environment-scheme-acres>

34 Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2025) Press Release 10th November 2025 (There are currently just over 53,700 farmers participating in ACRES.) <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/press-releases/minister-heydon-announces-nearly-147-million-in-payments-to-almost-34000-acres-farmers/>

35 Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine *Forestry Programme 2023-2027* <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-agriculture-food-and-the-marine/publications/forestry-grants-and-schemes/>

36 Government of Ireland, Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine (2023) *Ireland's forest strategy (2023-2030)* <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/irelands-forest-strategy-2023-2030.pdf>

37 Agriland.ie (2026) January 12th 2026 *Forestry planting reaches over 2,500ha in 2025 – DAFM* <https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/forestry-planting-reaches-over-2500ha-in-2025-dafm/>

38 The Farm Structure Survey 2023, published by The Central Statistics Office on number of farms by farm type. The data recorded Mixed field crops (7.3%), Specialist Tillage (3.7%) and Mixed Crops and Livestock (1.4%). <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-fss/farmstructuresurvey2023/farmstructure>

39 Irish Independent (17th October 2023) Just 60 field vegetable growers left in the country – Bord Bia director <https://www.independent.ie/farming/just-60-field-vegetable-growers-left-in-the-country-bord-bia-director/a/135222486.html>

As current schemes are due to be reformed,⁴⁰ the opportunity now exists to provide better conditions for farm workers, greater opportunities for participation and schemes that are designed to deliver environmental benefits as well as commercial returns. The Commission heard that women and young farmers are disproportionately excluded from many schemes, and that the forestry scheme prioritises and values commercial timber production over woodlands for nature or carbon storage.

With the increased ambition in the 2026-2030 carbon budget for the agriculture sector and the objective to convert the land-use sector from a carbon source to a carbon sink, **the Commission recommends the next offering of ACRES, the Forestry Programme and other schemes should facilitate increased subscription numbers, more equitable access, and additional funding with more specific support for climate action measures.**

Local action

There are a multitude of success stories that demonstrate the value of local action and results-based projects, supported with both public and private finance which could provide learning for future supports.

Organisations such as ReFarm⁴¹ and Peatland Finance Ireland⁴² offer an early example of how blended finances, which incorporate public and private finances, can incentivise farmers and landowners to undertake action that deliver economic and social impact as well as climate action. LIFE projects such as EMIT-Change⁴³, Carbon Farming⁴⁴ and the Farm Carbon EIP⁴⁵ similarly stand out as good examples. Working alongside nature restoration objectives, these initiatives offer training, advice and finance for peatland restoration, grassland management and planting hedgerows, among other things.

Many of these projects demonstrate the farmers' participation in agri-environment schemes that lead to benefits that go beyond nature and can help to maintain farm viability. Awareness and pride in how their work contributes to their land, for example with the return of wildlife, plants and trees, has been shown to improve farmer health, contribute to a sense of community and belonging and address social isolation.⁴⁶

40 Both ACRES and the Forestry Programme are planned to be reformed in 2027.

41 ReFarm Ireland <https://refarm.ie/>

42 Peatland Finance Ireland <https://peatlandfinance.ie/>

43 LIFE Emit Change <https://teagasc.ie/environment/climate-centre/research-projects/emit-change/>

44 LIFE Carbon Farming <https://life-carbon-farming.eu/>

45 EIP Farm Carbon <https://farmcarbon.ie/>

46 Blanc, C.; Oldbury-Thomas, D.; Morrissey, P. (2025) Mental Health Impacts of Agri-Environmental Schemes: Insights from Agricultural Advisors in France and Ireland. Sustainability 2025, 17, 7677. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17177677>

Carbon farming: Opportunities and safeguards

Emerging frameworks such as carbon farming offer further opportunities for farmers to complement their income and support greater biodiversity and ecosystem restoration. In November 2025, the European Commission adopted the Implementing Regulation which outlines the technical rules on certification schemes, audits and seeks to harmonise and streamline certification processes.⁴⁷

The Commission heard both interest and caution regarding carbon farming. While these schemes may create new income opportunities, their success will depend on transparency, trust and ensuring that benefits are distributed fairly across farm types and regions. **The Commission recommends that fairness and equity should be implemented into future carbon farming schemes, and that robust guardrails should be applied to prevent inequitable outcomes, such as income instability.**

Nature restoration: Creating opportunities through environmental stewardship

Climate action and nature restoration must be understood as mutually supportive. The EU Nature Restoration Regulation provides the opportunity to provide clarity and certainty for those working across food, land-use and rural systems in Ireland over the next 25 years at least.

The Independent Advisory Committee on Ireland's Nature Restoration Plan recognises healthy ecosystems as essential for our economy, health and well-being as well as essential for food production and adaptation to climate change.⁴⁸ **The Commission supports the recommendations to fund nature restoration and support farmers, fishermen and foresters. This includes measures such as introducing payments for ecosystem services and ensuring that reforms to CAP, ACRES and the Forestry Programme recognise the added value in healthy ecosystems and provide adequate financial rewards for participants.**

47 European Commission (2025), Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/carbon-removals-and-carbon-farming_en#recognition-of-certification-schemes

48 Independent Advisory Committee on Nature Restoration (2026) *Nature Restoration Recommendations* www.restorenature.ie

Co-operatives: Renewing Ireland's co-operative tradition

Ireland has a long tradition of co-operative enterprise in agriculture, enabling farmers to pool resources, strengthen market access and share risk. As agriculture and land use evolve, co-operative approaches may provide opportunities for farmers and landowners to participate in emerging activities such as renewable energy generation, nature restoration, carbon farming, local food systems and shared processing infrastructure. The Commission believes that collective approaches can help reduce barriers to participation, strengthen local economic resilience and ensure that the benefits arising from transition are more widely shared. The Commission notes the proposed legislation to modernise co-operatives in Ireland was introduced in 2022, but has not progressed.⁴⁹ **The timely enactment of this legislation would strengthen the legal framework for co-operative enterprise and better enable farmers and rural communities to participate in emerging opportunities associated with the transition.**

Agri Food Regulator: Ensuring fairness across the supply chain

The Agri-Food Regulator was established in 2023 to ensure fair trading and transparency within Ireland's food supply chain. The Regulator is tasked with collecting data on prices and market analysis and to enforce laws on unfair trading practices.⁵⁰ While the Regulator is operational and exercises its existing statutory enforcement functions, the full market transparency powers envisaged at its establishment including the ability to compel the provision of certain supply-chain data have not yet commenced. The Commission welcomes the additional legislative powers that have been provided to strengthen the Regulator's mandate and notes that these are expected to commence by the end of 2026.

49 Oireachtas Question 963, 29th July 2025 <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2025-07-29/963/>

50 Agri-Food Regulator <https://www.agrifoodregulator.ie/>



Public procurement: Leveraging purchasing power

Each year in Ireland, public bodies spend an estimated €18.5 billion annually on goods, services and works.⁵¹ As a major buyer, the State increasingly uses public procurement as a strategic tool to deliver wider social, environmental and economic objectives.

The *Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan 2024–2027* recognises procurement as an important vehicle for climate action and explicitly identifies opportunities to support sustainable agriculture through the purchase of organic food and timber from sustainably managed forests.

Additional potential opportunities could include increasing the proportion of local and seasonal food for the *Hot School Lunches* programme, or within hospitals and public catering contracts. Likewise, increasing the use of Irish wool in insulation within the *Home Energy Upgrade scheme* or as a material for peatland restoration could support the market in these types of products.

Further work is required by Government as it develops its next *National Public Procurement Strategy*,⁵² of which strategic public procurement will constitute a core theme. **The Commission recommends further examination of how procurement can be used to further a just transition in agriculture and land use.**

The Commission believes that farmers and landowners are central partners in Ireland's climate and nature transition. However, participation cannot be assumed. Long-term confidence will depend on whether climate action, land-use change and nature restoration are supported through fair funding arrangements, reliable income opportunities and policies that provide certainty over the long term. A just transition requires that the costs, risks and rewards of change are shared fairly across society, while ensuring that rural communities can continue to thrive.

51 Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (2024) *Buying Green: Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan 2024–2027* <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/buying-greener-green-public-procurement-strategy-and-action-plan-2024-2027.pdf>

52 Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (2025) Press Release Ministers Chambers and Higgins welcome public consultation on Ireland's first National Public Procurement Strategy <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-public-expenditure-infrastructure-public-service-reform-and-digitalisation/press-releases/ministers-chambers-and-higgins-welcome-public-consultation-on-irelands-first-national-public-procurement-strategy/>

Social Dialogue and Participation

Context: Participation as a foundation for transition

A just transition in agriculture cannot be considered in isolation from the wider food system. Farmers operate within supply chains that include processors, retailers, exporters, consumers and public institutions. Future discussions on agriculture, land use and CAP reform should therefore consider how value is distributed across the food chain, the role of public procurement in supporting sustainable production, changing consumer preferences, food affordability and food security. A shared vision for agriculture and land use should be embedded within a broader vision for Ireland's food system.

As noted throughout this report, agriculture and land use in Ireland are facing an accumulation of pressures. The convergence of climate targets, the reform of the CAP, the next iteration of Food Vision and Nature Restoration Regulation obligations creates a significant opportunity to co-create a shared vision for the future of food, land-use and rural systems.

The Commission believes that while climate targets are clear, the pathway to achieving them fairly remains uncertain for many stakeholders. Throughout the Commission's engagements stakeholders have articulated a strong appetite for open, honest conversation on the future for Irish agriculture and land use.

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) and the Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) also highlight this uncertainty.^{53, 54} **The Commission supports their recommendation for a structured, Government backed dialogue with farmers, rural workers and communities to develop a shared vision for agriculture and land use that is socially inclusive, economically viable, and environmentally resilient.**

National dialogue: Developing a shared vision for the future

The dialogue should focus on how Ireland can manage land-use change fairly, protect livelihoods, and create a more sustainable and resilient rural economy. Ensuring stakeholders build a shared understanding of the costs and benefits of taking action on climate change will be essential to this process, as well as providing information on practical measures and incentives for climate and environmental schemes.

Agriculture and land use must be part of a wider conversation about our rural communities and the future of the rural economy. It should address the interconnected questions of food security and the future of livestock, tillage and other food production systems as well as rural development objectives. The transition will affect not only farmers, but also families, local businesses, community organisations, processors, contractors and future generations who wish to live and work in rural Ireland. The opportunities to support nature restoration, biodiversity targets and renewable energy should be integrated to allow a clear roadmap to be co-created that gives confidence to those most affected by the transition. Preparing for adaptation to deal with the known effects of climate change must form part of the dialogue with guidance and training opportunities identified.

Engagements of this magnitude must be Government-backed and resourced appropriately. **Meaningful participation requires more than consultation; it requires a clear commitment from Government to reflect the outcomes of dialogue in policy development and implementation, and to demonstrate how recommendations and agreed actions are translated into tangible deliverables.** Events such as the National Economic Dialogue present one such opportunity, although the Commission notes with disappointment that a standalone dialogue on agriculture was not part of this year's event.

⁵³ National Economic and Social Council (2023), Just Transition in Agriculture and Land Use: <https://www.nesc.ie/publications/exploring-a-just-transition-in-agriculture-and-land-use/>

⁵⁴ Climate Change Advisory Council (2024), Annual Review 2024 – Agriculture and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry: <https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications/annualreviewandreport/AR24-Agriculture%20LandUseandForestry.pdf>

Place-based dialogue: Leading transition at local level

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) notes that *“a just transition becomes meaningful when it acknowledges the specific context of place, acknowledges challenges and past experiences and identifies place-sensitive opportunities”*.⁵⁵

The Commission recommends that any future dialogue on agriculture and land use must be inclusive, evidence-based and place-based, and must go beyond consultation to co-creation.

This requires engaging communities from the bottom-up with just transition as a meaningful concept applied to real world conditions.

Agriculture in Ireland is highly diverse, with significant differences in farm systems, land quality, enterprise types and economic conditions across regions. The opportunities and challenges associated with transition will therefore not be experienced equally. A meaningful dialogue must recognise these differences and provide opportunities for farmers and rural communities to help shape the policies and supports that will affect them.

According to NESC, the *“potential of just transitions in Ireland will be shaped by re-localisation of markets and suppliers”*. Thus, meaningful dialogue must include farmers, landowners, farm organisations, processors, retailers, consumers, farm workers, contractors, alongside local communities and public authorities. Discussions should focus on how climate action, nature restoration, food production and farm viability can be advanced together in ways that reflect local circumstances and priorities. Addressing immediate issues, such as housing and local employment opportunities, must form part of the dialogue as well as agriculture and land use through a just transition lens.

Place-based dialogue can help build trust, improve understanding of local opportunities and constraints, and support the development of practical pathways for transition that are grounded in local realities.

The *Community Conversations*⁵⁶ held as part of the public engagement for the development of Ireland's Nature Restoration Plan provides a recent example of effective place-based dialogue in Ireland.

In addition, **the Commission recommends that the Government explore local or regional food and land-use system forums to support participatory planning and dialogue on agriculture, food and land use,**

The Commission's engagements highlighted a broad recognition that change in agriculture and land use is necessary, but also a strong desire for greater clarity about the pathway ahead. Farmers, landowners and rural communities want to be active participants in shaping that future. Decisions on food production, land use, climate action and nature restoration will have long-lasting implications for livelihoods, landscapes and rural economies. Meaningful dialogue can help build trust, develop a shared understanding of competing land-use demands and identify practical pathways that reflect local circumstances. A just transition will require not only clear policy direction, but ongoing engagement with those who will be most affected by the decisions taken.

55 National Economic and Social Council (2022) *Exploring Place-based Opportunities for Policy and Practice in Transition* https://files.nesc.ie/nesc_research_series/research_24_place_based.pdf

56 Act and Hometree (2026) *Community Conversations, Synthesis Report. Insights, experiences and recommendations from communities across Ireland on nature and nature restoration to inform Ireland's Nature Restoration Plan*. https://be1d489e-7aa0-4c71-a88c-5dc314c217f6.filesusr.com/ugd/9a85d8_25829a92f39e47babf007e425ed3f4c9.pdf

Delivering a Just Transition in Agriculture and Land Use

Ireland's transition in agriculture and land use represents a significant opportunity to reshape how land is managed to support climate action, nature restoration, food production and thriving rural communities. While the challenge of reducing emissions and restoring ecosystems is substantial, the transition also offers the potential to create new opportunities for farmers, strengthen rural economies, improve environmental outcomes and enhance the resilience of Ireland's food system.

Delivering this vision will require sustained leadership, long-term investment and a clear strategic direction. Farmers and landowners are central to achieving Ireland's climate and biodiversity ambitions, and must be supported through fair and accessible policies that provide certainty and viable pathways for change. At the same time, the diversity of farm systems, land types and regional circumstances must be recognised to ensure that the costs and benefits of transition are shared fairly.

A just transition cannot be delivered through policy alone. It requires ongoing dialogue, meaningful participation and a willingness to work in partnership with those who live and work on the land. Government must provide clear leadership by setting a coherent long-term direction, aligning policy and investment across government, and ensuring that the costs and benefits of transition are shared fairly across regions, sectors and communities. By strengthening the evidence base for decision-making, supporting skills and diversification opportunities, creating space for inclusive and place-based engagement, and using public land and public procurement to demonstrate best practice, Government can build the trust and confidence necessary to support long-term change.

Ultimately, the success of Ireland's agriculture and land-use transition will be measured not only by emissions reductions or restored habitats, but by its ability to sustain viable livelihoods, support vibrant rural communities and maintain a resilient food system. By embedding fairness, participation and long-term thinking at the heart of decision-making, Ireland can demonstrate that climate action, nature restoration and rural prosperity can be advanced together, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Across Ireland, farmers are already demonstrating how climate action, nature restoration and farm viability can be advanced together. Examples include participation in results-based agri-environment schemes, organic farming, peatland restoration, agroforestry, renewable energy production and collaborative initiatives such as European Innovation Partnerships. These initiatives highlight that, when supported by appropriate advice, finance and market opportunities, farmers can play a leading role in delivering environmental outcomes while maintaining viable livelihoods.

Government Action Checklist

This checklist has been prepared by the Commission to demonstrate the list of actions necessary to implement the recommendations of this report.

National Dialogue and Shared Vision

- Convene a national dialogue on the future of Irish agriculture and land use to develop a shared long-term vision for agriculture and land use in a thriving rural landscape.
- Ensure the dialogue is grounded in the Just Transition Principles. Facilitate participation by farmers, rural communities, industry, civil society and other stakeholders.

Long-Term Funding and Equitable Access

- Establish long-term funding commitments to support generational land-use change.
- Ensure funding arrangements reflect the long-term nature of land-use decisions.
- Maintain viable livelihood opportunities within rural communities throughout the transition.
- Increase participation opportunities within schemes such as ACRES and the Forestry Programme.
- Improve equitable access to climate action schemes.
- Increase funding available for climate and biodiversity actions.

Climate, Nature and Ecosystem Services

- Introduce or expand payments for ecosystem services.
- Implement the recommendations of the Independent Committee on Nature Restoration relating to support for farmers, fishermen and foresters.
- Ensure adequate funding to reward environmental outcomes.
- Ensure all schemes such as ACRES or the Forestry Programme appropriately reward climate and biodiversity actions and ecosystem services.
- Provide additional financial incentives for nature restoration and biodiversity enhancement.

Skills, Training and Community Capacity

- Undertake research on the pace and geographical distribution of employment change arising from the transition to climate neutrality.
- Assess future skills requirements within the agriculture and land-use sectors.
- Ensure advisory services are fully accessible to small-scale farmers.
- Ensure advisory services are fully accessible to part-time farmers.
- Deliver gender-responsive advisory and training services.
- Scale up farmer-led skills development initiatives.
- Scale up community-led development programmes.
- Provide multi-annual funding for local climate and biodiversity initiatives.
- Support long-term community capacity-building and trust-building programmes.

Government Action Checklist (cont.)

Strategic Land-Use Planning

- Use the findings of the Land-Use Review to inform a coherent, cross-government approach to land-use policy.
- Develop an evidence-based framework for balancing climate, biodiversity, economic and social objectives in land-use decision-making.

Supporting Diverse and Active Farming Systems

- Ensure future definitions of “active farmer” recognise the diversity of farming systems and farm structures.
- Protect the viability of low-intensity farming systems.
- Recognise and reward farmers who provide ecosystem services.
- Ensure agricultural supports continue to sustain rural economies and communities.

Generational Renewal and Access to Farming

- Develop a national strategy for generational renewal in agriculture.
- Implement the recommendations of the Commission on Generation Renewal.
- Establish a targeted support package for young farmers.
- Develop funding mechanisms that support young farmers entering the sector.
- Introduce land mobility initiatives to improve access to land.
- Improve access to land for women, young people and new entrants.

Gender Equality

- Review women's eligibility across existing agricultural schemes.
- Address barriers to participation in agricultural support programmes.
- Integrate gender equality into future CAP reforms.
- Embed gender equality as a principle across all future agricultural schemes.
- Ensure equal access to funding, training and decision-making opportunities.
- Collect disaggregated data on gender uptake across all support schemes in order to properly assess if they are achieving their goals

Diversification and Market Development

- Work with stakeholders to build and maintain demand for diversified agricultural products and services.
- Develop additional routes to market for diversified producers.
- Reduce risks associated with farm diversification.
- Support the development of viable business models linked to climate and biodiversity objectives.

Government Action Checklist (cont.)

Fair Markets, Governance and Regulation

- Embed fairness and equity principles within future carbon farming schemes.
- Introduce safeguards to prevent income instability and other inequitable outcomes in carbon farming markets.
- Ensure the commencement of the legislative powers granted to the Agri-Food Regulator to allow it to fulfil its statutory mandate.
- Consider the role of public procurement in supporting a just transition in agriculture within the National Public Procurement Strategy.
- Use public procurement to support sustainable and locally beneficial agricultural outcomes.

Participation, Cooperation and Local Governance

- Establish local or regional food system forums to support participatory planning.
- Strengthen local engagement on agriculture, food and land-use policy.
- Develop co-operative models that meet the current and future needs of farmers.
- Ensure reforms to co-operative legislation accommodate different co-operative sizes, outputs and governance structures.
- Support collaborative approaches to climate action, biodiversity restoration and rural development.



Supporting Information

About the Commission

The Just Transition Commission was established in late 2024 as an advisory body to Government. Commissioners were appointed by Government for a three-year term (2024-2027). The Commission is composed of representatives nominated through the five recognised pillars of social dialogue:

- Environmental
- Agriculture
- Community and Voluntary
- Trade Union
- Employer

In addition, independent experts are appointed to provide specialist expertise in areas including climate policy, labour markets, governance, economics, and social inclusion.

This composition is intended to ensure that a range of perspectives are reflected in the Commission's advice and that the public voice is represented in the development of just transition policy

Secretariat Support

The Commission would like to thank the Secretariat of the Just Transition Commission for their ongoing support and contributions. The Secretariat is provided by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment by Colm Ó Conaill, Greta Szabo, Michael Keegan, Rónán Stokes and Conor Reynolds.

The Commission extends its sincere appreciation to all those who engage with its work. The Commission is grateful for the input, expertise, insights and first-hand experience shared, as well as the support of those who help facilitate this engagement.

The Commission would also like to thank Kate Ruddock for support with drafting this report.

List of Stakeholders Consulted

Policy & Academic

- Professor Alan Matthews
- Teagasc
- Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine
- Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment
- National Park & Wildlife Services

Farms Visited

- Brookfield farm, Nenagh, Tipperary
- Gurteen College, Roscrea, Tipperary
- Teagasc Signpost farm, Nenagh, Tipperary

Representative Groups

- Women in Agriculture Stakeholder Group
- Macra na Feirme
- Irish Farmers Association
- Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association – survey
- Irish Co-operative Organisation Society – survey
- Dairy Industry Ireland – survey
- Irish Organic Association – survey
- Irish Grain Growers Group – survey
- Irish Natura and Hill Farmers Association - survey

Just Transition Commission Membership



Ali Sheridan – Chair

*Independent Expert
Appointed October 2024*



Oisín Coghlan

*Environment Pillar Representative
Appointed October 2024*



Conor Minogue

*Business Pillar Representative
Appointed October 2024*



Ryan McKinney

*Trade Union Pillar Representative
Appointed October 2024*



Dr. Diarmuid Torney

*Independent Expert
Appointed October 2024*



Suresh Kumar

*Independent Expert
Appointed October 2024*



Dr. Evan Boyle

*Independent Expert
Appointed October 2024*



Tanya Ward

*Independent Expert
Appointed October 2024*



Michelle Murphy

*Civil and Voluntary Pillar Representative
Appointed December 2024*



Vanessa Kiely O'Connor

*Agriculture Pillar Representative
Appointed October 2024*



Brian Flynn

*Independent Expert
Appointed March 2026*



Glossary

Carbon Budget Programme

Ireland's Carbon Budgets provide 5-year economy-wide legally-binding ceilings that set out the maximum amount of greenhouse gas emissions that are permitted to be released. Carbon Budgets are prepared by the Climate Change Advisory Council and submitted to Government for approval. Please also see: Sectoral Emission Ceilings.

Climate Action Plan

The Climate Action Plan aims to provide a decarbonisation pathway to 2030 consistent with Carbon Budgets and an overall aim to achieve climate neutrality in Ireland by 2050.

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

CAP is the name of the European Union's policy to support agriculture and related activities across the Union. The policy is supported by payments for farmers and farming communities.

Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC)

The CCAC is an independent advisory body providing evidence-based advice and recommendations on policy to support Ireland's transition to a biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable, climate neutral and resilient society.

Climate Neutrality

A sustainable economy and society where greenhouse gas emissions are balanced or exceeded by the removal of greenhouse gases. Achieving climate neutrality by 2050 is Ireland's National Climate Objective.

European Innovation Partnerships (EIP)

European Innovation Partnerships are European and National Government funded co-operative projects to trial environmentally sustainable farming practices. They often include farmers, community groups, scientists and local and national state organisations.

Generational Renewal

Generational renewal refers to the transition of farming from an ageing population to a younger population.

Just Transition Principles Framework

The Just Transition Principles Framework is made up of four principles:

- An integrated, structured, and evidence-based approach to identify and plan our response to just transition requirements;
 - People are equipped with the right skills to be able to participate in and benefit from the future net zero economy;
 - The costs are shared so that the impact is equitable and existing inequalities are not exacerbated; and
 - Social dialogue to ensure impacted citizens and communities are empowered and are core to the transition process.
-

Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

The Multiannual Financial Framework is the name of the European Unions long term budget. It covers a period of seven years. The next budget will run from 2028-2034 and will amount to almost 2 trillion euro. CAP payments are funded through this budget.

National Climate Objective (NCO)

Ireland's Climate Law, sets out the national climate objective whereby the State shall, so as to reduce the extent of further global warming, pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy.

Nature Restoration Regulation

Is a new Regulation that was introduced across the European Union in 2024. The Regulation has direct effect and aims to restore nature to good condition across the Union. The Irish Government's plan to restore nature is currently in development.

Sectoral Emission Ceilings

Sectoral Emissions Ceilings refer to the total amount of permitted greenhouse gas emissions that each sector of the economy can produce during a specific time period, within the limits of Ireland's Carbon Budget.

Just Transition Commission's Terms of Reference

1. Establishment

- 1.1** The Just Transition Commission (Commission) is established on an administrative basis by Government Decision 30 April 2024.

- 1.2** The mission of the Just Transition Commission is to support the Government in its responsibility to provide that Ireland's transition to the National Climate Objective has regard to the requirement for a just transition to a climate neutral economy, which endeavours, in so far as practicable, to maximise employment opportunities, and to support people and communities that may be negatively affected by the transition. The Commission will be a public voice on planning for just transition, leading in developing a shared understanding, and identifying the challenges, solutions and opportunities for Ireland.

2. Functions of the Just Transition Commission

The functions of the Just Transition Commission are:

- 2.1**
- **To prepare and analyse strategic evidence-based research in relation to just transition:** to anticipate and inform long-term climate policy and investment planning, including focusing on the potential impacts, risks and opportunities arising from the climate transition for different sectors of both the economy and society, including the social, economic and employment impacts of this change and the policy responses required.
 - **To evaluate, advise, and comment on** policy planning and implementation and progress on the application of Ireland's just transition principles into national and sectoral climate policies, based on high-quality, evidence-based analysis.
 - **To provide strategic advice and engagement on just transition:** the Commission will support the National Dialogue on Climate Action, as well as any dialogues on climate/just transition matters within individual sectors, in engagement on the implementation of climate programmes agreed by Government.
 - **Sectoral or regional engagement and road-mapping:** the Commission may, on its own initiative, or at the request of the Government, undertake proactive engagement with particular communities, sectors or regions facing specific acute or long-term challenges arising from the transition, and advise Government on strategic co-ordination by the agencies of the State, on any interventions or targeted supports which may be helpful to address the challenges being faced by that community, sector or region.

3. Work Programme

The work programme for the first term of the Commission shall include, but may not be limited to:

- An analysis of the potential impacts on Ireland's workforce, and policy implications, of achieving the statutory 2050 climate neutrality objective; including examining the potential overall employment implications, which sectors of the economy may be most adversely impacted, which sectors may be expected to see significant employment growth in the decades ahead; and an examination of the geographic distribution of these impacts.
- 3.1 • An assessment of the degree to which climate action policies already reflect the principles of Ireland's Just Transition Framework, taking account of the policy framework and sectoral emissions ceilings set out in the Climate Action Plan, and advice on any opportunities for strengthening both the principles themselves and the application of the principles into sectoral policies.
- Advice on the strengthening of the local and community dimensions of just transition and strengthening engagement with vulnerable cohorts into Ireland's climate engagement activities, in particular the National Dialogue on Climate Action, as well as sectoral dialogues.
- Recommendations on a set of just transition indicators to support measurement of progress, over time, in achieving a just transition.



4. Membership and Chairperson

- 4.1** The number of Members, appointed on a part time basis only, shall be comprised of not fewer than eight and not more than ten ordinary Members (excluding the Chair). Appointments to the Commission may be for a term of up to three years, renewable once.
- 4.2** The Minister who holds responsibility for climate policy shall make appointments to the Commission based on objective criteria, with due regard for the benefits of diversity, including on the basis of gender. The composition of the Commission should be balanced, so that the views of members represent a diverse group of stakeholders.
- 4.3** The Minister may appoint one member each from the five pillars of social dialogue, comprised of the Agriculture pillar, the Community and Voluntary pillar, the Employer pillar, the Environment pillar and the Trade Union pillar.
- 4.4** The remaining members shall be recruited through a competitive process to supplement delegated members and to represent a range of expertise and perspectives including human rights and equality, skills development, rural and community development, social inclusion, the green economic transition, and youth perspectives.
- 4.5** The Chair shall be appointed by the Minister either from amongst the appointed members or through a separate competitive recruitment process.
- 4.6** The Chair shall be independent of the Government and is responsible for determining the work programme of the Commission, in consultation with the Members, and for the discharge of this work programme, in conjunction with the secretariat.
- 4.7** The Minister may decide to appoint one or more deputy chairs from amongst the Members as required, subject to ultimate accountability remaining with the Chair.
- 4.8** Members and the Chair shall be suitably qualified persons, (for example, but not limited to individuals who have a direct experience of policy issues from a business or societal perspective or in academia).
- 4.9** All appointments to the Commission shall be approved by the Government
- 4.10** Commission Members shall receive a fee and expenses.

5. Independence of Commission

- 5.1** The Commission is an independent body and shall perform its duties in an objective, neutral and fully independent manner, free of any expressed ideology or political position.
- 5.2** The Commission shall have functional autonomy and shall be responsible for the management and direction of its own work programme, save where requested by Government to undertake proactive engagement with particular communities, sectors or regions facing specific acute or long-term challenges arising from the transition. The work programme will be shaped by the Chair, in consultation with Members and with the assistance of its Secretariat.
- 5.3** The Commission shall develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government, through the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, outlining the operational relationship between the Commission and the Government, including the provision of secretariat, financial and operational resources to the Commission.
- 5.4** The Commission shall produce independent high-quality, evidence-based analysis on just transition challenges and opportunities and shall report to the Government through the Minister with responsibility for climate policy and make this analysis available to the public to inform policy development across government.

6. Advisory Representatives

- The following Departments may attend Commission meetings in an advisory capacity:
- 6.1**
- Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine
 - Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
 - Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
 - Department of Finance
 - Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
 - Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
 - Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform
 - Department of Rural and Community Development
 - Department of Social Protection
 - Department of Taoiseach
 - Department of Transport
- 6.2** The Commission may invite additional Government Departments and Agencies to attend Commission meetings in an advisory capacity where appropriate.
- 6.3** When necessary, alternates may attend on behalf of advisory representatives, with the prior agreement of the Chair.

7. Relationship with other bodies

- 7.1** The relationship between the Commission and Climate Change Advisory Council will be subject to a Memorandum of Understanding between the two bodies.
- 7.2** The Commission may coordinate its work programme with other advisory bodies to ensure appropriate complementarity, taking account of the Commission's work programme set out in section 3.

8. Meetings and Procedure

- 8.1** Subject to the requirements of this Section, the Commission shall regulate its own procedures
- 8.2** The quorum for a meeting of the Commission shall be not less than six members at the meeting.
- 8.3** The Commission will seek to reach decisions by consensus. Where this is not possible, decisions shall be determined by a simple majority of votes of the members present and, if voting is equally divided, the Chairperson shall have a casting vote.
- 8.4** The Chairperson may at any time call a meeting of the Commission or shall call a meeting of the Commission at any time when requested to do so in writing by any five members of the Commission.
- 8.5** Views expressed by the Commission in publications or by any Member of the Commission speaking on its behalf, shall not be understood as representing the views of the Minister who holds responsibility for climate policy or any Member of the Government.
- 8.6** The disclosure of information, except in the exercise of their duties, obtained by any member of the Commission or any committee or consultative group appointed by it, shall be prohibited.
- 8.7** The Commission shall keep the Minister who holds responsibility for climate policy informed of its activities on a regular basis and the Chairperson shall be afforded the opportunity to present the key findings and recommendations of its work to the Minister, at minimum on an annual basis.

9. Secretariat

- 9.1** The secretariat to the Commission shall be provided by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.
- 9.2** Communication between the Government, Ministers, Government officials and the Commission, save for when the Chair directly engages with such parties, shall be conducted through the Secretariat.

Get in touch!

The Commission is keen to hear from people, communities, organisations and wider societal actors working towards a just transition. We are eager to hear about both the challenges being faced and positive examples of how social and climate goals can be integrated to support action, inclusion, justice and equality. To share your insights or stories, please email us at

info@justtransitioncommission.ie
www.justtransitioncommission.ie

**Just Transition
Commission of Ireland**
Coimisiún na hÉireann
um Aistriú Cóir

