



# **Mid-West Regional Authority Conference**

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## **The Impact of Environmental Designations on Farming in Ireland**

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# Introduction

- Designation of land has been a feature impacting on farmers for some time.
- EU Habitat Directive was implemented in 1997.
- Part of negotiations in Partnership deal.
- 2 Agreements – 1997 and revised again in 2004.
- IFA against the process of designation as it imposes restrictions on farming activity, forestry, fish farming, development, drainage and flood relief
- Compensation for loss a major part of IFA negotiations.



# Implications on Farming

- Restricted practices on farming.
- Now part of Cross Compliance rules for Single Farm Payment.

Example of restriction.

- Burren – Grazing, feeding points set down, restrictions on farm improvement works, fertiliser application, infilling and reclamation. Normal farming practices prohibited.
- Blanket Bogs, Heather and Upland Grassland -
  - Stocking rate restrictions.
  - Commonage framework plans.
  - Destocking
  - Supplementary feeding restriction
- Sand Dunes & Machair Areas –
  - Restriction on farming activities, grazing, feeding points etc.

continued

### Corncrake Habitats –

- Mainly on Shannon Callows.
- Restriction on cutting meadow.
- Centre out meadow mowing – earliest 10<sup>th</sup> Aug.
- Grazing not allowed after 15<sup>th</sup> May.
- Loss of meadows in recent year due to summer floods.

### River Margins –

- Increased buffer strips.
- Restriction of drainage works on the river.
- Now Pearl Mussel cited as reason for further restrictions

## Continued

### Raised Bogs –

- Turf cutting restrictions.
- 10 year derogation given.
- IFA wants turf cutting for domestic purposes to be allowed.

### Eskers –

- Grazing restrictions
- Quarrying not allowed
- Impact on potential economic benefit



# Forestry

- Restrictions on areas eligible for forestry
- Mainly in Western Seaboard / The Hen Harrier/ Pearl Mussel
- Acid Sensitive areas – inconsistency with determination of suitable areas for planting.
- Impacting on the potential to reach the Government planting target of 17% Forestry cover by 2030
- Quota system in the Hen Harrier flawed



# Fish Farming

- 50% of all Irish fish and shell fish farming takes place in designated areas.
- ECJ ruling found Ireland has not complied in respect of Aquaculture/Fish and other factions.
- Effectively puts a hold on development – 860 licences are awaiting decision.

# Overcoming Income Loss: Supplementary Measures in

## 1. REPS

- REPS 1, 2, 3 & 4.
- New REPS – More targeted – SACs, NHAs, SPAs and Commonages.
- IFA want the same payment rate as REPS 4 for these areas.

## 2. NPWS Farm Plan Schemes

- Other option for 5 year plan.
- About 200 farm plans.
- Destocking payment set out every year.



# Capital Loss

- IFA critical that capital loss on land value not taken into account.
- Burden on land folio.
- Some compensation where commercial activity has been stopped.
- Need for independent assessment of capital loss and arbitration process.
- Turf cutting compensation must be based on the cost arising from the need to source alternative fuel.



# General Problems Associated with Designations

- Criticism of the notification process.
- Appeals period reduced to 3 months by the Government.
- Creeping designations – areas under designation has increased.
- Appropriate assessment now required.
- County Development Plans – designation is a reason to turn down developments.
- Sometimes seems easy way for Planners i.e. blame somebody else.
- Needs for greater flexibility – particularly where other national objectives have to be achieved, e.g. Flood mitigation, sustaining economic activity in rural areas.

# Continued

- National priorities must be recognised – renewal energy, wind farms etc.
- The socio-economic considerations need to be taken into account.
- Designations are mainly in the western part of Ireland.
- Areas in greater need of economic regeneration are those that have high level of designation.
- Balanced debate required so that the interest of society is met.