

Signpost Sustainability Self-Assessment: What Changes Will You Make?

Taking the time to assess your farm's performance will help you to identify opportunities to make your farm business more profitable and enjoyable, while also allowing you to play your part in caring for the environment and making space for nature.

Step 1: Take a few moments to read the following statements and tick those that you agree with.

	Yes
1. I am using protected urea as my source of fertiliser N.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I am applying lime to correct low soil pH on all productive agricultural soils.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. All of my soil samples are at optimum P & K levels (Index 3).	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I am using low-emission slurry spreading (LESS) equipment to spread my cattle slurry between 1 st February and 1 st May, when weather and ground conditions are suitable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I have reduced my fertiliser N application rates in the last three years reports.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I have a herd health plan and use bulk milk screening to monitor my herd for infectious diseases (dairy farmers) or I have a herd health plan and use the Beef Health Check report or faecal egg counts to monitor my herd/ flock for parasites (for cattle/ sheep farmers).	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. My herd EBI is increasing by €10 per year (dairy farmers) or I am selecting four- and five-star beef sires for use on my suckler herd (suckler beef farmers).	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I make breeding / culling / feeding / drafting decisions based on milk recording results/ calving reports / animal performance / weight recording reports.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. My herd replacement rate is less than 20% and I calve my replacements at 2 years.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I use the Dairy Beef Index (DBI) to improve the beef quality of dairy beef calves (dairy farmers) or I use the Commercial Breeding Value (CBV) Index when purchasing beef animals (beef farmers).	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. All of my grazing swards have clover incorporated and / or I am including clover in all of my new reseed mixtures.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I have adequate slurry storage, which enables me to spread slurry at the right growing time and when ground conditions are good.	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I have incorporated field margins along field boundaries and buffer strips along streams/ rivers.	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I side-trim only escaped hedges.	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I have retained or planted thorn saplings / flowering trees in all topped hedges.	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I have reduced age at slaughter of beef animals by 1 month in the last few years.	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOTAL	<input type="text"/> /16

Step 2: How do you score? Count the number of ticks.

SCORE	15 - 17	12 - 14	11 OR LESS
	You are farming sustainably	Some scope for improvement	Significant scope for improvement

What changes to your farming practices will you make in the next 12 months?

What change(s) will make your farm more sustainable?

Establish your numbers.*

Learn one new skill.

Change one farming practice.

Take the first step towards a better farming future.

Your one action will make a difference.

* GHG emissions figures, biodiversity score, water quality in local stream / river etc.
Contact your Teagasc Adviser for further details.

Step 3: Having completed the assessment, you should now identify up to three actions that you can start in the next twelve months.

ACTION AREA	FUTURE TARGET	FIRST STEP
<i>Example: N fertiliser</i>	<i>Switch to protected urea as fertiliser N source.</i>	<i>Prepare a plan with my adviser and contact my merchant.</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		