

GLAS: There's money in the margins

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The agri-environment scheme, GLAS, offers dairy and tillage farms a return of over €1,170/ha on their least productive land. Entering field margins into the scheme will have limited, if any, effect on farm output and €25,000 from GLAS over the next five years is likely to be a great return on effort and investment.

Dairy farmers

Many dairy farmers have watercourses. Fencing all the watercourses on a farm at a distance of 1.5 metres from the top of the bank earns €1.50 per metre per year for five years. This is a payment rate of €10,000/ha of land taken out of production. And cows can still graze under the wire.

Every 1,000 metres of watercourses will get €1,500 each year for five years. If the farmer has fields on both sides of the watercourse, the payment is doubled to €3,000 for fencing both banks. There is no maximum payment for this option, other than the overall scheme limit of €5,000.

Permanent stakes and wire must be used but there is no specification other than it must be fit for purpose for the animals on the farm. For dairy cows, a single-strand electric fence is

acceptable. Unlike the previous agri-environment scheme, AEOS, payment received in GLAS does not depend on the price paid for the fencing and, indeed, the fencing may already be in place.

Where watercourses are identified as vulnerable water areas on the GLAS online planning system, this gives the farmer priority access to GLAS with Tier 2a status. He must fence all watercourses in this case. This can only be known once the FRS advisor accesses the computer for each specific farmer. If not identified as vulnerable water areas farmers can still undertake this action, but will not get priority access.

Dairy farmers with a stocking rate over 140 kg of nitrogen per hectare have priority access into GLAS as Tier 1b applicants, provided they undertake low-emission slurry spreading or grow one hectare of wild bird cover.

Low-emission slurry spreading

In this GLAS action, all of the slurry applied on the farm, whether home-produced or imported, must be spread with a low-emission method. These are band spreading, injection systems and trailing shoe. The payment is €1.20 per cubic metre per year for five years.

An annual slurry declaration must be completed with documentary evidence to confirm the spreading method used and the volumes applied.



This may be a calculation of slurry produced, imported and spread, or a receipt from a contractor.

Low-emission slurry spreading improves the recovery of slurry nutrients, reduces phosphorus run-off, offers a wider window of opportunity to apply slurry, reduces tainting of the grazing sward and generates less odour.

Wild bird cover

This involves growing a crop such as a mix of oats and linseed and leaving it unharvested to provide seed for birds during the winter – like a giant bird table. The crop must remain in situ until 15 March, after which it is replanted by 31 May.

Oat seed is eaten by birds such as the yellowhammer; the smaller linseed is preferred by finches, skylark and the linnet.

Tillage farmers

What crop delivers €1,170 per hectare? The answer is GLAS arable margins – in the least productive part of the farm: three, four or six metres from the boundary. Where the margin is established along a watercourse, an additional two metres unsown (with an arable crop), which is required un-

Fencing watercourses

Louth dairy farmer Eamonn McEntegart, Knockbridge, who has undertaken to fence watercourses in GLAS with FRS advisor Tony Brennan and Teagasc advisor John Lawlor. John Lalor recommends to all his dairy farmer clients to consider GLAS. FRS advisor Tony, who is drawing up the GLAS plans for Teagasc, stresses how important it is for Teagasc clients to contact their local office now with the deadline for GLAS Tranche 2 approaching in December.





The Moss Carder bumblebee can use arable margins, improve pollination and increase biodiversity on tillage farms.

Table 1: Arable grass margins

Width metre	€/linear metre	€/hectare of land under margin	Linear metres of margin to make a hectare	Maximum linear metres
3	0.35	1,170	3,333	7,000
4	0.50	1,250	2,500	5,000
6	0.70	1,170	1,666	3,500

der the Basic Payment Scheme, must be in place between the watercourse and the GLAS margin.

GLAS arable margins are established by sowing a grass seed mix containing at least 60% cocksfoot or timothy, or a combination of these, at the standard rate of 25kg to 30kg/ha.

Grass seed labels and receipts must be retained for the duration of the GLAS contract. The margins are retained for the five years with no soil cultivation once established. The margin must be mulched, mown or grazed at least once a year between 16 August and the end of February. Off-takes can be removed. Fertiliser or lime cannot be applied to the margin. Pesticides cannot be applied either except for the spot treatment of noxious or invasive weeds.

Many tillage farmers did not like the compulsory tillage margins on every boundary in REPS, but these

GLAS arable margins are completely different. In REPS, margins of 1.5 metres were abandoned with natural regeneration and were too narrow to manage separately and hence became problem areas, prone to weeds.

Flexible choices

The best part of this GLAS action is the flexibility. Farmers can choose to undertake an arable margin on one or all sides of a field and on one or all fields. You can choose different widths of margins in different locations. The same margin width must be undertaken on a full side of a field. Therefore, farmers can choose headlands which are difficult for crop production. Margins are not digitised separately from the field for Basic Payment Scheme purposes. GLAS payment for arable margins is on a linear basis. The correct width must be present on field inspection.

Priority actions for tillage

Tillage farmers with over 30ha of tillage crops in 2015 have priority access into GLAS with Tier 1b status, provided they undertake at least 10ha of catch crops or 10ha of minimum tillage. Tillage farmers under 30ha can undertake catch crops, minimum tillage or low-emission slurry spreading in order to get priority access as Tier 2b applicants.

The minimum volume of slurry to be applied per year is 50cm³ and this can be all imported.

Payment for catch crops in GLAS is €155/ha, unless they are also used for equivalence or ecological focus areas when the GLAS payment is reduced to €128/ha.

Catch crops must be sown by 15 September each year and retained until 1 December. An integral mixture of two species is sown. The minimum tillage payment in GLAS is €40/ha per year.

There are over 20 GLAS actions from which to choose. GLAS is now open for Tranche 2.

Contact your Teagasc office immediately if you want to discuss your options with an advisor. This consultation is free and necessary before you commit to a GLAS plan being drawn up.