

Teagasc- The Signpost Series

2030 Agri-Food Strategy: The Environmental Ambition

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Structure of presentation.

- Turning point moments over past 50 years.
- 2030 Strategy:
- TORs
- Process
- Key recommendations – Missions, Goals

- The Environmental Ambition
- 2030 Strategy and the wider international context: Food Systems Summit (FSS), September 2021.

Turning Point moments over past 50 years

- 1973: Irish entry to EEC
- 1984: EU milk quota
- 1993: MacSharry CAP reform: price to income support.
- 1993-2019: More complex CAP: increasing focus on agri-environment, food safety, animal welfare, rural development
- 2015: Abolition of EU milk quota
- 2019: A greener CAP: European Green Deal (EGD), Farm to Fork (F2F), Biodiversity Strategy.
- 2020-21: Towards Sustainability – politics, policy and the marketplace.

2030 Strategy – the Journey

- TORs: ‘Outline a vision and key objectives, with associated actions, to ensure the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the sector’.
- Process: Stakeholder Committee – 32.
- Timeframe: November 2019-April 2021.
- Publication on 17 April, 2021, for public consultation to 15 June.
- - Draft 2030 Strategy
- -Environmental Report
- -Appropriate Assessment (AA): Natura Impact Assessment.

2030 Strategy in historical context

- 2030 Strategy fifth such strategy since 2000.
- Successor strategy to Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025.
- FW 2025: ' Guiding principle .. Is that environmental protection and economic competitiveness are equal and complementary: one will not be achieved at the expense of the other'.
- FW 2025 delivered in terms of increased output, value of exports and value-added. But at the expense of the environment.
- EPA: 'The economic growth in recent years has occurred at the expense of the environment, as witnessed by the negative trends in water quality, greenhouse gas emissions, ammonia emissions and biodiversity'.

2030 Strategy against background of changing Irish climate policy.

- Irish climate policy steadily lost credibility, nationally and internationally, from 2010 onwards, as evidenced by consistently poor rankings in international comparisons. Taoiseach's admission to European Parliament in 2018 that Ireland was a 'climate laggard'. Supreme Court judgement (July 2020) striking down 2017 National Mitigation Plan
- Governmental response: Increased climate ambition in Programme for Government (PfG). Recent Climate Action Amendment Bill provides for setting 5 year carbon budgets for each economic sector to force a reduction in emissions.
- Against the background of higher climate ambitions at EU level and internationally, with re-engaged US leadership.

Approach used in developing the 2030 Strategy.

- Because of the acceptance internationally of the interconnectedness between food systems, health and the environment, Committee decided to use a 'food systems approach' in developing the Strategy.
- This has two important consequences:
 - An explicit link is made between selected aspects of policies for food systems, health and the environment.
 - Roles and responsibilities of all the main actors in the food chain will be spelled out in working towards the vision for a sustainable food system for 2030.

The Context for the 2020s

- Radically different context from that in which FW 2025 was framed
- The core elements of the future context upon which the 2030 Strategy will be framed are the political/policy changes relating to the agri-environment, changing consumer preferences about sustainably produced food, and the influence of companies following their own 2030 sustainability agendas.
- The Strategy identifies four major shaping issues for the next decade:
 - The evolving global food economy
 - Planning within human and planetary boundaries
 - Brexit and its consequences
 - Building back better after COVID-19

2030 Strategy Report - Structure

- Foreword
- Executive Summary
- 1. Introduction and Context.
- 2. A Climate Smart, Environmentally Sustainable Sector
- 3. Viable and Resilient Primary Producers with Enhanced Wellbeing
- 4. Food that is safe, nutritious and appealing: trusted at home and abroad
- 5. An Innovative, Competitive and Resilient Sector driven by Technology and Talent
- 6. Implementation arrangements

2030 Strategy – Key recommendations

- Meeting the TORs: policies for the delivery of economic, environmental and social sustainability.
- ‘The three components are not compartmentalised and there is an important interplay between them: working towards each dimension of sustainability draws on policies across the four Missions’.
- ‘The issue of policy sequencing, timeframes for implementing policy change, and the use of the Just Transition approach will be important’
- ‘There are trade-offs between the different dimensions of sustainability: these need to be acknowledged and a willingness shown to reach realistic compromises on the direction of change and the speed at which it can take place. This Strategy sets out the agenda from which such choices and decisions can be made’.

2030 Strategy's Big Idea.

- 'The Strategy's central objective is that Ireland should become an international leader in Sustainable Food Systems (SFSs) over the next decade'.
- 'The Strategy recognises that there needs to be a profound shift towards more sustainable policies and action, nationally and internationally'.
- 'The future source of competitive advantage for the Irish agri-food sector lies in being able to demonstrate that it meets the highest standards of sustainability (in all its forms), such that it can be considered among the world leaders in this field. This is the basis on which Ireland can meaningfully build on its 'green' reputation and aspire to gaining market share in expanding high value international markets and, in certain cases, gaining a premium price for what it sells.

Impact of implementation of 2030 Strategy policies.

- ‘Ireland’s agri-food sector, along with Government and society, will have to make significant changes. The sector should aim to become climate-neutral by 2050, with verifiable progress by 2030, encompassing emissions, biodiversity and water quality’
- ‘The Strategy aims at making the sector more diversified, resilient and based on circular economy principles... But the core of Ireland’s agri-food output will continue to be grass based livestock production wherein lies Ireland’s natural competitive advantage.
- ‘The long-standing policy of supplying an increasingly diversified range of export markets and and developing new high value markets will continue. The aim is to secure a premium price and ensure that this premium is shared across the value chain, in particular back to the primary producer’.

Economic, Environmental, Social Sustainability

- Economic: Needs continuing supportive policy framework and investment. Core of commercially viable farmers key to competitiveness. Diversification of farm household income will continue to be a key viability strategy during the 2020s.
- Environmental: Sector will make its proportionate contribution to national goal of climate neutrality by 2050. Must build on delivery of AgClimate commitments with an early initiative to address the environmental damage due to rapid expansion of dairying. Improvement of soil quality and extensive and diverse grazing systems a priority.
- Social: Greater emphasis than in previous strategies. Set against stronger national focus on regional and rural development. Expand tested formulae of bottom up development, local leadership, with better broadband, technology, and linkages with regional educational institutions. Acknowledge need for generational renewal and an enhanced role for women in the sector. Proposals on dealing with farm safety, rural isolation and mental health.

Policy coherence in the 2030 Strategy.

- While earlier Strategies such as FW 2025 dealt with economic and environmental sustainability, the 2030 Strategy is the first to make a direct connection with health policy. It proposes that the issue of food and health should be brought to a new level of political and policy importance. This will require both a whole-of government and a whole-of-society approach.
- The Strategy proposes improved coherence for food, nutrition and health through the establishment of a high level group between the Departments of Health and of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to work on their overlapping agenda in such areas as Healthy Ireland, the National Obesity Strategy and 'One Health One Welfare ' approach.
- A further innovation is the proposed linkage between domestic policy on Sustainable Food Systems and Ireland's foreign/development policy.

2030 Strategy – The Environmental Ambition

- Mission 1, on ‘A Climate Smart, Environmentally Sustainable Agri-Food Sector’ and its 7 Goals reflects the political and policy importance of this issue. In the absence of the five-year carbon budget for the sector, the Strategy does not propose a detailed plan for the delivery of a climate neutral sector by 2050, but indicates parameters, policy directions and milestones.
- AgClimatise is clear that an increase in the national cattle herd above current levels will jeopardise the achievement of climate neutrality by 2050. A series of challenging targets for emissions, water quality and biodiversity are proposed for 2030. But the Strategy does not resolve what the respective roles of beef and dairying should be in meeting these targets: further clarification on this should be completed by Q2 2022.
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2030 Strategy – The Environmental Ambition.

- The immediate implementation of AgClimatise is a high priority. But it is clear that AgClimatise will be updated to ensure consistency with new targets agreed nationally and internationally for the sector. Agreement on the five year carbon budget – planned for end-June - for the sector will lead to a further adjustment of AgClimatise.
- The Strategy commits to a pilot scheme for on-farm carbon trading, to reward farmers for the public goods they are providing. EU and national policy can be expected to further develop in this area in the coming years. It also sets out a range of areas, particularly forestry, where the sector should increase its capacity to sequester carbon.

Summary

- The 2030 Strategy will propose policies aimed at transitioning Ireland to becoming a world leader in Sustainable Food Systems (SFSs). Producing sustainable food is now just an entry point to the market: the challenge for Ireland is whether it can build a SFS which becomes a source of strategic competitive advantage in securing markets and the possibility of price premium for its products. An acid test of success will be the degree to which such a competitive advantage can be reflected back to the price received by the farmer.
- Ireland is the only country that has developed its current national agri-food strategy using a 'food systems' approach. There is considerable international interest in the Irish process and the outcome of the Strategy and this can be used to attain a leadership role at the Food Systems Summit in September and the Nutrition for Growth Summit in December.

Summary

- While the 2030 Strategy takes a realistic view of the decade ahead, its overall approach is positive and will highlight significant opportunities for Ireland. In working towards becoming an international leader in SFSs, it will do so in the belief that economic and political benefits can be achieved which can reach down to farm level.
- Establishing a leadership position in SFSs will open the door to the next stage in transformation and value addition in the sector. Having transitioned from being a producer of commodity products until the 1990s, to its current position of being an internationally competitive food sector, Ireland can build on this during the 2020s to become a leading supplier of policy advice and services to countries on track to developing their own version of a SFS. Africa should represent a particularly buoyant market for such services.