

Planning for your 2024 BISS application

Trevor Dunwoody
Teagasc farm management specialist



Applying to the Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) scheme is almost certainly the most important task you will complete this year. Not only is it the application for BISS, CRISS, Eco-scheme, ANC and Complementary Income Support for Young Farmers, it is also a requirement for virtually every other area-based scheme operated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

These Department schemes include ACRES, Organic Farming Scheme, Straw Incorporation Measure, Protein Aid Scheme, Red Clover Scheme, Multispecies Sward Scheme, Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme (SCEP) and Forestry.

Confirmation of participation in these schemes is part of the BISS application process. You can use a combination of slider buttons, or appropriate crop declaration for 2024, on the 'land details' pages. Some schemes also require a separate, additional, application.

As always, your Teagasc advisor can help you to navigate your way through. Be sure to make an appointment early.

The importance of your application is emphasised by National Farm Survey results, which show that in 2022 direct payments amounted to €421 per hectare on average across all farms in Ireland. This made up 42% of family farm income (FFI).

Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) – the BISS payment is based on the size of your holding and the number and value of entitlements held. One hectare of eligible land must be claimed to draw down a payment for each entitlement held.

All entitlements are subject to a

two-year usage rule. Where a farmer has unused entitlements for two consecutive years the lowest value entitlements will revert to the National Reserve in the second year of non-usage.

This is regardless of whether these are owned or leased-in entitlements. To avoid this, farmers can transfer surplus entitlements either temporarily or permanently to another farmer who has land available, to claim pay-

“As always, your Teagasc advisor can help you to navigate your way through. Be sure to make an appointment early

ment on these entitlements.

Where a previous lease of entitlements has expired at the end of 2023 a 'lease reversion' letter will be available to view in the correspondence section on the Department's agfood portal. If the entitlement owner wishes to re-lease these entitlements in 2024, a new transfer of entitlements application must be submitted before the closing date.

There will be no clawback on the sale of entitlements in 2024 but clawback is expected to return, on sale of entitlements, in 2025. The value of most entitlements will change over the next three years due to convergence towards the national average value.

By 2026, all entitlements will have a minimum value of 85% of the national average and no entitlement will have a value greater than €285 per entitlement.

Capping now applies to BISS entitlement payments. Any BISS payment above €100,000 is fully reduced while payments between €60,000 and €100,000 are reduced by 85%. The maximum BISS payment per herd number is now €66,000 per year.

Complementary Redistributive Income Support for Sustainability (CRISS) CRISS is designed to redistribute payments from larger farms to smaller- and medium-sized farms. This payment is not linked to entitlements and will be made on the first 30 eligible hectares claimed on each herd number.

The payment rate for CRISS in 2023 was €42.34 per hectare. However, to be eligible, a farmer must hold one entitlement or part thereof and be entitled to a BISS payment of at least €100.

Eco-scheme This is a voluntary annual scheme to reward farmers for undertaking actions which are beneficial to climate, environment, water quality and biodiversity. The eco-scheme has eight agricultural practices (APs) to choose from, with three of these having an enhanced option – AP 1 Space for Nature (SFN), AP 2 – Extensive Livestock Production and AP 4 Planting of Native Trees and/or Hedgerows.

A farmer must deliver two practices, or one enhanced option, to qualify for payment. The payment rate for 2023 was €67 per hectare. Entitlements are not required to claim this payment.

Agricultural practices for Eco-scheme

• **AP 1 – Space for Nature (SFN)**
Over 90% of farmers should qualify for eco-scheme payment under AP1. One eco-scheme practice is satisfied where a farmer allocates at least 7% of their land to SFN. The two eco-scheme practices are satisfied where a farmer allocates at least 10% of their land to SFN. Applicants who have in excess of 10% SFN will secure their eco-scheme payment without the need to consider any further measures. BISS maps should be examined to ensure all eligible SFN features are mapped correctly.



Monaghan advisor Leanne Conaty (centre) with Seamus McNally and his daughter Julie Mullarkey. Seamus and Julie formed a Registered Farm Partnership in 2019 and are currently dairying at Glaslough in Co Monaghan. In 2024, they will apply for BISS, CRISS, Eco-scheme, ANC and Multispecies Sward Scheme as part of their BISS application.

• AP 2 – extensive livestock production

One eco-scheme practice is satisfied where the farm stocking rate is less than or equal to 1.4 livestock units per forage hectare. The two eco-scheme practices are satisfied where the farm stocking rate is less than or equal to 1.2 livestock units per forage hectare. This will be based on the previous year's stocking rate.

• AP 3 – limiting chemical nitrogen usage

This AP promotes lower usage of chemical fertiliser. Farmers who select this AP must not exceed a certain level of chemical nitrogen use based on stocking rate in the previous year or crop type.

• AP 4 – planting of native trees and/or hedgerows

One eco-scheme practice is satisfied where a farmer plants three trees or one metre of hedgerow per eligible hectare. Two eco-scheme practices are satisfied where a farmer plants six trees or two metres of hedgerow or three trees and one metre of hedgerow per eligible hectare. Where farmers selected this AP in 2023, hedges/trees planted should now be mapped on the 2024 application.

• AP 5 – use of GPS-controlled fertiliser spreader or GPS-controlled sprayer

All chemical fertiliser or all plant protection products must be spread using GPS-controlled equipment.

• AP 6 – soil sampling and appropriate liming

A sample must be taken for a maximum of three hectares for all eligible hectares of the holding. Where the sample identifies a lime requirement, one-third of the requirement must be spread in the year of sampling with the remainder in the following two years.

Some farmers are ineligible for this AP depending on stocking rate and participation in other schemes. This AP can only be selected once every three years.



Continued on p34



Continued from p33

•AP 7 – planting a break crop

Applicants must plant at least 50% of their land area under eligible arable crop and at least 20% of this arable area must be planted with a prescribed break crop at the appropriate time.

•AP 8 – sowing a multispecies crop

A minimum of 7% of eligible hectares must be reseeded with multi-species sward.

Area of Natural Constraint

(ANC) – this is a support payment for those farming in designated areas. A full list of eligible townlands is available on the Department's website. This payment is not linked to having an entitlement.

To qualify for this payment, the minimum stocking requirement is 0.1LU per forage hectare on average across the year and 0.1LU per forage hectare for 28 consecutive weeks retention period. Applicants in certain areas can request a derogation from the stocking rate and stock retention requirements based on environmental grounds.

Complementary Income Support for Young Farmers (CIS-YF)

This is a support payment to eligible young farmers for a maximum of five years. This payment is per hectare, subject to a maximum of 50 hectares and is not linked to entitlements. However, to be eligible, a farmer must hold one entitlement or part thereof and be entitled to a BISS payment of at least €100.

The payment rate for 2023 was €152.05 per hectare. Young farmers can apply whether they are farming as a sole trader, or as part of a group, i.e. joint venture, registered farm partnership or company.

If farming as a company, the young farmer must be a director and have a minimum 20% shareholding in the company. The main eligibility criteria for the CIS-YF are:

1. Aged no more than 40 years at any time during the calendar year in which they first submit an application for CIS-YF.
2. Is setting up or has set up as head of the holding, either solely or jointly, during the five years preceding the first application for CIS-YF.
3. Has successfully completed a recognised course in agriculture with minimum Level 6 qualification by 15 May 2024.

Applicants will be required to provide documentation to demonstrate



full financial control, whether farming solely or as part of a group.

The young farmer's name should be on the bank account and all income and expenses documentation for the farm.

National Reserve

Successful applicants will receive an allocation of entitlements on land claimed for which they hold no entitlements or a top-up to existing entitlements which are below national average value subject to a maximum of 50 entitlements.

There are two categories: young farmer and new farmer. The eligibility criteria for the young farmer category is similar to the requirements for CIS-YF eligibility outlined above.

Eligibility for the new farmer category includes having completed a recognised Level 6 agricultural qualification, having commenced farming in previous three years and not having any previous agricultural activity/risk in their name.

Active farmer

An active farmer check is now completed on all applications to ensure the person claiming payment is the person farming the land. The active farmer check can be satisfied by meeting minimum stocking level requirements or through other farming activities

such as producing crops, cutting silage or hay, topping or maintaining landscape features. Where an applicant is found to be inactive no CAP payments will be made.

Herd numbers

Where a farmer is changing the registration details on the herd number, this application must be submitted to the DVO before the closing date for BISS. This may occur where a farmer is adding or removing name(s) to form or dissolve a joint venture or registered farm partnership, setting up or dissolving a company, following the retirement of a farmer or through inheritance.

Where the herd number change form is submitted but not processed before the BISS closing date, the BISS application for 2024 should be submitted under the new entity. An advisor or the Department can assist with this process.

Any change to the registration details on the herd number will require a change to the registration details on the entitlements.

A transfer of entitlements application will be required to complete this process. The name of the person controlling the entitlements must match the name at the top of the BISS application.



Native trees and hedgerows: over 90% of farmers should qualify for an eco-scheme payment under AP1 – Space for Nature (SFN). One eco-scheme practice requirement is satisfied where a farmer allocates at least 7% of their land to SFN. The two eco-scheme practices are satisfied where a farmer allocates at least 10% of their land to SFN.

\ Sarah O'Sullivan

Completing the application

Review the pre-printed statement of land and maps which will issue to all farmers. Compare it with the previous year and note any changes or amendments which are required, e.g. adding or removing land or change of parcel use.

- Make an appointment with your advisor, where required, to assist with completion of the appropriate applications.
- Inform your advisor where there has been any change to the name on the herd number or where herd number change forms have been submitted to the DVO since last year. Retain copies of forms submitted to DVO.
- Decide on the schemes for which you will be applying in 2024.
- Ensure the BISS land parcel declarations match requirements for any schemes you will be participating in during 2024.
- Check that all landscape features such as hedges, stone walls, drains, scrub and habitats have been identified and included in the Space for Nature calculation.
- Complete all necessary changes to the application.
- Check entitlement position to ensure sufficient land is declared to claim all entitlements. Where entitlements will be transferred in or out, a transfer of entitlements application must be submitted.
- Where eligible, submit an application for the Complementary Income Support for Young Farmers and National Reserve. Applicants previously accepted as eligible for CISYF scheme for a five-year period need to confirm their continuation in the scheme on the BISS application or submit a new application where the slider button is not available.
- The closing date for scheme applications is 15 May 2024.



Knowledge grows

Why your grass needs YaraVera™ AMIDAS this spring



YaraVera AMIDAS (40%N + 5.6%S) is a sulphur enriched urea fertilizer with the perfect N:S ratio for grazed grass.

Guaranteed to:

- Increase grass growth and improve grass quality
- Deliver sulphur and nitrogen in every granule
- Spread accurately and evenly

YaraVera™ AMIDAS,
the only urea + sulphur
CCF available
in Ireland



@Yara_Ireland

Yara Ireland

yaireland@yara.com

www.yara.ie