#CAP4NATURE.

SPECIALISM :

Agro-ecology and agri-environment schemes

(interactions between agricultural systems/practices and ecosystems: biodiversity & ecosystem services, pastures, peatlands, wetlands, plants, invertebrates, HNV farmland)

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1. Status and 2. Trends Biodiversity and Agriculture

- 91% Habitats in unfavourable conservation status with 50% with a declining trend.
- Decline of farmland birds continues e.g. corncrake, yellowhammer, lapwing.
- Decline of bees, butterflies and insects in general – landscape simplification in both forestry and agricultural areas.
- No clear policy/land use targets for high nature value farmland
- HNV farmland (potential HNV 1.5M ha) often viewed as target for forestry expansion (can be positive or negative depending on forestry methods employed, species choice etc.)
- Decline in quality of HNVf continues indicative of inadequate policy response
- Farmed Natura 2000 network should be seen as a stamp of quality for farmland; but is seen as restricting land use opportunities and not rewarded by CAP system (eligibility, payment structures, labeling etc.) apart from few exceptions (target species Hen Harrier, breeding waders)
- Large areas of undesignated semi-natural vegetation (high nature value farmland) completely undervalued in policy framework
- Positive moves in certain local areas - locally adapted pilots, results based payments as a mechanism for payments for biodiversity and related ecosystem services.
- Threats identified, solutions identified but scale of implementation too small to address scale of challenge

3. Drivers/Pressures

Climate change

Summers droughts, winter floods, soil degradation

Biological factors

Introduction of invasive species, pathogens

Habitat loss and Pollution

Loss of natural and semi-natural habitats and pollution (pesticides and fertilisers)

Agriculture intensification

Intensification of agricultural practices (monocultural agro-systems)

Land Conversion, Abandonment of HNV/marginal areas

Abandonment of those areas in which the intensification of agriculture is limited by natural constrains

Solutions: Landscape scale enhancement of Ireland's green infrastructure

1

Maintain quantity and quality of existing semi-natural vegetation including linear features across all farm types. Results-based incentives.

2

Improve landscape connectivity

Connect large areas of semi-natural vegetation in HNV areas with hedgerow and field margin network and semi-natural pockets in intensive areas

3

Buffer strip along water courses/bodies and sensitive ecosystems

To reduce input of nutrients to water courses and improve water quality for aquatic biodiversity.