

Future Agricultural Policy

Farming for Sustainability - Knowledge Transfer

REGULATORY IMPACT SCREENING

October



Introduction

1. The Future Agricultural Policy Framework Portfolio for Northern Ireland (the Framework) was published by the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on 24 August 2021. The Framework takes into account the views of key food, farming and environmental stakeholders from an engagement exercise undertaken in 2018. Based on the four key outcomes of increased productivity, environmental sustainability, improved resilience and an effective functioning supply chain, it charts the way forward for a future agricultural policy which better meets Northern Ireland's needs now that it has exited the EU.

Background

2. As part of the previous NI Rural Development Programme, DAERA/CAFRE developed and delivered a number of schemes involving awareness training (Farm Family Key Skills), Peer to Peer Learning (Business Development Groups) and Innovation Demonstration/Transfer (Innovation Technology Evaluation Demonstration /Farm Innovation Visits). These schemes have been successful in meeting their aims concerning increasing knowledge in participating individuals, improving business performance in members of peer learning groups and developing the adoption of relevant technologies.
3. The extensive range and depth of knowledge that will be required to be transferred to farm businesses means that the new KT model must have an overall aim to: Develop the capabilities of people managing, working or supporting farm businesses in Northern Ireland to meet the goals of DAERA's Farm Support and Development Programme.

Farming for Sustainability

4. Farming for Sustainability is a Knowledge Transfer (KT) scheme aimed at providing farm businesses with the technical knowledge required to adapt to and benefit from DAERA's Farm Support and Development Programme (FSDP). The scheme contains three different levels of KT (Information, Training and Peer Learning Groups) so that farm businesses have a range of options to meet needs regarding level of knowledge required.
5. A high proportion of businesses will have their KT needs met at a lower awareness level and that these interventions will form the greater part of DAERA's KT provision. The context of lower-level knowledge used is awareness information and training that gives the individual a basic level of knowledge to allow them to make straightforward decisions.
6. Information will largely incorporate written technical material that can be viewed/read with a regular newsletter available to all businesses. Training composes short courses, primarily delivered digitally but with some face-to-face access, with businesses required to register to gain access.
7. There is sufficient evidence from Business Development Groups (BDGs) and discussion groups in other areas to build on the BDG scheme whilst incorporating a more targeted approach whilst maintaining some flexibility. Peer learning groups are designed for those businesses requiring the greatest change to meet the aims of the FSDP and participants are supported through group participation and associated mentoring.

Regulatory Impact

8. Regulation can be defined as: “A rule or guidance with which failure to comply would result in the regulated entity or person coming into conflict with the law or being ineligible for continued funding, grants and other applied for schemes.” This can be summarised as all measures with legal force imposed by central government and other schemes operated by central government. The Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) process is not necessary for certain identified activities:
 - where policy changes will not lead to costs or savings for business;
 - road closure orders; or
 - changes to statutory fees by a predetermined formula such as the rate of inflation.

9. It is anticipated that there would be no additional compliance or administrative burdens placed on farm business over and above those required in existing regimes. Participation by farm businesses in any of the future support measures will be optional and Northern Ireland businesses would neither be placed at a competitive disadvantage compared with other businesses elsewhere in the UK, nor would they have any special advantages. Therefore it is very unlikely that there will be any mandated costs or savings imposed on any farm business. For these reasons, a full RIA has been screened out.

REGULATORY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (RIA) – Farming for Sustainability (Knowledge)

Screening Questions	Response to Screening Questions		Full Impact Assessment Required		Justification / Key issues and groups to focus on
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Is the policy or amendment to the policy likely to have a direct or indirect impact on businesses?	✓			✓	It will have an impact by supporting DAERA's Farm Support and Development Programme by providing farm businesses with knowledge to meet the aims of the Programme and component schemes.
Is the policy or amendment to the policy likely to have a direct or indirect impact on the voluntary / community sector?		✓		✓	
CONCLUSION				✓	There would be no additional compliance or administrative burdens placed on farm business. It is very unlikely that there will be any mandatory costs or savings imposed on any farming business. The scheme is also optional and for these reasons, a full RIA has been screened out.

When is regulatory impact assessment required?

If the answer to any of the above is yes, consideration should be given to undertaking a Regulatory Impact Assessment. However, the level of appraisal should be proportionate to the costs involved. A Regulatory Impact Assessment is not required for:

- I. proposals which impose no costs or no savings, or negligible costs or savings on business, charities, social economy enterprises or the voluntary sector;
- II. increases in statutory fees by a predetermined formula such as the rate of inflation; or
- III. Road closure orders.

APPROVAL and AUTHORISATION

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Approved by:	Position/Job Title	Date
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