



INHFA Proposal for Targeted Suckler Welfare Scheme

Introduction

After extensive research regarding the benefits of animal production, the following statement from the EU Commission Methane Strategy report states;

“Animal production is the key activity on permanent grassland, allowing for the survival, economic stability and existence of rural farms in hill and mountain regions, thus preventing the overgrowth of such areas”.

To this end, INHFA has concluded that continued grazing of these areas with livestock will ensure that these landscapes do not become ecological hazard areas prone to wildfires which have devastating consequences for climate, habitat, and species loss.

While Ireland’s new Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme aims to drive carbon efficiencies on some farms (SCEP is targeting 20,000 suckler herds and approx. 400,000 cows), there is a real risk that the more extensive type suckler herds which graze the most severely handicapped Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) will be left without access to a support measure for sucklers. A climate-efficient cow may not be a biodiversity-effective cow capable of operating on high nature-value farmland.

The INHFA is calling for a support measure that targets a payment to traditional suckler farms in the following way:

Funding Requirement (€28 million annually)

1. Targeted up to a maximum of 20 cows per farm with front-loading on the first 10.
2. **Target area**
Areas of Natural Constraint, categories I and 2, and Areas of Specific Constraint, offshore islands. Only suckler cows in these areas to be eligible for support.
3. **Type of suckler cow**
All breeds and crosses that are traditionally grazed on the target area except for dairy breeds, for example, Friesian or Jersey or where the Dam on the blue card is a dairy breed.



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4. Qualifying costed actions:

A menu to choose from the following welfare actions:

- Meal feeding of the calf/weanling pre and post-weanling.
- Vaccination for respiratory illness in susceptible herds.
- Disbudding
- Scanning
- Outdoor calving Area
- Dung sampling
- Knowledge transfer
- Safety course
- Later Housing Date – extended grazing measure
- Sale of weanlings through Mart
- Grading of Animals – Identification of Different grades

The INHFA believes this Scheme will enable buy-in from farmers that ensures uplands areas are protected and thus achieves climate and biodiversity efficiency.

The Irish Natura and Hill Farmers Association (INHFA)

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