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# Irish supports for sustainable livestock production

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# Overview: Irish agriculture



- Estimated 2025 value of Irish food / drink / horticulture exports = €19bn.  
Meat & livestock = €5bn.
- Approx. 133,000 farms with an average size of 35 ha.
- Mean age of farm holders: 59 years – 87% male.
- More than half (56%) classified as specialist beef.
- Total Utilised Agricultural Area excluding commonage = over 4.6m ha.
- Grassland accounted for 92% of agricultural land. Almost 270,000 ha under cereals.
- Trend in cattle breeding herd: total cows = 2.29m in 2015 vs 2.25m in 2024
- Dairy cows up: 1.24m → 1.48m head but beef cows down: 1.05m → 0.77m head.



# Overview: Irish beef production



## 2024 bovine data

- 2.34m calves born – mostly in Feb., March & April (67%).
- Calves per breeding herd – 1-24 calves = 63% of births.
- Beef calves = 742,000 head (32%). Dairy calves = 1.6m head (68%).
- Sire types: FR (28%), AA (25%) LM (14%) & CH (11%).
- Dam types: FR (64%), LM (11%), CH (5%).
- 1.97m mart movements – mostly beef cattle
- 1.34m farm-to-farm movements – mostly in March, April & May.
- 1.9m cattle slaughtered & 379,000 head exported live.
- 41% of beef cattle killed between 18 & 24 mths.



# CSP livestock support schemes



- Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme (SCEP)  
supports farmers who implement certain breeding actions in their beef herds; aimed at lowering overall GHG emissions emanating from livestock production.
- Dairy Beef Welfare Scheme  
supports dairy farmers using better genetic merit beef sires to improve the health and welfare of the national herd.
- Sheep Improvement Scheme  
supports farmers undertaking additional measures to improve the welfare of their flocks; including a mandatory genotyped ram action at least once during the first three years of scheme participation.



# SCEP – scheme outline



- Builds on previous CAP scheme which aimed at reducing carbon emissions through better cattle breeding.
- Budget of €256m over 5 years. Objective is to improve beef farmers' environmental sustainability by breeding high-genetic animals based on national economic profit indexes.
- Participants must undertake 5 compulsory actions in each year of the contract: eligible sire; replacement strategy; genotyping; weighing; & data recording.
- €225 per ha for the first 15 ha and €180 per ha for remaining ha up to the maximum payable area per holding – converts into €150 per cow for the first 22 cow/calf pairs & €150 per head for remainder.



# SCEP – implementation challenges



- Almost 16,000 currently active participants.
- Some 5,000 farmers removed from or left the scheme:
- 3,600 removed & 1,400 voluntarily withdrew.

## Reasons for removals

- Failure to join the quality assurance scheme by the prescribed deadline – accounted for approx. 50% of removals.
- Failure to meet the calving down requirement in either scheme year one, two or three.
- Failure to complete the compulsory SCEP training module.
- Failing to complete 3 out of 4 actions (excl. record keeping); &
- Failure to submit a BISS application.



