



**South-East Regional Authority
Údarás Réigiúnach an Oir-Dheiscirt**

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Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food
on
“Common Agriculture Policy post 2013”

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¹ Considered and approved by the South-East Regional Authority at their meeting held on 28th September 2009.

Introduction

The South-East Regional Authority (SERA) welcomes this opportunity to submit its views to the consultation process on what the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) should represent post 2013. Agriculture, both in the form of primary food production and the myriad of associated secondary processes, still remains one of the key elements of Ireland's economic environment. A strong agricultural sector is also critical to ensuring that balanced regional development, a key objective of the National Spatial Strategy and successive National Development Plans, is achieved.

The South-East Regional Authority (SERA)

The SERA is one of eight regional authorities established in Ireland in 1994, under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1991, (Regional Authorities) (Establishment) Order, 1993. The Authority comprises 37 elected members nominated by the six constituent local authorities in the region. The principal functions of SERA include: promotion of co-ordination in the provision of public services in the region; promotion of co-operation, joint action, etc. between local authorities, public authorities and/or others; reviewing the overall development needs and investment priorities of the region; preparation of statutory Regional Planning Guidelines and reviewing Development Plans of local authorities in the region.

The South-East Region

The South-East Region covers the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford and South Tipperary. The area of the region is 9,406 sq. kms., (which is about 13.5% of the area of the state) and the population is 460,838. The region is predominantly rural in character with the main urban centres being Waterford City, Kilkenny City and the towns of Carlow, Clonmel and Wexford. The region has a balanced urban structure with the main urban centre in each of its five counties having a population exceeding 17,000. In addition, it has a range of smaller towns and villages evenly distributed across the region as well as a strong rural settlement pattern. The regional economy of the South-East is based primarily on agriculture, manufacturing and services, tourism, fishing and aquaculture.

Agriculture in the South-East Region

The agriculture and food sectors account for a significant proportion of output and employment in the South-East Region, with the region having a higher than average reliance on this sector².

² The share of GVA derived from agriculture, forestry and fishing in 2006 was 6.6% for the region with the corresponding figure for the state being 3.7% (*County Incomes and Regional GDP 2006*, Central Statistics Office)

In line with national trends the number of farmers in the South-East has decreased drastically in recent years. Also the number of people employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing has been steadily declining.

The South-East is generally regarded as one of the more productive regions of the country having average farm economic margins higher than the national average³. However, there is a constant need to engage in higher value, more land intensive practices such as horticulture or higher value practices such as organic farming (on-farm diversification) to maximise productivity on smaller landholdings.

Johnstown Castle Research Centre in Co. Wexford and Oak Park National Bio-Tech Research Centre at Carlow are national centres for agricultural research and are a strong asset in terms of developing the region's agricultural base.

The SERA has previously stated its objective to maintain the rural economy which is vital to the future economic, social and environmental balance of the region and to maintain the maximum number of people in farming and land-based activity, thus sustaining the economic landscape of the region, by improving the efficiency of commercial and potentially viable farmers.

Traditional rural based sectors of employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing will continue to have key roles as a base for strong and diversified rural economies. Efficient agricultural, marine and natural resource sectors, together with significant and developing sectors such as tourism, enterprise, local services and other sources of off-farm employment, will be the mainstays of a strong rural economy. However the mix and concentration in any one of these sectors will vary according to the potential of different places. This calls for tailored responses to the particular issues in various types of places.

It will be necessary to secure agriculture, where it has the capacity to remain strong and viable, by maintaining the maximum possible number of family farms, while at the same time ensuring that smaller farmers have the opportunity to supplement their farm income through off-farm work.

Issues for Consideration

The following general issues and points are raised by the SERA for consideration by the Department in this consultation process:

- 1) A strong EU agriculture policy should be maintained beyond 2013.
- 2) Farmers should "be viewed as multifunctional providers of a range of commodity and non-commodity goods that are valued by society"⁴ and the CAP should reflect this.

³ *National Farm Survey 2008*, Teagasc

⁴ *Cap reform: implications for Ireland*, Teagasc Rural Economy Research Centre, Working Paper Series 09-WP-RE-04

- 3) The future CAP should result in the maintenance of a strong agricultural production base in the EU, in order to serve the internal EU and wider global markets.
- 4) The future CAP must be environmentally sustainable and support and assist in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and of the carbon footprint.
- 5) Agriculture is intrinsically linked to rural development and rural communities and the CAP must reflect this.
- 6) The Single Payments Scheme is vitally important to farming and rural areas in Ireland; it must continue post-2013, in a fair and equitable manner.
- 7) The bureaucracy and “red-tape” associated with the CAP must be stream-lined and made simpler to use and understand.
- 8) The future CAP should be sufficiently flexible to allow Member States to determine the appropriate concentration between Pillar 1 and 2 at state level, in order to take account of the distinguishing factors at play at Member State level.
- 9) The future CAP should seek the achievement of the highest standards in food production and safety.
- 10) Systems and processes for identification and labelling of imported food products must be rigorous to allow customers within the EU to make a properly informed value judgement at purchase.
- 11) The future CAP must allow for swift, decisive and collaborative action-taking and management in the event of food and/or animal health crises.
- 12) It must provide farmers with the scope to quickly adapt to changes in the marketplace.
- 13) The CAP should seek to encourage innovation and creativity at all stages in the food production chain.

Conclusion

The SERA, if requested, would welcome and is available to meet with the Department to discuss its submission further.