



# NEWSLETTER

Connecting communities,  
growing our future.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL INNOVATION



The CAP Network Ireland National Conference in Tullamore focused on the Bioeconomy.

## CAP Network Ireland's National Conference

CAP Network Ireland, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, hosted our National Conference in Tullamore in October. The theme for this year's event, 'Agri-Bioeconomy Values Chains & Business Models in Ireland,' was chosen to highlight to our members and the wider rural community the emerging opportunities the bioeconomy presents for economic development and diversification in rural Ireland.

Seamus Boland of CAP Network Ireland provided the opening address, followed by the official launch of Bioeconomy Ireland Week 2025, delivered by Martin Heydon T.D, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Minister Heydon identified opportunities for unlocking new value chains from grass, crops, forestry, marine biomass, and organic waste streams, and outlined the Department's recent investment in Bioeconomy demonstration initiatives.

The first panel of the day, 'Sustainably growing, mobilising & utilising biomass in Ireland,' was introduced by Dr. Gillian Barry, Head of Innovation and Enterprise at TUS, and Áine O'Donnell of the Mount Lucas Circular IMTA. After a short presentation, they were joined on stage by John Brosnan from ICOS and Kenneth Joyce from Coillte for a panel discussion moderated by MC Darragh McCullagh.

A networking break followed, giving attendees the chance to visit the display area, where information stands showcased funding supports, research resources, and project results relevant to the bioeconomy.

After the break, Jack Norman, co-founder of Zirkulu, shared the company's journey as an Irish bioeconomy start-up using bio-based materials to produce clothing. Michelle Collins, Director of R&D at Tirlán, then presented Tirlán's journey through innovation and investment in bio-based materials and packaging.

The final panel discussion of the day, 'Financing the Bioeconomy,' opened with a state-of-play presentation from Marina Donohoe, Enterprise Ireland, who emphasised the opportunity for the commercialisation of research within the bioeconomy. Marina was joined onstage by Diana Patrascu, Head of the Sustainable Finance Unit at the European Investment Fund, and Michael Brandkamp, Managing Partner at the European Circular Bioeconomy Fund, for a discussion on investment and funding opportunities in the European context.

For more information on the bioeconomy in Ireland, scan the QR Code:



In September, CAP Network Ireland unveiled two milestone publications at the National Ploughing Championships in Co. Offaly. These highlight our ongoing efforts to strengthen knowledge exchange and support for rural and agricultural stakeholders by sharing timely insights on emerging trends in this space.

## ‘Women in Agriculture’ Booklet Launched

CAP Network Ireland’s ‘Women in Agriculture: Driving Change Under Ireland’s CAP Strategic Plan’ was launched in the presence of Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon T.D., alongside several of the women featured within.



The booklet emphasises the role and impact that women in rural Ireland are making to improve the financial, economic and environmental sustainability on farms and in the wider rural landscape through their interaction with the CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) 2023–2027.

The booklet showcases 9 female farmers from various sectors availing of financial supports, either as the

primary farmer or as part of a Formal Farm Partnership, to strengthen the resilience of their farms.

The remaining 5 women explain their roles working in various initiatives funded to deliver on the strategic aims of the CSP.

Most importantly, participating in the booklet was an opportunity for these women to share insights on the CSP, and on how to improve the design and delivery of supports in the next iteration. To access the booklet, scan the QR code:



## ‘Your Guide to TAMS 3’ Booklet Launched

CAP Network Ireland’s ‘Your guide to TAMS 3: Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Scheme’ booklet was unveiled by Minister of State Michael Healy-Rae T.D. for the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM).

This booklet is a collation of six leaflets designed to better inform farmers and professionals within the agricultural sector of which schemes are relevant to them, what investments are covered, and the grant rates that can be availed of. Investments with grant support available include but are not limited to; animal housing, rainwater harvesting, bull pens, dehorning crates, farm roadways, solar panels, mulchers, sprayers, fertiliser spreaders, and much more.

In addition to scheme information, there is a full detailed breakdown of grant rates available for each of the 11 sub-schemes within TAMS 3. There are higher supports available for Organic farmers, Young Farmers, and Women farmers, with a higher rate limit of 60%. To access the booklet, scan the QR code:



# Events Hosted by CAP Network Ireland

## EIP-AGRI Networking Event

On November 11th, CAP Network Ireland, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), hosted a capacity building workshop for EIP Agri Operational Group (OG) projects.

This event brought the OGs together with representatives from DAFM, CAP Network Ireland, Teagasc, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the EU CAP Network.

In his opening address, Brian McGee, Principal Officer, DAFM, congratulated the OGs on their success in initiating their projects and emphasised the Department’s commitment to supporting them as they develop their innovations in the years ahead.

The address was followed by a series of presentations from Céline Karasinski (EU CAP Network), Ray Ó Foghlú (Development Lead at Hometree), Avion Phillips (Teagasc) who introduced the Horizon Europe project EU-FARMBOOK and finally, Anne Maguire (EIP Section at DAFM) who presented on data collection and management requirements for EIPs. Afterwards, James Claffey facilitated a Q&A session.



Following a short break, each OG presented a two-minute pitch outlining their project. With 22 OGs in attendance, this whistle-stop tour was both thematically and geographically diverse.

The real work began in the afternoon, when representatives from the OGs took part in one of the three parallel workshops; project management, project communications, and project financial reporting. These sessions presented a detailed overview of the different project operational requirements, giving those present the opportunity to engage directly with DAFM and their peers.

For more information on the EIP-AGRI workshop, **scan the QR code** on the opposite page:

## LEADER Capacity Building Workshop

On November 27th, CAP Network Ireland, in collaboration with the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG), hosted a LEADER Capacity Building Workshop in Tullamore.

The event focused on strengthening LEADER delivery and exploring how the programme can support Ireland’s expanding bioeconomy. It brought together key stakeholders involved in delivering the LEADER Programme across rural Ireland.



The morning began with presentations from Marie Duffy, David Donnelly and Declan Harty of DRCDG, who provided updates on the 2023–2027 LEADER Programme.

A series of informative presentations followed from three guest experts working in the bioeconomy space. Matthew Halpin from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine highlighted practical examples from Ireland’s growing bioeconomy and outlined how LEADER can play a role in supporting emerging opportunities. Seán Finan of the Irish Bioenergy Association (IrBEA) directed attendees to a range of useful resources available through the association to assist LEADER organisations. Fiona Kelleher of AmuGreen introduced the MyGug anaerobic digester, an innovative solution that converts food waste into energy, demonstrating its contribution to the circular economy, and lowering energy costs.

The event concluded with a lively discussion on the opportunities for advancing bioeconomy projects in rural areas and how LEADER can strengthen its support at local level. Participants expressed strong enthusiasm for continued collaboration. For more information on LEADER, **scan the QR code**:



EIP Workshop



LEADER



Ciara and Robert Stanley

## CASE STUDY

# Making Farming Fashionable For a New Generation

## Ciara and Robert Stanley

Ciara and Robert Stanley are rural entrepreneurs who have diversified their income streams in recent years and added value to their beef enterprise at Coppengagh House Farm outside Tullow, Co. Carlow. They manage a conventional commercial beef system with a 40 cow suckler herd. The farm receives supports under the CSP 2023-2027 through BISS and eco-scheme payments. Robert also runs a business selling, installing and servicing AGA cookers in the winter months. Before developing Coppengagh House Farm shop, Ciara's embroidery business was in a spare room in their house while also working fulltime. She recently participated in the ACORNS programme which she credits as an important factor in her development as a rural business owner.

## Farm Diversification and Direct Selling

*"Breeding high quality sucklers is what I really like, but we weren't really being paid for our beef, especially our heifers. This is when we started going into Wagyu beef." says Robert. "We wanted to take back control and get more income. We started with Wagyu beef boxes, and they proved really popular," Ciara explains.*

*"We decided to open a farm shop, and we moved my embroidery business up here to the farm. In between all that, I got the opportunity to buy the clothing brand; Ballybar Ireland. It was all very busy and full on at the time, but we knew that there would be a good relationship between the farm, the shop, the clothing and the embroidery. The country lifestyle market was the market that we wanted to hit. Then we finally added the coffee barn."*

In 2023, they started selling Wagyu beef through the shop and the demand for this type of succulent and flavoursome meat has continued to grow ever since. The Wagyu cattle are bought in as weaned calves at intervals throughout the year to ensure a regular supply for sale.

## A Synthesis of Income Streams

The farm shop hosts a small AGA showroom which they use for cookery demonstrations using their beef and other Irish artisanal products stocked in the shop.

*"It benefits everything in the business, including the food business," says Robert who loves the idea that demonstration chefs are preparing beef that was grown on pasture located outside the showroom window. For Ciara quality is a watchword of the business, "The food products we sell must be Irish and be of a very high standard. It's amazing to see just how good so many Irish producers are."*

*"We wanted to take back control and get more income. We started with Wagyu beef boxes and they proved really popular."*

## Connecting with the Public

For the Stanleys, they see their farm shop as an opportunity to bring the public onto their farm and counteract negative perceptions about farming often portrayed in media.

*"When we expanded, people asked us if we were going to have other animals, but we are not a pet farm," says Robert, "We are a working farm. Some of the cattle outside in the field are going to be inside in the freezers in a few months' time. Our butcher is only a mile down the road, so we have some of the lowest food miles in the country." Judging by the footfall through the farm gate, this commitment to authenticity is paying dividends.*

# ACORNS

Ciara participated in the ACORNS programme in 2023. The programme is designed to support early-stage female entrepreneurs living in rural Ireland and runs over six months part-time.

*“When I was setting up the farm shop, it was recommended to me by a friend who had been through it. I couldn’t recommend it enough, to be honest,” says Ciara. “I made a lot of contacts; it pushed me out of my comfort zone and helped me to look at my small business seriously and make it viable.”*



*“I couldn’t recommend it [ACORNS] enough, to be honest...It pushed me out of my comfort zone and helped me to look at my small business seriously and make it viable.”*

*“I would like to see more people do what we’re doing,” says Ciara, “if there are more farms selling their own produce, it will become more normal that farms are where people go to buy their food, and neighbours support their local farms. I would like to see a national effort to educate the public to appreciate where their food comes from and appreciate the provenance and seasonality of their food and stop all the finger pointing.”*

There is no better example of this to be found than at Coppengh House Farm.

To explore our other farmer case studies, visit the CAP Network Ireland website by scanning the QR code below:

## Farm Sustainability and Local Food

*“Farming is a great lifestyle if you can make a living from it,” says Robert. The various income streams are helping them to achieve this goal.*



Case Studies



ACORNS



# 4th AKIS Coordination Group Meeting: Driving Change in the Beef Sector

On October 10, 2025, the 4th AKIS (Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems) Coordination Group meeting was held at Teagasc Grange, Co. Meath.

The overarching theme of the meeting was to discuss how the Irish AKIS can enhance the uptake of solutions to challenges in the beef value chain.

The meeting brought together a diverse group of agricultural stakeholders – including DAFM, Teagasc, the Agricultural Consultants Association, farm organisations, researchers, agri media and farmers – to move beyond theoretical discussions and identify actionable strategies for enhancing the uptake of beef solutions among farmers.

In his keynote address, Pearse Kelly, Head of Drystock at Teagasc, highlighted that while solutions to profitability and sustainability challenges in the beef sector exist, we must strengthen our beef AKIS knowledge flows to ensure these solutions reach the farmer. Every AKIS stakeholder has a part to play.

## Mapping Impact Pathways to beef solutions

The centrepiece of the meeting was an afternoon workshop facilitated by CAP Network Ireland, dedicated to developing Impact Pathways. Impact pathways are maps that identify what stakeholders need to do to transfer knowledge to end users.

In this case, the workshops asked attendees to map out the complex networks of stakeholders required to support farmers in adopting specific beef sector solutions.

The workshop focused on four critical challenges facing the Irish beef sector:



### 1. The Climate Challenge: Decreasing Age of Beef Animals at Slaughter

To achieve a slaughter age of 22–24 months, this group emphasised a push and pull system. While research and policy push the tools (genetics and grass management), the market must pull the change through processor bonuses for younger animals.

A major proposed action was aligning the conflicting goals of suckler farmers (easy calving) and beef finishers (high muscle growth) through targeted scheme rewards.

### 2. The Productivity Challenge: Calving Heifers at 2 Years

This group tackled the scepticism often surrounding the 24-month calving target. The resulting pathway highlighted that success relies on a Farmer's Support Network, involving everyone from vets to feed merchants. The group proposed innovative solutions, such as incentivising the 24-month target within the SCEP scheme and encouraging champion farmers to prove the financial benefits to their peers.

### 3. The Economic Challenge: Improving Genetics

The focus here was on trust. The group noted that farmers often trust neighbours most. The pathway to improved genetics involves leveraging these trusted peer networks and embedding genetics education across all agricultural training programs.

### 4. The Labour Challenge: Generational Renewal

Participants viewed this not as a linear pathway, but as a feedback loop involving succession planning and technology adoption. Key actions identified included promoting Young Farmer Champions to improve the perception of the sector and utilising the Succession Farm Partnerships (SFP) to facilitate older farmers stepping back.

## Moving to Action

The meeting concluded with a commitment to action. The Impact Pathways developed during the workshop at Grange will serve as a model to inform the consultation process for the CAP Post-2027 proposals, ensuring that future policy is grounded in the reality of the AKIS and beef farmers' experiences.



This workshop was led by the CAP Network Ireland Innovation Hub. To learn more about the work of the Hub, scan the QR code below:

# EU Corner: CAP Network Ireland in Europe

## ‘Create Green’ Represents Ireland at ARIAs

Congratulations to the Create Green project, which proudly represented Ireland in the Environmental Protection category at the EU CAP Network’s Agricultural and Rural Inspiration Awards (ARIA) 2025.

The awards took place on 3 December in the Théâtre du Vaudeville in Brussels, where EU rural development stakeholders, innovators, and policymakers gathered to celebrate excellence in CAP-funded initiatives.

ARIA 2025 focused on projects shaping a sustainable and resilient future for rural Europe, highlighting the greenest, smartest, most socially inclusive, innovative, and community-driven ideas making a real impact at local level.

From more than 120 entries submitted by Member States, Create Green, nominated by CAP Network Ireland, was selected as one of just 24 finalists. The project stood out for its strong commitment to environmental protection and its practical support for rural SMEs seeking to adopt more sustainable practices.

Funded through the 2023-2027 LEADER programme, Create Green supports creative and food/farming businesses in County Offaly. The initiative recognises the important role these sectors play in local economic growth, rural vitality, and the development of a strong regional identity.

It also champions their potential to address climate change, advance the circular economy, and contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Developed by Offaly Local Development Company, the programme provides tailored training and guidance, including supports in energy efficiency, supply-chain awareness, sustainability communication, and the use of SDG-linked themes and tourism indicators to strengthen brand identity and eco-tourism potential.



## Thematic Group on Unlocking the Potential of Cooperation

The purpose of the Thematic Group (TG) was to explore how best to unlock the potential of cooperation in the CAP to increase business competitiveness, resilience and growth, particularly for small farmers.

CAP Network Ireland, along with 40 other Thematic Group members, formally met online on 25 September and subsequently held three informal meetings online in November to discuss the support landscape, the role of finance and the policy framework within the European Union.



## SCAR AKIS Conference

CAP Network Ireland recently represented Ireland at the SCAR-AKIS meeting held in Vic, Spain, in November 2025. The event brought together policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders to capture feedback on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) within the new CAP Post 2027 National Regional Partnership (NRP) proposal.

Key agenda items included discussions on EIP-AGRI and AKIS funding under the new proposal, and future funding structures under Horizon Europe. This gathering provided a vital opportunity to network with European counterparts and gain early insights into the strategic direction of agricultural innovation and advisory services in Europe.



Visit the EU CAP Network website for more interesting insights by scanning the QR code.

# CAP Strategic Plan Monitoring Committee Meeting

CAP Network Ireland recently participated in a meeting of the CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) Monitoring Committee.

The Committee is made up of stakeholders from across the agricultural and public sectors, including climate, environmental, economic, and social partners as well as bodies responsible for promotion of social inclusion, fundamental rights, gender equality, and non-discrimination.

Members include representatives from farm bodies, environmental NGOs, government departments, agencies, local government and education, and research bodies.

The Monitoring Committee's role is to monitor the implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan, and give feedback on the annual performance reports, evaluation plan, and any amendments to the Plan.

At the meeting, CAP Network Ireland presented an overview of our work over the past year, highlighting key events, publications and campaigns.

The presentation closed with an overview of our Transition Year School Programme, which promotes Generational Renewal and the positive contribution of agriculture to the broader economy.

Further details can be found on the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine website by scanning the QR Code below:



## CAP Network Ireland Events Calendar

The world of agriculture and rural development moves quickly, and it can be easy to miss out on key dates and opportunities. The CAP Network Ireland Events Calendar has been developed to help keep stakeholders informed by bringing together a range of national and international events, conferences and important scheme deadlines, all in one convenient place.

Stay informed by visiting the Events Calendar on the CAP Network Ireland website or by scanning the QR Code:



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