



CAP
Network
Ireland

NEWSLETTER

Connecting communities,
growing our future.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL INNOVATION



This Spring, CAP Network Ireland returned to schools as part of our Transition Year (TY) programme to promote Generational Renewal and highlight the positive contribution of agriculture to the Irish economy. A total of 280 TY students from 10 schools participated in the programme, which included a classroom workshop followed by a visit to a local farm. Read more on page 2.

Unlocking LEADER Programme Opportunities Workshop in Tullamore



CAP Network Ireland, in collaboration with the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG), hosted the third in a series of LEADER capacity building workshops in Tullamore on 21st May.

The networking event brought together personnel from Local Action Groups (LAGs) and Implementing Partners (IPs) across Ireland to explore opportunities within the 2023–2027 LEADER Programme, with a focus on climate action and agricultural diversification.

The morning discussions focused on the role of LEADER funding in supporting communities to respond to climate challenges while delivering environmental and social benefits.

Participants heard about a range of projects from across rural Ireland, including measures to reduce flood risk, raise awareness of climate action and invest in renewable energy.

The session highlighted how local partnerships are helping communities put climate action into practice and demonstrated how successful LEADER projects can

provide valuable learning for other areas considering similar initiatives.

The afternoon session focused on how LEADER is helping farmers diversify their businesses and build resilience for the future.

Examples of successful projects, ranging from glamping ventures to on-farm vending machine initiatives, demonstrated how diversification can create new income opportunities while supporting local economies.

Discussion also addressed some of the key challenges facing new enterprises, including labour shortages and market access.

Participants heard about wider European trends, including the increasing role of young women in leading innovative rural businesses and diversification projects.

A Summary Report outlining the key findings and discussion points from the workshop will be published soon on the CAP Network Ireland website, alongside presentations and a gallery of images from the day.

Scan the **QR Code** above for more information about the work of LEADER.

TY Programme Promoting Generational Renewal in Agriculture

The issue of generational renewal in agriculture is widely acknowledged, where over one third of Irish farmers are over the age of 65, and less than 6% are under 35.

In addition, there is the persistent gender gap, where longstanding cultural norms have resulted in women, 51% of the population, owning just 13.4% of farms.

In September 2025, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon, published the report of the Commission on Generational Renewal in Farming.

The report outlined 31 key recommendations to address the critical issue of farm succession and attract young

farmers to the agricultural sector. Action 27 calls for all agri-food stakeholders to promote generational renewal in farming, while Action 29 calls for the promotion of agriculture in schools.

Addressing gender balance, Action 30 calls for the sector to promote and normalise female succession. Encouraging the next generation of farmers, advisors, Agri-scientists and Agri-professionals is vital to the environmental, economic, and social sustainability of Irish agriculture.

CAP Network Ireland designed our schools programme to leverage the collaborative framework of transition year, visiting schools in rural, urban, and peri urban areas and first, surveying the students to get an understanding of their current level of awareness of agriculture, the impact of CAP supports, and their thoughts on opportunities for a career in the sector.

After completing the survey, we worked with the students in small groups, identifying who they felt were the key stakeholders in agriculture in Ireland.

This classroom exercise was followed by a visit to a local farm, where participant farmers spoke to the students, outlining their role as a farmer, the supports they receive under the CAP, and the journey of food from farm to fork, explaining how the farm is one element of the wider food production value chain in Ireland.



Students measured grass growth, saw calves getting tagged, toured robotic milking units, examined data from diary cow collars, and learned about AI & IVF breeding.

The results from the survey and the classroom exercise will be submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, outlining the priorities of Irish teenagers for the CAP post-2027.

Everyone – teachers, students, farmers and the CAP team – had a great time, and hopefully we have encouraged some students to consider a career in agriculture, as a farmer, advisor or agronomist.

For more information on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), scan the **QR Code** below:



CAP Network Ireland Innovation Round Up

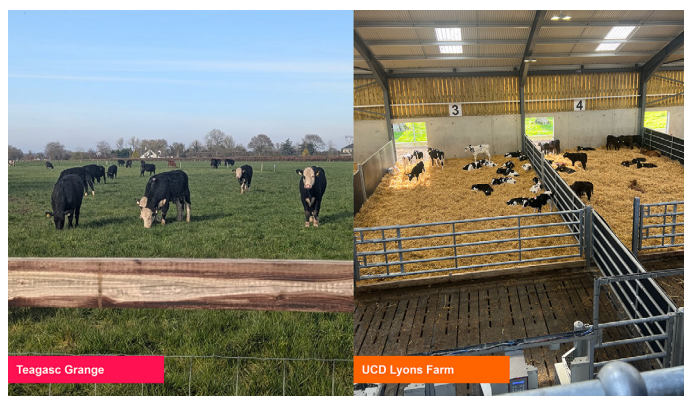
EU CAP Network Seminar: Innovative Tools for Advisors

In March 2026, CAP Network Ireland supported the EU CAP Network Seminar, “Innovative Tools for Advisors,” held in Dublin. Bringing together 160 participants from 25 European countries, the event focused on helping agricultural advisors navigate their evolving roles through effective knowledge exchange. Workshops centred on bridging the gap between high-level agricultural research and everyday farming practices. Discussions emphasised peer-to-peer learning networks and socio-economic strategies designed to support generational renewal and navigate complex farm transfers. To connect these theoretical concepts with real-world applications, CAP Network Ireland organised field visits to four distinct sites: Teagasc Grange, McCormack Family Farms, UCD Lyons Farm, and the farm of Michael and Norman Dunne. These visits demonstrated practical tools in action. Highlights included large-scale beef research trials at Grange, bespoke digital traceability tools at McCormack Family Farms, cutting-edge infrastructure and knowledge dissemination at UCD Lyons Farm, and effective succession planning through farm diversification at the Dunne farm. Ultimately, the seminar reinforced that a multifaceted toolkit, blending practical, digital, and socio-economic strategies, is essential to empower farmers and build resilient, sustainable agricultural businesses for the next generation.

AKIS Coordination Body Meetings: Driving Knowledge Transfer in the Beef and Sheep Sectors

CAP Network Ireland has played a pivotal role in organising and facilitating the two most recent National Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) Coordination Group meetings, demonstrating a strong collaborative effort alongside the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and Teagasc. The 4th meeting took place on October 10, 2025, at Teagasc Grange, Co. Meath, focusing on the beef sector. This was followed by the 5th meeting on February 26, 2026, at Teagasc Athenry, Co. Galway, which targeted the sheep value chain. DAFM representatives opened these sessions by highlighting the urgency of accelerating knowledge transfer, noting that while excellent agri-food research exists, solutions must reach farmers more quickly. Teagasc supported these initiatives by hosting the events, providing expert speakers, and delivering key technical insights into farm systems. Meanwhile, CAP Network Ireland drove the operational agenda and led the core workshop activities. The primary objective of both interactive meetings was to workshop practical strategies for increasing the adoption and transfer of existing solutions to critical sectoral challenges. During the beef-focused meeting, attendees mapped out AKIS

stakeholder responsibilities to support farmers across four challenges: reducing animal slaughter age, calving heifers at two years, improving genetics of suckler herd, and addressing generational renewal. Similarly, at the fifth meeting, stakeholders actively analysed barriers to adoption and debated solutions for four critical challenges: high-maintenance ewes, low wool value, the price-cost squeeze on sheep farms, and anthelmintic resistance. By structuring these multi-actor dialogues, CAP Network Ireland help the AKIS produce real-world feedback to inform post-2027 CAP proposals, ensuring knowledge flows directly into use on Irish farms.



Teagasc Grange

UCD Lyons Farm



AKIS Coordination Body Meeting

Showcasing the success of Irish EIP-AGRI Operational Groups

CAP Network Ireland have recently published three EIP-AGRI themed Innovation Spotlight videos on our YouTube channel.

- Organic Tillage and Vegetables EIP
- Organic Beef and Lamb Innovation Group (OBLIG) EIP
- The Hare's Corner

Scan the **QR Codes** below to watch the videos.



Innovation Hub



AKIS



Spotlight Videos



Colm Gavin

CASE STUDY

Thriving Upland Communities are Essential for the Common Good

Colm Gavin

Colm Gavin is the 8th generation of his family to earn a living from land situated in a Special Area of Conservation on the Mayo/Galway border near Doo Lough. Colm is a part-time sheep farmer, heavily involved in community work. He is currently employed by FORUM Connemara CLG on the Dúlra project helping to mobilise local farmers in conservation and peatland restoration activities.

Colm is passionate about the sustainability of upland areas. *“It’s very important to keep livelihoods going and keep these places thriving,”* he says. *“I’m 10 years farming this land myself, and I’m happy to be able to keep the generations going. It’s very important to keep farming going in the uplands.”*

The farm consists of 75ha of private land and 100ha of commonage. His flock is composed of the traditional Mayo Blackface, and his participation in the Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme (SBLAS) guarantees the quality of his lamb.

Managing The Uplands for the Common Good

Besides sheep farming, Colm is exploring other revenue streams for the farm and is keen to invite the public onto his land. Colm is quite progressive in his thought processes around farming on marginal land.

“I host my own open days so that people can see what I have done on the farm. It’s to show that you can do things with nature in mind and still farm productively but also think about what production means.”

“Production isn’t just meat, it’s about water, carbon, the public good and even aesthetics. All of this is production but we only get paid for producing protein. It’s about getting people’s heads around these concepts and showing them what I think about this.”

“It’s very important to keep livelihoods going and keep these places thriving.”

Support Under the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027 (CSP)

Colm is participating in supports available under the CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027 such as the Sheep Improvement Scheme and the nationally funded National Sheep Welfare Scheme.

“Both schemes are quite good. What they are doing is bringing up the standard of the farmer who is not doing those actions but should be. The schemes are raising the bar for us all, and we are getting paid for reaching that standard.”



Also under the CSP, he is participating in ACRES CP on his commonage land and in the Organic Farming Scheme on his own private land.

“Financially, being in organics makes so much more sense. Almost 3 times more sense sometimes!” he says laughing. But it also makes sense for Colm to

be involved in ACRES. “Most of my scores on the commonage are already 8 out of 10 so I don’t really have much I can do to raise my score.” He is planning to focus on Rhododendron removal as it is one of the options that is still available to him.

He has also made applications to TAMS 3 for investments on his farm in recent times. So far, he has drawn down money for fencing and for the purchase of a flail mower for the control of rushes through the Organic Capital Investment Scheme. He is also considering a purchase of a PTO driven woodchipper under TAMS.

“Active communities in these upland areas are critical. These areas are going to die if we don’t take care of them.”

Looking at The Future of Upland Farms

Colm cares deeply about where he comes from and wants his community to thrive in the future. He believes that upland farmers will play an important role in the future management of biodiversity. Invasive species like Rhododendron and Millenia become a serious problem for native species where where land is not under careful stewardship. “With people on the ground visiting their land almost daily, they can focus on an emerging problem and manage it with grazing or whatever,” he says. He identifies the lack of quality research and advice in Ireland as a major issue that needs to be addressed: “Support and advice are very important,

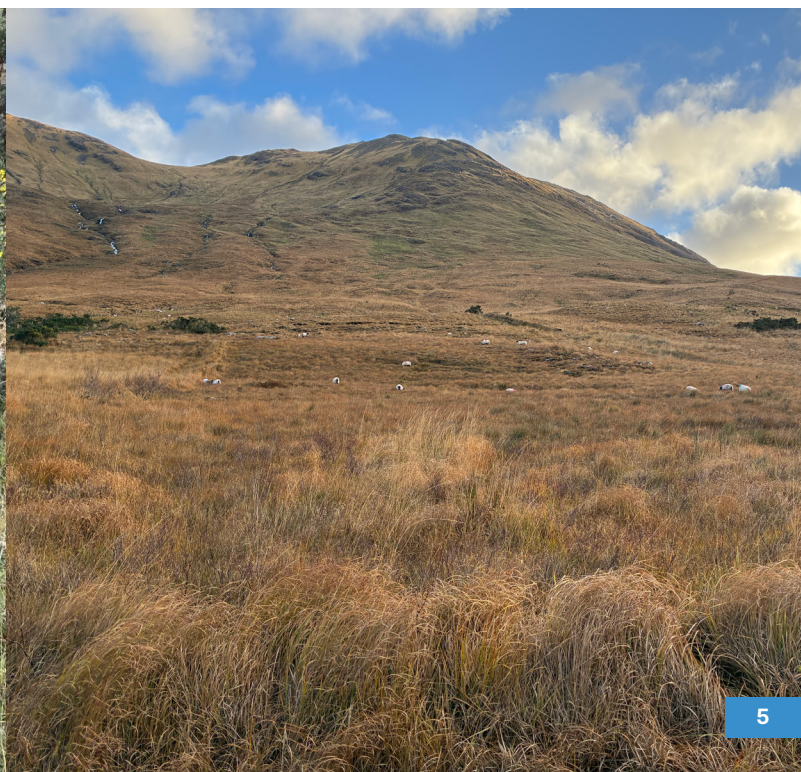
but we currently have no place to go to for advice relevant to upland farming. Ireland needs to set up a demo hill farm with proper costings and run it right in terms of production and nature management. Active communities in these upland areas are critical. These areas are going to die if we don’t take care of them,” Colm emphasises.

“It takes effort to keep them going. It doesn’t take much for a community to disappear. We talk a lot about biodiversity but without people on the ground to manage it, you’re starting on a backward step straight away.”



With progressive thinkers like Colm Gavin advocating for these communities, they should be in good hands.

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



New Resources From CAP Network Ireland

Discover two new resources now available from CAP Network Ireland: a free image library showcasing free-to-use, authentic imagery of rural Ireland and a practical video series explaining Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Conditionality requirements.

Image Library

A new image library developed by CAP Network Ireland is a valuable new resource designed to provide free-to-use, fully accessible imagery that reflects rural life in an Irish context. The library includes photographs of farming, biodiversity, landscapes, rural communities, innovation, and agricultural practices from across Ireland. These images are available for public use, helping organisations, educators, media outlets, and community groups access authentic and locally relevant visual content.

The library supports more effective communication about agriculture, biodiversity, sustainability and rural development by providing a trusted source of high-quality Irish imagery. By showcasing the diversity of rural Ireland, it helps ensure that communications and publications can draw on visuals that are relevant, representative and freely accessible to a wide audience. To explore the image library, scan the Free Image Library **QR Code**.



Free Image
Library



Conditionality
Videos

Conditionality Video Series

Produced by CAP Network Ireland on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), the Conditionality Video Series provides a practical and accessible introduction to one of the key elements of the CAP.

The four-part series explains how conditionality sets the baseline standards farmers must follow in areas such as environmental protection, climate action, animal welfare, and public health. It also outlines the role of DAFM in supporting and monitoring compliance.

Each video focuses on key aspects of the framework, including Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs). Using clear explanations and practical examples, the series helps farmers and stakeholders better understand their responsibilities under the current CAP system.

As CAP requirements continue to evolve, the videos provide straightforward guidance to support understanding, compliance and sustainable farming practices at farm level.

To view the full video series, scan the Conditionality Videos **QR Code**.

EU Corner: CAP Network Ireland in Europe

CAP's Role in Supporting Sustainable and Competitive Livestock Systems, Lisbon

Two in-person meetings were held recently to explore opportunities to improve the way CAP Strategic Plans are used to support transitions to more sustainable and competitive livestock systems, taking into account the diversity of systems in the EU.

These meetings took place in Brussels in January, and in Lisbon in April which included a farm visit to Companhia das Lezírias, to view conservation grazing in a changing climate.



7th National Networks Meeting in Malta

Representatives from CAP National Networks across Europe gathered for the 7th National Networks Meeting in Malta to explore how networking activities at EU and national levels can enhance the resilience of rural areas and communities to climate change.

At this meeting, it was announced that Ireland will host the 8th National Networks Meeting in October 2026.



LEADER and Territorial Development Subgroup Meeting, Brussels

The 7th meeting of the EU CAP Network's LEADER and Territorial Development Subgroup brought together stakeholders from across Europe involved in delivering the Programme.

Updates were shared on LEADER implementation and networking under the current CAP, alongside discussions on the future of LEADER beyond the funding period.

As part of the meeting, the Create Green project in Co. Offaly, shortlisted for the Agricultural and Rural Inspiration Awards 2025, was highlighted as one of four good practice EU LEADER projects building resilience in rural areas.

Networking for Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Workshop, Latvia

In February, CAP Network Ireland travelled to Latvia, for the 3rd EU CAP Network workshop on innovation and knowledge exchange.

Joining peers from 24 Member States, we explored ways to enhance EIP-AGRI Operational Groups, utilise AI for knowledge hubs, and strengthen collaboration with Horizon Europe networks. The event reinforced the vital role National Networks play in translating research into practical, on-farm solutions.

Visit the EU CAP Network website for more interesting insights by scanning the QR Code below:



8th National Networks Meeting to be Held in Ireland This October

This October, Ireland will co-host the EU CAP Network's 8th National Networks Meeting, jointly organised between the EU CAP Network and CAP Network Ireland.

Taking place in Co. Wicklow, the event will welcome representatives from Networks across Europe for an exchange of ideas, experiences and best practice. The meeting will focus on how National Networks can enhance and improve the implementation of cooperation measures under their respective CAP Strategic Plans.

Through peer learning and discussion, participants will explore practical ways to strengthen cooperation initiatives that support farmers, rural communities and local development across member states.

A key feature of the programme will be a series of field visits in Wicklow, providing delegates with firsthand insight into successful collaborative initiatives in Ireland.

Participants will visit examples of EIP-Agri Operational Groups, LEADER-supported projects and cooperative models, showcasing innovative approaches to rural development, knowledge exchange and community-led action.

By combining policy discussion with practical examples, the meeting aims to foster stronger connections between National Networks and encourage the sharing of experiences on effective cooperation measures under the CAP.

Ireland looks forward to welcoming colleagues from across Europe for what promises to be a valuable and engaging event in the scenic surroundings of Wicklow.

Updates on this event will be posted on the CAP Network Ireland social media channels and website. Scan the **QR Code** below for more information.



CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) Monitoring Committee Meeting

On 27 May, CAP Network Ireland attended the latest CSP Monitoring Committee meeting in Co. Cavan. The day began with a visit to two farms participating in the Farming for Water EIP, where members learned about practical interventions to protect local waterways from agricultural run-off in the Boyne catchment.

Following the field visits, the Committee received updates on the implementation of the CSP. CAP Network Ireland shared highlights of its recent communications, knowledge exchange and

capacity-building activities, including work to engage young people and promote opportunities within the agriculture sector.

To learn more about the CSP, scan the **QR Code** below:



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An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
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