



Agriculture and Climate Action

Draft Terms of Reference for NESCS working group

March 2022

Context

The National Economic and Social Council has been requested by Government to undertake research on climate and agriculture in 2022.¹ The Climate Action Plan 2021 action # 384 requests NESCS to conduct research and engage on how to support climate just transition in agriculture.

Government commitments to legally binding greenhouse gas reductions of 51 per cent by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050 imply significant changes for the agricultural sector over the coming decade.

A key focus in the Climate Action Plan is on workable solutions which, in the case of agriculture and food, will result in tangible and significant reductions in emissions and improvements in biodiversity. The Climate Action Plan also views the principles of just transition as a useful lens for ensuring a collaborative approach to 'leaving no one behind' in the transition to carbon neutrality.

Approach

NESCS will explore in practical terms how climate targets, and the transition that they imply for Irish agriculture, can be achieved in a manner that considers social equity and inclusion, environmental resilience (including biodiversity and water quality) and economic well-being. The project will consider agriculture within the wider context of land use, forestry and opportunities for rural development and regeneration.

The project will focus on:

- Framing Action: An understanding of how the challenge of climate action and transition is understood within the sector, with a focus on both opportunities as well as concerns (including economic, social and psychological); and the specific contextual, economic,

¹ NESCS advises the Taoiseach on strategic policy issues relating to sustainable economic, social and environmental development in Ireland. For further details on NESCS and its work programme and publications, please see www.nesc.ie.



social, cultural and historical characteristics and linkages between the agricultural and forestry sectors.

- **Mapping Options:** An examination of the options and alternatives and costs in supporting ambitious climate action, informed by but not limited to the Teagasc MACC (marginal abatement cost curve); and, mapping of existing innovative approaches and areas of collaboration. Examination of options will include reflection on mitigation potential, environmental benefits (biodiversity, water quality) as well as farmer perspectives of feasibility from an economic, social or cultural perspective.
- **Levers for Change:** An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of possible levers to support climate action and transition.

NESC will take a collaborative approach, engaging with a wide variety of stakeholders. The aim is to co-create solutions with a diversity of stakeholders including farmers and rural communities.

Terms of reference:

- Bring a practical, stakeholder-informed and solutions-focused perspective to explore how Irish agriculture can achieve climate targets to deliver transition to a net-zero economy and society that considers social equity and inclusion, environmental resilience and economic well-being.
- Advise on consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders, using bilateral interviews, focus groups and participatory stakeholder workshops.
- Deliver a report on Agriculture and Climate Action for Council approval by March 2023.

Working Group

A multi-stakeholder NESC working group will support and provide guidance on the work. Members will be drawn from the Council and a range of wider stakeholders, while staying within a manageable size for effective discussion, see Table 1. The working group will meet 4-6 times 2022 and once in 2023 online initially but in person where possible.

Organisation	Name
Cork University Business School	Professor Thia Hennessy (Chair of NESC Working Group), Head of School, Head of the Department of Food Business and Development and Chair of Agri-Food Economics



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta
National Economic & Social Council

NESC Pillars	
Business	Conor Mulvihill, Director Dairy Industry Ireland
Trade Union	Macdara Doyle, Campaigns Officer ICTU
Environment	Fergal Anderson, Farmer Leaf and Root Farm Dr. Ollie Moore, EU Co-ordinator Sustainable Ireland Cooperative (Trading as Cultivate) Shane Downer, Executive Officer Hedge Laying Association of Ireland
Community & Voluntary	Michelle Murphy, Research and Policy Analyst Social Justice Ireland
Farming	Damian McDonald, Director General Irish Farmers Association TJ Flanagan, Chief Executive Irish Co-operative Organisation Society John Enright, General Secretary Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
NESC Independent Members	
TUDublin Dublin City University Formerly Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)	Professor Paul Donnelly Professor Edgar Morgenroth Professor Sinead O’Flanagan
External Experts	
EPA	Mary Frances Rochford, Programme Manager Office of Environmental Sustainability
Bord Bia	Deirdre Ryan, Director Sustainability and Quality Assurance
Teagasc	Dr Kevin Hanrahan, Head of Research Department Rural Economy & Development Programme
The Food Farming & Countryside Commission	Sue Pritchard, Chief Executive
University College Cork	Dr Hannah Daly, Lecturer Sustainable Energy and Energy Systems Modelling
University College Dublin	Dr Edel Kelly, Lecturer/Assistant Professor School of Agriculture and Food Science
Trinity College Dublin	Dr Catherine Farrell Botany
University College Dublin	Professor Kevin O’Connor School of Biomolecular and Biomedical Science
	Matt Crowe former Director of the Environmental Protection Agency



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta
National Economic & Social Council

Government Departments	
Dept of the Taoiseach	Conor Ó Raghallaigh Head of Climate Action
Department of Environment, Climate & Communications (DECC)	Frank Maughan, Principal Officer Just Transition, EPA and Sectoral Policy
Department of Rural & Community Development (DRCD)	Pat Henry, Assistant Principal LEADER Unit
Department of Agriculture Food & the Marine (DAFM)	Anthony Cawley, Assistant Principal Officer
Secretariat to the Group	Niamh Garvey Jeanne Moore Elaine Kennedy

Timeframe

Activity	Timeframe	Meeting Dates
First working group meeting: sign-off on project TOR Desk research Update to Council in March 2022	Q1 2022	Thursday, 03 March @11am
Bilateral interviews Participatory focus groups and workshops Second working group meeting: project update	Q2-Q3 2022	Thursday, 26th May @ 11am Venue TBC
Third working group meeting: review interim report Interim report to Council September 2022	Q3	Thursday, 15th September @ 11am Venue TBC
Stakeholder event on interim findings Fourth working group meeting: review draft report Draft report to Council December 2022	Q4 2022	Thursday 24th November @ 11am Venue TBC
Fifth working group meeting: review final draft report Final report to Council in March 2023	Q1 2023	Thursday, 16th February @11am Venue TBC