

GLAS SCHEME

INFORMATION FOR CLUBS

The acronym GLAS stands for Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme. It is the new Agri-Environment Scheme, part of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

According to the Department, the Scheme is green as it preserves Ireland's traditional hay meadows and low input pastures; low-carbon as it retains the carbon stocks in soil through marginal habitat preservation and practices such as minimum tillage and agri-environment as it promotes agricultural actions which enhance the rural environment. GLAS aims to encourage farmers to promote biodiversity, protect water quality and also to help combat climate change.

Under the scheme, priority is given to different 'tier' farmers. Here's how to quickly determine what these 'tiers' mean.

What is a Tier 1 farmer ?

Under the rules of the scheme, Tier 1 farms will get priority access to GLAS. To determine if you are a Tier 1 farmer you need to have one of the following Priority Environmental Assets (PEAs):

1. Farmland habitat (private Natura sites);
2. Farmland birds (Twite, Breeding Waders, Cough, Geese/Swans, Corncrake, Grey Partridge, Hen Harrier);
3. Commonages (50% minimum participation in GLAS Commonage Management Plan);
4. High status water area;
5. Rare breeds.

Farmers who do not have Priority Environmental Assets but whose lands include a Vulnerable Water Area may apply for access to the scheme under Tier 1(b). An applicant may still qualify for Tier 1(b) access if one of the following actions are chosen and planned for:

- Low emission slurry spreading;
- Minimum tillage;
- Green cover establishment from a sown crop;
- Wild bird cover (grassland farms only)

General Actions

These general actions seek to enhance the climate change, water quality and biodiversity benefits delivered. For low input permanent pasture, some of the options include traditional hay meadow, planting new hedgerows and arable margins.

If there is still availability in the scheme, after the above demand has been met, then Tier 2 farmers will be given access to GLAS.

What is a Tier 2 farmer ?

You are considered a Tier 2 farmer if you:

Do not have Priority Environmental Assets but do have land with a Vulnerable Water Area; or, if you don't have a Vulnerable Water Area, an applicant may still qualify for Tier 2 access provided one of the following actions are chosen and planned for:

1. Minimum Tillage (arable farm < 30 ha)
2. Catch Crops Establishment from a Sown Crop (arable farm < 30 ha)
3. Low Emission Slurry Spreading (livestock farm < 140kg N/ha)
4. Wild Bird Cover (grassland farm < 140 kg N/ha)

If there is still availability in the scheme, after the above demand has been met, then Tier 2 farmers will be given access to GLAS.

Note: It is not guaranteed that all eligible applicants in Tier 2 will get into the Scheme and a scoring matrix will apply if necessary.

What is a Tier 3 farmer ?

Finally, the third priority farmer will be those who do not meet the above criteria. However, it is possible for such Tier 3 farmers to make themselves Tier 2 by adopting the actions above to fulfill the Tier 1 or Tier 2 criteria. These actions aim to enhance the climate change, water quality and biodiversity benefits delivered and can be chosen in addition to Tier 1 and Tier 2 actions or on their own (choosing only General Actions will not guarantee entry to the Scheme):

- Arable Margins
- Bat Boxes
- Bird Boxes
- Catch Crops
- Conservation of Solitary Bees
- Coppicing Hedgerows
- Environmental Management of Fallow Land
- Laying Hedgerows
- Low Emission Slurry Spreading
- Low input Permanent Pasture
- Minimum Tillage
- Planting a Grove of Native Trees
- Planting New Hedgerows
- Protection of Archaeological Sites
- Protection of Water Courses (not in High Status or Vulnerable Areas)
- Riparian Margins
- Traditional Hay Meadow
- Traditional Orchards
- Traditional Stone Wall Maintenance
- Wild Bird cover

A scoring matrix will be used to allow farmers join GLAS by means of these actions if take-up of Tier 1 and Tier 2 actions permits.

What about Planting Under GLAS ?

Some 2,000 new groves of native trees options are established under GLAS. In Ireland and under GLAS, a native tree is one that got to Ireland before the last Ice Age occurred and without the help of man. Recommended native trees for wet sites, according to Teagasc, include the Common Alder, Willow or the Downy Birch. These trees thrive in wet, boggy conditions and are ideally suited to establish a grove in these conditions. They will also help to dry up the surrounding site, which may allow different species to grow. For sandy or dry sites, Teagasc recommends the Scots Pine as it thrives in wind exposed sandy soils in particular along the coast. For more fertile sites, it recommends Holly, Crab Apple or Sessile Oak; these trees require higher nutrients, a more sheltered site and free draining soils to establish successfully. The Sessile Oak is also recommended by Teagasc for difficult or challenging sites as it prefers rocky conditions to grow in. For limestone sites, the Spindle and Hazel are suggested by Teagasc. The hazel trees are commonly associated with the Burren in Clare which is known for its limestone soils and demonstrates the conditions it requires to grow.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLUB SECRETARIES:

- (1) Establish how many farmers in your Club area are in the GLAS Scheme.
- (2) Enquire what Tier of the Scheme are they in.
- (3) Offer to become involved.
- (4) If they are in one that has game crop we can supply them with seed.
- (5) The traditional meadow may require that the farmer needs Grey Partridge.
- (6) Planting of coveys and trees – Club members can offer to help.

This is a golden opportunity for Gun Clubs to help re-establish suitable habitat for game & wildlife and can provide very necessary cover from overhead predators and ideal nesting and rearing habitat. Please ensure that your Club plays its part by becoming involved. As we write, the GLAS Scheme is still accepting farmers into it and already there are plans for GLAS Part 2. If we do not get involved, we will be sidelined and you might find access to certain land will become restricted. Let there be no doubt that other non shooting/hunting bodies will be only too happy to become involved and take credit for your efforts in controlling vermin and rearing and releasing game onto your land.

Should you require any more assistance or information on this subject or any Game Development matter please do not hesitate to contact the NARGC Game Development Team.