

## **Request for Research Tender on**

*Towards the development of a National Results-Based Agri-Environmental Scheme to achieve co-benefits for water, air, soil and biodiversity*

**Closing Date: Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

**Queries to be addressed to:**

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**An Fóram Uisce**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION TO AN FÓRAM UISCE

An Fóram Uisce (the Water Forum) was established on a statutory basis in June 2018, in accordance with the Water Services Act 2017. An Fóram has advisory roles in relation to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Irish Water, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and the Water Policy Advisory Committee.

An Fóram is the only statutory body representative of all stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland's water bodies. Consisting of 26 members including representatives from a wide range of organisations with direct connection to issues relating to water quality and also public water consumers. Approximately 50 different organisations were involved in the nomination of members.

The Water Services Act 2017 provided the statutory basis for An Fóram. The Act also provided for the dissolution of the Public Water Forum (whose remit was primarily concerned with issues pertinent to Irish Water and the Regulator) and the National Rural Water Services Committee (the committee for addressing issues regarding rural water), with their functions being incorporated into An Fóram.

An Fóram provides an opportunity for stakeholders to debate and analyse a range of issues with regard to water quality, rural water concerns, issues affecting customers of Irish Water and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021. As an independent entity, An Fóram has discretion to determine its own work programme and means of communicating its views and analysis.

Dr Tom Collins, our Chairperson, was previously the Chair of the Public Water Forum and a former Chair of the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee.

Its work is supported by an executive team including: Senior Executive Officer: Donal Purcell; Research Lead, Dr Triona McGrath; Communications and Education Lead, Dr Gretta McCarron. Technical support, Post-doctoral researcher (DkIT), Dr Angelos Alamanos; Administrative support, Martina Ryan.

Further information on the work of An Fóram Uisce is available at [www.thewaterforum.ie](http://www.thewaterforum.ie)

## 2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

According to Ireland's River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021, agriculture is a significant pressure in approximately 53% of water bodies identified as *At Risk* of not meeting good ecological status under the Water Framework Directive. Good water quality is essential for rich biodiversity and wildlife, along with human health and well-being.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) supplies the broad framework of EU agricultural policy and is the mainstay of public subvention to agriculture through direct farm payments and other supports. Traditionally agri-environment schemes implemented under the CAP have been designed using a prescription-based model, which is generic in nature and lacks targeted measures. Under this 'action-based' approach, there has been little emphasis on ongoing monitoring or evaluation if measures have had any benefit to the environment.

In recent years there has been a shift towards 'results-based' agri-environment payment schemes, which reward farmers for the delivery of environmental outcomes. The results-based model has been successfully used by a number of national European Innovation Partnership (EIP) projects, such as the BRIDE Project, Hen Harrier Project and Pearl Mussel Project, along with the Burren LIFE project. These national pilot projects are typically confined to specific environmental challenges and geographic areas, rather than at a national level. However, there has been increasing interest in the expansion of small-scale results-based agri-environmental schemes to a wider scale across diverse agricultural settings, addressing multiple environmental targets simultaneously<sup>3</sup>.

The European Commission proposed the CAP Reform in 2018 as a means to modernise the EU's policy on agriculture, incorporating a performance and results-based approach. The CAP Strategic Plan 2022-2027 is currently in preparation, which will be instrumental for the transition towards sustainable agriculture. Member states must ensure their CAP strategic plans are coherent with environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive and aligns with the EU Green Deal, Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies.

In 2020 An Fóram Uisce commissioned a body of research to investigate optimising water quality returns from the Reform of CAP, which was carried out by Dr. Charles Larkin, Institute of Policy and Research at the University of Bath. Larkin (2020)<sup>1</sup> discussed the concept of using public money to pay for public goods to improve the quality of Ireland's water environments, since a wide variety of environmentally related public benefits can be produced by farming, such as water quality improvement, climate change mitigation and biodiversity enhancement. A key recommendation from the report is the need for a catchment-based, integrated approach which takes account of all relevant aspects of land and landscape management in an integrated manner.

In 2021, An Fóram Uisce adopted the Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management (FILLM)<sup>2</sup>, as the overarching framework for environmental management, which includes all components of our natural environment in a catchment setting, while also addressing relevant EU Directives (e.g. the Water Framework Directive), climate change adaptation and mitigation, soil conservation, spatial planning, and sustainable food and timber production. The use of FILLM ensures optimum results for the efforts and resources used through consideration of co-benefits, identification of synergies and can facilitate trade-offs where synergies are not feasible.

Following on this, An Fóram Uisce proposes to commission a piece of research to investigate how results-based schemes can be expanded from pilot projects towards a national scheme. The study will develop knowledge on targeted approaches where measures will address issues relating water quality, climate change and biodiversity, in an integrated manner.

<sup>1</sup> Larkin (2020). Optimising Water Quality Returns from the Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): A Rapid Evidence Assessment Report. [CAP-Reform-Report-to-An-Foram-Uisce\\_FINAL-3.pdf](https://www.thewaterforum.ie/CAP-Reform-Report-to-An-Foram-Uisce_FINAL-3.pdf) (thewaterforum.ie)

<sup>2</sup> A Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management (FILLM), [TWF-FILLM-Report-Feb21-v9WEB.pdf](https://www.thewaterforum.ie/TWF-FILLM-Report-Feb21-v9WEB.pdf) (thewaterforum.ie)

<sup>3</sup> O'Rourke and Finne (2020). Farming For Nature, the role of results based payments. Teagasc and National Parks and Wildlife Services. <https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/ffn-ebook-complete.pdf>

### 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The proposed project will build on the work done by the EPA catchment unit, the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP) and national EIPs (and international projects if applicable), to investigate how results-based approaches can be expanded from pilot projects towards a national scheme. Research should address the use of the FILLM approach (Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management), to design mitigation measures that have co-benefits for water, air, soil and biodiversity, along a catchment setting.

In addition, the research should address the following aspects;

#### Land Characterisation and ‘Right Measure Right Place’

Results-based approaches must be measurable and quantifiable; therefore a baseline assessment of each farm must be carried out in order to evaluate i) the environmental context of the farm; ii) the environmental benefits that are achievable; and iii) the measures/actions needed to achieve these benefits. How can the biophysical setting of land be characterised ahead of a results-based approach, such as that being done by the EPA Catchments Unit, LAWPRO and ASSAP, be expanded or implemented nationally?

How can a national scoring system be designed that will incorporate baseline conditions at a farm level (i.e. land characterisation) and integrated mitigation measures that have co-benefits for water, air, soil and/or biodiversity. Investigate how a scoring system can incorporate different types of farms and landscapes, e.g. encompassing extensive and intensive farms, and upland and lowland areas.

#### Governance of a national results-based approach

What are the governance issues of a national results-based approach, including who will carry out preliminary land characterisation, followed by monitoring and evaluation. Is there scope for farmers to play a key role in assessments, if they are provided with the correct training, knowledge and equipment. How can a national results-based approach be administered?

### 4. PROJECT DELIVERABLES

The following deliverables are required for **all** awarded tenders:

- Final report, encompassing all requirements listed under Section 3.
- A Policy Brief document identifying the key policy recommendations for moving towards a national results-based agri-environmental scheme.

## 5. BUDGET

The currency and invoices in which all prices and rates shall be quoted, and which payments under the contract will be paid, shall be Euros (€).

The **maximum budget is €20,000** inclusive of VAT and overheads where applicable.

### 5.1 Payment Schedules

An upfront payment of 50% of the total agreed budget will be made upon receipt of invoice from the contracted service provider or institution following the initiation of the project.

A final payment of the remaining 50% of the total agreed budget will be made on project completion within the timeframes stated within Section 6, and following receipt of the final report.

## 6. TIMELINES

It is a mandatory requirement that a draft report is **completed on or before 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021** as per the timeframe outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1:** *Timeframe for project delivery*

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Publication of tender                | 13 <sup>th</sup> April 2021                  |
| Deadline for tender submissions      | 14 <sup>th</sup> May 2021                    |
| Award of tender and start of project | 24 <sup>th</sup> May 2021                    |
| Project initiation meeting           | On or before 28 <sup>th</sup> May 2021       |
| Draft report submitted               | On or before 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2021 |

Following review of the draft report, a completed final report is to be submitted which takes into account proposed amendments to the draft report.

## 7. MARKING SCHEME

All submissions will be assessed by a panel of suitably qualified persons.

Marks will be awarded (maximum 100 marks) based solely on the information provided in the submission, as follows:

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the subject matter of the brief and the requirements of the project (40 marks).
- Project management (10 marks).
- Timeline, including GANTT chart for project actions and deliverables (10 marks).
- Details of budget, including compliance within the stated budget (10 marks).
- Demonstrated relevant research track record of team appropriate to the subject matter, including previous/ongoing projects delivered and scientific publications (30 marks).

## 8. SUBMISSION OF TENDERS

Applications must be submitted no later than **5pm 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021** via email to Dr Triona McGrath, Research Lead, An Fóram Uisce: [triona@nationalwaterforum.ie](mailto:triona@nationalwaterforum.ie).

Submissions must include:

- A completed application form.
- A CV (max 4 pages) of the lead person to whom the tender will be awarded.

An acknowledgement of receipt of applications will be issued within 48 hours of the submission deadline.

## 9. AWARD OF TENDERS

**One** award will be made through this request for tenders.

Applicants will be notified of the success of their submissions no later than **24<sup>th</sup> May 2021**.

Bodies of work may be initiated immediately from the date of award, with an initial project meeting to take place on or before **28<sup>th</sup> May 2021**.

## 10. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- All applications must be made using the official application form.
- Applications may be received from consortiums of individuals from different institutions. Such applications must identify the **lead person** to whom the tender may be awarded. All other members of the consortium will be sub-contracted by the lead person. The maximum total budget of €20,000 (inclusive of VAT and overheads) is applicable to single service provider applications and consortium applications respectively.
- The Water Forum will disqualify incomplete applications, applications not using the application form provided and any application received after closing time/date. Compliance with the word limitation contained on the Application Form is a requirement of the application process.
- It is a necessary requirement of the application process that the successful applicant must provide a copy of their Organisation/University/Institution's current Tax Clearance Certificate.
- Failure to address within the final report each of the items included under Section 3 and the relevant thematic area will result in the withholding of final payment until all requirements are met.
- The Water Forum will have copyright ownership of any material developed for use by The Water Forum under the terms of this tender. The service provider may have a non-exclusive licence to use such material but only for its own purposes (to be agreed with the successful service provider).
- The principles of Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019 will be applied where there is any potential for commercial exploitation of project outputs resulting from this tender.
- The Water Forum encourages an open access publication policy. Publications arising from tender awards funded by The Water Forum should, as a minimum, ensure open access via Green methods (depositing the peer-reviewed manuscript in an online repository before, at

the same time, or after publication). All reports will be uploaded to, and publicly accessible via, The Water Forum's website: [www.nationalwaterforum.ie](http://www.nationalwaterforum.ie).

- Any publications arising from tender awards funded by The Water Forum must acknowledge An Fóram Uisce | The Water Forum as the source of funding.
- Projects funded by The Water Forum must uphold the highest standards of research integrity and The Water Forum expects all tender awardees to abide by the guidelines outlined in the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland; and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information – When an application is received by The Water Forum, a record is created in the name of the applicant. This information will be

stored by the office of The Water Forum, where relevant, in paper/electronic form. Information that is collected by the Office, including information that you give us, is added to the record. You have the right, given by the Data Protection Act of 1988 and 2003, to a copy of your information at any time. The Office is also subject to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2014.

The information we record is used for the following purposes:

- Processing and assessing of applications;
- Payment arrangements;
- Auditing requirements;
- Informing and advising The Water Forum in relation to the Project and using same as a basis for further consideration by The Water Forum including research projects and policy analysis and recommendations;
- Publication of the Project Outcomes.

**End/**