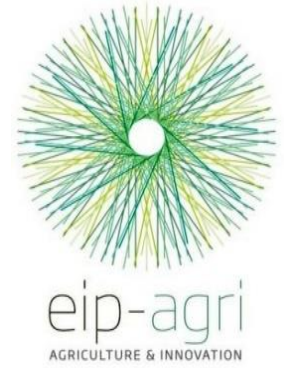




**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



Farm and Community Biodiversity Initiative

West Cork Trees Project LLOC5031 Final Report



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1. Executive Summary

The Carbery Trees Project saw Carbery Group milk suppliers provided with fifty trees each for planting on their farms in an initiative to address biodiversity at a local level across the West Cork region. The project was funded as part of the EIP-Agri Farm and Community Biodiversity Initiative. The project was built on a previous project between Carbery and Southwestern Services (SWS) which was hugely successful and saw some forty-five thousand trees planted across West Cork. A further sixty thousand trees were planted across the region through this initiative.

The trees were provided to farmers, in biodegradable bags at their local co-operatives in two tranches to facilitate the harvesting of plants and farmers planting them at appropriate times of the year.

The first tranche was run in November/December 2021 and the second in February/March 2022.

The farmers also received educational booklets on planting instructions and the benefits of trees and had the opportunity to attend a tree planting workshop. The biodiversity workshops were impacted by Covid 19, and were held later than anticipated, in July, September and October 2022.

The native species chosen for this initiative will help to improve the natural environment and biodiversity by providing habitats for indigenous natural wildlife. The average tree can absorb around 1 tonne of CO₂ when grown to maturity which shows the co-benefits of reducing carbon emissions locally. Native trees enhance farmed landscape and can also provide shelter, and they are wonderful wildlife habitats.

A booklet on how farmers can protect and enhance biodiversity on their land was produced by the experts in the operational group (OG), printed and sent to all one thousand, two hundred and fifteen Carbery suppliers.

Throughout the initiative, there was no costs to farmers. The project was administered by the OG with Carbery as the lead. Expert advice and leadership was provided through SWS, our farmer member and the Green Economy Foundation in conjunction with Carbery.

The final element of the project was the completion of 3 short videos, called 'Digital Stories'. These videos, were completed with our ecologist Cian White, and give short guidance on tree planting & maintenance, wetland habitats on farms, and identifying biodiversity rich species on the farm.

2. Brief description of the project

Summary

The Carbery Trees OG demonstrated an innovative biological diversity initiative in the West Cork area. This biodiversity initiative offers a replicable mechanism for farmers to enhance biodiversity through native Irish tree species (oak, birch, white thorn, black thorn) whilst reducing overall farm emissions and enhancing water quality. The Carbery Tree's Project saw native woodland species planted across West Cork and it will support farmers on a journey to enhanced biodiversity on their farmland. The project includes innovative knowledge exchange activities, including digital storytelling, training of farmers in the correct planting and care of native woodland species, training farmers in ways to protect and enhance biodiversity in their local areas and relevant material associated with the project. The project will demonstrate an effective model to enhance biodiversity which integrates easily into Ireland's existing agricultural structures and practices and can be adopted by all landowners, thus helping to improve overall sustainability of the locality and the industry.

Project Activities

The project saw over sixty thousand native woodland species planted on Carbery supplier farms across West Cork. Fifty native woodland tree species were provided to each of the 1,215 Carbery suppliers. The trees were supplied in biodegradable bags and distributed to the farmers through the four West Cork Co-op's, Bandon, Barryroe, Drinagh and Lisavaird.

The project involved significant knowledge transfer (KT) activities, including the compilation of a booklet to educate and enable farmers to take further action to protect and improve biodiversity on their land.

The project has a strong operational group consisting of experts in ecology, agriculture, sustainability, forestry, and farming. The project demonstrates a very replicable action for Irish agriculture and supporting documents will be developed within the project to enable farmer uptake and replication nationally. The project aimed to provide habitats for biodiversity with co-benefits of enhancing water quality, landscape and increasing carbon sequestration. In relation to Rural Development Policy 2021-2025, the project meets a number of principles, as it is sustainable, participative, inclusive, progressive, and integrated.

3. More detailed reporting

Through the Carbery Trees Project, the OG delivered on the ground tree planting workshops, providing fifty plants to each farmer along with added practical solutions for farmers to take up to enhance biodiversity.

The OG provided an expert guided education programme to dairy farmers in West Cork that will teach them the value of biodiversity and actions that they can take to protect and enhance it within their lands. It will educate farmers on ways to carry out simple assessments of biodiversity on their own farms. Replication of the project across Ireland could see over six million native woodland species planted across the island.

The project demonstrated a tangible method for increasing biodiversity at farm level through native tree planting. This will provide habitats, improve water quality, enhance the landscape and the average tree can absorb 1 tonne of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) when grown to maturity.

Enhanced knowledge of the importance of biodiversity for dairy farmers is a fundamental objective of Carberys sustainability ethos, and through the lifetime of the project a number of KT biodiversity events were held with farmers catchment. This included demonstrating and training of the correct tree planting guidelines at each of the four west Cork co-ops. It included workshops on the importance of biodiversity and how we can improve and protect it in intensive dairying systems. Digital stories were developed. They are an innovative way of disseminating important information to farmers and stakeholders. Digital story telling uses multi-dimensional communication in order to share knowledge. It involves producing short, personally narrated clips using images, sound and video. Storytelling and learning are intrinsically linked. By translating first-hand experience into a reflective narrative, the learner is motivated to create a memorable story thus increasing the retention of the learnings for themselves as well as those who hear the story¹. Stories were produced by farmers and also by the OG on the actions of the project.

In addition to demonstration workshops and KT activities, Carbery Trees delivered an extensive booklet on biodiversity in West Cork, including actions that can be taken to work towards improving biodiversity. Given the replication potential of the model for rural regions around Ireland, dissemination will be key to ensure greater awareness and actions that can be taken by farmers to enhance and protect biodiversity.

KPIS

KPI 1 – Project Schedule. The project did not run to the intended schedule. There were significant delays in delivering key aspects of the project due to Covid 19 and changes in personnel working on the project.

KPI 2 – Deviation of planned budget. The project closed within the planned budget of €80,300.

KPI 3 – Deviation of planned work hours. Working hours were significantly more than planned. The project manager left Carbery in March 2022, and it took a significant number of people resources to complete the project in their absence.

KPI 4 – Development of communication strategy. The communications strategy was led by Carbery Communications manager Louise Kelly. The project was successfully highlighted in local media, online and through communication with our suppliers. The Digital Stories played a significant role in communicating the project to the wider public.

KPI 5 – Orders of Trees. The ordering and sourcing of trees was done through South Western Forestry Services

KPI 6 – Harvest of Tranche 1 Trees.

KPI 7 – Collection of Trees from co-op branches. There was significant people and time resources used in the distribution of trees from the Co Op to our suppliers.

KPI 8 – Harvest of Tranche 2 Trees

KPI 9– Collection of Trees from co-op's

KPI 10 – Completion of Workshops for Tranche 1. The workshops were delayed due to Covid 19, with the first being run by ecologist Cian White, Ecologist, Emily Fitzgerald from South Western Services and Padraig Walsh from Carbery.

KPI 11 – Completion of Workshops for Tranche 2, The 2nd workshop was held on 2nd September 2022 and was run by Cian White, Ecologist.

KPI 12 – 3rd Workshop – held on 11th October 2022 and facilitated by Aoife Healy of Carbery.

KPI 12 – Review of project and dissemination of actions to wider audience

KPI 13 – Development of leaflet for print and website. Completed and distributed as planned.

KPI 14 – Development of biodiversity booklet 'actions farmers can take to protect and enhance biodiversity'. Completed and distributed as planned.

KPI 15 – Digital stories to disseminate. Completed and distributed, slightly delayed.

Closing Evaluation

The West Cork Trees Project (LLOC5031) was set up with the objective of enhancing the biodiversity on our supplier farms and to increase awareness on the importance of biodiversity. 60,000 additional native trees planted in our supplier catchment will have many environmental benefits.

Planting trees helps to slow down and combat the effects of climate change. Trees remove carbon dioxide from the air and replace it with clean, pure oxygen. Trees absorb carbon and store it within their trunk, branches and leaves in the process of sequestration.

The production of greenhouse gases from destructive activities, such as the burning of fossil fuels, can be partially offset by the planting of native Irish trees.

Another important benefit of tree planting is the fact that trees and their root systems help to purify and slow rainwater before it seeps back into our streams and rivers. Trees act as a buffer between the water falling from the sky as rain and the water coursing in our rivers.

While it was successful in achieving the project objectives, there are areas which could be improved upon, particularly in relation to issues around project management. Change in personnel early in the project meant that knowledge of the administrative aspects of the project was lacking.

VFM

In evaluating Value for Money, the aim was to minimise the cost of input resources, maximise efficiency from the resources used and the effectiveness of the results from those resources.

Sourcing the trees for the project was the single biggest financial requirement. This work was carried out by Michael Connolly and the team from South Western Services Forestry division. The sourcing of trees was limited due to the scale and type of trees required.

Carbery people resources were another significant cost to the project. The use of in house graphic designers, ecologists & communications specialists among others, ensure we were utilising excellent resources at lower costs than if we were required to look on the open market.

A tender process was used to select the media production company used to produce the digital stories videos.

Financial Report

€75,305.14 in funding was drawn down by the project to the Carbery trees bank account. The project financial documents were audited on Monday 20th March 2023.

Carbery Food Ingredients,

Ballineen,
Co. Cork
P47 YW77

INVOICE



Bill To
The Department of Food, Agriculture and the Marine,
Agriculture House,
Kildare Street,
D02 WK12

Invoice # 0001
Invoice Date 24/06/2022

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
Supply, distribution, bundling and bagging of 61,400 trees	30,950.00
Personal fees in project implementation - SWS	2,050.00
Leaflets - SWS	295.39
Handling Fee of trees: Bandon, Barryroe, Drinagh, Lisavaird - €500 x 4	2,000.00
Working Hours: Aoife Feeney - 6 Hours x €50	300.00
Working Hours: Louise Kelly - 10 Hours x €50	500.00
Working Hours: Orla Hurley - 7 Hours x €50	250.00
Working Hours: Enda Buckley - 12 Hours x €50	600.00
Working Hours: Padraig Walsh - 70 Hours x €50	3,500.00
Telephone Charges	250.00
Booklet Creation	3,500.00
Graphic Design	3,500.00
Travel	200.00
Workshop Development	1,300.00
TOTAL	49,295.39

Bank Details

Name on Bank Account: Carbery Food Ingredients Ltd

Name of Bank: Allied Irish Banks Plc

Address of Bank: AIB, 66 South Mall, Cork

IBAN: IES4 AIBK 9363 8303 5979 47

BIC: AIBKIE2D

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Co. Cork
P47 YW77

INVOICE

**Bill To**

The Department of Food, Agriculture and the Marine,
Agriculture House,
Kildare Street,
D02 WK12

Invoice #

0002

Invoice Date

30/11/2022

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
Working Hours: Padraig Walsh 120 hours x €50/hour	6,000.00
Working Hours: Enda Buckley 30 hours x €50/hour	1,500.00
Working Hours: Louise Kelly 40 hours x €50/hour	2,000.00
Working Hours: Orla Hurley 20 hours x €50/hour	1,000.00
Working Hours: Aoife Healy 17 hours x €50/hour	850.00
Working Hours: Cian White Biodiversity expert: 10 hours x €100/hour	1,000.00
Workshop travel	500.00
Workshop organisation	1,500.00
Telephone	361.28
Graphic Design Liam Madden Creative Illustration & design	880.50
Ecologist and Booklet design SWS Forestry	615.00
Biodiversity Board Design for Workshop	1,000.00
Booklet printing Walsh Printers	1,153.22
Workshop implementation	3,000.00
TOTAL	21,360.00 €

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Co. Cork
P47 YW77

INVOICE



Bill To

The Department of Food, Agriculture and the Marine,
Agriculture House,
Kildare Street,
D02 WK12

Invoice

0003

Invoice Date

05/07/2023

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
Wombat Media – Carbery Trees Digital Stories	2,775.00
Wombat media – Editing of Digital Stories	580.00
Working hours – Aoife Healy 24 hours	768.72
Ecologist fee	500.00
Travel/meals	26.03
Total	4,649.75

Bank Details

Name on Bank Account: Carbery Food Ingredients Ltd

Name of Bank: Allied Irish Banks Plc

Address of Bank: AIB, 66 South Mall, Cork

IBAN: IE54 AIBK 9363 8303 5979 47

BIC: AIBKIE2D

Lessons learned

The project was a significant undertaking, which brought many biodiversity learnings for Carbery Group, the OG team and the 1220 farmers who were all part of the project. A key lesson learned from the project is the importance of one person taking ownership of project management. Our record keeping was not at the standard which we would usually hold ourselves to, given the change in personnel throughout the project.

Actions to carry forward.

The West Cork Trees project was well received by our supplier farmers, businesses we deal with, and the local community. Carbery Group will continue to monitor the progress of the 60,000 trees planted under the project in 2022 and look to carry out a similar planting programme again in the future.

The digital stories completed as part of the project will be used to highlight the work being done by Carbery and its suppliers to enhance biodiversity and will be promoted during the upcoming Biodiversity week.

Details of dissemination of project findings

The results of the project, namely the planting of 60,000 trees was communicated through Carbery Groups communication channels, and further afield through both local and national media outlets. Our Digital Stories will be a resource available to farmers going forward, to care for the trees planted as part of the programme. These short videos will be distributed through Carbery and our 4 supplier Co Ops social media channels.

[60,000 trees get set for planting on farms as part of latest West Cork Trees Project - Carbery](#)

[60,000 native trees being planted in West Cork in New Year - Cork Beo](#)

[Carbery Group to plant further 60,000 trees in West Cork \(echolive.ie\)](#)

[Tree-planting project: Farmers to plant 60k trees - thatsfarming.com](#)

Closing

The Filming for the West Cork Trees digital stories took place on 26th April 2023. The first edits of the production are available on the below links, and will be distributed through Carbery Group social media channels as part of Biodiversity week 2023.

https://365cs-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/ahealy_carbery_com/EdyoY_fWWc5LIm1mXC97VkmBrOeyb6EYxDY3An-RKOfQIA?e=xJhAgj

https://365cs-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/ahealy_carbery_com/EcjUugzHDSZKqEZMajOv4mAB2U3yp32DkgMjSZEbHID_QQ?e=uCleTf

https://365cs-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/ahealy_carbery_com/Ec-DyofJ6NRLhf6iN_ThNGAB-I8bx3AwHMQuea9MHfOtlw?e=KOCjyH

The final requirement of the project, closing of the bank account was requested on 23rd May 2023.

Acknowledgement

Carbery would like to acknowledge the assistance of The Green Economy Foundation, South Western Forestry Services, Cian White and the The Farm Zero C team, and the generous funding received as part of this EIP-Agri project through the Department of Agriculture, Food & The Marine.