



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

# Land Eligibility Guide

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# Guide to the calculation of Eligible Hectare and Reference Area

## Introduction

This document is intended as a short guide to the calculation of Eligible Hectare. It should be read in conjunction with the BISS and other area-based schemes Terms and Conditions and other guidance documents. It is not intended as a definitive guide to Land Eligibility or the Eligible Hectare. This guide will provide an outline and guidance as to the process of calculating Eligible Hectare. **Eligible Hectare will be automatically computed and displayed on the BISS online system.** An applicant or agent does not have to manually calculate the figure unless they so wish.

Also, included is a brief guide to the calculation of Reference Area, the land area used for the stocking rate calculation for Nitrates and for Active Farmer, ANC and Eco scheme (Ag Practice 2 & 3).

## Eligible Hectare

From 2023 onwards, Eligible Hectare is the basis of payment for area-based payments such as BISS, CRISS, Eco Schemes, ANC etc. An Eligible Hectare is an Agricultural Area that is used for an Agricultural Activity. An Agricultural Area is comprised of arable land, permanent crops, and permanent grassland, along with agroforestry systems. An Agricultural Activity includes the production of agricultural products, such as livestock or growing crops or can involve the maintenance of the agricultural area.

## Other Eligible Areas and Non-agricultural areas

An eligible hectare is firstly an agricultural area that is used for an agricultural activity, but it can also contain other areas as set out below.

### *Landscape Features*

Landscape features are all eligible for payment and are considered part of the eligible hectare. Features include:

- Hedgerows
- Trees in a line
- Drains
- Ponds (less than 0.2ha)
- National Monuments
- Designated Habitats
- Stone walls

### *Beneficial Features*

Beneficial features may occupy up to 50% of a parcel, without impacting the eligibility of parcel. Beneficial features can be scattered throughout the reference parcel or can or can be confined to a particular area within the parcel. The main beneficial features are:

- Scrub
- Trees
- Woodland
- Habitat
- Rock

### *Non-agricultural areas*

Non-agricultural areas are ineligible for payment irrespective of the activity being carried out. Non-agricultural areas include the following:

- Artificial areas such as roads, paths, buildings, farmyards, quarries
- Waterbodies such as streams, lakes, and ponds greater than 0.2 ha.
- Sand (beach, foreshore)
- Areas predominately used as sports fields, golf courses, pitch and putt courses.

### *Reductions*

Non-agricultural areas (artificial features - roadways etc.; waterbodies - rivers, streams etc.) must be deducted in full. There are no deductions for Landscape Features. Beneficial features will be deemed part of the eligible hectare once they are less than 50% of the reference parcel area minus deductions for any artificial features and waterbodies.

Where Beneficial Features are present, the possibility of a reduction is dependent on the Agricultural Area of the parcel. Please see table below for the % Reductions that apply to the parcel.

% Beneficial Area	Reduction to apply to the Agriculture Area		
	Permanent Grassland	Arable & Permanent Crops	Burren and Aran Islands*
0 up to 50%	No reduction	No reduction	No reduction
Greater than 50% to 70%	Area of Beneficial Features identified	100% reduction	Area of Beneficial Features identified
Greater than 70%	100% reduction	100% reduction	Area of Beneficial Features identified

\*An exemption applies to parcel in Burren and Aran Islands, which are unique karst limestone regions.

## Calculation of Eligible Hectare

The calculation of eligible hectare comprises of several steps, using the parcel Digitised Area as the basis for the calculation:

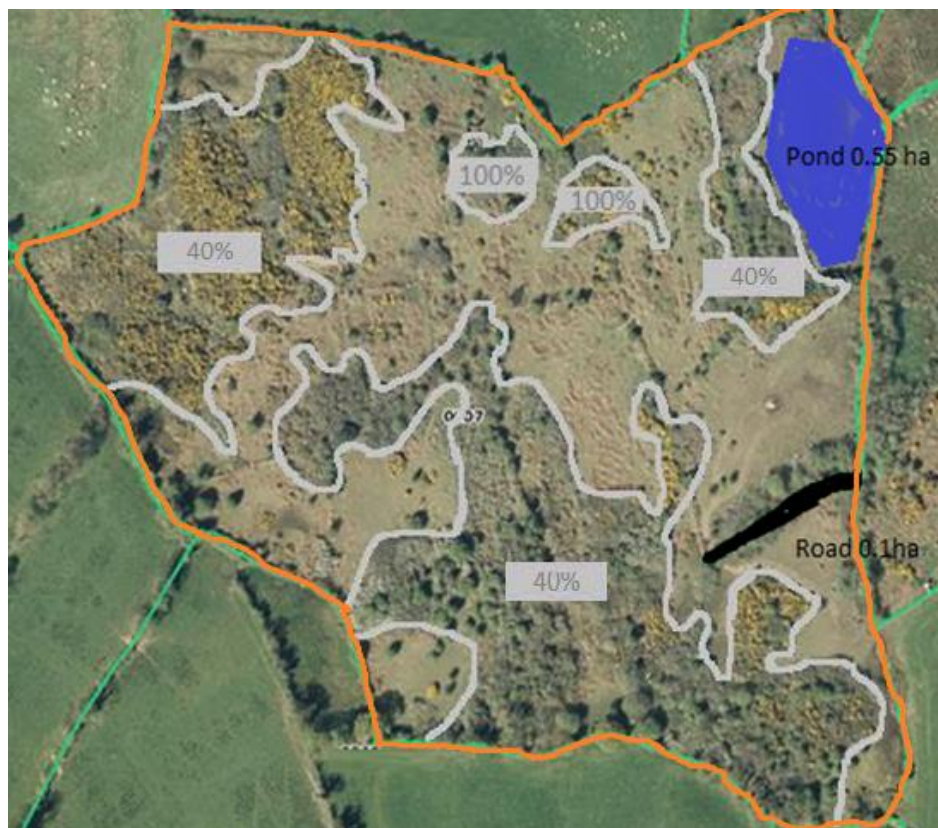
- 1) Select from the following the appropriate Agriculture Area for the parcel in question:
  - arable,
  - permanent crops or
  - permanent grassland
- 2) Sum and deducted from the Digitised Area (a) all the areas of ineligible features and exclusions in the parcel (b), to give the Adjusted Eligible Area (c)
- 3) Sum the area of all the Beneficial Features in the parcel (d)
- 4) Calculate the Beneficial Features area (d) as a percent of the Adjusted Eligible Area (c) to give **% Beneficial**
- 5) If the parcel is permanent grassland, use i) below, if the parcel is arable or permanent crop, use ii) below and if the parcel is designated area of the Burren or Aran Islands, use iii) below:

- i) Permanent Grassland  
If the '% Beneficial' is between 0% and 50%, no reduction to apply, use 0% reduction.  
If the '% Beneficial' is between 51% and 70%, the reduction is the '% Beneficial'. For example, a parcel with 60% beneficial feature, will have a 60% reduction.  
If the '% Beneficial' is greater than 70%, a 100% reduction applies.
  - ii) Arable and Permanent Crops  
If the '% Beneficial' is between 0% and 50%, no reduction to apply, use 0% reduction.  
If the '% Beneficial' is greater than 50%, a 100% reduction applies.
  - iii) Burren or Aran Islands  
If the '% Beneficial' is between 0% and 50%, no reduction to apply, use 0% reduction.  
If the '% Beneficial' is between 51% and 100%, the reduction is the '% Beneficial'. For example, a parcel with 95% beneficial feature, will have a 95% reduction. A parcel with 100% beneficial features is ineligible.
- 6) Deduct the reduction (0% - 100%) from the Adjusted Eligible Area to calculate the Eligible Hectare.

## Example 1 - Permanent Grassland

Parcel Digitised Area (a)		hectare 10
Ineligible features / Exclusions	Pond	0.55
	Farm Road	0.1
	<b>Total Exclusions (b)</b>	<b>0.65</b>
<b>Adjusted Eligible Area (c)</b>		<b>9.35</b>
Beneficial Features	Scrub (1.1 ha @40%)	0.44
	Scrub (0.1 ha @100%)	0.1
	Scrub (0.09ha @100%)	0.09
	Scrub (3.6 ha @40%)	1.44
	<b>Total Beneficial Area (d)</b>	<b>2.07</b>
% Beneficial Area	d/c (2.07 /9.35)	22%
<b>Eligible Hectare</b>		<b>9.35</b>

*As the total area of Beneficial Features (2.07ha) is less than 50% of the Adjusted Eligible Area, NO REDUCTION. The Eligible hectare is 9.35 ha.*



## Example 2 - Arable

Parcel Digitised Area (a)		hectare 26.6
Ineligible features / Exclusions	None	
	Total Exclusions (b)	0.0
Adjusted Eligible Area (c)		26.6
Beneficial Features	Scrub	0.45
	Trees (3.2 ha @40%)	1.28
	Total Beneficial Area (d)	1.73
% Beneficial Area	d/c (1.73/26.6)	6.05%
Eligible Hectare		26.6

*As the total area of Beneficial Features (1.73ha) is less than 50% of the Adj. Eligible Area,*

***NO REDUCTION. The Eligible hectare is 26.6 ha.***



## Example 3 - Permanent Grassland

Parcel Digitised Area (a)		hectare 3.65
Ineligible features / Exclusions	None	
	Total Exclusions (b)	0.0
Adjusted Eligible Area (c)		3.65
Beneficial Features	Scrub (80%)	2.92
	Total Beneficial Area (d)	2.92
% Beneficial Area	d/c (2.92/3.65)	80%
Eligible Hectare		0.0

*As the total area of Beneficial Features (2.92ha) is greater than 70% of the Adj. Eligible Area, **100% REDUCTION**. The Eligible hectare is 0.0 ha.*



## Example 4 - Arable

Parcel Digitised Area (a)		hectare 7.51
Ineligible features / Exclusions	Building	0.01
	Road	0.13
	Building	0.025
	Garden	0.18
	Road	0.13
	<b>Total Exclusions (b)</b>	<b>0.475</b>
Adjusted Eligible Area (c)		7.04
Beneficial Features	None	0
	<b>Total Beneficial Area (d)</b>	<b>0</b>
% Beneficial Area	d/c (0/7.04)	0%
Eligible Hectare		7.04
<i>No reduction for Beneficial Features. Reduction of 0.475ha for exclusions. The <b>Eligible hectare is 7.04 ha.</b></i>		



## Example 5 - Burren

Parcel Digitised Area (a)		hectare <b>11.3</b>
Ineligible features / Exclusions	Farm Road	0.08
	Farm Road	0.01
	<b>Total Exclusions (b)</b>	<b>0.09</b>
<b>Adjusted Eligible Area (c)</b>		<b>11.21</b>
Beneficial Features	Rock (0.72ha @100%)	0.72
	Rock (5.72ha @60%)	3.43
	Rock (4.6 ha @80%)	3.68
	Rock (0.17ha @80%)	0.14
<b>Total Beneficial Area (d)</b>		<b>7.97</b>
<b>% Beneficial Area</b>	d/c (7.97/11.21)	<b>71%</b>
<b>Eligible Hectare</b>	(11.21-7.97)	<b>3.24</b>
71% or 7.97 ha reduction for Beneficial Features. Reduction of 0.09 ha for exclusions. <b>The Eligible hectare is 3.24 ha.</b>		



## Land Area for Livestock Stocking Calculations - Reference Area

The Reference area is the area used to calculate the livestock stocking density for Area of Natural Constraint scheme, Active Farmer, ECO scheme, and Nitrates. Simply put, the Reference area is the area available for grazing. It is the digitised area of a parcel less the area under Ineligible and Beneficial features. There can be cases where the reference area will be less than the Eligible Hectare for a parcel. Example 6 below is the Reference Area for the same parcel used in Example 1.

## Example 6 – Reference Area

Parcel Digitised Area (a)		hectare 10
Ineligible features / Exclusions	Pond	0.55
	Farm Road	0.1
	<b>Total Exclusions (b)</b>	<b>0.65</b>
Beneficial Features	Scrub (1.1 ha @40%)	0.44
	Scrub (0.1 ha @100%)	0.1
	Scrub (0.09ha @100%)	0.09
	Scrub (3.6 ha @40%)	1.44
	<b>Total Beneficial Area (d)</b>	<b>2.07</b>
Eligible Hectare (as per Example 1)		9.35
Reference area (a – (b+c))		7.38

