Public consultation on draft scoping report for the environmental assessment of the CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027

*** 1. How Do You Best Describe Yourself**

- Other (please specify)

Organic certification and development body

2. What is your age profile

- 41-55

3. Organisation if applicable

Irish Organic Association

4. Are there other plans or programmes that should be identified and reviewed as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment process?

Several other plans and programmes are set out in sub-sections 2.3-2.5 and Annex A. However, rather than listing the relevant EU and national legislation and accompanying plans and programmes a hierarchy and prioritisation of these policies is needed. This is necessary for the SEA to assess the relationship of key environmental and climate policies against the objectives set out in the CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) in an effective and targeted way.

Under sub-sections 2.3 and 2.4 the Appropriate Assessment for the Habitats Directive and Water Framework Directive (WFD) are singled out over other policies, but without any rationale given. While these Directives are key pieces of environmental legislation relevant to the agri-food-sector, the SEA should also be grounded on the headline objectives and targets set out in the European Green Deal as well as other EU and national environmental and climate objectives.

Notably, the proposed CSP regulation (COM/2018/392 final) sets out key pieces of EU environmental and climate legislation under Annex XI (which have statutory national plans*) that the CSP is expected to make an active contribution to over the next decade. This includes:

- Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)
- Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)
- WFD Directive (2000/60/EC)
- Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC)
- Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC)
- National Emission Ceilings Directive (2016/2284)
- GHG emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) Regulation (EU/2018/841)
- GHG reductions 2021 to 2030 Effort Sharing Regulation – ESR (EU/2018/842)
- Renewable Energy Use Directive (2009/28/EC)
- Governance of the Energy Union Regulation (EU/2018/1999)
- Sustainable Pesticide Use Directive - SPUD (2009/128/EC).

All plans and programmes should be carefully considered alongside key EU environmental and climate objectives in terms of their relevance to the agri-food sector. For example, Annex A highlights the Relationship to Plans and Programmes, however, the accompanying summaries remain generic and do not specify the objectives and scope of these programmes as they pertain to the agri-food sector.

The scoping of the SEA should also make clear the relationships between key pieces of EU legislation outlined above (e.g., WFD, SPUD, Birds and Habitats Directives) and statutory national plans* as well as relevant international commitments (e.g., Convention on Biological Diversity, Paris Agreement).

*refers to statutory national plans e.g., the River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027, the SPUD National Action Plan 2019-2024 and Prioritised Action Framework for Natura 2000 2021-2027. Other key supporting plans and programmes relevant to EU legislation and international commitments include the Ag Climatise Roadmap and the National Biodiversity Action Plan for 2017-2021 and its successor.

5. Is there additional information that needs to be considered as part of the baseline data? If so, please enter in the text box below.

Several strategic documents, assessments and data sets are outlined in Section 4 of the scoping report. However, the selection lacks precision in terms of how it pertains directly to the draft CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) e.g., the SWOT analysis, Needs Assessment and Interventions for consideration. For example, the scoping report draws on the findings of EPA's recent SOER "Ireland's Environment: An integrated Assessment 2020". However, the direct relevance of its key findings to the CSP is vague and does not appear to refer to the specifics of the working draft of the CSP.

The scoping report needs to set out how specific national indicators will inform the baseline data with a clear link made to the CAP's new Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (PMEF) and national monitoring systems. This also includes identifying where data gaps exist and how these can be addressed through for instance the use of proxy indicators. Key indicators for the SEA for example concern biodiversity, soil, water etc, but also issues such as farming practices e.g., area under organic farming, farming intensity and farmland type/designations e.g., HNV farmland, SACs/SPAs and health e.g., antimicrobials sales in food-producing animals, risk and impacts of pesticides.

Overall baseline data should be guided by the national reference values for the quantified Green Deal targets set out in the European Commission's CSP Recommendations to Member States (Annexes 1 & 2 COM(2020) 846 final)

This includes indicators related to the key European Green Deal targets for the agri-food sector:

- 25% of the EU's agricultural land under organic farming
- 50% reduction of the overall use and risk of chemical pesticides and use of hazardous pesticides
- 50% reduction of sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture
- 10% of the agricultural area under high-diversity landscape features
- 50% reduction of nutrient losses, while ensuring no deterioration in soil fertility
- 20% reduction in the use of fertilisers by 2030
- Contribution to the 55% GHG emissions reduction target by 2030 and to reach climate neutrality by 2050

For example, the SEA should account for the current area of Irish farmland under organic production and the proposed target to 2030 in the Ag Climatise Roadmap (Action 9) vis-à-vis the current EU share for organic farmland and the 25% EGD target.

6. Do you consider that the range of issues covered is appropriate?

- No

If the answer above is "No" please comment

A wide range of issues are highlighted reflecting the different environmental and climate challenges facing the agri-food sector. However, the framework and approach for how these issues will be tackled is not immediately apparent to the reader (see answer to Question 8 as well).

7. Are there any changes, that in your consideration should be made a) to the proposed environmental objectives and b) to the guide questions including the consideration of alternatives?

a) Table 5 in sub-section 5.2 proposes a series of draft SEA objectives to test the potential environmental effects of the draft CAP Strategic Plan (CSP). It is mentioned that these have been taken from national plans and the recent SEA Scoping of the Agri Food Strategy 2030. However, the relationship between the SEA objectives and key EU environmental legislation and national plans relevant to the agri-food sector, including the European Green Deal (EGD) targets, is not explained. SEA objectives need to be formulated against EU and national objectives and targets relevant to the agri-food sector in a transparent and result-orientated way, against which the CSP's impacts can be tested.

The overall aim of the SEA should be to ensure the full integration of environmental considerations into the CSP to ensure a high level of environmental performance and the promotion of the sustainable development of the agri-food sector to 2030. To this end, the SEA must help to support coherence between all 10 CSP operational objectives and sub-objectives (9 CAP specific objectives and the cross-cutting objective) and EU environmental and climate objectives/EGD targets from design through to implementation. This should essentially identify where the relationship could be neutral, complementary or conflictual to improve synergies, manage potential trade-offs and identify where mitigation actions are needed.

b) Sub-section 5.4 appears to draw to some extent from the EPA's guidance on "Developing and Assessing Alternatives in Strategic Environmental Assessment" (2015). We would expect that each alternative would be framed by the 10 objectives and sub-objectives set out in the draft CSP. This should also draw on Ireland's existing national targets that correspond to the EGD targets. The scoping report should already set out to some extent the different alternatives that will be comparatively assessed (including a baseline scenario) and clarify how they will be framed drawing on the EPA's current guidance. It should also be explained why these alternatives have been chosen as well as their potential limitations.

8. Do you have further suggestions regarding the scope of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and its proposed assessment of the CAP Strategic Plan?

Overall, the scoping report should set out clearly how the SEA will be carried out including an overview of the process, the methodological approach and how stakeholders will be involved. The SEA objectives must be further refined and accompanied by the relevant targets and indicators to support the design of the CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) and monitoring during implementation.

As well as the draft CSP, greater emphasis needs to be placed on the European Commission's Recommendations for the Irish CSP published in December 2020 (SWD(2020) 377 final). (For further reflections on the European Green Deal targets see the answer to Question 5).

Reference is made to the use of the recent SEA Scoping of the Agri Food Strategy 2030 (DAFM, 2020) to inform the understanding of existing environmental issues in the SEA. However, the SEA for the CSP needs to have a more structured and transparent overview of the relationship and

specific overlaps between the forthcoming Agri Food Strategy 2030 and the CSP. This includes the identification of the mitigating actions that may need to be put in place to ensure environmental performance and the promotion of sustainable development across the agri-food sector. This is necessary because the Agri Food Strategy 2030 is expected to be a major driver of public policy commitments and private sector initiatives towards the agri-food sector over the next decade. In particular, it could have a significant positive or negative impact on Ireland's environmental and climate performance.

Some final observations include:

In sub-section 1.4, "Table 1 CAP Interventions in National Strategic Plans" under "Rural Development Interventions" reference should be made to support for organic farming under "Environmental, climate and other management commitments" (i.e., under "Agri-environmental schemes" add "and support for organic production].

In sub-section 3.3 "Table 2 Strategic Environmental Assessment Topics – scoping and potential significant environmental effects" refers to an "Increase in ecological farming practices" under SEA Topics covering "Biodiversity Flora and Fauna" and "Climatic Factors (Climate Change & Air Quality)". As this definition is unclear it would be more appropriate to refer to organic farming as it is legally defined at EU level. It should be referenced under "positive potential effects" under these above SEA Topics as well others e.g., water resources, population and human health, soil and geology, ecosystem services/ and natural capital. The "positive potential effects" of "appropriate agro forestry" should also be considered, under other SEA Topics too e.g., soil and geology, ecosystem services/ and natural capital.

In Section 2, both the Marine Framework and the Sustainable Pesticide Use Directive (and statutory national plans and programmes) should be referenced.

Irish Organic Association
March 2021

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