

**Opening Statement by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine  
to the Select Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine on the  
Supplementary Estimate 2024**

**5 November 2024**

I welcome the opportunity to discuss my Department's request for a Supplementary Estimate for 2024 with Committee members.

This Supplementary Estimate is required to make use of savings on the Department's vote. It is also required to provide additional funding to meet liabilities in a number of areas. These include 2024 costs apportioned to my Department for the development of the border control post in Rosslare, TB related cost pressures and farm payments due under schemes such as the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES).

An additional €200 million, representing an increase of 10.2% on my Department's gross 2024 allocation, is required to meet costs that will arise in 2024. The Supplementary Estimate will also provide for the movement of savings of €46.6 million across a number of subheads to meet expenditure pressures arising in other areas.

As these proposed transfers and additional expenditure involve changes to the original 2024 voted allocations, I believe that it is important to seek your input and approval.

The areas where savings have emerged reflect the very dynamic and challenging environment in which the sector and the Department operates. Despite the continuing challenges facing the agri-food sector, including unpredictable

weather patterns, high input costs and the delivery of a range of new CSP schemes, farmers have demonstrated their adaptability and resilience and have continued to deliver safe and nutritious food for Irish and international markets.

To support farmers to meet these challenges, since the beginning of September this year, advance payments totalling €874 million have been made by my Department to a record number of farmers in respect of their 2024 Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS), Complementary Redistributive Income Support for Sustainability (CRISS) Payment Scheme, Eco-Scheme and Areas Facing Natural Constraints Scheme. The balancing payments in respect of these schemes are due to commence in early December.

My Department has provided Committee members with more detailed briefing material on the specifics of the Supplementary Estimate, but I will now highlight some of its key elements, broken down by the four Programme areas under which expenditure occurs in my Department.

### **Programme A: Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health and Animal Welfare**

Programme A is being increased by 17% or just over €63 million. The main reason for this increase is because the level of bovine TB in Ireland has increased in 2024. The 12-month rolling TB herd level herd incidence on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2024 stood at 5.6% compared to 4.74% on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The 12-month rolling number of TB reactors on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024 stood at 37,685 compared to 26,039 on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2023. This reinforces the need to both support the TB programme not just financially but also ensure that the policies the TB Forum develop are implemented in a robust manner.

The On-Farm Market Valuation Scheme is the principal compensation measure available to Herdowners whose herds are affected by disease under the TB Eradication Scheme. This compensation is based on the market value of that animal subject to individual animal ceilings under the On-Farm Market Valuation (OMFV) Scheme.

While market values have broadly remained static since 2023, weakened factory salvage recovered against animals, primarily dairy animals, removed under the scheme has resulted in the average compensation per head rising by 23.5% year on year.

The large increase on the administration side of Programme A is in the main due to the OPW payment for the Rosslare development. As I have highlighted to the Committee previously, the upgrade to Rosslare Europort is a critical project to develop the necessary permanent infrastructure required because of Brexit. €21.5 million will go to the Office of Public Works as my Department's apportionment of the 2024 development costs.

### **Programme B: Farm Sector Supports & Controls**

The total allocation for Programme B is being increased by €117.72 million. This includes an additional €106 million for ACRES and €9 million for residual payments on the 2023 Ukraine-related tillage schemes and the 2024 National Sheep Scheme.

In addition, with the savings identified throughout the Vote, I have allocated extra funding to Programme B as follows:

- €11.6m for Organics (B.3),
- €0.5m for Multi Species/Red Clover (subhead B.3),
- €1.32m for the Sheep Improvement Scheme (B.8), and
- €28.6m for ACRES (B.14).

In respect of ACRES alone, this will bring the total 2024 expenditure to some €334.6 million. As the Committee members are aware, ACRES is my Department's flagship agri-environmental scheme, with an allocation of €1.5 billion over the period to 2027. In response to the exceptional demand from farmers, I was delighted to be able to secure places for all 55,000 farmers who applied under both Tranche 1 and 2, and this additional funding of €134.6 million, will provide for substantial payments to farmers in respect of 2024.

I would like to reassure the Committee that I will ensure that the maximum levels of funding will be paid out under all farmer schemes to farm families between now and the end of the year.

### **Programme C Policy and Strategy**

Funding within Programme C is used to optimise the sustainable development of the agri-food sector and following this Supplementary Estimate, Programme C will increase by €22 million to €447.8 million.

My Department leads on Ireland's engagement with the World Food Programme (WFP) and a significant percentage of this increase relates to the WFP. The WFP is funded exclusively from voluntary contributions and works in partnership with other UN and international organisations, NGOs, civil society

and the private sector to enable communities and countries to meet their own food needs.

I reinforced Ireland's commitment to the WFP on my visit to the Horn of Africa earlier this year. In doing so, I pledged a total of €105 million for the period 2025-2027, to directly fund the WFP's global humanitarian work. This represents a 40% increase on the funding made under the previous three-year period. The advance of €18 million in 2024 on next year's commitment, will help save lives by supporting food security and nutrition in very fragile humanitarian settings. It reaffirms Ireland's role as one of WFP's most engaged partners.

Under this Programme, an additional €5 million is also being provided to support the Sustainable Beef and Lamb Quality Assurance Scheme which is managed by Bord Bia. This sum represents an advance payment to Bord Bia in respect of 2025.

### **Programme D Seafood Sector**

The allocation within Programme D has been reduced from €170.60 million to €167.34 million. Savings on both the Current and Capital within programme D were identified and used elsewhere within the Vote.

Some of the savings in Programme D are payroll savings that have been declared by the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and Bord Iascaigh Mhara.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I believe this is a necessary and important supplementary estimate which I recommend to the Committee for support. I am happy to respond to any questions that members may have.

ENDS