



A Farmer's Perspective on Achieving the Vision.

Thomas Duffy

Introduction

Thomas Duffy, former President of Macra na Feirme (Ireland's national young farmers org) and former vice president of CEJA (EU Council of young farmers orgs)

Farming in registered farm partnership with family in North-East Ireland

- The farm;

- 51ha (125ac) owned – fragmented into 3 blocks with no block being larger than 20ha (50ac)
- 105 cows milking – all spring calving and grass based: Friesians/xbreds

Our Philosophy – Reduce waste first - 'Wilful waste brings woeful want'

- Pollution is EXPENSIVE – every kg of N lost to water, or kg of methane produced is fertiliser or feed you both



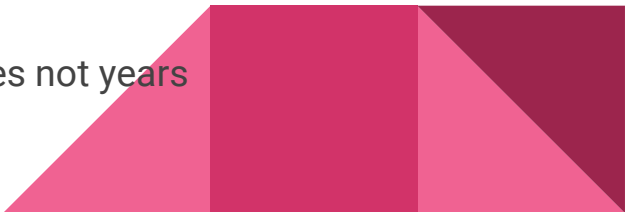


VS



Policy uncertainty - major impediment to action

Rapidly changing priorities - due to both internal and external politics

- 2019-2022: climate/environmental concerns - incentives against production, consideration for negative side effect lacking, communication/consultation
 - Existing CAP/schemes still reflect this prioritisation
 - 2022-now: Russian invasion/post covid food inflation
 - Focus again on production and security of supply, major price shock on farms in 2022 due to grain and fertiliser prices - showed the fragility of inputs due to externalised trade
 - Regardless of views on these policies (e.g climate is still a major risk) such change is difficult for farms
 - Farm investments/practice changes are considered in decades not years
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Even positive policy can slow change

Most farmers would view new vision positively

- Due to the long term thinking needed a potential future positive can slow transition
 - Example: welcome refocusing on the impending generational renewal crisis
 - Farmers believe renewed focus could bring welcome schemes to address
 - Existing older farm holders may wait to see how policy evolves before hand over
 - Particularly notable in latter part of CAP periods



“Strategic sectors”?

Industrialisation



Deprioritising agriculture

- Global trade has been a mixed success, some markets have opened for EU farm goods (especially high value)
- However much of commodity production have been offshored - vulnerable
 - Protein inputs in particular through transatlantic trade
 - Too few efforts to ensure “strategic autonomy” - ability to rapidly wean off
- Many key inputs exposed to major disruption - fertiliser should be seen as steel - reduced dependent **without reducing production** (space for reducing emissions and environmental impact otherwise just more offshoring) eg N fixing & precision agriculture, and reshoring
- Danger of tariff uncertainty leading to further eroding of agriculture
 - Mercosur - food safety
 - US-EU food standards

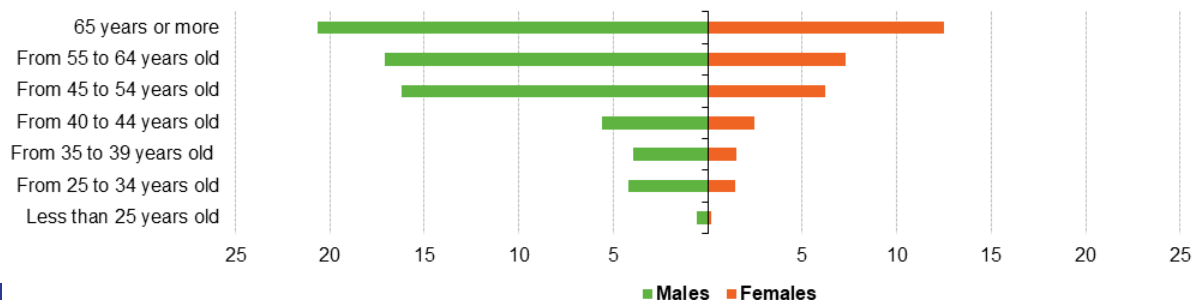
Generational Renewal

- Climate
- Global Conflict

- **AGEING POPULATION**

- Out of step with EU Workforce
- Only 11.9% of EU farm managers under the age of 40 (Eurostat 2020)
- Often highlighted - no clear solutions: many previously effective solutions deemed politically unpalatable eg Germany's rules on pensions ("ageism") leading to worsening situations
- Use of land by non-farmers as an asset (tax and interest rates driving this - beyond the reach of EU competency)

Age classes of farm managers, by gender
(% of all farm managers, EU, 2020)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ef_m_farmang)

Value chain - easy said, hard done

Two major barriers to this

- Active campaigning against rebalancing - other players
- Farmer's buy-in - past experience and risk

Strong legislation needed, both at EU level and national

- Current high prices only offsetting high input costs
- Shrinking supplies in many key products - e.g beef and dairy due to herd shrinking driving by prior policy
- Climate shocks e.g. droughts
- Both base prices and sudden market disruption significant
 - EU intervention has been significantly rolled back since intervention
 - Needs today with the uncertainties to be more dynamic - **funding from others in the chain?**

Innovation - Museum vs melting pot

- European farmers have been forced to fall behind in key areas
 - Common technologies in developed world market outside Europe
 - GMOs the most obvious
 - Hormones - a question of competition
 - Cloning genetic material
 - Soil cultivation tied to some products banned or restricted
- NGTs a reset of GM debate
- Precision agriculture out of reach of most users - similar issue to other business tech
- Public interest vs private interest



CAP - the shrinking honey pot everyone wants to raid

Reorientation of CAP

- Identity crisis since decoupling
 - Supplying multiple objectives - supporting farmers, rural areas, guaranteeing standard + biodiversity ++ climate +++ labour standards ++++offsetting other polluting industries ++++ compensating for bad trade deals too?
- Effective CAP is stable (if not increasing) **NOT** decreased to fund other priorities
 - Private funding can only be additional not replacement



Land access

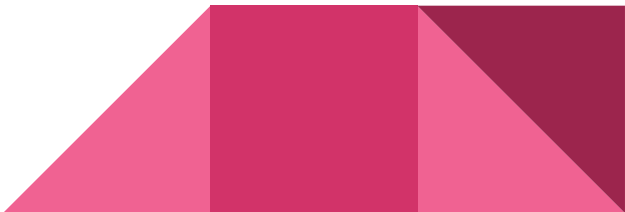
“Market based” public goods markets cannot simply support land owners

- Carbon or nature markets - offsetting dirty industries
- Solar farms

Current CAP already failing on

- Forestry
- Large corporate farms by reducing payments and investment support to small holders

Acceleration of this post 2025 already being seen

- Fundamentally locks out all new/young farmers
 - Question of competency, private property and regulation
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Thank you for time

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