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Minister's Online Newsletter



November 2011



Hello again,

I hope you gleaned plenty of information from my first newsletter last month. In this issue I simply now want to update you on developments since then.

The Budget

My Department has carried out a comprehensive review of all areas of activities and expenditure and has submitted a report to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform which provides for cost reductions and a comprehensive set of options to meet the funding constraints. The review will be considered as part of the Government's overall pre-budget deliberations and the 2012 Estimates process.

The actual funding available in 2012 will be determined by the Government in the context of the prevailing economic and budgetary situation, the outcome of the Comprehensive Expenditure Review and the discussions on the 2012 Estimates process. In this context, Government's Infrastructure and Capital Investment programme announced on 10 November provided for a capital allocation in 2012 of €168m, **an increase on the NRP capital allocation of €18m**. No increase is proposed in relation to current expenditure outlined above.

Funding for the schemes in 2012 will be decided in Budget 2012 against the background I have outlined. My objectives are to ensure that funding is directed to priority schemes and services in accordance with Government policy and that the most cost-effective and efficient service is delivered by my Department. In this context, I will be aiming to maintain support for the most vulnerable farm families while

attempting to focus the remaining available resources in favour of investment opportunities in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy and the Government's Programme for Recovery.



Left: Minister Coveney at the South East Food Showcase

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Agri-Food Exports - Latest Figures

The year-to-date export figures at end-September for the sector are now up by 15% over the same 9 months of last year. According to the Irish Exporters Association, “this is the more remarkable as commodity prices in agricultural supplies have flattened in the past 6 months, as harvests internationally were improved over last year. The continued rapid expansion in this sector will have a very wide ranging impact on the economy as a whole as there are a wide range of producers, sub-suppliers and added value manufacturers in the sector who should now have the confidence to expand their workforce”.



Exports of animal and vegetable oils and fats are also doing extremely well so far in 2011. However, the beverages sector has declined, following an 8% increase in 2010.

Export Performance YEAR 2011 (Jan-Sept)

	Jan - Sept 2010	Jan - Sept 2011	Difference	% Difference
Agri-food	€5.06bn	€5.83bn	€770m	15.2%
Beverages	€866m	€812m	€-54m	-6.2%
Oils/Fats	€18m	€35m	€17m	92.7%



Minister Coveney with Aidan Cotter, CEO of Bord Bia

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Farm Payments

Disadvantaged Areas Payments

To date, 90,429 - 90%, of farmers have received €199.3m in Disadvantaged Areas payments and the full budget allocation will be spent by the end of the year.

Single Farm Payments

A total of 110,513 farmers have received €554m in EU funded Single Farm payments to date. They will receive a further €500m in the second tranche on 1st December.

By end of the year, almost all farmers will be paid and in the region of €1.4 billion will have been pumped into the Rural Economy under both schemes.

AEOS1

Over 5,000 applications out of 8,773 participants have now been processed and paid their initial 75% part year payment under AEOS I. The final 25% is also issuing in the vast majority of these cases meaning that by 18 November 2011 over €4m will have issued under AEOS I.

Year 2 payments under AEOS I are expected to commence in December 2011 subject, in individual cases, to the submission of valid capital expenditure receipts.

AEOS 2

To date 6,362 applicants have been approved for entry into the scheme with effect from 1 September 2011 with the 470 remaining cases (rejections, queries) being addressed with a view to acceptance into the scheme on 1 January 2012 where appropriate.

Payments in respect of 2011 will commence in first quarter 2012.

REPS

Out of 30,341 REPS 4 participants nearly 30,000 applications have been paid their initial 75% payment for 2010 with nearly all of these now having received their balancing payment. A total of €104 million has now issued to REPS 4 applicants in 2011 while the final payments to REPS 3 participants amounted to €24million in 2011.

Processing of applications for 2011 is well advanced with a view to commencing payments in early December.

CAP Proposals

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In my last newsletter I gave you a lot of information on the **CAP proposals** released by the Commission on 12 October and our initial reactions. Since then the proposals have been discussed at various Working Groups which are examining the technical aspects of the proposals, the SCA (Special Committee on Agriculture), the October Council of Ministers and more recently at the Council on 14 November. I have had the opportunity to present the proposals to the Oireachtas and they were also discussed at the North South Ministerial Council Agriculture meeting on 26 October. I also attended the European Parliament on Monday 7 November when the legislative proposals were debated at a unique meeting of EP Agriculture Committee MEPs, Member States' farm Ministers and the European Commission. In addition, at official level, a meeting of our stakeholder group "the CAP consultative committee" was convened to discuss their reaction to the proposals.



From left to right: Paolo De Castro MEP, Chairman of the EP Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development, Minister Simon Coveney, Mairead McGuinness MEP, Jerzy Buzek President of the European Parliament, Marek Sawicki President-in-office of the Agriculture Council and Polish Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development.

I have met with the Estonian Agriculture Minister, Helir - Valdor Seeder, and have meetings lined up with my Finnish and UK Ministerial colleagues before the end of the year. Negotiations will be taking place at political and technical level over the next year or more. As negotiations develop, I will continue to interact with my Ministerial colleagues and with the Commission and European Parliament. My intention is to maintain and develop alliances with like-minded Member States to secure the best possible outcome for Ireland.



Minister Coveney with the Estonian Agriculture Minister Helir - Valdor Seeder

Fisheries and Discards Report

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In relation to the **fishing** sector I have just launched a national consultation on the impact of the Commission's proposal for the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. I want interested parties to submit their views before 31 December on the range of reform issues that the EU Commission has tabled in its proposals. More information on this is available on <http://www.fishingnet.ie/CFPR/intro.htm>

You may also have seen that I have called on Europe to lift bans and change quotas and catch quantities in favour of species-specific rules. It's incredible to think



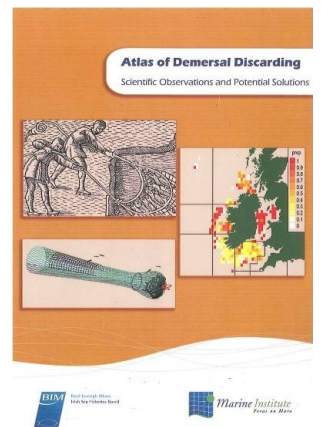
Minister Coveney with Dr. Peter Heffernan, CEO of the Marine Institute at the launch of the Discards Report

that over a third of white fish caught in Irish waters by the domestic fleet is dumped back into the sea dead or dying. It makes no sense for fishermen to be catching fish and then having to throw them back in dead. It damages stocks for the future, it puts equipment under strain and costs everybody time and money.

We have for the first time recorded the extent of waste forced on to domestic and foreign fleets operating around Ireland under strict European laws.

It is estimated 1.3 million tonnes of fish are discarded in the north-east Atlantic every year, from waters north of Spain up to Scandinavia - the second highest discard level in the world.

The Marine Institute and [Bord Iascaigh Mhara](#) reported that 38% of cod, haddock, whiting, monkfish, plaice and prawns caught are thrown back in dead or dying. The report assesses only Irish vessels which catch 15%-20% of the total in Irish waters.



Cover of Discards Report

European Commissioner on Maritime Affairs and Fisher-



Minister Coveney with Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner on Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

ies, Maria Damanaki has been pressing for a total ban on boats dumping fish at sea and suggested all fish caught should be landed, even if they cannot be sold. I have called on the rest of Europe to follow our lead and ask fishermen to record and publish full details of discards to reveal the full extent of waste.

To access the Atlas of Demersal Discarding please visit the Marine Institute website at the link below:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10793/666>

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Winter Ready Campaign

The government recently launched a campaign on how to be **winter ready**. Hopefully the coming winter won't be as severe as the last two but it is important that we should be prepared for any eventuality. Teagasc has excellent advice for farmers which can be accessed on our main website. <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/customerservice/winteradvicetofarmers/> It's worth taking a little time out to read this. More information is available on www.winterready.ie. Aertel page 592 or the Office of Emergency Planning 1890 252736.

BE WINTER-READY

BirdWatch Ireland

Since my last newsletter I have also launched **BirdWatch** Ireland's Action Plan for Lowland Farmland Birds. This Action Plan is one of ten Action Plans which are being created by BirdWatch Ireland to protect priority, migratory and dispersed birds in the wider countryside. It is disappointing to see that farmland birds have experienced some of the largest population declines of any group of birds in Ireland. "The Corn Bunting, a specialised lowland farmland bird, had sadly become extinct in Ireland, and data shows that the Kestrel and Skylark have shown a significant decline between 1998 and 2008". Agriculture has a significant role to play in the protection of these birds. Lowland farmland birds depend on habitats such as tillage, grasslands and associated features such as hedgerows, ditches, etc. for their survival.



L-R: Anja Murray (BirdWatch Ireland), Alex Copland (BWI), Oliver McEvoy (DAFM), Catherine Keena (Teagasc), Minister Coveney, Alan Lauder (BWI CEO), John Kelly (Invasive Species Ireland), Peadar O'Connell (BWI)

North South Ministerial Council Agriculture Sector Meeting

On 26 October I hosted the **NSMC Agriculture sectoral meeting**. I met with the Northern Ireland Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Michelle O'Neill who was accompanied by Minister Edwin Poots. We discussed the development of the all island animal health and welfare strategy. The recent developments on the Common Agriculture Policy were also discussed.



Minister Coveney & Minister Hogan with Michelle O'Neill, Minister for Agriculture & Rural Development; Edwin Poots, Minister of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

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Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science Textbook - Pastures New

I would like to bring your attention to a new textbook for Leaving Certificate students studying Agricultural Science. It's called '**Pastures New**' and was produced by Agri Aware and the Irish Agricultural Science Teachers Association (IASTA). It is comprised of all the study guides that were delivered through the Irish Farmers Journal over the past five years plus additional relevant information. As farming methods have changed over the years, the book embraces this change as much as possible; with the addition of sections on climate change, ecology and conservation.

It is interesting to note that over the period 2007 - 2010, the number of secondary schools offering Agricultural Science as part of the Leaving Certificate curriculum has increased from 194 to 266 schools. Consequently, the number of students taking the Agricultural Science exam has dramatically increased in the same period from 4,267 to 6,878.



Left to right: Noirín Buckley IASTA, Minister Coveney, Leo Smith IASTA, Damian Phelan, Chairman IASTA

Important Dates

- Thursday 1st December—Department Estimates and Multi-Annual Ceilings
- Friday 2nd December—White Paper on Receipts and Expenditure
- Tuesday 6th December—Budget Day
- Thursday and Friday, 15th and 16th December—European Fisheries Council

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- Name
- Email address
- Whether you want to be contacted by email or text (If you would prefer to be contacted by text please add your mobile number)