

## **UNFCCC SBSTA Agriculture workshop 12<sup>th</sup> November, Warsaw.**

**Mr. Jerome Mounsey, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Ireland**

Co-chairs, distinguished Colleagues, dear Friends,

Effective adaptation of agriculture to climate change is critical for Ireland and the EU, as agricultural production is and will be increasingly threatened by a changing climate.

Enhancing farmer's resilience to threats posed by climate change and greenhouse gas emissions is set as an explicit objective of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) which contributes to the EU economy wide objectives on mitigation and adaptation. The rural development policy components of the CAP provide support for capacity building and also specific adaptation actions and their co-benefits. Scientific work is carried out within the EU by national research institutes working together and also by the EU Joint Research Centre (JRC).

Results of this work (assessment of agriculture vulnerabilities; development of effective adaptation and mitigation measures) are then incorporated into EU wide policy i.e. the EU Adaptation Strategy of 2013; Complementing the activities of Member States, the strategy supports action by promoting greater coordination and information sharing between Member States and by ensuring mainstreaming of adaptation in all relevant EU policies. A European climate adaptation web platform has been launched in 2012 and to help facilitate the exchange of scientific knowledge, tools, best practises and policies between EU members. EU measures, some of which also provide mitigation benefits, are applied in a regional rural context as part of the EU rural development programmes. Some concrete areas of action include:

- Integrated land use and water management
- Promoting improved soil management
- Drought and water conservation plans
- Drought monitoring and drought early warning systems
- Promoting the establishment of green infrastructure such as wooded riparian areas and buffer strips along water bodies/ flood plains
- Risk management tools (mutual funds, insurance)
- Economic incentives for adaptive farm practices

Moving to some national examples from just one of the EU's 28 member states, although it's important to note that each member state could produce very different examples.

Ireland has in its past suffered from a serious famine, due to a new weather related disease (Potato blight) and its memory still lives in our minds, so Ireland will not be complacent about sustainable food production. This experience has led to our keen interest at national & international level, in improving the capacity of farmers to effectively deal with the challenges related to climate change. The Irish agriculture sector is heavily dependent on rain fed grass based production utilised in situ by grazing livestock and facilitated by its current temperate climate. In recent years, Ireland like other countries has experienced above average variability in weather patterns which have ranged from extreme cold spells (-18), cold springs, extreme rainfall events and also drought conditions.

How is Ireland approaching this challenge? In the last 20 years there has been a revolution in grassland management techniques, which consist of the following components:

- Monitoring of the quantity & quality of grass/forage supply

- Guideline reference points for grass supply at different times of the year
- Higher utilisation of grass forages in situ
- Feed budgeting
- Increased emphasis on soil fertility and protection of land
  - Monitoring grass growth allows farms respond quickly if weather conditions change to minimise damage to soil and prevent erosion.
- Flexible management systems

This has resulted in longer grazing seasons, lower costs, higher milk & meat quality and output, healthier animals, lower labour requirements and much more resilient productions systems. Other points of interest are as follows

- Animal breeding: balanced breeding has led to more resilient & productive animals suited to national production systems (i.e. low cost, grass based production systems)
- Forage & crop breeding: breeding and variety testing to ensure that cultivars/breeds are appropriate to national & local conditions
- Conservation of local genetic resources (plant and animal)
- Farm discussion groups: farmer led and focused discussions have greatly helped with Knowledge transfer.
- Research: collaboration with other EU member states (FACCE-JPI) and also broader networks (i.e. GRA)
- Weather forecasting: forecasts include warnings on potential risk conditions for animal/plant disease ([http://www.met.ie/agri-environment/agri\\_agri.asp](http://www.met.ie/agri-environment/agri_agri.asp))
- Biosecurity: prevention of new plant & animal disease is seen as an increased challenge
- Climate modelling: this helps review the impact of various climate change scenarios into the future.

The Irish government has (as part of the EU) been very active in mainstreaming adaptation and co-benefits into government policies and strategies. This is very important to ensure that the co benefits & linkages between other important issues such as productivity, sustainability, efficiency and mitigation of GHG emissions from agriculture are fully harnessed. While considerable progress has been made at national and EU level, on the area of agriculture and climate change, there remains a lot of further work to do on this area.

Madame co-chair, Ireland on behalf of the EU and its 28 Member States has presented some of our experiences at national and regional level on this important topic. We believe that further constructive negotiations, workshops, presentations and technical papers on agriculture under SBSTA, can lead to an improved understanding of all parties on this very important yet until recently, somewhat neglected topic at the UNFCCC. We are open to sharing our local, national and regional experiences and just as importantly, keen to learning from other parties around the world, on how to assist our farmers to combat climate change and to sustainably produce more food to feed a growing world population.

Thank you,

## **Supporting documentation, websites and reports**

### **European Union**

SBSTA Submissions on agriculture by Denmark on behalf of the European Union (March 2012)

[http://unfccc.int/files/methods/redd/submissions/application/pdf/20120305\\_eu\\_agriculture.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/methods/redd/submissions/application/pdf/20120305_eu_agriculture.pdf)

SBSTA Submission on agriculture by Lithuania on behalf of the European Union (September 2013)

[http://unfccc.int/files/methods/redd/submissions/application/pdf/20130903\\_subm\\_eu\\_agriculture\\_sbsta39\\_rev.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/methods/redd/submissions/application/pdf/20130903_subm_eu_agriculture_sbsta39_rev.pdf)

The EU Joint Research Centre (JRC)

<http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/>

EU agriculture and climate change

<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/climate-change/>

The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-overview/2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-overview/2012_en.pdf)

The European Climate Adaptation Platform (Climate-ADAPT)

<http://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/>

The EU Adaptation strategy of 2013

[http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/adaptation/what/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/adaptation/what/index_en.htm)

### **Ireland**

Global Research Alliance

<http://www.globalresearchalliance.org/>

FACCE-JPI

<http://www.faccejpi.com/>

Ireland's Climate: The Road ahead

<http://www.met.ie/publications/IrelandsWeather-13092013.pdf>

National Climate Change Adaptation Framework

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/Environment/ClimateChange/FileDownload,32076.en.pdf>

A Marginal Abatement Cost Curve for Irish Agriculture (Teagasc)

[http://www.teagasc.ie/publications/2012/1186/1186\\_Marginal\\_Abatement\\_Cost\\_Curve\\_for\\_Irish\\_Agriculture.pdf](http://www.teagasc.ie/publications/2012/1186/1186_Marginal_Abatement_Cost_Curve_for_Irish_Agriculture.pdf)

Presentation on Agriculture, Food and GHGs (2013)

[http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/Ire\\_GHG\\_Emissions\\_1990\\_2012\\_P\\_McKiernan.pdf](http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/Ire_GHG_Emissions_1990_2012_P_McKiernan.pdf)

### **General**

UNEP Bridging the Gap report (2013)

<http://www.unep.org/pdf/UNEPemissionsGapReport2013.pdf>

IPCC fourth assessment report (AR4) Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report

[http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/svr/ar4\\_svr.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/svr/ar4_svr.pdf)