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Multilateral Assessment

A compilation of questions to - and answers by - Ireland
exported on 01-06-2021
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Question by New Zealand
at Monday, 05 April 2021

Category: Assumptions, conditions and methodologies related to the attainment of its
quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

Type: Before 05 April

Title: Reducing emissions in the agriculture sector

We understand that the only additional measure included in BR4 in the “with additional measures” projections for agriculture is the application of nitrification and urease inhibitors, which would allow a reduction in synthetic fertiliser application without reducing agricultural production. From the review of BR4, we also understand that further measures are discussed in the draft national climate and air road map for the agriculture sector. We would be interested to know whether specific decisions have since been taken on additional measures aimed at reducing GHG emissions from the agriculture sector, especially relating to measures that would reduce livestock CH₄ and N₂O emissions, and if Ireland has set any specific targets for these emission reductions.

Answer by Ireland

Ag Climatise (published December 2020), the Climate and Air Roadmap was based on the premise of stable methane emissions, therefore most of the reductions would occur on the nitrous oxide side. By taking fertiliser use down from 408K to 325K tonnes by 2030, and by applying 65% of this in the form of protected Urea, significant cumulative abatement of nitrous oxide would occur over the decade. The target was to reduce nitrous oxide emissions associated with chemical nitrogen use by 50%, on average, over the decade. Overall, this would lead to a reduction in total agricultural emissions of between 10-15%.

Currently, a new economy wide Climate Action Plan is being drafted. As part of this process, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has committed to a reduction in methane emissions of 10% between now and 2030. This target was identified in the draft Agri-Food 2030 strategy document. This final landing point for agricultural greenhouse gas emissions for 2030 has not been agreed yet. However, it is clear that ambition will be increased beyond the 10-15% target as set out by the 2019 Climate Action Plan.

Question by New Zealand
at Monday, 05 April 2021

Category: Assumptions, conditions and methodologies related to the attainment of its
quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

Type: Before 05 April

Title: Improvements to managed farmed peatlands

Could Ireland please provide detail of the improvements that will be made to managing farmed peatlands and how this will improve carbon sequestration/reduce emissions?

Answer by Ireland

There is approximately 300,000ha of farmland on cutover peat soils found mainly on the periphery of raised bogs in the midlands of Ireland, with the majority used for grazing. These are drained carbon rich soils where the carbon pool is very vulnerable due to the oxidisation of organic matter in the soil as a result of drainage. Blocking the drains, raising the water table and maintaining the high organic matter soil in a permanently moist/wet state will reduce the rate of oxidisation and thus reduce the rate of CO₂ emissions. There will also be co-benefits such as an improvement in water quality, increased biodiversity and improved resilience and adaptation to changing weather patterns.

The main focus of rewetting drained agricultural carbon rich grasslands is on protecting the carbon store and it is not foreseen that sequestration will be a major factor in emission reduction/removal. This is in contrast to the restoration of bogs where bogland species flora would eventually return to a restored site and sequestration may occur after an extended period, estimated at around 20 years depending on site conditions.

The Climate Action Plan 2019 outlines a target of 40,000 ha of reduced management intensity of grasslands on drained organic soils to be reached by 2030. Teagasc, Ireland's semi-state Agriculture and Food Development Authority estimate that net savings of around 20 t CO₂ e per hectare on average could be achieved from rewetting grasslands and rewetting 40,000 ha, would reduce emissions by 4.4 MT tons of t CO₂ e over the period 2021-2030.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has funded two projects that will help deliver improvements in the management of farmed peatlands, 1) the Rewetting of Farmed Peatland European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Pilot Project, which will provide lessons learned to scale up actions and measures into a larger agri-environment programme for the next Common Agricultural Policy and 2) the 'National Agricultural Soil Carbon Observatory' which will provide the infrastructure to measure GHG fluxes from soils under agricultural management and will enable Ireland to better quantify soil carbon emissions and sinks from agricultural land on peat soils and will place Ireland at the forefront of carbon sequestration research.

Question by New Zealand
at Monday, 05 April 2021

Category: Assumptions, conditions and methodologies related to the attainment of its quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

Type: Before 05 April

Title: Details on forestry removals

Could Ireland please provide detail of the removals expected from the Government’s commitment to planting 8,000 ha trees per year? How has this commitment contributed to the current accounting period?

Answer by Ireland

Afforestation is one of the largest land-based climate change mitigation measure available to Ireland in meeting emission reduction targets. The Climate Action Plan 2019 sets an annual average target of 8,000 ha of newly planted forest per year over the period of 2021-2030. Based on an annual afforestation rates of 8,000ha/yr, forestry will remove 10.83 Mt CO₂-e. for the period 2021-2030.

Table 1. Contribution of forestry to GHG removals (Mt CO₂-e.) (negative values represent a removal)											
Afforestation Scenario	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
0ha	-2.28	-1.89	-0.26	-0.74	-0.89	-1.5	-0.81	-0.49	-0.1	0.72	-8.24
8,000 ha	-2.23	-2.05	-0.51	-0.94	-0.73	-1.39	-1.31	-1.04	-0.7	0.07	-10.83

Any afforestation that takes place during the period 2021-2030 will not significantly contribute to meeting the 2030 targets, due to the lower sequestration rates in these young forests to capture CO₂ in the early part of the rotation. However, these forests will play an important role in achieving carbon neutrality as forests get older by 2050.

The actual annual rate of afforestation is currently below the target of 8,000 ha/yr. The average for the last decade (2010-2019) has been around 6,000 ha/yr and the figures have been decreasing annually since 2016. In 2020, 2,434 ha of land were afforested. An afforestation rate of less than 8,000 ha per year would mean that the annual sink in the afforested land category could fall below what is currently expected as outlined in the Climate Action Plan 2019. Some further action will need to be taken to promote the level of afforestation for the next decade. Increasing afforestation rates to a level approaching the target of 8,000 ha per year will be challenging. One of the main constraining factors is land availability and competition with food production. Increased promotion and effort, allied to long-term policy change, is required to enable the increases in afforestation rates envisaged. The recently announced *Project Woodland* will develop a new strategy to address the challenges currently facing the forestry sector.

Question by Thailand

at Monday, 05 April 2021

Category: Progress towards the achievement of its quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

Type: Before 05 April

Title: Tracking the emission reduction in building sector

According to Near zero Energy Building (NZEB) policy, the new buildings require high energy performance or very low amount of energy. Since Thailand still struggle with the progress of tracking emission reduction from this sector, so could Ireland share experience and methodology on how to track the progress from this sector?

Answer by Ireland

Energy demand and associated emissions for NZEB buildings are modelled using software tools but are not measured directly. However, the energy and any associated emissions are captured in the high level annual national energy balances and emissions inventory.

Nearly Zero Energy Buildings mostly use electricity, so the majority of emissions actually occur upstream in the electricity generation sector. Electricity generation emissions are monitored through the European Emissions Trading Scheme. The volume of sales by electricity suppliers to the different sectors of the economy are monitored as part of the EU Electricity and gas price directive. Any direct use fossil fuel or solid renewables is captured in a top down manner through fuel supplier surveys.

Question by United States of America

at Monday, 05 April 2021

Category: Progress towards the achievement of its quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

Type: Before 05 April

Title: Lessons from carbon pricing

Ireland is one of a minority of countries globally to have already implemented economy-wide carbon pricing through the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) and the carbon tax. Could you outline some of the lessons learned in their implementation?

Answer by Ireland

The importance of legislative reform in the fight against climate change has been highlighted by a

number advocacy groups including the Climate Change Advisory Council[1], the Citizen's Assembly on Climate Change[2] and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action.[3]

To aid successful implementation of environmental taxation reform, government policy has taken account of the recommendations of these organisations such as the need to set a clear long term carbon price signal for industry and households and public engagement via an open consultation with regard to the use of carbon tax revenue. In this regard, a public consultation on the carbon tax and use of funds was carried out in 2019. An overview of the consultation and main findings was set out in the 2019 Tax Strategy Group Paper ; Climate Action and Tax [4]

Finance Act 2020 legislated for a trajectory of annual carbon tax rate increases leading to a rate of €100 per tonne of carbon dioxide emission in 2030. This legislative pathway sets out clear and transparent signals to businesses and householders and affords them an opportunity to adapt and invest in cleaner alternative fuels where possible.

Further public acceptance of increases in the carbon tax rate has also been enhanced by pursuing the policy to carbon tax as outlined in the 2020 Programme for Government (PfG). The PfG set out that the policy approach to carbon tax should be informed by research from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) on fuel poverty prevention. The PfG also committed to hypothecation of revenue arising from increases in the carbon tax rate for expenditure on measures to :

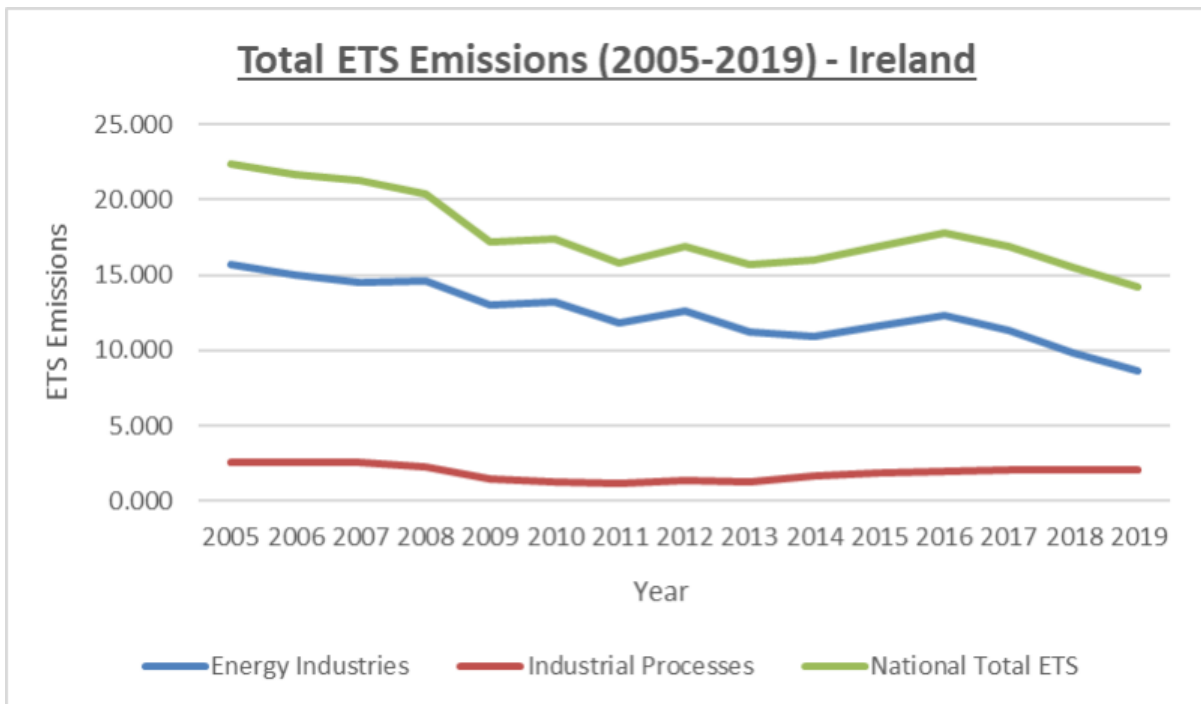
- Ensure that the increases in the carbon tax are progressive through targeted social welfare and other initiatives to prevent fuel poverty and ensure a just transition;
- Fund a socially progressive national retrofitting programme targeting all homes but with a particular emphasis on the Midlands region and on social and low-income tenancies;
- Allocate funding to a REPS-2 programme to encourage and incentivise farmers to farm in a greener and more sustainable way.

Ireland has supported the strengthening of the ETS through a volume-based intervention called the Market Stability Reserve (MSR). The MSR removes excess allowances from the market, which are only released in the event of the total number of allowances in circulation being below the threshold of 400 million. The MSR has proven to be an effective method of increasing the price of carbon and is recognised as a key reason for an ETS price increase from c. €8 per tonne of CO₂ equivalent in January 2018 to €49 per tonne of CO₂ equivalent in May 2021.

Following implementation of these reforms, prices have strengthened considerably, albeit there was a temporary dampening of during the onset of Covid-19. This has resulted in a higher and more robust carbon price, which helped to ensure a year on year total emissions reduction in Ireland of 9% in 2019, with a reduction of 14.9% in electricity and heat production and a 1.9% reduction in industry.



Industrial process emissions have dropped slightly between 2005 and 2019. However, emissions from energy industries have fell significantly over the same time period with a decrease in national total ETS emissions therefore occurring, as illustrated in the graph below.



[1] The Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC), established under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, is an independent advisory body tasked with assessing and advising on how Ireland is making the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.

[2] The Citizen’s Assembly on Climate Change was part of the Irish Citizen’s Assembly established by the Irish Government and met between October 2016 and April 2018 to cover five topics including climate issues.

[3] The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action is a parliamentary committee comprised of elected representatives and senators from both Houses of the Oireachtas [Ireland’s National Parliament].

[4] *Climate Action and Tax*, 2019 Tax Strategy Group Paper summarised the findings of the consultation <https://assets.gov.ie/19116/c447474fea5e422080a6384b7a84fbed.pdf>

Question by New Zealand
at Monday, 05 April 2021

Category: Assumptions, conditions and methodologies related to the attainment of its quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

Type: Before 05 April

Title: Food system resource use and sustainable forests

Has Ireland considered the impacts on emissions projections of food system resource use efficiencies and integrating sustainable forests into agricultural landscapes?

Answer by Ireland

Forestry in Ireland operates within a legal and regulatory framework that is necessary in order to protect forests and also to ensure that forestry operations and activities are carried out in compliance with the principles of sustainable forest management.

Through our national Forestry Programme a range of measures were introduced to support the forest sector in Ireland. One of the primary goals is to increase forest cover through afforestation, which includes agro-forestry, forestry for fibre, and native woodland establishment. There is also potential to increase the uptake of smaller afforestation sites less than 1 ha on farms and potential to consider it as part of an agri- environmental scheme.

Since 1980, private land owners have afforested over 300,000ha of land, of which farmers have accounted for 81%. The parcels of land being afforested are small and typically are part of a farmers overall holding, having an average size of 8.6 ha. As forest cover in Ireland stands at only 11%, these private forest parcels are very much integrated into the wider agricultural landscape. In total, it is estimated that 23,491 individual private forest owners have established forests under various afforestation schemes since 1980. Nearly half (46.4%) of all individual owners have received afforestation grant aid at least twice since 1980, which should contribute to management efficiencies, due to the increased size of the individuals forest holding.

There is also a woodland improvement scheme that provides support for forest management operations in broadleaf woodlands and actions within existing forests, which effect structural changes aimed at protecting and enhancing water quality and other environmental sensitivities. Support for the construction of forest roads is provided under the Forestry Programme.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has funded the Teagasc (Ireland's semi-state Agriculture and Food Development Authority) Forest Carbon online tool which can be used by existing and potential forest owners to predict the amount of carbon captured and removed in Ireland's woodlands. It produces indicative information on the projected removals or emissions of

forests based on different species, soil types and age. Sustainable planting options that can integrate into the agricultural landscape (Agroforestry, Native Woodland Scheme) can be simulated using this online tool in order to determine their contribution to carbon sequestration.

It is clear that over the long term, especially out to 2050, forestry will be a key land use in order to offset residual agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. This is a key part of the climate neutral vision for agriculture as set out in the Ag Climatise roadmap.

Question by United States of America

at Monday, 05 April 2021

Category: Progress towards the achievement of its quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

Type: Before 05 April

Title: Electric vehicle policy

The Climate Action Plan sets an ambitious target of nearly one million electric vehicles sold by 2030. Given that there were only 16,000 electric vehicles on the road at the end of 2019, what additional measures does Ireland have planned to increase the rate of new electric vehicles?

Answer by Ireland

Providing a sustainable, low-carbon transport system is a key priority of the Irish Government. The Programme for Government commits to 7% average annual emissions reduction to 2030; ultimately, the goal is for a zero-emission mobility system by 2050. Electrification will be key to achieving this objective in the transport sector.

Electric vehicles are the most prominent transport mitigation measure in the 2019 Climate Action Plan, and Ireland has set an ambitious target of 936,000 EVs on our roads by 2030. This is equivalent to one-third of the circa 2.8 million vehicles currently on the road in Ireland. This target is indicative of the scale of the transformation that is needed across all sectors if Ireland is to achieve its climate targets in the coming years. It will require very significant and sustained growth from the current level of approximately 32,000 EVs as of March 2021.

There remain a number of challenges that will have to be managed over the coming years including those relating to policy, expenditure and supply factors. Key to this will be reaching the 2025 mid-point, where the underlying analysis informing the Climate Action Plan 2019 indicated, Ireland would need to reach c. 181,000 EVs to reach a take-off point that will accelerate growth over the latter half of the 2020s. It is expected that, with the introduction of a wider variety of EV models with longer drive ranges by an increasing number of manufacturers, as well as the further overall development of the market in the EU, Ireland's current trend will continue, however Government measures will still need to reach the ambitious target of 936,000.

However, the Government has already committed significant funding to support EVs through the National Development Plan 2018-2027, which currently includes an allocation of €200 million for the period 2018-2027 and additional support from the Climate Action Fund. In 2021, the Government has allocated €36 million for the promotion of EVs. In this regard the Department of Transport, through the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, provides for the:

- Purchase grant of up to €5,000 for new battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) (€30m);
- Home Charger Grant Scheme (€4m); and
- Public Charge Point Scheme (€2m).

Wider Government EV incentives available also include:

- VRT relief of up to €5,000 for the purchase of BEVs and up to €2,500 for PHEVs;
- Benefit-in-Kind tax relief for BEVs;
- Accelerated Capital Allowances for businesses;
- Low rate of annual motor tax; and
- Tolling reductions of 50% for BEVs and 25% for PHEVs.

In addition, a national Electric Small Public Service Vehicle Grant Scheme was established in 2018 to support the electrification of the taxi, hackney and limousine fleets. The scheme initially provided grants of up to €7,000 for battery electric vehicles and up to €3,500 for plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. To encourage greater take-up the grant levels were increased in 2020 to €10,000 and €5,000 for BEVs and PHEVs respectively. Between 2018 and 2020 this initiative supported the registration of 101 electric SPSVs through grants of €627,000.

Additionally, €1.5 million was allocated in 2020 to support a *Small Public Service Vehicle Recharging Network Scheme*, which will see the installation of SPSV dedicated EV fast recharging infrastructure at transport hubs around the country. Chargers were installed at Dublin and Cork Airports as well as Heuston (Dublin), Kent (Cork) and Colbert (Limerick) train stations.

Further to the EV grant schemes, in March 2021, the Department of Transport introduced an Alternately-Fuelled Heavy Duty Vehicle Purchase Grant to accelerate the decarbonisation of the disproportionately high-emitting heavy-duty transport sector, which includes trucks, buses and coaches. The Scheme aims to assist applicants to bridge the difference in price between conventionally- and alternately-fuelled HDVs. Applicants may be eligible for up to 40% to 60% of the difference in price between a conventionally-fuelled HDV and its alternately-fuelled equivalent, depending on the size of the applicant's business. Individual applicants (including affiliates) may apply for support for up to 20 vehicles up to a maximum total funding amount of €500,000.

The various supports provided by Government have helped increase the uptake of EVs in Ireland and have gone some way to bring the lifetime cost of an EV purchased in 2020 closer to that of a petrol or diesel car. This is particularly important for families or everyday commuters who are considering the switch to EVs. Early adoption of EVs by Irish consumers over the course of the next 10 years will pay increased dividends from a climate change perspective, and sustained high level support for EV uptake will be critical in this regard.

Question by United States of America

at Monday, 05 April 2021

Category: Progress towards the achievement of its quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

Type: Before 05 April

Title: Nearly Zero Energy Buildings

How has Ireland prepared industry to meet the requirements that all new homes are Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) standard?

Answer by Ireland

A key principle of Ireland's Building Regulations is that its requirements are performance based and technology neutral. This performance based approach has been supported by:

- the introduction in 2007 of Ireland National Calculation Methodology and Software. The Dwelling Energy Assessment Procedure (DEAP) is the official Irish methodology for calculating the energy performance and associated carbon dioxide emissions for the provision of space heating, ventilation, water heating and lighting in dwellings.
- the introduction of legislation in 2012 creating a register of accredited Building Energy Rating (BER) assessors with the authority of issuing building Energy Performance Certificates.
- The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has the lead responsibility for DEAP and the BER scheme.

In June 2019, Ireland signed into law amendments to Part L of the Building Regulations – which relates to conservation of fuel and energy - , giving effect to Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) Regulations and Major Renovation regulations that had been signed earlier that year. The regulations aimed to make all new dwellings 70% more energy efficient and emitting 70% less carbon dioxide than performance requirements in 2005. In conjunction with this, amendments to Part F of the Building Regulations - which relates to ventilation - were signed into law. The NZEB standard was achieved, in part, through improved air tightness in a building. New builds require more effective ventilation systems and third party validation of these systems.

Part L of the Building Regulations for dwellings had been progressively improved since 2007:

- In 2007, regulations requiring a 40% improvement over 2005 energy and carbon emissions performance levels was introduced. It introduced a mandatory requirement for renewables on all new dwellings.
- In 2011, Part L further advanced the energy and carbon emissions performance by 60% relative to 2005 performance requirements through improved fabric performance and air tightness requirements.
- The revised regulations of 2019 advanced the performance of dwellings to a 70% improvement relative to 2005 performance levels to a typical BER of A2 through advanced air tightness and ventilation requirements.

The industry representative bodies were involved through several public consultation processes and stakeholders workshops at each iteration of the Building Regulations and DEAP Methodology improvements. A modelling and cost study was conducted to estimate the cost impact of NZEB requirements. It found that the average cost uplift across all types of typical new dwellings required to achieve NZEB was 1.9% over the then construction costs – ranging from 0.7% to 4.2%. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) also engaged with Department of Education and Skills, Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), Higher Level Education bodies, Professional Bodies, Industry bodies and Education and Training Boards to deliver NZEB training programmes for construction professionals and trades professionals.

DHLGH also engaged with DECC, Professional Bodies, Industry Bodies, SEAI and the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI):

- Drafting Standards Recommendations and Code of Practices for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of heat pumps and solar Photovoltaic panels;
- Setting up a Certified Air Tightness Testers Scheme, a Certified Thermal Modellers Scheme, a Windows Energy Performance Scheme and a Ventilation Validation Registration Scheme, all under the administration of NSAI.

An NZEB building means a building that has a very high energy performance, as determined in accordance with Annex I of the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive Recast (EPBD Recast) 2010/31/EU of 19th May 2010 – i.e. calculated using DEAP published by SEAI. The nearly zero or very low amount of energy required should be covered to a very significant extent by energy from renewable sources, including energy from renewable sources produced on-site or nearby. Market data indicates that an NZEB dwelling is:

- A dwelling that has typically a BER of A2 – 97% of new dwellings since 2015 are A-rated.
 - A dwelling with passive level performance fabric and triple glazed windows – Typical U-values for walls, roof and floor are respectively 0.13, 0.11 and 0.14 W/m² K.
 - A dwelling where the main source of space heating is a heat pump – 90% of new NZEB dwellings built in 2020 use a heat pump for their space heating and domestic hot water.
 - An air tight dwelling (2-3 m³/m².hr) with mechanical ventilation.
 - A dwelling where at least 20% of its primary energy use is achieved with energy from renewable sources produced on-site or nearby: ambient energy (heat pumps) or solar energy (PV panels).
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Question by Canada

at Monday, 05 April 2021

Category: Progress towards the achievement of its quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

Type: Before 05 April

Title: Impact of COVID-19 and mitigation policy

Looking back at the last year and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, what have you learned or experienced that may impact the design of mitigation policies going forward? What lessons could other countries learn from your experience?

Answer by Ireland

Background

The economic and social implications of COVID-19 are unprecedented and call for strong, collective and urgent measures to bring our economy back on track towards sustainable and inclusive growth.

While the Irish government's immediate focus is on the task of combating Covid-19 and its immediate consequences, the Government continues its preparatory work on rebuilding our economy and introducing the necessary recovery plans to bring renewed, sustainable progress and prosperity back to our citizens.

The dramatic decline in economic activity and travel in Ireland in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is translating into greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the short term. Estimates produced by the Environmental Protection Agency in January 2021 indicate a reduction in Ireland's total emissions of 5.9% in 2020 compared to 2019 levels.

The biggest decrease was seen in the Transport sector, where emissions are estimated to have reduced by over 2 MtCO₂eq compared to 2019, a fall of almost 17%. Emissions from the Energy Industries sector are estimated to have decreased by 14% (1.3 MtCO₂eq) in 2020 compared to the 2019 level. However, due to the increase in the amount of home working, Residential sector emissions (mainly home heating) are estimated to have increased by 9% (0.6 Mt CO₂eq) in 2020.

Green Recovery

The Covid-19 pandemic has placed an enormous burden on our society and economy. As we emerge from the current crisis and rebuild, it is crucial that we ingrain climate resilience as part of our recovery. We must make structural changes that will break the link between fossil fuels and economic progress and ensure that our post-Covid-19 recovery plan is fully consistent with the decarbonising economic transformation required over the coming decade.

Focusing on climate action as part of a 'green' recovery stimulus offers the opportunity to rebuild our economy, generate new jobs and respond to climate change. If done right, the recovery from the crisis could provide us with a window of opportunity for modernising and strengthening our policies to ensure a historic boost to competitiveness and the green transition towards climate neutrality in 2050.

To address the climate challenge, the 2020 Programme for Government commits to an average 7% per annum reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2030 (a 51% reduction over the decade), and to achieving a carbon neutral economy no later than 2050. The next iteration of Ireland's Climate Action Plan, to be published in 2021, will identify and set out the far reaching policy changes across every sector to deliver the necessary emissions reductions. With regards to a green recovery in particular, the Programme for Government commits to:

- Delivering a National Aggregated Model of Retrofitting reaching over 500,000 homes by 2030, as part of the EU Renovation Wave.
- Learning from district heating pilot projects to launch a scaled-up programme.
- Accelerating the electrification of the transport system, including electric bikes, electric vehicles, and electric public transport.
- Developing a strategy for remote working and remote service delivery, taking advantage of the opportunity for a rapid roll-out of the National Broadband Plan.
- Ensuring an unprecedented modal shift in all areas by a reorientation of investment to walking, cycling and public transport.
- Developing a new Sustainable Rural Mobility Plan.

European Green Deal

As we rebuild from the pandemic, Ireland recognises the importance of ensuring that the European Green Deal is central to defining a post-COVID-19 economic stimulus package that is fully consistent with job creation and the decarbonising economic transformation required over the coming decade. The government have welcomed the European Green Deal, which will see the EU raise its ambition from 40% to at least 55%. Ireland supports this and supports delivering net zero greenhouse gas emissions at EU level by 2050.

The European Green Deal will help accelerate investments and progress in technology to enable cost-effective transitions across the EU and across sectors as we decarbonise our societies. Together with the European recovery plan and the EU budget, the European Green Deal provides an excellent framework for developing and implementing short- and long-term actions across all sectors that can bring our economies back on track towards sustainable and inclusive growth – actions that support a green, resilient and just recovery of the EU economy.

Just Transition

To be effective, pandemic recovery strategies must be as human-centred in their impact as the effects of the crisis itself have been. On this point, the Irish Government has made progress developing its approach to a Just Transition, including considerable research by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) to balance the Government's response to economic opportunities with the vulnerability that transitions may create for workers, firms, and sectors. A number of interventions, including the establishment of a competitive Just Transition Fund and the appointment of a Just Transition Commissioner, have been made with regards the midlands.

The EU Just Transition Fund is also being progressed through the development of the Territorial Just Transition Plan and considerations around programming.

The transformation to a low-carbon, economy requires the mobilisation of every element of Irish society and the Government will develop new models of engagement with citizens, sectors, and regions, the Just Transition Fund and other national and international experiences.

Question by United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
at Thursday, 01 April 2021

Category: Progress towards the achievement of its quantified economy-wide emission reduction target

Type: Before 05 April

Title: Citizens' assembly on climate change

Ireland's Biennial Report highlights the creation of a citizens' assembly on climate change. Could you say more on how Ireland has engaged its citizens in the development of your Climate Action Plans?

Answer by Ireland

Following on from the success of the 2018 Citizens' Assembly, Ireland has been continuing to strive to give all of Irish society the opportunity to fully engage in climate action. Alongside Irish Government commitment to ambitious policy action, the next phase of our response to climate breakdown involves a mass cultural and behavioural shift. To achieve this requires a new model of collaborative engagement with citizens, sectors, and regions, embracing a two way dialogue on a structured basis. In order to achieve these objectives a National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA) is being developed as a means to create and increase awareness, understanding and engagement on climate change.

The NDCA is a forum for collaboration between citizens, communities, youth, the government and relevant agencies on climate change. Through the development of an enduring process of awareness raising, communications and activation, it is intended that the new structure will have a strong action focus, promoting and leveraging citizen, sectoral and regional involvement and empowering their participation in the co-design of national climate policy and plans. The NDCA will also be used to support the consultation and engagement for the annual update of the Climate Action Plan.

As part of the development of the 2021 Climate Action Plan, the *Climate Conversation*, under the NDCA, was set up. The *Climate Conversation* asks citizens and communities to tell us what getting to net zero means to them – the challenges, their hopes, and the ways Government can support them to take action.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, this year's *Conversation* was held online and contained the following strands:

1. Broad Online Conversation

A nationwide online consultation was held over a two month period, between 23 March – 18 May 2021, inviting citizens to be part of the ongoing *Climates Conversation* and a call for expert evidence seeks input from climate scientists, experts and industry to share their data-based technical proposals. The consultation was based on 5 key climate pillars to capture current thinking, ideas and concerns; in addition to people's willingness to change and behaviours.

A number of steps were taken to promote and encourage participation in this process, including ensuring the design of the consultation was user-friendly, youth proofed and housed on an accessible platform. In addition it was necessary that sufficient time was allocated to the consultation to support widespread engagement and ensuring the consultation was highly visible through media engagement.

Over 3,800 submissions were received from citizens, and over 228 submissions were received as part of the call for evidence. These inputs are now being considered and incorporated into the 2021 Climate Action Plan.

1. Community and youth conversations

In order to accommodate the two-way dialogue that a process like this requires, we worked closely with Local Authorities and Public Participation Networks to organise virtual discussion forums, in order to give the opportunity to individuals and communities across all regions to have their say. As part of this process we conducted 28 virtual workshops across 26 counties between March-April 2021. This included 18 Public Participation Network sessions, organised with the support of the Local Authorities, and 12 youth conversations, organised with the support of Foróige and Comhairle na nÓg. The findings are now being summarised for analysis and will also be fed into the 2021 Climate Action Plan.

1. In depth Citizen Conversations

In addition to the community and youth conversations, it was decided to hold two in-depth dialogue sessions in April and May 2021 with almost 50 householders, community representatives, NGO representatives, and students on different topics to garner deeper feedback, and encourage creative input on different issues.

1. National Climate Conversation Event

Another key strand of the *Climate Conversations* involves the National Climate Conversation Event, which will allow for the sharing and discussion of the findings of the citizen, community and youth climate conversations with the key institutional players identified in the Climate Action Plan. This will provide an opportunity for policy makers and stakeholders to discuss the outputs/findings and themes arising from the climate conversations, the actions in the Plan and in particular the role of the public in implementing the Plan.

This process will inform the yearly update of the Climate Action Plan, other relevant national policy/legislation and national initiatives, in addition to ongoing Local and Community engagement and activities.

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