



YOUNG FINE GAEL'S

**AGRICULTURE
&
RURAL
AFFAIRS**

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2017

YFG

YOUNG FINE GAEL

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Young Fine Gael recognises the enormous cost of entry into farming for young farmers and through these policies we hope to address this for young farmers in Ireland. We believe that young farmers require every support possible for them to succeed in this career. YFG wants to tackle youth unemployment in the young farming community and we believe this can be achieved with the proper supports.

- **Young Fine Gael calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to continue the Department's promotion of knowledge transfer programs through Teagasc and to a greater extent encourage business skills to be actively taught and discussed through STAP and BTAP programs.** With the ever-increasing requirement for additional investment in farm infrastructure to facilitate expansion and technical efficiency, business skills must be taught to young farmers to aid in their ability to adapt to uncertain markets and to make their farms more profitable.
- **Young Fine Gael calls for increased capital investment for young farmers.** The application procedure for TAMS II is extremely complicated and technical. The detail required by the Department is input through a software program, for which no technical support is provided. The program has had many glitches from its introduction with advisers having no access to technical support from the Department. The applicant must submit overlays and planning permission approval documents to the Department before they receive any confirmation of attainment of the grant. Young Fine Gael proposes that the Department issue an offer of the grant before planning costs are incurred by the applicant, or offer a consultancy, without prejudice provided to the applicant by the Department.
- **Young Fine Gael supports proposals from Macra na Feirme that 'A fund of €2 million be made available to young trained farmers to purchase grass measuring equipment' and to incentivize farmers to spread lime as required²⁷.** Currently, under the departments Technology Adoption Programmes in Beef and Sheep, it has been established from a high volume of soil testing that much of the land in Ireland does not have adequate Ph values for optimum grass growth. Therefore, when an adequate amount of lime is applied to the soil, it will return a higher yield of grass growth. Many farmers are not aware of the high value that lime application applies to land and therefore young farmers should be incentivised to improve grass growth in an environmentally sound manner.
- **Young Fine Gael calls for a National Reserve for 2018 in order to incentivise young farmers into the industry.** Budget provision for the National Reserve is essential on a yearly basis to fill the stopgap, which currently exists in the current program. Under the current program, new and upcoming young farmers are not able to avail of the same financial supports as other young farmers were in 2015.
- **Young Fine Gael calls on the Government to reduce fuel taxes.** High fuel costs are a heavy burden on job creation in rural Ireland, with many people having to travel long distances to get to work. Donegal is considered as one of the most disadvantaged counties when it comes to this scenario with fuel costs often outweighing the high insurance, road tax and car maintenance costs on an annual basis.
- **Young Fine Gael opposes any proposal to abolish the agricultural diesel subsidy.** It is accepted globally that agricultural diesel should be subsidized due to the large volumes of diesel that is consumed by machinery; which is essential to run a farm. Any such proposal will directly impact on farmers and will result in a weakening of an already volatile sector.
- **Young Fine Gael proposes that the Minister considers extending the tax relief for leasing farmland by young, trained farmers to family members.** Currently, tax relief is only available to non-related parties. Such relief should be granted under a fixed term lease.

27 Macra na Feirme <https://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/agriculture/Macra-na-Feirme-Opening-statement-for-JC-meeting-of-13-09-16.pdf>

- **Young Fine Gael calls for the European Investment Bank fund for young farmers to be used to create a fund that would provide young farmers with access to credit and interest subsidised loans to facilitate the establishment of new farm business and collaborative arrangements.**
- **Young Fine Gael calls for the provision of incentivised funding for young farmers who hold a green cert.** YFG believes that targeted incentives and supports that facilitate and encourage more young farmers into the industry are vital. Particular focus is needed on resources for young farmers entering the industry as the first few years of starting up in agriculture are the most critical regarding income, viability and long term sustainability from farming activity²⁸.
- **Young Fine Gael calls for the early retirement scheme to be reopened in order to let young farmers progress in their career.** The scheme aims to provide income for older farmers who stop farming²⁹. When the Early Retirement Scheme was available a typical approved transferor would be paid a flat rate of €9,300 per annum for the first 5 hectares or 5 production units plus €300 per hectare of agricultural land or production unit transferred/leased up to a maximum of €15,000. The grant would be paid for a maximum of ten years, or until the farmer reached 66 – whichever is sooner. This provided a good income for older farmers who stopped farming. This also encouraged the replacement of these older farmers by young farmers which would provide them with their future in the agriculture industry. But now as it is currently closed, it is difficult to encourage older people to exit farming. Farmers usually live where they work and they are encouraged to stay because EU incentives are generous. Now farmers are eligible for the old age pension too, regardless of means or income. These issues form a block on new entrants, or people getting into farming later upon inheritance.
- **Young Fine Gael calls on the Government to deliver on its budget commitments for the Rural Development Schemes.** Young farmers are an essential component of the future for rural communities in many ways including providing employment, raw materials for exports and environmental and countryside management. The funding priorities under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 have a significant impact for the future of farming by assisting the growth and expansion of sustainable farm business. All Rural Development schemes should prioritise young farmers; eligibility criteria should be focused on attracting new young farmers, retaining young people in agriculture and other rural industries, and supporting all existing young farmers in reaching their potential.
- **Young Fine Gael calls on the Government to organize and deliver a new and innovative farm safety training programme for young farmers.** The level of farm deaths and accidents in Ireland in recent years is unacceptable. Much has been done to improve the awareness among farming communities however there needs to be further significant changes in practice on farm to improve farm safety, particularly with modern technological advances in farm equipment and management.
- **Young Fine Gael calls on the Government to deliver resourcing of positive mental health initiatives through the implementation of the ‘Connecting For Life, Ireland’s National Strategy to reduce suicide 2015-2020.** Young Fine Gael supports measures to further target Knowledge Transfer and the Continued Professional Development of farmers, particularly in relation to risk management and business advice. There is a need to address the health, safety and wellbeing of farmers through training, education and innovation.
- **Young Fine Gael calls on the Government to urgently prioritise the rolling out of high-speed broadband, particularly in rural communities.** Smart farming refers to the increased use of technology in agriculture. Smart farming has the potential to deliver a more productive and sustainable agriculture production, based on a precise and resource-efficient approach. Technology has the potential to assist with productivity and efficiency on all farms, not just large commercial operations. It is crucial therefore for rural communities to have access to stable high-speed broadband to facilitate these technological advances.

28 <http://www.macra.ie/news/1536-department-needs-to-prioritise-all-young-trained-farmers-in-cap>

29 Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmerschemespayments/earlyretirementscheme/>



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