



The FarmPEAT Project,  
c/o Irish Rural Link,  
Moate Business Park,  
Clara Rd.,  
Moate,  
County Westmeath,  
N37 W9R0.



## **FarmPEAT Project EIP – *Farming with nature in the midland peat landscape.***

In response to challenges such as climate change and loss of biodiversity, FarmPEAT is developing new ways to practice agriculture within the peat landscape. FarmPEAT is a pilot project working with a group of 51 farmers developing an agri-environmental scheme benefiting both the farmer and nature. FarmPEAT focuses primarily on the peat soils in the midlands under agricultural use. Data from the EPA indicates that agricultural peat soils emit the equivalent of 20 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>/ha/yr -which equates to the emissions from four family cars. Farmers who own these lands can benefit financially from a change of land management under FarmPEAT.

Daniel Bennett, from the National Rural Network team at Irish Rural Link, highlights the unique impact of this project. He notes that “FarmPEAT has developed a flexible results-based scheme which awards payments based on the environmental quality on the farm. This approach incentivises the farmers to adopt more environmentally friendly practices set out by FarmPEAT. Ultimately, the degree of change implemented remains the farmer’s decision.”

The FarmPEAT team work closely with the project farmers, sharing details of the results they are looking for and evolving the project based on the farmers’ feedback. Project Officer Emma Byrne says, “FarmPEAT believes that the farmers’ input is vital to the success of the scheme and there is a significant level of flexibility built in”. The co-operation between the project team and the farmers has already encouraged positive changes on peat soils. Results from a recent survey show that, since joining the project, 98% of participant farmers are willing to make changes on their farm which would benefit the environment. A participating farmer mentions “as the farmer, it’s important that our views are heard and used to be part

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of the solution. It's refreshing to work with a project where the team take the time to visit the farm and chat to you about the work".

The FarmPEAT Programme aims to financially reward farmers who practice climate-friendly farming on peat soils. This means the peat needs to be rewetted to retain the carbon stored within. However, FarmPEAT are not talking about flooding the farmland. "The results-based payment to the farmer for the peaty soils is based largely on where the water-level in the drain is", says Caroline Lalor, Project Manager. To get the top payment, the water levels in the drain need to be within 30cm of the surface. There are other requirements in terms of biodiversity and the absence of damaging activities, but the water level is key.

Peat needs to be wet, and the agricultural land needs to remain productive. FarmPEAT is well on track to striking a balance between both these objectives. Science supports this approach, with recent research published in *Nature* suggesting that for every 10cm of peat that is rewetted, there is a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the order of 3 tonnes/ha/yr. For example, if the participant farmers raise the water-level in their drains by 30cm and the water is still 80cm below the surface, FarmPEAT is happy to support this, and in turn, the farmers will see an increase in their payments.

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