

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002304/25
to the Commission
Kathleen Funchion (The Left)
(6 June 2025)

Subject: Issues with Ireland's Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme

Since the last reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP) and the implementation of that reform at the national level, the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES) in Ireland has had several issues. There are still farmers who have not received payments since 2023.

1. Has the Commission investigated the causes of these delays?
2. What assessment did the Commission carry out when this scheme was proposed?
3. In the upcoming reform of the CAP, will the Commission fully take into account that changes at the EU level can have long-term impacts on the ground for farmers, due to delays in their implementation at national level and additional administrative challenges, in order to ensure we do not have a repeat of these issues with ACRES?

Submitted: 6.6.2025

Answer given by Mr Hansen on behalf of the European Commission
(18 July 2025)

The voluntary Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES) promotes commitments to deliver on climate and environmental objectives.

When Ireland's common agricultural policy Strategic Plan (CSP) was approved, ACRES was noted for its ambitious scope, with a substantial budget of EUR 1.5 billion, and its innovative dual approach combining prescriptive and results-based (or scored) actions. ACRES stood out as the only scheme in the EU to incorporate results-based measures on such a scale.

The Commission was informed that the initial rollout of ACRES faced some implementation challenges, as the uptake exceeded expectations, which indicates farmers' willingness to contribute to the climate and environmental objectives.

The Irish authorities conveyed that payment delays are due to challenges involving the rollout of significant training programmes for advisors and farmers, extensive scoring activities under ACRES, and major adaptations in processes, IT systems, controls and reporting.

Ireland has recently informed the Commission that the 3% of ACRES payments still outstanding for claim year 2023 mainly relate to ownership issues. Such delays are not expected for subsequent years.

Many Member States signalled difficulties linked to the initial CSP implementation and requested a derogation from the application of a late payment reduction ⁽¹⁾.

The Commission recognised that the extent of some system changes could not have been fully foreseen or corrected under normal administrative conditions and therefore granted a derogation exceptionally and exclusively for the first year of CSP implementation.

⁽¹⁾ See Article 5 (4) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/127.