

Brief People of Ireland

Regenerating Systemic Risk A Case Study on Ireland

A Case Study on Ireland
and the Impact Potential of
Regenerative Agriculture

Published October 5

Appeal to the People of Ireland

From the Irish Farmer Members of the European Alliance for Regenerative Agriculture (EARA)

Your Food, Your Country, Your Future

Ireland has a long and proud history in agriculture, and this is embedded in the social fabric of the country. Today, there is still about 65% of Irish land under agricultural management, providing food to over 190 countries. Farming shapes rural livelihoods and community life, underpins a major share of exports and employment, and carries a farming heritage woven into how the Irish nation sees and governs itself.

However, Irish agriculture is now highly dependent on external inputs, placing the sector at risk of staying under the boot of international powers at the cost of its national food security. Farmers are feeling this pressure, spending over €20 billion since 2020 on the feed, fuel, fertiliser, and plant protection products that goes towards feeding these 190 countries. As these inputs are continued, the soil loses its ability to provide nutrient-rich food, creating a lack of healthy, nutrient-dense products for the Irish population. Yet, margins are tight, and farmers are reliant on foreign markets to earn their keep as the productivity of Ireland's farmland declines.

Currently, over 80% of fresh produce consumed in Ireland is imported, and over 90% of Irish meat and milk is exported. This means both the farmers, and you the public, are reliant on the climate and trade relationships of other countries. This paper proposes an alternative system that prioritises the health of the soil, plants, animals, and consumers, while regenerating the ecological, economic, and social performance of the farm. Farmers need your support to achieve this at the national level.

So, EARA's Irish farmer members address this appeal to the Irish people, to those who eat Irish food, live in Irish communities, and have a stake in the health of Irish land.

The Current State of Irish Farming

Ireland has some of the best food-growing conditions of any nation in the world, yet it ranks among the lower European countries for providing its population with a diverse diet. Since 2020, Irish consumers have spent roughly €9.6 billion on fresh fruit and vegetables, as domestic horticultural production has declined steeply over the past 20 years.

Ireland is self-sufficient in only three of seven food groups, namely meat, dairy and fish, and even these rely heavily on imported feed and fertiliser. This dependence is a structural vulnerability to our national food security and sovereignty, leaving us exposed to supply-chain shocks, transport disruption and extreme weather.

And still, Ireland remains one of Europe's largest food exporters. We produce far more than enough to feed our own population, and the choice to direct that capacity outward comes at the cost of Irish ecological, social and economic health. As of 2026, less than half of Irish farms are economically viable, half of Irish rivers are polluted, the rate of bovine tuberculosis reached its highest level in more than 20 years, and only 4% of Irish farmers are under 35.

These are not separate problems but symptoms of a single fragile production model, one built to extract profit through dependence on external inputs, high stocking pressure, environmental degradation and narrow commodity margins. What Regenerating Agriculture Offers to Ireland
Regenerating forms of agriculture entrust Irish farmers to choose the best paths ahead for their land and communities, producing food by regenerating nature in symbiosis with our culture.

Regenerating forms of agriculture do not sacrifice yield for nature, independence for annual profit, or national income for national security. Regenerating forms of agriculture entrust Irish farmers to choose the best paths ahead for their land and communities, producing food while regenerating nature.

„Ireland has some of the best growing conditions in the world, yet over 80% of the fruit and vegetables we eat are imported, leaving families in Ireland exposed to the next supply shock. On our farm, the cattle, sheep, hens, trees and vegetables work as one system, and even on poor, wet land in west Clare the soil gets healthier every year. That's what happens when you look at a farm as a whole instead of as separate enterprises. And people want Irish food. Every organic vegetable, egg and cut of meat produced here is already sold here. What's missing is support and a fair market to bring the integrated, diverse systems we will depend on in the future back to our farms, and to get more growers back onto the land.“

Fergal Smith, regenerative grower, Moy Hill Farm, Co. Clare

Why This Matters to You

Healthy Food

Grass-fed and pasture-diverse systems produce meat and milk with a markedly more favourable omega-3 to omega-6 ratio and higher antioxidant and trace-element content than grain-finished equivalents. Trace minerals and plant compounds are transferred from the soil to the plant, and into the animal products that protect against inflammation, heart disease, and cancer.

Clean Water

Diversification strengthens the land's capacity to manage water. Year-round ground cover reduces the bare-soil periods when nitrate leaches and topsoil erodes. Deeper and more varied rooting opens the soil to greater infiltration, so that heavy rainfall soaks in rather than running off. Regenerating farms are living water infrastructure.

Biodiversity

Regenerative management restores biodiversity above and below ground, rebuilding the living soils that underpin all terrestrial life.

Climate Resilience

As droughts and floods become more frequent, farms with living, water-holding soils and diversified production are more resilient. They buffer the land against extremes.

Rural Communities

A transition to regenerative agriculture can reinvigorate the sector, returning control of food production and consumption to Ireland and creating viable futures for the next generation of farmers.

National Security and Sovereignty

Ireland's climate, rainfall and land base give it a natural advantage in national production. Regenerating systems reduce exposure to global commodity and energy markets, keeping output and supply steadier through external shocks.

What We Can Do Together

Buy from local producers

Where possible, buy directly from farmers, visit farmers' markets, join produce box schemes, and support community-supported agriculture. This returns price-setting power to the farmer and keeps value within the local economy.

Demand Irish-grown produce

Voice your support for farmers seeking to create a new agri-food system. This can push decision-makers and enablers to build a stronger, healthier and more resilient agricultural sector.

Encourage your wider community

Community investment models are currently underused, allowing citizens to fund diversified or transitioning production and reap the benefits associated with regenerative land management.

Support community investment

Every purchase of Irish-grown regenerative produce over an imported equivalent strengthens the domestic grower base.

And most importantly, thank farmers for their hard work

It is on us to fight together for true Irish independence, sovereignty and security.

It is on us to fight for our uniquely beautiful ecosystems of Ireland, the ground from where our Irish culture sprouts.

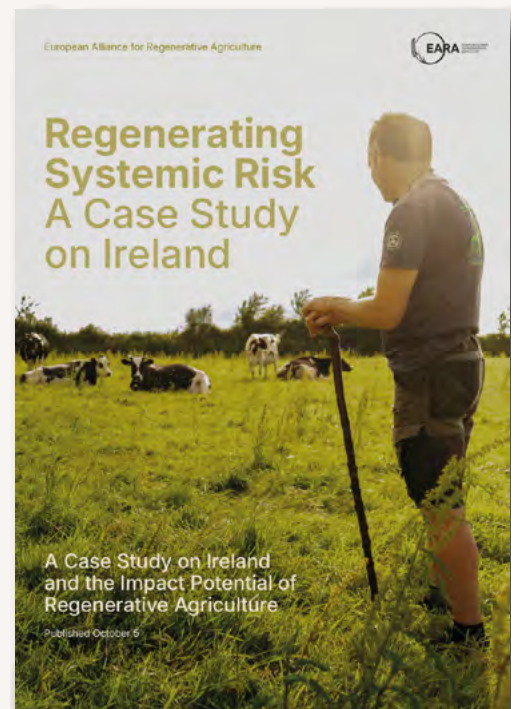
Spoiled grounds make a spoiled culture. Lets regenerate our Irish grounds together and in doing so regenerate our culture, our freedom, our future, the future of the children of Ireland.

An té nach gcuireann san earrach, ní bhaineann sé san fhómhar

He who does not sow in spring will not reap in autumn

To access the full report visit and read up on the impact potentials of regenerating forms of agriculture for a strong, resilient Ireland visit our website under the link.

→ [Read the report](#)



Acknowledgments

We thank the EARA farmers for opening their doors to showcase their regenerating ecosystems, and for contributing their data and knowledge to this paper.

About the European Alliance for Regenerative Agriculture

The European Alliance for Regenerative Agriculture is the independent, farmer-led coordination, advocacy and collective action organisation of the movement of regenerative agriculture at the European level. EARA is striving to enable the transformation of our agrifood ecosystems through accountable ecological, economic and social regeneration.

More information can be found on our website at www.eara.farm

EARA is independently funded through mission-aligned, politically independent philanthropic partners and maintains no corporate or industry ties, ensuring our work remains farmer-led and free from commercial interests. We never accept funding that could have an influence on EARA's strategy or decision-making. All our funders decisively support EARA's farmer-led decision-making.