



# CAP Network Ireland

Empowering Women in Irish Agriculture

James Claffey

 @capnetworkire  capnetworkireland.eu  CAP Network Ireland



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine



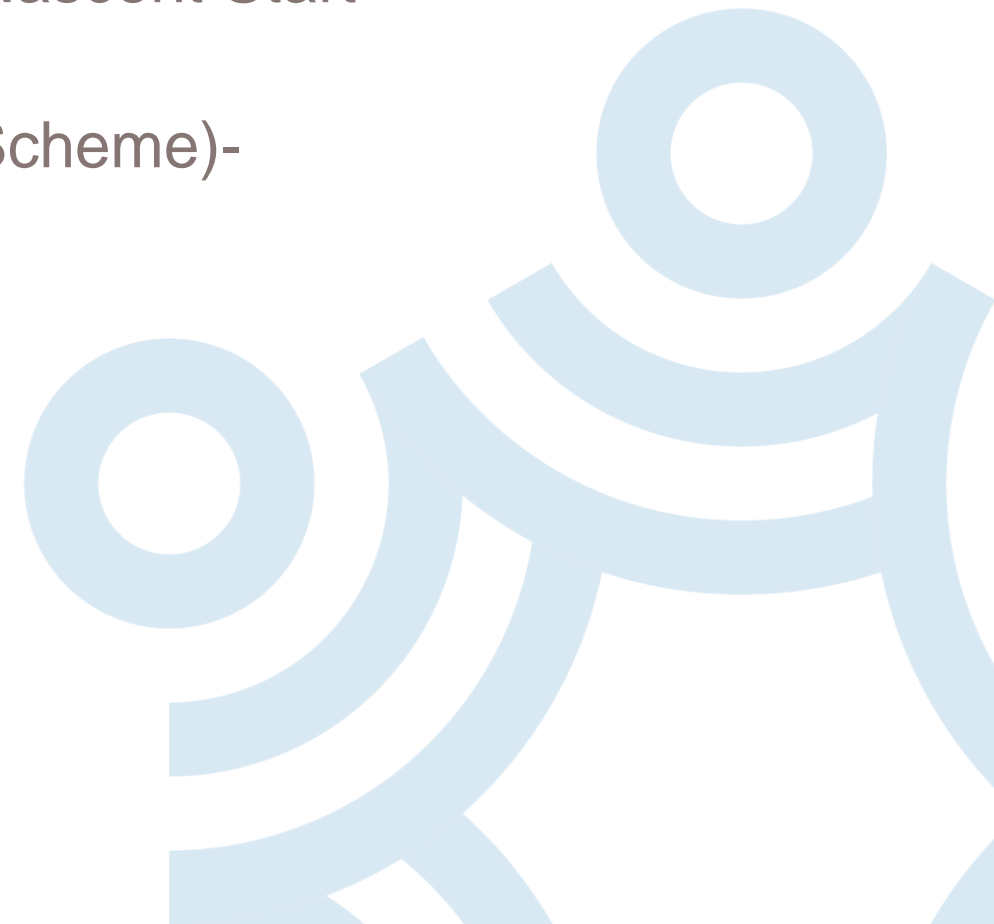
Co-funded by  
the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union and the Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine under Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027.



# Outline

- What is CAP Network Ireland?
- Introduction
- ACORNS (Accelerating the Creation of Rural Nascent Start-ups)
- TAMS 3 (Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme)-  
Women Farmers' Capital Investment Scheme
- Final Thoughts



# What is CAP Network Ireland?



# CAP Network Ireland



## We Champion Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

- We are a **national network** dedicated to supporting sustainable agriculture and development in Ireland.
- **Our members** include farmers, advisors, researchers, rural communities, agencies and other interested stakeholders.
- **Our role** is to promote networking, innovation and funding opportunities under the CAP Strategic Plan.

# CAP Network Ireland is managed by three organisations



Irish Rural Link is a non-profit, rural Irish advocacy cooperative campaigning for sustainable rural development in Ireland and Europe.



ERINN Innovation is an Irish SME that specialises in bridging the gap from science to policy, industry and society.



Munster Technological University is a multi-campus technological university with expertise in agricultural and rural development.

# Our Work Covers Four Key Areas:



Research



Communication  
& Marketing



Management &  
Implementation



Innovation  
Hub

# Our Channels

- Website: [www.capnetworkireland.eu](http://www.capnetworkireland.eu)
- Email: [info@capnetworkireland.eu](mailto:info@capnetworkireland.eu)
- Facebook: **CAP Network Ireland**
- Twitter/X: **@capnetworkire**
- LinkedIn: **CAP Network Ireland**
- YouTube: **@capnetworkireland**
- E-bulletin/ printed newsletter
- Publications, infographics, events



A screenshot of the CAP Network Ireland website homepage. The top navigation bar includes 'Home', 'About', 'News', 'Contact', a search icon, and a 'JOIN NOW' button. The main content area features a large orange banner with the text 'We champion sustainable agriculture and rural development.' Below this is a 'LEARN MORE' button. To the right is a photo of a man in a grey polo shirt standing in a barn. Below the orange banner is a 'Case Study: Thinking outside the box' section with a photo of a man with a beard and a text box describing his organic beef farming business.

**We champion sustainable agriculture and rural development.**

Welcome to CAP Network Ireland!

Join us as we journey towards a more sustainable future for Ireland's rural communities.

LEARN MORE

## Case Study: Thinking outside the box

**Rory O'Reilly: Organic Beef Farmer**  
Rory O'Reilly lives in south Co. Galway with his wife and 4 children. He is an organic suckler beef farmer who has found innovative ways to make a living from heavy marginal land while also protecting its ecology. He has developed a new market for beef from his herd of 42 cattle by selling directly to his customers via a box scheme at Loughmountain Farm ([loughmountain.ie](http://loughmountain.ie)).



# Context

- The CSO Farm Structure Survey 2023 reports only 13% of farm holders are female.
- **Historical Role & Contributions** – Women have always played a vital role in Irish agriculture, from family farms to agribusiness, yet their contributions have often been overlooked.
- **Challenges & Barriers** – Women in farming face obstacles such as land ownership limitations, access to finance, and cultural perceptions that can hinder their participation and leadership.
- **Progress & Support Initiatives** – Recent policies, funding schemes, and training programs aim to enhance gender equality in agriculture, though further structural changes are needed.
- **Future Focus** – Creating an inclusive farming sector requires investment in education, financial access, land rights reform, and better gender data collection.
- Ireland's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 emphasizes promoting gender equality in agriculture. The plan introduces measures to enhance women's participation in farming and rural development.

# ACORNS (Accelerating the Creation of Rural Nascent Start-ups)



# About ACORNS

- The innovative ACORNS (Accelerating the Creation of Rural Nascent Start-ups) programme began as a pilot in 2015,
- The programme is aimed at providing early-stage female entrepreneurs living in rural Ireland with the knowledge, support and networking opportunities to advance the development of their businesses to meet and exceed their goals.
- It is funded through the Rural Innovation and Development Fund by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- **Objectives of Acorns**
  - Encourage and support female entrepreneurs.
  - Provide mentoring and peer support.
  - Help develop sustainable businesses in rural areas.
  - Foster networking and knowledge-sharing among participants.
- <https://acorns.ie/>



## Eligibility Criteria

- Women living in rural Ireland (outside the city boundaries of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford).
- The programme is open to early stage female entrepreneurs who have recently started a business, which has less than three years sales, or who are at an advanced stage of setting up a business.
- Open to all sectors.

## How Acorns Works



- Participants are grouped into small learning teams.
- Each team is guided by an experienced female entrepreneur (Lead Entrepreneur).
- Sessions focus on business challenges, solutions, and growth strategies.
- Runs over six months with interactive monthly meetings.

# Impact

- Benefits of Participation
  - One-on-one mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs.
  - Networking opportunities with like-minded women.
  - Increased confidence and business knowledge.
  - No participation fee, fully funded by the government.
- Many previous participants report new sales, increased sales, first-time exports and job creation.
- Progress made by the Acorns 9 participants (2023/2024) demonstrates combined turnover of €4m– an increase of 43% over the six-month programme. Ten participants had export experience and Acorns 9 participants employed 133 people at the end of the cycle.
- 96% of participants said the programme brought about practical change within their business, with the same number saying the programme helped them feel nearer to achieving their entrepreneurial ambitions.

# Testimonials

*Being part of ACORNS has gifted AgriKids with a network of professional business contacts operating within rural Ireland. It also gifted friendship which will go beyond the six month programme.*

<https://acorns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Alma-Jordan-1.pdf>



*The ACORNS programme has been a truly rewarding experience for me on my entrepreneurial journey to date. To meet such a group of supportive, focused and positive women was truly inspiring and incredibly motivating alongside the wealth of knowledge and vast experience offered up by our Lead Entrepreneur. I am very grateful to the ACORNS Network and proud to be a part of it.*

**[Anne-Marie Feighery, Feighery's Farm](#)**



# Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS 3)



## TAMS 3 provides funding to encourage farmers to adopt environmentally friendly practices, increase productivity and improve animal welfare.



- The Women Farmers Capital Investment Scheme (WFCIS) opened for applications in June 2023 and is funded under the CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) 2023-2027.
- The scheme specifically aims to
  - Empower women in agriculture
  - Promote gender equality
  - Acknowledge the role of women in agriculture
  - Encourage generation renewal
  - Provide financial support for technologies, equipment and buildings
  - Boost efficiencies on Farms
  - Reduce the environmental impact of farming



# Eligibility and Conditions

- All investments under this scheme are available to all farmers but this scheme specifically allows eligible Women Farmers to receive a 60% grant with an individual funding ceiling of €90,000. The ceiling is increased for eligible registered farm partnerships to €160,000.
- The scheme is available to Women over 18 and under 67 who have a minimum of 5ha declared on BISS. Women who were not on a herd number during the reference year – 2022, will need to complete an appropriate education course.
- There are additional criteria for those wishing to avail of tillage or equine investments namely 15 ha for tillage investment and three equines declared on the Equine Census for equine investments.
- Women who form part of a company or are in a registered farm partnership may also be eligible to apply.

# What investments are available?

- The scheme has over 400 available investments,
- The top ten investments in WFCIS applications are:
  - 1 Health and fertility monitoring
  - 2 Calf Rearing Equipment
  - 3 Pasture Management
  - 4 Mass Concrete Tank
  - 5 Animal Housing
  - 6 Meal Bin
  - 7 Sheep Fencing
  - 8 Bovine Fencing
  - 9 Farm water supply
  - 10 Equine Fencing



- Applications in Women Farmer Capital Investment Scheme (WFCIS)  
TAMS 3
  - 1338 applications received over first 5 tranches
  - 928 approval issued across 4 tranches
  - 281 payment claims received
  - €2,770,512.86 paid to 198 applicants
  - Average payment €13,992.82



# Annette Kearney, Dairy Farmer, Co. Cork

- Registered Formal Farm Partnership with husband and son
- The partnership enabled Annette to access the Women Farmers' Capital Investment Scheme in TAMS 3 to invest in heat detection collars and automatic drafting facilities for the farm.
- This investment has helped improve family work/life balance

***“It’s the first time in 30 years that I have ever drawn down any funding in my own name. It’s nice to be recognised for a lot of unseen work done over the years.”***

**<https://capnetworkireland.eu/sustainability-is-an-attitude-thing/>**



# Final Thoughts

- **Inclusive Investment Schemes** – Ensure funding programs are accessible to all farmers while incorporating targeted support for women without creating division.
- **Consistent and secure funding:** Ensure there is consistent funding between programming periods, allowing security and confidence in the sector.
- **Land Ownership Reform** – Address legal and cultural barriers preventing women from owning and inheriting land.
- **Cultural and Social Change Initiatives** – Run awareness campaigns to challenge traditional gender roles in farming and promote women's participation.
- **Improved Gender Data Collection** – Strengthen data reporting mechanisms to track progress and inform future policies effectively.
- **Flexible Support Programs** – Provide tailored support structures, such as childcare options and flexible training schedules, to accommodate women's diverse roles in farming



# Thank you

CAP Network Ireland

[info@capnetworkireland.eu](mailto:info@capnetworkireland.eu)

 [@capnetworkire](https://twitter.com/capnetworkire)  [capnetworkireland.eu](https://www.facebook.com/capnetworkireland.eu)  CAP Network Ireland



 Co-funded by  
the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine under Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027.



Scan the QR code to join  
CAP Network Ireland