

Updates to the Pearl Mussel Programme Terms and Conditions

May 2020

Update to Habitat Quality Payment Rates (Section 12.1, Page 19 of Terms & Conditions)

Habitat quality payment rates have been revised following a review of the Programme undertaken during early 2020, in addition to farmer and farm advisor consultation. The updated payment rates that will take effect following the 2020 scoring season are shown in Table 1 below. The effect of making the following changes should result in an increase in the annual results-based payment for most farmers with >15ha within the Programme. The methods of payment calculation remain unchanged in that the lowest scoring lands will be in the first payment band (Band A).

The changes include:

- Payment bands have been consolidated into three new bands (Band A: 0-30ha, Band B: 30-70ha, and Band C: >70ha).
- Payments for plot scores have been revised with the main objective of reducing the increase from a score of 7 to 8 within each band. This has mainly been achieved by increasing payment rates for a score of 7.

The following text will replace the existing text in Section 12.1, Page 19 of the Terms & Conditions:

Habitat Quality Payment Rates

Payment rates vary across three area bands, with quality based payment rates declining as farm area increases: 0-30ha, >30-70ha, and >70ha (see Table 1). In calculating results based payments, the lowest scoring lands will be paid at the highest payment band rates. This adds a strong incentive to improve lower scoring lands as any increase in habitat quality (score) will be paid at the highest rate. The same payment rates apply to private lands and commonage lands. In the case of commonages, the payment bands are applied at the LPIS parcel level rather than farm level.

In addition, Table 1 below replaces Table 1 in Section 12.1, Page 20 of the Terms & Conditions:

Table 1: Revised habitat quality payment rates effective for 2020 onwards. Payment rates for quality score achieved across three area bands.

Payment rates (2020) according to quality per ha (€)			
Plot score	A 0 - 30ha	B >30-70ha	C >70ha
<4	0	0	0
4	68	15	5
5	79	18	6
6	90	20	7
7	135	30	10
8	180	40	14
9	203	45	15
10	225	50	17

Floodplain Classification and Payment (Section 12.1, Page 20 of Terms & Conditions)

The floodplain payment is extended to include all plots that occur along the main river channels that support freshwater pearl mussel, rather than only those plots that are prone to seasonal flooding. The extent of main channel eligible for the floodplain payment extends from the mouth of the river to 500m upstream of mapped freshwater pearl mussel habitat. The calculation of payment and payment rates remain the same as 2019, with the average score and length of main channel determining the payment level.

The payment recognises the importance of lands adjoining the main rivers in supporting freshwater pearl mussel populations. This change aims to further incentivise farmers to improve the habitat quality of farmland adjoining the main river channel. An effect of this change is that more farmers will be in receipt of a floodplain payment from 2020 onwards.

The following text will replace text in Section 12.1, Page 20 of the Terms & Conditions (first sentence in second paragraph under heading 'Floodplain payment'):

This payment relates only to farmers with plots that occur along the main river channels with freshwater pearl mussel habitat and extends a further 500m upstream of freshwater pearl mussel records as reported by NPWS (maps available from Project Team or can be viewed on project website (www.PearlMusselProject.ie)).

The caption of Table 2 on Page 21 of the Terms & Conditions to be re-worded as follows:

Table 2. Floodplain payment relevant to all plots occurring along the main river channels which support freshwater pearl mussel.

Advisory services to small landholdings

The project team will assume the role of the farm advisor on those farms with less than a total area of 2ha of private lands within a catchment.

There are two instances where this will apply:

1. Commonage farmers who also have private land (<2ha) within the catchment.
2. Private-only farmers with less than 2ha within the catchment.

The following text is inserted into Section 9 (Page 14) of the Terms and Conditions:

The project team will assume the role of the farm advisor on those farms with less than a total area of 2ha of private lands within a catchment.

Joint herd numbers (Section 6, Page 6 of Terms & Conditions)

The following text is inserted into Section 6 (Page 6) of the Terms & Conditions:

In the case of joint herd numbers, all persons attached to the herd number must sign all forms pertaining to the programme.

Supplementary payment (Section 12, Page 18 of Terms & Conditions)

The maximum supplementary payment available to farmers is increased from €200 to €300. In addition, the payment will continue to be paid to farmers for their first two years participating in the Programme regardless of the result achieved in their 'whole-farm assessment'. This change took effect during 2019 and was applied to all relevant participants in their 2019 payment. The following text will be to replace the existing text in Section 12 (Page 18) of the Terms & Conditions:

A supplementary payment will be made to any participant in the Programme whose total annual results-based payment is less than €1,100. This payment will be a maximum of €300 and shall not allow a participant to exceed €1,100. For example, where the results-based payment is €800 or less, the supplementary payment will be €300. Where the total payment is €950, the supplementary payment will be €150, etc. Note, from the third year of participating in the Programme the supplement will only be available where the participant achieves a whole-farm assessment of 'good' or 'excellent'.