

ACRES is Ireland's main agri-environment scheme. It pays you for your nature-friendly management of your farm.



About your ACRES Co-operation payment

Your ACRES Co-operation (CP) payment over your five-year contract is made up of:

- an annual core payment for all your ACRES CP results-based payments plus your ACRES general action payments, and
- additional payments if you undertake supporting actions in the form of approved non-productive investments and/or landscape actions.

Results-based payments: the level of payment you receive is linked to the quality of environmental services provided. The higher the field score, the higher the payment you receive.

Results-based approach

Payments are linked to nature quality of your farm.
Higher nature quality = Higher payment level



Each field is scored out of 10, using a scorecard that captures high and low quality habitat which reflect past and current management.

Payments for general actions: a flat-rate payment is made to you for carrying out general nature friendly actions, for example, new hedgerow planting.

Payments for Non-productive investments (NPIs):

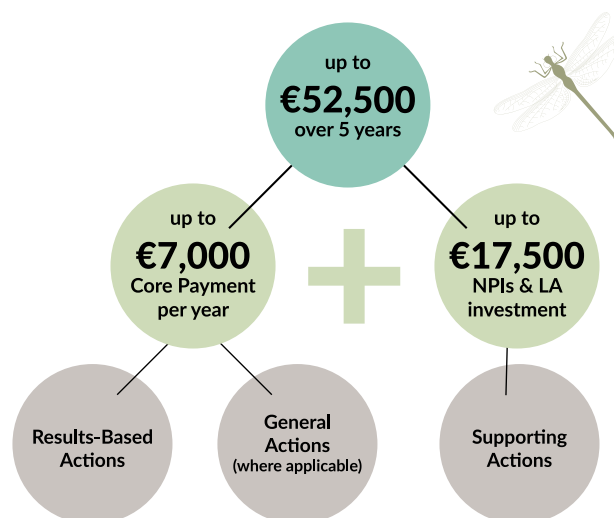
Non-productive Investments are small-scale actions you can take which will help to support the habitats and species found on your farm. Some examples include provision of water troughs, pumps or gates for better grazing management.

Payments for Landscape Actions (LAs):

Landscape Actions are larger scale supporting actions coordinated by your local CP Team that will be of benefit to the local environment. Some examples include invasive species management, and water quality protection.

Potential ACRES CP Budget

Every farmer has the potential to receive €52,500 over the five year period.





What are the payment rates?

The level of payment you receive will be determined by:

- your results-based scores.
- the ACRES general actions you undertake; and
- the non-productive investments and landscape actions you undertake.

A maximum budget of €7,000 per year is available as a core payment for all your ACRES CP results-based payments plus your ACRES general action payments.

An additional fund of €17,500 is available for you if you undertake approved non-productive investments and/or landscape actions during the five years of the contract.

You have the potential of receiving a total payment of €52,500 over the lifetime of your five-year ACRES contract.

If you are part of Registered Farm Partnership, your ceiling is the maximum outlined above multiplied by the number of holdings, up to a maximum of three.



How is my results-based payment calculated?

Result-based payments link the nature quality of the habitats on your farm to your payment.

Habitat quality is assessed at the field level of your farm by your ACRES Farm Advisor using specifically designed scorecards.

Each scorecard has environmental indicators relating to:

- nature quality (presence and abundance of positive plant indicators etc.),
- water quality (presence of drainage features etc.) and
- threats and pressures

The better the quality of the habitat, the higher the mark awarded in each section of the scorecard.

Each of your fields receive a final score on a scale of 0 (low quality) to 10 (high quality) and the level of payments are linked with this score - the higher the score, the higher the payment.

Your ACRES Farm Advisor will be able to explain the reasons for assigning a particular score based on the criteria within the relevant scorecard and will provide you with management tips as to how you can improve your score over the lifetime of your ACRES contract.

Results-Based Payment for ACRES Co-operation

Field Score	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	<4
Payment Rate per hectare	€400	€350	€300	€250	€205	€175	€150	€0
Scale for farmers also in Organic Farming Scheme	€150	€100	€50	€0	€0	€0	€0	€0

Commonage Rates* (ACRES General & ACRES Co-operation)

Field Score	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	<4
Payment Rate per hectare	€220	€180	€145	€115	€90	€70	€60	€0**

* Commonages <10ha with a Commonage Farm Plan receive a flat rate of €120/Ha

** Participation payment set at €50/Ha on the first 20 Ha irrespective of results-based score. The results-based payment rates are inclusive of this participation payment.





What are the ACRES scorecards?

There are ten scorecards; seven are habitat-focused (a habitat is a place where plants and animals live), while three are species-specific. Your ACRES Farm Advisor will use one or more of the scorecards which are relevant to your land.



Habitat-focused scorecards:

Grassland	For grassland habitats unless there is a clear reason to use another grassland scorecard.
Peatland	For fields where peatland habitats such as wet heath, dry heath, blanket bog, raised bog, or a mosaic of habitats such as heath, bog and/or grassland are present.
Scrub / Woodland	For fields where scrub (shrubs, stunted trees or brambles) or woodland dominate.
Rough grazing	For fields with tall vegetation such as rushes and patches of established scrub. It is suitable for enclosed land that is of particular importance for ground nesting birds, small mammals and raptors.
Winterage	For fields with species-rich limestone grasslands and associated habitats that are primarily winter-grazed, as found across the Burren region in Counties Clare & Galway.
Low Input Peat Grassland (LIPG)	For fields of transitional grassland next to raised bog habitats.
Coastal Grassland	For fields close to the coast where dune grassland, machair or saltmarshes are present.

Species Specific scorecards:

Chough	For fields within inland Chough Special Protection Areas (and coastal sites with clifftop grassland if appropriate) and other fields important for Chough.
Breeding Wader	For fields within known breeding wader hotspots or fields where there is evidence of breeding waders present between March and July.
Corncrake	For fields within Corncrake Special Protection Areas and other fields important for Corncrake. It applies to hay and silage fields in these areas but can also apply to fields with delayed grazing.





Payment Examples

Example 1:

A **15ha farm** that scores a **5** on all fields will receive Core results-based payment of **€2,625** ($€175 \times 15$) leaving a balance of **€4,375** that can be added to the **€17,500** Fund available for Non-Productive Investments and/or Landscape Actions.

Example 2:

A **30ha farm** that scores a **7** on all fields will receive a Core Results-based payment of **€7,000*** ($€250 \times 30$).

*€7,000 is the maximum annual core payment

When is my farm scored?

Your ACRES Farm Advisor visits your farm to score your fields during the summer period.

Land in ACRES must be scored in three of the five years of the scheme.

While most land will be scored in years 1, 3 and 5 there is an option to score in other years (such as years 1, 2 and 4) and this can be indicated on your annual BISS application.

Commonages are scored by your local CP Team.



How can I increase my results-based payment?

You have an opportunity to increase your field scores and so increase your payments in subsequent years by supporting actions in the form of adjusting your management practices and/or undertaking Non-Productive Investments or Landscape Actions.

Practices which can lead to higher habitat quality, and thus higher field scores, can include grazing fields at the right time of year to allow native wildflowers to bloom and set seed, reducing or eliminating access to watercourses from livestock, and reducing the levels of scrub.

NPIs and LAs actions which will help the environmental management of your farm can be applied for, either through your ACRES Farm Advisor or through your local CP team, to increase your score so that you can potentially receive a higher payment rate.

Find out more

Further information, including T&Cs, is available from:

- Your ACRES Farm Advisor
- Your local ACRES CP Team
- the Department's ACRES team
- gov.ie/acres



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