



PEATLANDS
for Prosperity

New Income Options & Economic Opportunities



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhfháilú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union



Tionól Réigiúnach an
Dirthir agus Lár Tíre
Eastern and Midland
Regional Assembly



government supporting communities



Introduction

There is currently much concern, talk and, above all, uncertainty about peat grasslands and proposed restrictions on activities such as drainage. The focus around this is very much on the productive and well-drained peat grasslands. However, many Midland farmers also have areas of bog and cutover which have no productive use and provide no income but still retain historical drainage which means that the peat is still being lost through decomposition.

These areas are huge stores of carbon but in their drained state they are a big source of greenhouse gas and water pollution. With the recent release of the new **Peatland Standard for Ireland** and other existing carbon accounting methods there is now a means to pay farmers for preventing carbon emissions from peatlands including these non-productive areas.

Unlocking the New Financial Potential of Peatlands for Farmers

This means that these 'wastelands' are now a potentially viable source of long-term income. This can be accessed by restoring these non-productive areas of farms and then ideally active management to produce new crops from Paludiculture, that is, wetland agriculture or forestry.

In this way, payments can be 'stacked', comprising firstly, high quality carbon / nature payments for restoration of these areas and secondly, income from new crops. This fixes all the environmental problems of these areas as it restores an abundance of wildlife and all the ecological services. As the peat is no longer degrading this is the ultimate option for sustainable carbon farming and producing new food products as well as materials for the circular bio-economy.



Following on our successful work with the Farm Carbon EIP, Green Restoration Ireland Cooperative Society Ltd (GRI) is implementing a **Peatlands for Prosperity** project funded by the EU Just Transition Programme. It has set up Ireland's first on-farm paludiculture trials and in this way has developed the know-how to successfully grow a wide range of crops from grassland to blueberries, herbs and vegetables to commercial timber species.

GRI also forms part of a European network of practitioners which is refining knowledge on how to better grow these crops and working on bringing new products to market. This is particularly important as while large markets already exist for products such as berries, herbs and vegetables, new ones have to be developed for products such as biochar, building materials and textiles, all of which can be produced from paludiculture.

Farm Services

As part of the **Peatlands for Prosperity** project, GRI will offer free consultancy and training for farmers, farm advisors and interested members of the public as well as hosting open days and school visits to the pilot farms. Consultancy services will involve desktop and field surveys as follows:

- **Free surveys of farms** to 'baseline' their peatland habitats and identify the level of carbon storage, greenhouse gas emissions (for carbon credits), suitability for carbon projects, options for peatland forestry and identification of suitable crops for cutover e.g. biomass, fodder, fruits etc.;
- Full Farm Report listing appropriate measures and recommendations to increase farm income from these and other areas of the farm and projected income from carbon credits, proposed crops etc.;
- **Establishment of trial** paludiculture areas for a limited number of farms. This will include soil analysis, vegetation and topographical surveys, water level management and planting of the farmers' preferred crops.



Training

GRI has extensive training experience including the delivery of Ireland's first farmer program on carbon farming. The free training services will explain topics such as paludiculture and carbon farming, forestry on peatlands, water level management, water quality implications of peat, how carbon credits work, product options for the different paludiculture crops and so on. The topics will be presented in a hands-on, straightforward fashion by the GRI Team and international experts from the UK and Europe to appraise you of the possibilities and will include:

- **Farm walks and workshops** hosted by the pioneer farmers and GRI at the two pilot farms (see Map of 'Landscape' Farm on the following page) to see options for farming cutover and water level management
- **In-person and online training** for farm peatland management and Paludiculture
- **A training certificate** / qualification in Paludiculture.

Resource sharing

GRI will also share tools and information for identifying the best options for farms and online resources will be provided about the most promising crop options.

If requested GRI can also provide recommendations for other carbon farming options for the non-peatland areas of the farm.

Steps to Take

If you are interested in any of the training options or in getting an assessment of the income possibilities for your farm's peatlands and seeing how you can add value to your farm then call Doug on 087 9678 372 or email us at info@greenrestorationirelandcoop.ie



Paludiculture crops

- Bog Myrtle trial 1
- Blueberry & Sphagnum trials 2
- Floristry trial 3
- Cattail trial 4
- Wet multi-species sward trials 5



Pilot Farm in County Offaly

Paludiculture 'Landscape' farm

REWET wells
(University of Galway/Teagasc research project) for groundwater monitoring of rewet peat pastures

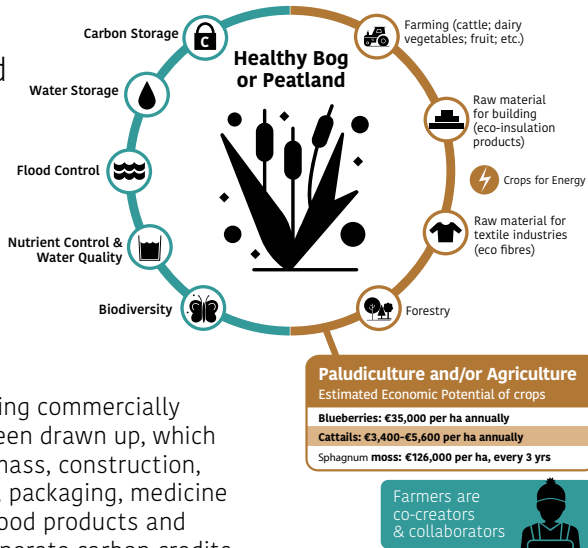
Drain dams

Biodiversity ponds



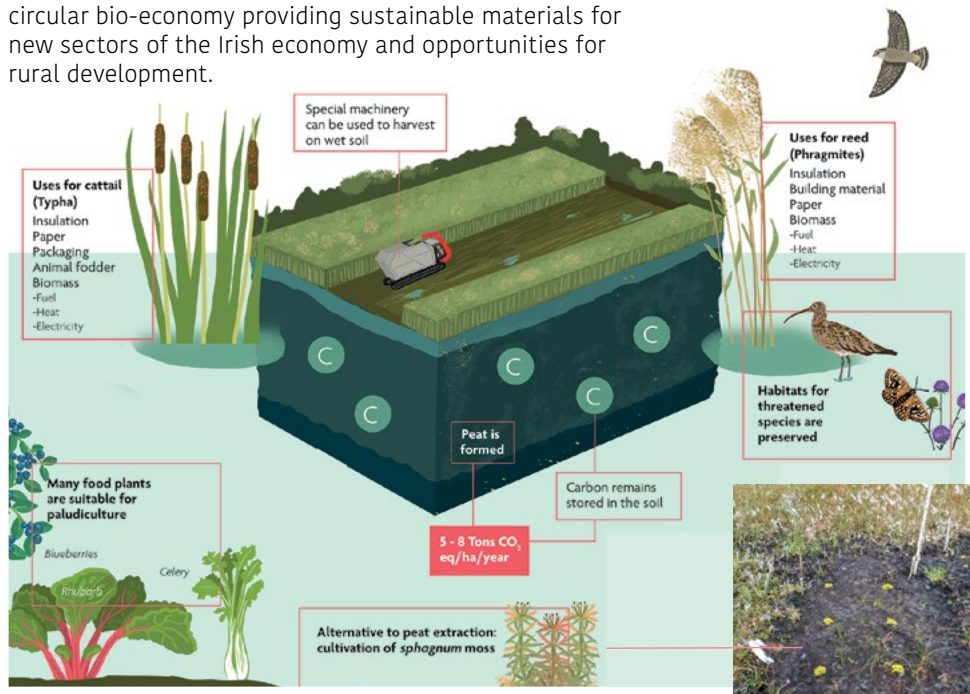
What is Paludiculture?

Paludiculture is a new kind of farming that involves the productive land use of wet and restored peatlands that preserves the peat soil and thereby minimizes CO₂ emissions and soil subsidence.



A shortlist of the 100 most promising commercially viable paludiculture species has been drawn up, which includes crops for agriculture, biomass, construction, food, floristry, fodder, horticulture, packaging, medicine / pharmacy, textiles, timber and wood products and other raw materials. It can also generate carbon credits and provide the basis for new amenity and recreation products. Paludiculture is eligible for BISS under CAP and forms part of the Irish Climate Action Plan for 2023.

Processing of foodstuffs and materials produced from Paludiculture will form an important pillar of a new circular bio-economy providing sustainable materials for new sectors of the Irish economy and opportunities for rural development.

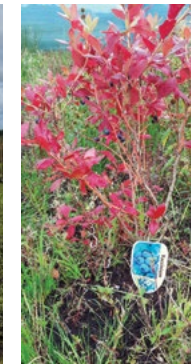


Agriculture and Peat Wastage

Peatlands have provided invaluable resources for generations of rural communities but peat soils reclaimed for agriculture have a finite lifespan as they disappear at rates of between 0.5 cm and 2 cm a year. This loss becomes a pressing issue for farmers where peat soils are getting thin and approaching the underlying impermeable subsoil of lack or marl. This results in growing problems with drainage and productivity loss as the fertile peat soils are permanently lost to be replaced with the infertile, high pH subsoil layer that lie beneath.



Wet multi-species sward trials



Blueberry crop



Grass fodder crop

Debates around the Carbon Offsetting Industry

Better known as carbon credits or offsets, these will be called carbon reduction units (CRUs) under the EU's **Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming (CRF) Regulation** (EU/2024/3012). This area is a heated topic of debate and minefield of confusion. The training will demystify the discussion by explaining what 'credits/CRUs' are, how can they be earned, what are they worth, who owns them, how they link to carbon farming and so on. The training will also address the significant knowledge gap in relation to carbon farming and how these link to CRUs.



Who are GRI?

Green Restoration Ireland Co-operative Society Ltd (GRI) is a non-profit cooperative that was established in 2019 with the aim of finding ways to diversify farm income by developing and implementing more sustainable farming practices.

In the Farm Carbon EIP, GRI developed expertise and measures to sustainably manage agricultural peatlands (completed at the end of 2024), for which it received awards and nominations (see below). The EIP work included options for management of peat grasslands and the establishment of Ireland's first on-farm trials of Paludiculture (wetland agriculture) crops. These crops included wet multi-species swards and other high value crops that show great promise for areas of non-productive cutover lands. Through its work, GRI is at the forefront of developing options for carbon credit projects, Paludiculture crops and management options for farmed peatlands to maximise farm incomes. GRI has also delivered Ireland's first farmer training on carbon farming through IFA's Farm Business Skillnet.

More Info & Contact

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Awards and nominations



2024 AGRICULTURAL & RURAL INSPIRATION AWARDS

2024 FINALIST
Environmental Protection
Agricultural & Rural Inspiration Awards

2024 HIGHLY COMMENDED
Environmental Research Project
FBD Better Farming Awards



2024 FINALIST
Environmental Farmer of the Year
Adrian Egan (Farm Carbon EIP)
FBD Better Farming Awards

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Testimonials

"As a farmer on the EIP, I have learnt so much from Doug and the Farm Carbon team over the past 3 years from peatlands to hedgerows and they can all play a vital role in capturing carbon, supporting biodiversity while supporting and improving farms and the farmers lives. They are doing great work and truly deserve this award."

Adrian Egan – Farmer

"Since joining Doug and his team at GRI, we have become very aware of the importance of improving and protecting our environment and ways and means of avoiding Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

We regarded our peatlands as non-productive wasteland. Doug and his team have enlightened us as to how these peatlands can be utilized. We now realise their importance, potential and the huge diversity of plants and crops that we can grow on peatlands. Having worked with Doug and his team over the past three years, our disused peatland is now producing a variety of crops and fruit bushes.

By raising the water table, our new ponds have welcomed back a huge variety of wildlife which is such a joy to observe. This has been an enlightening and amazing project and we hope that this is only the beginning."

Donie Regan - Farmer