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GREEN HORIZONS WEBINAR SERIES

# Partnering for peat

## Future-proof farming through collaboration



**18 SEPTEMBER 2025**

16:00-17:00 CEST | 15:00-16:00 BST

**WE ARE STARTING SOON**



# Housekeeping

- This session is being recorded.
- Recording and slides will be available on our website afterwards.
- Questions are welcome, we will address as many as we can
- Please share your feedback with us at the end

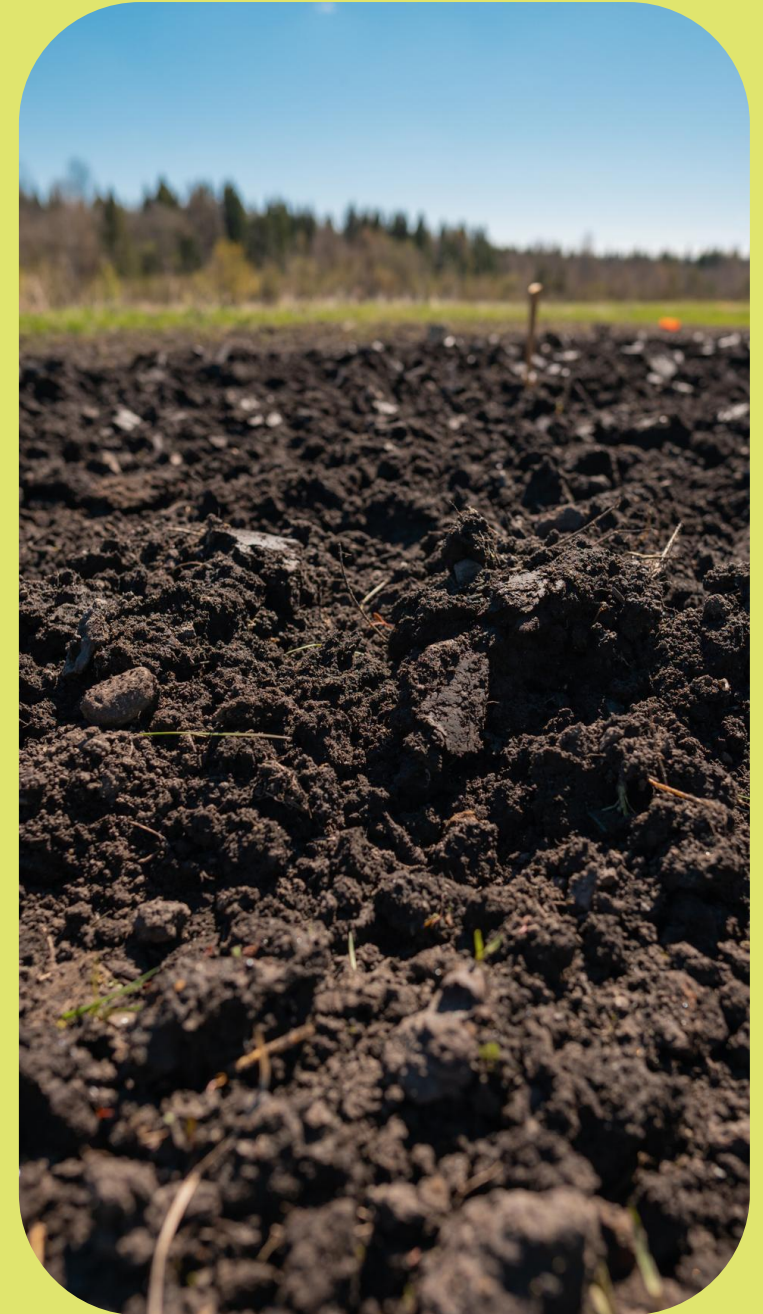






# Agenda

- Welcome
- Introduction of the Green Horizons Network
- Present 'Groene Cirkel Kaas en Bodemdaling'
- Reflections from Green Restoration Ireland
- Q&A with the audience
- Feedback and close



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## An invitation: The Green Horizons Farmer Network

- European network for farmers with an innovative mindset who face barriers in adapting to climate change and reducing their environmental impact.
- Benefits:
  - Discover opportunities for collaboration, funding and participation in trials or innovation networks to help build resilience against climate change
  - Access knowledge, tools and pilot results from climate-smart agriculture projects across Europe
  - Make voices and experiences heard in Europe to shape better agricultural policy.







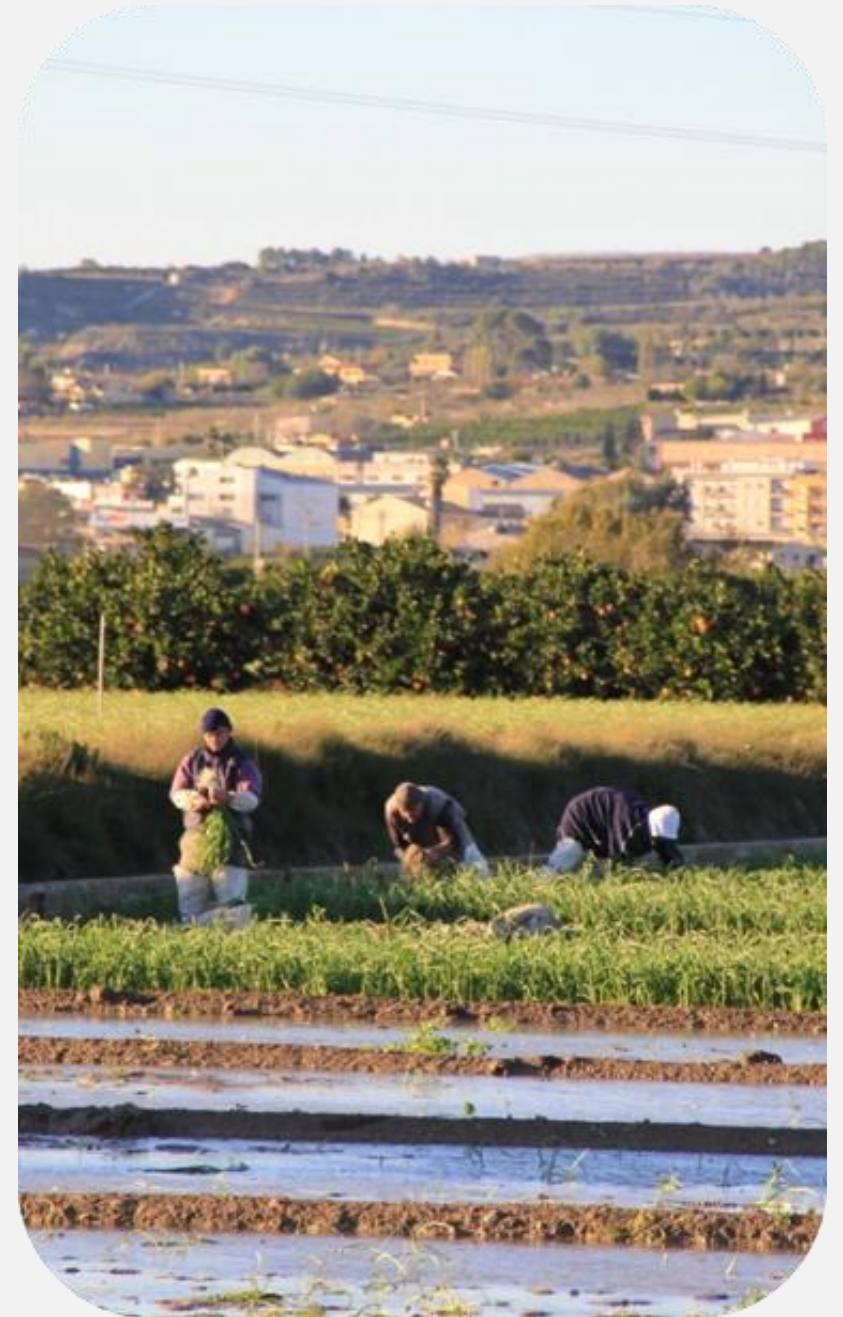
## Join our network

Visit [www.climate-hive.org/page/Green-Horizons](https://www.climate-hive.org/page/Green-Horizons) or scan the QR code:



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## Our upcoming webinar

# Navigating the New Common Agricultural Policy

Wednesday 24 September, 16:00-17:00 CET

To register: [bit.ly/GreenHorizonsSeries](https://bit.ly/GreenHorizonsSeries)  
or scan the QR code →





# Meet today's speakers



**Cees  
van den Bosch**

Climate Theme Manager,  
Rabobank



**Raymond  
Noordermeer**

Former CEO,  
De Graafstroom



**Douglas  
McMillan**

Founder and Chairperson,  
Green Restoration Ireland  
Cooperative



**Saskia  
Visser**

Resilient and Climate  
Neutral Regions Cluster  
Lead, Climate KIC  
**Moderator**

**Making impact with local action learning!**



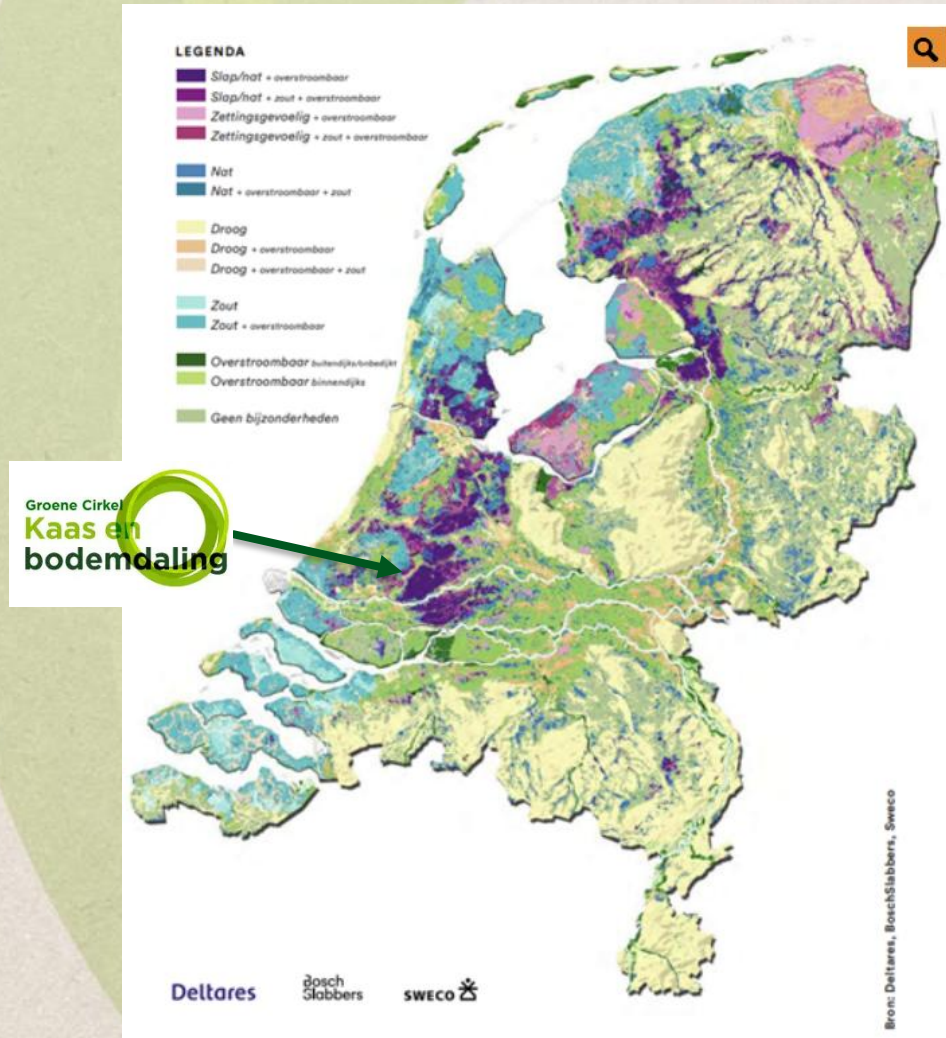
## Green Circles Cheese and Landsubsidence



WHAT IS  
GREEN CIRCLES?



## Based in "The Green Heart"





## Why Green Circles?

- Increasing social needs in an overcrowded area
- Environmental boundaries, like nitrogen
- Pressure on rural areas. Increasing (price) competition for available (agricultural) land: urbanisation, industrialisation, nature and recreation
- Dairy farming earning capacity is heavily under pressure
- Citizens wants sustainable, healthy and local nutrition



## Ambition Green Circles

*Develop future-proof agriculture, find a solution for landsubsidence, restoring biodiversity in the green heart and a water system that can withstand the expected climate change*

Partners: Zuivelfabriek De Graafstroom, de zuivelcoöperatie Deltamilk, Waterschap Rivierenland, Rabobank, de Provincie Zuid-Holland en Wageningen University & Research (WUR) and Naturalis.

## Assignment Green Circels

### Project goals

- Find integral solutions to limit subsidence, conservation and restoring of biodiversity and preserving and strengthening the merit of dairy farming in the Dutch peatlands

### Results

- Identification and substantiation of (potential) action packages combatting landsubsidence, strengthening biodiversity and increasing earning capacity of the farmers
- An approach which is scalable to other (peatland) areas in the Netherlands

Financed by network partners and local government subsidies



## Approach

- System-area analysis
- Developing workshops
- Data collection, pilots, monitoring systems, learning experiences
- Economic analysis of sustainable measures





## Principles

- Focus on simple and smart measures that are in line with current dairy farming practices
- Including sufficient awards: From cost effective to true value!
- Voluntary participation but not without obligation: long term relations and agreements.
- Safe learning environment: Learning by doing!
- Partnership: We need each other. Principles are equality and cross border cooperation.



## Workshops Alblasserwaard Vijfherenlanden

- Groups of farmers from the region
- Discuss, develop ideas and actions to reach the objectives of a futureproof economy and nature
- Offer for local governments from farmers individually or as a group





## Action plans

- Biodiverse ditches
- Climate robust water management
- Better usage of manure and healthy soil
- Emission reduction



Op weg naar een New Deal  
tussen boer en samenleving

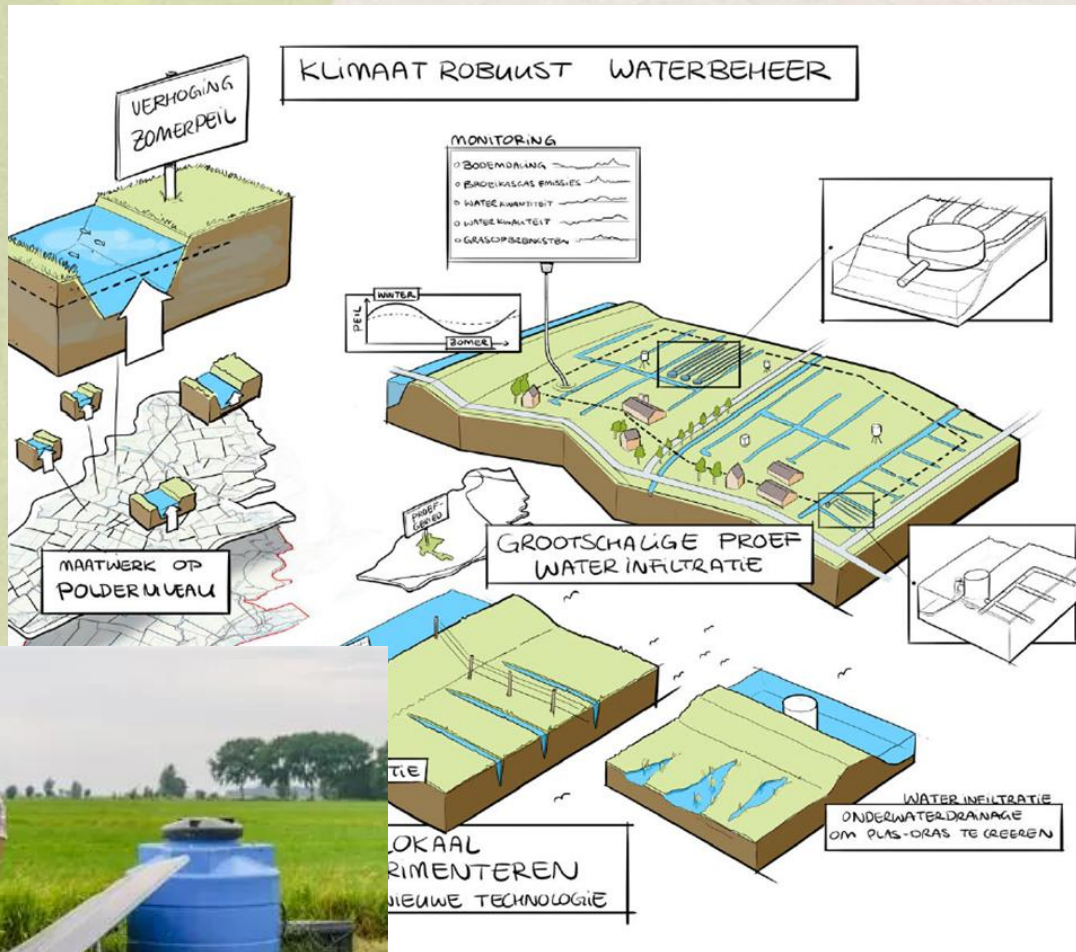
Melkveehouderij in Alblasserwaard-Vijfheerenlanden



WAGENINGEN  
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH



# Climate robust water management

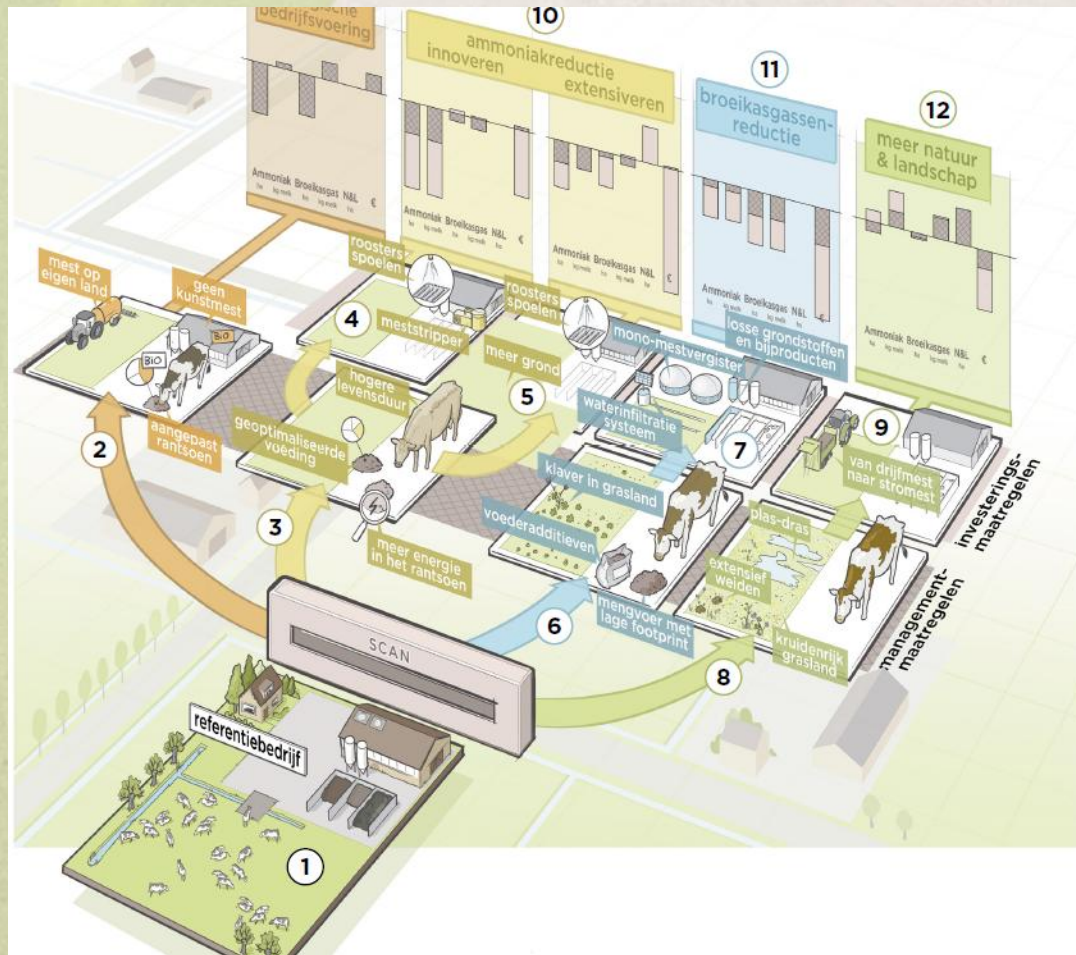


## Lessons Learned

- Huge reduction potential
- Successful pilots
- Scaling opportunities like carbon credits and subsidies are still limited



# Emission reduction



## Lessons learned

- Great tool
- Insights based on reference farms
- Conversation starter!
  - Farmer engagement
  - Towards fair incentives



**Thank you for your attention**







**PEATLANDS**  
for Prosperity

# Peatland Farming in Ireland

Dr. Doug McMillan  
General Manager, GRI Cooperative



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag  
an Aontas Eorpach

Co-funded by the  
European Union



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



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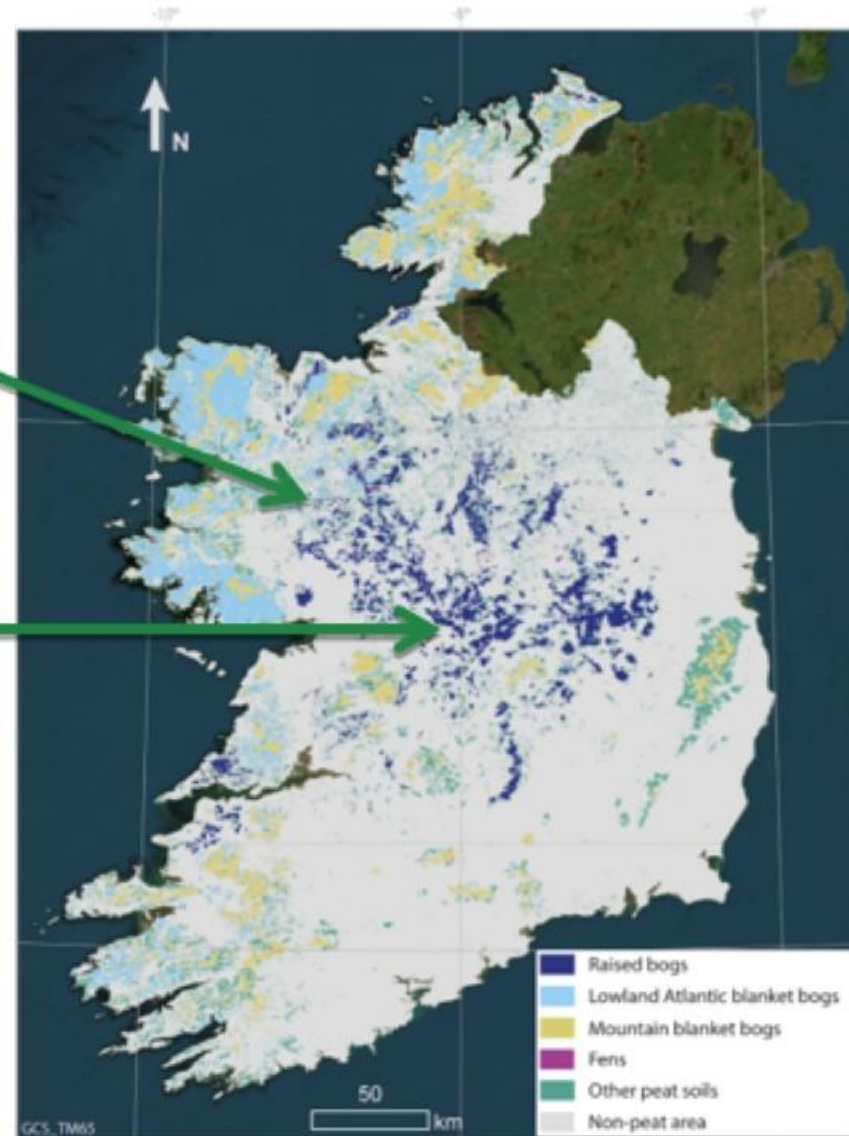
government supporting communities



Green Restoration  
IRELAND

# Irish Context

GRI Initial  
focus areas



- 1.66 M ha store 2.2 billion tonnes = **75%** of our soil carbon
- 85% damaged / degraded
- 340,000 ha peat grasslands
- Circa 100,000 ha deep drained >50 cm
- Emitting 30 tCO<sub>2</sub>e /ha/year
- Annual total about 4Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e
- (Approx. 10k ha arable)



# Green Restoration Ireland Cooperative

- GRI a non-profit cooperative
- **Mission**: Future-proof farming by developing income streams for innovative farm practices (e.g. Paludiculture, NbS, water quality etc.) and on-farm habitat restoration
- Farmer-focused - prioritize farmer (& peatland community) engagement







# Green Restoration Ireland Cooperative



- Past Projects: Farm Carbon EIP
- Whole-farm Plans - voluntary
- Successful pilots - First increases in water tables on agricultural peat grasslands
- Ireland's first two Paludiculture farms
- Current Projects: **Peatlands for Prosperity**, Smart Carbon Farming, Mayo Bogs Project, **Farm Carbon Transitions**, Life SUPER EU
- Open events for measures, workshops, farm walks & expert contributions
- School visits and competitions
- Baselining of carbon, biodiversity and water storage







# Dutch-Irish Differences

- Irish farms a mix of mineral and peat soils
- Include other non-agricultural peatland habitats i.e. degraded bog, cutover, plantation forestry etc
- Farmers less aware of land subsidence issue (also carbon storage, Paludiculture, water pollution)
- Water management infrastructure = ditches
- Little expertise in landscape-level water management infrastructure
- No mandated water levels
- Water level management '*stalemate*'





# GRI Approaches

- Awareness raising / comms – water table management (not rewetting), carbon storage, other options
- *Lighthouse* farm work has proven the ‘principle’ for multiple *high-value*, ‘*peatland-friendly*’ crops at demonstration and sub-commercial scale
  - 1. Wet grassland systems: Continued livestock production at higher water tables
  - 2. High value crops for small areas
- Whole Farm Plans - voluntary selection of measures e.g. solar pumps, Paludiculture, pond creation etc







# 3-Zone Solution: Landscape-Level Mosaic



- Irish (raised bog) peatlands typically exist in 3 concentric zones:
  - **Zone 1:** *Semi-intact core* (50,000 ha);
  - **Zone 2:** *Cutover middle ring* (120,000 ha) - Post-extraction abandoned areas;
  - **Zone 3:** *Agricultural outer ring* (80,000 ha) - Converted to grassland - Gradual transition potential with partial rewetting
- Restore Zone 2 '**wastelands**' with ***tailored, habitat-appropriate*** paludiculture solutions simultaneously restores productivity AND hydrological conditions needed to protect Zone 1
- *Restore & protect by producing*
- Partial water level rise in pastures









# GRI Approaches

- Culturally aligned
- Need income to support transition
- Measures address carbon and other ecosystem services
- Looking for integrated carbon footprint with biodiversity, water quality and supply with community involvement
- Farm group carbon projects
- Green financing
- Focusing on viable business cases
- Added value produce

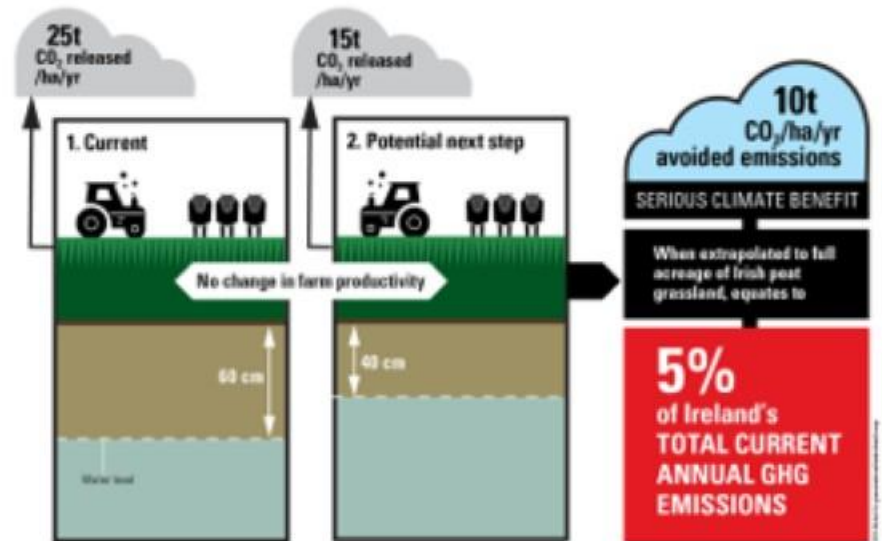






# Dutch-Irish Similarities

- Similar big peatland challenges: emissions, biodiversity loss, water pollution
- Competition for land and farming livelihoods
- Citizens want sustainable, healthy, local food
- Need income to support transition
- Viable business cases
- Green financing
- Need to go landscape-level (overcome adjacency)





# Thank You For Joining Us



Dr. Doug McMillan

General Manager

Green Restoration Ireland Co-operative Society  
Ltd

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[www.greenrestorationireland.coop](http://www.greenrestorationireland.coop)

## Let's Stay Connected



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# Thank you for joining!


## CONTACTS

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## STAY UP TO DATE

 [www.climate-kic.org](http://www.climate-kic.org)

 Join the Green Horizons network: [www.climate-hive.org/page/Green-Horizons](http://www.climate-hive.org/page/Green-Horizons)