NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

Whitaker Institute

Whitaker Institute Policy Brief Series

Policy Brief No.: 73

November 2020

Cluster: Environment, Development and Sustainability

Theme: Sustainable and Inclusive Societies

Further Reading: The full report is available at https://www.riskaquasoil.eu/results/

Contact:
edel.doherty@nuigalway.ie

Read More About: For more information on the RiskAquaSoil Project, please visit https://www.riskaquasoil.eu

Acknowledgements: This research is part of the RiskAquaSoil Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER) through the cooperation programme Interreg Atlantic Area, with reference EAPA – 272/2016

Farmers' attitudes and preferences for climate change adaptation: An Irish case study

In the context of agricultural production in the Atlantic Area, communities face challenges from changing temperatures and rainfall patterns, sea level rises and the impact of extreme climate events that could interrupt agricultural activity. To address these challenges, it is important for the agricultural sector to manage risks and adapt to challenging and changing climate conditions. A new report from NUI Galway examines farmers' attitudes and preferences for climate change adaptation in Ireland. The overarching aims of the report are to present findings on farmers' beliefs regarding climate change with a particular focus on extreme weather events, the drivers and barriers of climate change adaptation and the willingness of Irish farmers to engage in specific adaptation measures related to insurance protection for their own farm and flood protection for downstream communities. The report is part of the EU Interreg Atlantic Area *RiskAquaSoil* project which aims to develop a comprehensive management plan for risks in soil and in water to improve the resilience of the Atlantic rural and agricultural areas to climate.

Research Findings

The report found that over one-third of Irish farmers are concerned about extreme weather events impacting their farming activities. Farmers are most concerned about the impacts of storms, droughts and flooding. Within the study, farmers were asked whether they would be willing to help reduce the risk of flooding to downstream communities, over 40% of farmers indicated they would. Moreover, over 70% of farmers indicated a willingness to use insurance as a method to protect their farm financially against damages caused by extreme weather events. The report found that Irish farmers felt unprepared for extreme weather events. Farmers highlighted a number of resource constraints related to financial, time and capacity that impeded their ability to adapt. In addition, farmers were unsure of what they needed to do in the face of the climate crisis and they felt they lacked practical and reliable information concerning adaptation. In general, farmers are most willing to undertake farm adaptation or mitigation if it is economically beneficial to do so. To help adaptation, additional resources, the availability of tailored information for individual farms, locally-based agri-environment schemes and farm networks were mentioned by farmers as important enablers.

Policy Implications

Adaptation of rural and agricultural areas is crucial to protect local communities and improve resilience to climate change. Agricultural adaptation will not occur unless farmers are able and willing to adapt, as farmers are the central decision-makers for their own farms. This research showed that farmers were positively disposed to using public insurance as a method to protect against agricultural losses and that farmers could help protect downstream communities from flooding. Additional resources, practical and simplified information on adaptation measures highlighting the specific and local benefits of adaptation and highlighting that adaptation and farm viability are intrinsically linked, are important to engage farmers in adaptation.

Interreg Atlantic Area
European Regional Development Fund