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Qualifying conditions for our schemes change from time to time. Always check with your local Social Welfare Office or with Information Services to see if qualifying conditions have changed (see page 12 for contact details).

The information in this booklet is correct at the time of going to print.

1. What is Farm Assist?

Farm Assist is a weekly means-tested payment for low income farmers.

If you are a farmer and you have income from another source (such as other self-employment, insurable employment or capital), you may still qualify for a payment under the Farm Assist Scheme.

2. How do I qualify for Farm Assist?

You will qualify for this payment if:

- you are a farmer,
- are aged between 18 and 66, and
- satisfy a means test.

Who is considered a farmer?

For this scheme, you are considered a farmer if you farm land that you own or lease and that you use for the purpose of husbandry*.

If you farm land for the purpose of husbandry but you do not own or lease that land, you may still qualify as a farmer as long as the land is not part of a larger holding.

The land, which includes commonage (which is land that you and other landowners own together), must be within the State. You will not get Farm Assist if you lease or let all your land to another person.

*Husbandry means working the land with the object of taking produce from the land.

3. What is the means test?

A means test is a way of checking if you have enough means to support yourself and what amount of payment, if any, you may qualify for. To qualify for Farm Assist, you must show that your means are below a certain level.

Your means are:

- any income belonging to you or your spouse or partner,
- property belonging to you or your spouse or partner (except your home), and
- other asset(s) that could provide you with an income.

When you complete and send in the application form **Farm 1**, a Social Welfare Inspector will call to you at your home. They will ask you to produce supporting documents relating to your income and spending, such as accounts, mart receipts, wage-slips and bank statements.

Means from farm income or other self-employment

Your income from farming and other self-employment is assessed as gross income that you or your spouse or partner may reasonably be expected to receive, minus any expenses you incur to earn that income.

- If you have qualified children (see Part 4), we disregard the first €254 of your net income for each of your first 2 children and €381 for each other child.
- We then assess you on 70% of your remaining income from farming and self-employment.
- We divide this figure by 52 to get the weekly means. The difference between the weekly means and the appropriate weekly amount of social welfare payment is the amount of Farm Assist payable.

Example

You are a farmer with a qualified adult (see Part 4) and 3 qualified children. You have 60 acres of land and you are involved in mixed farming.

Income		Expenses	
Sale of cattle	€9,900	Livestock	€2,900
Sale of lambs	€3,600	Fertiliser	€2,500
Grants and subsidies	<u>€6,111</u>	Vet	€ 750
Gross income	€19,611	Electricity	€ 500
		Repairs	€3,900
		Labour	€2,800
		Interest	<u>€1,500</u>
		Gross expenses	€14,850
		Gross income	€19,611
		Minus expenses	<u>€14,850</u>
		Net profit	€ 4,761

Minus disregarded income (see page 4)

€254 for each of first 2 children	= €508
€381 for 3rd child	= €381
Total	- <u>€889</u>
	€3,872

Assessable income	= 70% of €3,872
	= €2,710.40 a year
€2,710.40 divided by 52	= €52.12 a week
Means rounded to	= €52.00 a week

In this example, the amount of Farm Assist you may get is €349.10.

Appropriate amount of social welfare payment since Jan. 2008	€401.10
Minus means	<u>€ 52.00</u>
Farm Assist	= €349.10

Means from REPS and SACS

We assess income from the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) and Special Areas of Conservation Scheme (SACS) separately from other farm income, using the formula below.

Formula	
- Income from REPS or SACS:	Yearly value of means
- Minus first €2,540	
- Divide answer by 2	
- Minus expenses	Weekly value of means
- Divide answer by 52	

Means from insurable employment

We assess your net income (gross income less PRSI, union dues and superannuation) as follows.

- We deduct €20.00 from your net weekly earnings for every day worked up to a maximum of 3 days (€60.00), and assess 60% of the remaining earnings as weekly means.

Seasonal work

If you have seasonal employment, we assess you on your earnings only during the period that you are actually working.

How we assess investments and savings

We do not take the actual income from investments and savings as your means. Instead we add together the following items and use a formula to work out your means:

- cash value of investments and property (except your home),
- money in savings accounts, and
- cash-in-hand or in a current account.

Capital:	Weekly means assessed:
First €20,000	Nil
€20,000 - €30,000	€1 per €1,000
€30,000 - €40,000	€2 per €1,000
Over €40,000	€4 per €1,000

What if my spouse or partner works?

Income from insurable employment

We assess your spouse's or partner's income from insurable employment in the same way as your own income from insurable employment.

Income from self-employment

We assess your spouse's or partner's income from farming or other self-employment in the same way as your own income from self-employment.

Other income

We assess other income at its cash value - for example €1 for every €1 of income.

4. How much can I get?

Your payment is made up of a personal rate for yourself and extra amounts for a qualified adult and qualified children. Your weekly rate of payment is the difference between your weekly means assessment and the maximum rate of Farm Assist that you could get if you had no means.

The current rates of Farm Assist are shown in the Rates of Payment booklet **SW 19**.

Who is a qualified adult?

If you are married or you are living with someone as husband and wife, who you are wholly or mainly maintaining, you may get an increase for this person as a qualified adult.

If you have children living with you and you are single, widowed or separated, you may get a qualified adult increase for a person aged 16 or over who is caring for your child(ren), provided the person is living with and being supported by you.

You will **not** get an increase for a qualified adult if your spouse or partner:

- gets a social welfare payment in their own right (**except** Disablement Benefit, Bereavement or Funeral Grant, Guardian's Payment (Contributory), Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory), Child Benefit or Supplementary Welfare Allowance),

or

- is disqualified from getting unemployment payments because of a trade dispute,

or

- takes part in a full-time FÁS training course,

or

- gets a training allowance for a Vocational Training Opportunities (VTOS) scheme.

Who is a qualified child?

A qualified child is any child under age 18 normally living with you.

A child aged 18 or over and normally living with you is also considered to be a qualified child for 3 months after they leave second level education or complete the Leaving Certificate examination.

A child aged 18 and up to 22 continues to be a qualified child until the end of the academic year in which they reach age 22 if they are in full-time education by day.

Rate of qualified child increase

- If you qualify for an increase for your spouse or partner, you will get the **full** rate qualified child increase for your child(ren).
- If your spouse or partner is getting a social welfare payment in their own right, they will get **half** the qualified child increase appropriate to their payment and you will get **half** the qualified child increase with your payment.

You will not get an increase for a qualified child if the child is getting a social welfare payment (eg. One Parent Family Allowance or Disability Allowance) or a payment from the Health Service Executive in their own right.

5. How do I get my payment?

You get your payment weekly. You may opt to have your payment paid directly into your bank account or paid by Electronic Information Transfer (EIT) at a post office using your social services card, which allows you to avail of the Household Budget Scheme at your local post office.

6. How long does payment last?

You may get Farm Assist as long as you:

- continue to farm,
- are aged between 18 and 66, and
- satisfy the means test.

7. Can time spent on Farm Assist count towards getting employment and educational supports?

Yes, time spent on Farm Assist may help you qualify for FÁS training courses, Community Employment Schemes, Rural Social Scheme, Back to Work Allowance and the Back to Education Programme.

8. Can I make PRSI contributions while getting Farm Assist?

Since 1st January 2007 Farm Assist customers are no longer excused from paying PRSI. You may be liable to pay Class 'S' contributions on your income from self-employment. If you are not already registered as self-employed please contact your local tax office. When you send in your annual returns to the tax office they will let you know if you have to pay PRSI. Your 2007 returns must be sent to the tax office by 31st October 2008. If you do not have to pay PRSI you may be able to pay Voluntary Contributions.

For further details, see information booklet **SW 8** or contact:

Voluntary Contributions Section

Department of Social and Family Affairs

Social Welfare Services

Cork Road

Waterford

Telephone: Waterford (051) 356 000

Dublin (01) 704 3000

9. Can I get any extra benefits?

If you are getting Farm Assist you may get:

- Fuel Allowance (subject to certain conditions), and also, depending on your overall income, you may get:
- a medical card (from your regional Health Service Executive office),
- Supplementary Welfare Allowance, Rent or Mortgage Interest Supplement or Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance.

Check with the Community Welfare Officer at your local health centre.

It may be possible to obtain a half rate Carer's Allowance in addition to Farm Assist. For further details, see information booklet **SW 41**.

10. When and how do I apply?

You may apply for Farm Assist by completing application form **Farm 1**, which you can get from:

the Department's website at www.welfare.ie,

or

the Department's LoCall Leaflet Request Line on **1890 20 23 25**,

or

your local Social Welfare Office.

Send the completed application form **Farm 1** with the relevant certificates and document to your local Social Welfare Office.

Note

You do not have to visit your local Social Welfare Office or 'sign on' to claim Farm Assist.

11. Where can I get more information?

You can get information on social welfare services, or get information booklets and application forms:

- on the Internet at www.welfare.ie,
or
- from your local Social Welfare Office (see State Directory section of your phone book or the Golden Pages for contact numbers),
or
- by telephoning the Department's LoCall Leaflet Request Line at **1890 20 23 25**,
or
- by telephoning Information Services at LoCall **1890 66 22 44** (from the Republic of Ireland) or **+ 353 71 91 93313**.

Note

The rates charged for the use of 1890 (LoCall) numbers may vary among different service providers.

Other useful booklets

National Fuel Scheme	SW 17
Rates of Payment booklet	SW 19
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	SW 54
Back to Education Programme	SW 70
Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance	SW 75
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance	SW 92
Back to Work Allowance (Employees)	SW 93

Citizens Information

The Citizens Information Board is the statutory body which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on the broad range of social and civil services to the public. It provides the Citizens Information website and supports the voluntary network of Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service.

www.citizensinformation.ie

Lo-Call 1890 777 121 (Mon-Fri 9am-9pm)

Local Centres (see Golden Pages)

Citizen Information is available from over 250 locations nationwide. The contact details and opening hours of your nearest Citizens Information Centre are listed in the Golden Pages.