

Biodiversity in Ireland will it vanish with the credit crunch?

A Brief overview with some explanations on the Kerry breed situation.
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The farming community at large fails to comprehend the importance of (national) plant and animal biodiversity and the government tries to save money by withdrawing its financial supports for it. A recent request for up to date official information on the status of animal and plant biodiversity not been forthcoming.

The Government's approach is basically lead from outside, through EU directives or by NGO's like ISSA which brought different projects on the way and have then be supported ("hijacked") by the government.

The Plant Sector

Native Irish apple project

Heritage Cereals repatriation

Brasica and Allium propagation.

Beta and Graminacea collection are undertaken by the department.

The Animal Sector:

Mainly lead by Cooperative Breed Societies, which is in principal a good system but:

Example Kerry Cattle: From Boom to Bust

The Kerry's got a numbers lift (from 200 breeding animals 10 years ago to now over 1000) through inclusion in the rural protection scheme, which is coming now to its end and a big culling of Kerry cattle is expected. Prices this year where as low as €20 for bull calves! More and more animals had been kept in order to increase numbers for the rural protection Scheme and no valuable breed selection programme has been implemented! The breed society is it logger heads with the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation which gets funded by the department to implement breed strategies, a programme has been forwarded by the ICBF 5 years ago and finances were given by the government but the programme did not got implemented by the Kerry Cattle Society and there is uncertainty about how and if the funding has been spent! In the mean time the breed is suffering.

Irish Moiled cattle also qualified for the numbers game but with a decent breeding program in place.....

The Irish Moiled Breed Society was formed in 1926. In 1982 the Society was revived with the encouragement of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust. The breed has enjoyed valuable research and guidance from both the Trust and the Genetics Department of Liverpool University. This encouragement has been greatly appreciated by the Society.

The Society has a well established DNA testing programme to ensure validity of pedigrees and the integrity of this important gene pool.

In 2008 a breed conservation strategy was launched. It is hoped that this strategy will help maintain the genetic base of the breed and also reduce to a minimum any increase in inbreeding within the breed. In 2008 there were approximately 140 members of the Society with over forty breeders on the mainland of Great Britain and the others being in Northern Ireland and the South of Ireland.

Other examples are:

The Droim Fhionn Cattle Breed

The Kerry Bog Pony

The Connemara Pony and the Irish Draft horse: both breed's have been transformed from working animals to high achieving sport horses.

Galway Sheep

Neglected Irish animal biodiversity resources:

Donkeys

Feral Goats

