

# Renewable Energy in the Land Based Sector



## A way forward

Interim Renewable Energy Action Plan  
2013/14



Department of  
**Agriculture and  
Rural Development**

[www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)

AN ROINN

**Talmhaíochta agus  
Forbartha Tuaithe**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Fairms an  
Kintra Fordèrin**

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## Section A: Overview

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development published its Renewable Energy Action Plan in 2010 which included a range of measures to support the agriculture and forestry sectors to contribute to and benefit from opportunities associated with the development of renewable energy for increased competitiveness, energy security and mitigation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

One of the key actions included in the REAP 2010 was the appointment of an External Stakeholder Group to oversee the implementation of the plan. The Renewable Energy External Stakeholder Group (Dr Elaine Groom, John O'Brien MBA MBIFM and Michael Doran BSc, MSc, MRICS, C.Env, MIOD) were appointed in 2011 by the then Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to undertake this work and to provide advice and direction on future Departmental actions. The Group presented their report, 'Renewable Energy in the Land Based Sector – A Way Forward – Next Steps' <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/2012-renewable-energy-external-stakeholder-group-report.pdf> to the DARD Minister in December 2012. The report set out the group's findings on progress to date of the delivery of the 2010 action plan and made a number of recommendations on the future strategic direction and actions required to continue to build on progress.

### **Renewable Energy Action Plan 2010 – Progress to date.**

A brief overview of progress against the action plan is provided below:

Three 'Practical On-farm Renewable Energy' knowledge exchange events focused on production and utilisation of renewable energy were held since 2012 at CAFRE's Greenmount and Enniskillen campuses, with over 2,000 attendees.

This event, as part of the overall knowledge and technology transfer programme, and the ongoing research programme, has contributed to the evidence base used to develop the Department's approach to ongoing support for research, innovation and the application of renewable technology in the land based sector.

DARD continues to support the Renewable Energy Research Programme carried out at AFBI. A suite of research focusing on biomass and anaerobic digestion is underway, with results disseminated via research publications, information leaflets, the Renewable Energy Centre at Hillsborough and via knowledge and exchange events such as POFRE.

## Section A: Overview

The Environment and Renewable Energy Centre at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Hillsborough, has hosted a large number of visiting groups from the European Union, government, industry, farming, environmental and student sectors. Anaerobic Digester and Biomass Crop Open Days have also attracted over 300 visitors.

The Department, via the College of Agriculture and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), has continued to focus on renewable energy industry training and knowledge exchange programmes, with almost 1,700 attendees participating in the range of training and events offered in the Renewable Energy Training Programme.

DARD's Biomass Processing Challenge Fund (BPCF), part financed by the European Regional Development Fund under the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme, was launched in June 2010 in support of the installation of on-farm biomass-fuelled renewable energy technologies. Grant offers totalling almost £1 million were made to farm-scale renewable energy projects under tranche one of the BPCF. In Tranche 2 Letters of Offer totalling £3.2 million were issued to successful applicants.

DARD has supported the development of a Renewable Energy Portal for the land based sector, focusing initially on Anaerobic Digestion (AD) with the biomass portal under development.

DARD has continued to promote opportunities via the Supply Chain Development Programme, which has supported renewable energy projects and published case studies on related portals and NI Direct, along with other technical information, training and funding opportunities. Two Renewable Energy Focus Farms have been established and have hosted in the region of 30 visits and 400 visitors.

The Department has continued to work with colleagues across government to identify and support renewable energy opportunities for the agriculture sector and to inform the review of the DARD REAP 2010, including DETI on renewable energy policy and support tools and Invest NI and the Industry Advisory Panel on potential opportunities for the sector.



## Section A: Overview

### The External Stakeholder Group Report- Renewable Energy in the Land Based Sector – A Way Forward – Next Steps’:

The REESG report acknowledges the progress made to date and successful implementation of measures within the plan, recommending that DARD should continue its priority activities as set out in the REAP 2010 and summarised below:

- **Policy**  
An effective, joined up and flexible policy environment which takes account of the interests of the land based sector.
- **Supply Chain Development**  
The agriculture and forestry sectors are aware of the opportunities available in connection with the renewable energy supply chain.
- **Market Understanding**  
Ensuring the sector has access to current information based on research and development to build confidence and enable the sector to engage in renewable energy activities.
- **Capability Development**  
Raise awareness and deliver industry training and knowledge exchange in energy efficiency and renewable energy activities, via the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)
- **Research and Innovation**  
A programme of research and innovation is undertaken at the Agri Food Biosciences Institute (AFBI) to inform the future development and application of renewable energy opportunities in the context of the land based sector.

## Section A: Overview

The Report also recommends that DARD's current actions should broadly continue with some further development. The report specifically notes that the recommendations are not limited to areas within DARD, but also focus on interdepartmental relationships with other government bodies. The following strategic aim, underpinned by strategic and tactical objectives for DARD are suggested, along with a number of supporting actions:

### Strategic Aim:

- Intrinsic part of NI renewable Energy Policy

### Strategic objectives

- DARD to be visibly active in the overall Renewable Energy Policy development in Northern Ireland
- DARD to be a strategic part of the Northern Ireland Renewable Energy Policy and decision making process
- Agriculture to be a strategic part of the renewable energy supply chain
- Stimulate and facilitate the active development of renewable energy within the agri sector
- Underpin development by research and provision of information

### Tactical objectives (within Agri sector)

- Research and knowledge development
- Information provision and technology transfer
- Policy tools (e.g. funding)
- Proactive inter-department dialogue

DARD's initial response to these recommendations is set out in the next section.

## Section B: Response to the Renewable Energy External Stakeholder Group Recommendations

DARD continues to view our role as one of facilitation to enable the sector to capitalise on renewable energy opportunities on-farm, through direct and indirect support measures, such as training, research and information provision and funding.

A significant focus for the REESG is that DARD should take a greater role in the development of renewable energy policy within Northern Ireland. While lead policy responsibility for renewable energy in Northern Ireland rests with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), we recognise the importance of the policy environment in enabling the sector to develop and that DARD has a clear contribution to make. DARD'S focus will continue to be on stimulating and supporting the development of renewable energy within the agriculture and forestry sectors, while making an active and meaningful contribution to the development of renewable energy policy.

Our key strategic aim is therefore to:

**Promote sustainable farming and forestry practices to deliver greater resource efficiency and reduced environmental impact, by supporting the sector to make a contribution to and benefit from renewable energy opportunities.**

In order to achieve this aim, we will continue to work to strengthen our relationship with other Departments and bodies in relation to the development of renewable energy policy and look at ways in which we can increase our impact on energy policy relative to our role and in line with the DARD's strategic direction.

## Section B: Response to the Renewable Energy External Stakeholder Group Recommendations

The following strategic objectives will underpin this aim.

1. **Strengthen DARD's contribution to the ongoing development of an enabling and joined up policy framework;**
2. **Continue to build the capability of the sector through training, knowledge exchange and technology transfer;**
3. **Deliver research, innovation and information to support and encourage uptake of renewable energy opportunities.**
4. **Continue to develop market understanding and promote opportunities in the renewable energy supply chain for the agriculture and forestry sectors;**

Our interim Renewable Energy Action Plan, sets out the initial and interim actions the Department will take to maintain our current approach and act on the REESG findings, while we further develop our approach under Phase 2 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy and Action Plan.



## Section C: DARD Interim Renewable Energy Action Plan 2013/14.

### Strategic Objective 1

Strengthen DARD's contribution to the ongoing development of an enabling and joined up policy framework

Action	Action Details	Supporting tasks	Timescale	Lead	Outcomes :
1	Ongoing delivery and monitoring of Tranche 1 and 2 the Biomass Processing Challenge Fund (BPCF).	1.1. Monitoring and publication of project information.	31 March 2014 (ongoing monitoring for 5 years following completion).	CCREB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> <li>• Increased demand for biomass feedstocks.</li> <li>• Displacement of fossil fuels.</li> <li>• Increase on-farm resource and energy efficiency and business competitiveness.</li> </ul>
		1.2. Increase awareness of additional/ alternative funding sources and publish on websites/portals.	31 March 2014	CCREB/ CAFRE/ SCDB.	
2	Actively contribute to Renewable Energy policy development and decision making process.	2.1. Maintain record of and continue to be represented on interdepartmental working groups and contribute to development and implementation of strategies/ plans.	Ongoing.	CCREB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to a supportive policy framework which facilitates the development of on-farm renewable energy opportunities.</li> <li>• Increase on-farm resource and energy efficiency and business competitiveness.</li> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> <li>• Displacement of fossil fuels.</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective 1 (Continued)

Strengthen DARD's contribution to the ongoing development of an enabling and joined up policy framework

Action	Action Details	Supporting tasks	Timescale	Lead	Outcomes :
2		2.2. Continue to work with DETI to establish links and contribute to renewable energy policy development and support measures.	Ongoing.	CCREB.	
		2.3. Engage with InvestNI to explore links and opportunities for DARD and the land based sector.	31 March 2014.	CCREB.	
		2.4. Engage with Matrix Panel on energy to explore links and opportunities for DARD and the land based sector.	31 March 2014.	CCREB.	
		2.5. Explore options to integrate renewable energy measures within development of new NIRD in renewable energy.	31 March 2014.	CCREB.	

## Strategic Objective 1 (Continued)

Strengthen DARD's contribution to the ongoing development of an enabling and joined up policy framework

Action	Action Details	Supporting tasks	Timescale	Lead	Outcomes :
3	Review and update directory of support via NI Direct, Rural NI, DARD website and portals, signposting links to other Departments/ information sources as appropriate.	3.1. Review existing content and update to comprehensive.	31 March 2014.	CCREB/ CAFRE/ SCDB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to a supportive policy framework which facilitates the development of on-farm renewable energy opportunities.</li> <li>• Raise awareness of and build confidence in renewable energy technologies.</li> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> <li>• Support an informed and skilled sector.</li> </ul>
4	Develop performance monitoring framework.	4.1. Develop measures/targets / indicators as appropriate to key actions.	31 March 2014.	RECG.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to a supportive policy framework which facilitates the development of on-farm renewable energy opportunities.</li> </ul>
5	Integrate the DARD Renewable Energy Action Plan into the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy and Action Plan.		Summer 2014.	CCREB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to a supportive policy framework which facilitates the development of on-farm renewable energy opportunities.</li> <li>• Increase on-farm resource and energy efficiency and business competitiveness.</li> <li>• Raise awareness of and build confidence in renewable energy technologies.</li> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective 2

Continue to build the capability of the sector through training, knowledge exchange and technology transfer

Action	Action Details	Supporting tasks	Timescale	Lead	Outcomes :
6	Ongoing development and delivery of a Practical On-Farm Renewable Energy knowledge exchange events per year.		February 2014.	CAFRE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of and build confidence in renewable energy technologies.</li> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> <li>• Support an informed and skilled sector.</li> </ul>
7	Maintain and update information on Renewable Energy Portals for the land based sector.	7.1. Ongoing review and maintenance of AD Portal.	Quarterly.	SCDB/ CAFRE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of and build confidence in renewable energy technologies.</li> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> <li>• Support an informed and skilled sector.</li> </ul>
		7.2. Finalise and launch Biomass portal.	Launch date to be confirmed.	SCDB/ CAFRE.	
8	Continue to develop and deliver renewable energy industry training and knowledge exchange programmes at CAFRE in line with industry need and sector developments.	8.1. Maintain continuous improvement approach to ongoing monitoring, evaluation and development of training.	31 March 2014.	CAFRE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of and build confidence in renewable energy technologies.</li> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> <li>• Support an informed and skilled sector.</li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective 3

Strengthen DARD's contribution to the ongoing development of an enabling and joined up policy framework

Action	Action Details	Supporting tasks	Timescale	Lead	Outcomes :
9	Continue to develop the renewable energy visitor experience at AFBI Hillsborough, focusing on industry needs.	9.1. Host two industry events at the EREC.	31 March 2014.	AFBI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of and build confidence in renewable energy technologies.</li> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> <li>• Support an informed and skilled sector.</li> <li>• Increased demand for biomass feedstocks.</li> <li>• Displacement of fossil fuels.</li> </ul>
10	Ongoing delivery of Renewable Energy Research programme.	10.1. Deliver current research projects.	31 March 2014.	AFBI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of and build confidence in renewable energy technologies.</li> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> <li>• Support an informed and skilled sector.</li> </ul>
		10.2. Review of renewable energy research projects.	31 March 2014.	CCREB.	
		10.3. Identify future research gaps/priorities in line with E&I calls.	31 January 2014.	CCREB.	
		10.4. Identify external funding opportunities including EU calls and other government departments/bodies & industry.	Ongoing.	AFBI.	

## Strategic Objective 3 (Continued)

Strengthen DARD's contribution to the ongoing development of an enabling and joined up policy framework

Action	Action Details	Supporting tasks	Timescale	Lead	Outcomes :
10		10.5. Identify and progress partnerships of interest with EU member states/ regions.	Ongoing.	AFBI.	



## Strategic Objective 4

Continue to develop market understanding and promote opportunities in the renewable energy supply chain for the agriculture and forestry sectors

Action	Action Details	Supporting tasks	Timescale	Lead	Outcomes :
11	Promote Renewable energy projects and case studies via the Supply Chain Development Programme.	11.1. Review and evaluation of current renewables supply chain development projects.	31 March 2014	SCDB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of and build confidence in renewable energy technologies.</li> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> <li>• Support an informed and skilled sector.</li> <li>• Identification and promotion of business opportunities for the land based and forestry sectors.</li> </ul>
		11.2. Ongoing development and promotion of renewables project.	31 March 2014.	SCDB.	
12	Ongoing support and further development of Focus Farm approach to showcase renewable energy opportunities and supply chains.	12.1. Review, evaluate and further develop Focus Farm approach in context of new Rural Development Programme to increase effectiveness of programme.	31 March 2014.	CAFRE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of and build confidence in renewable energy technologies.</li> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> <li>• Support an informed and skilled sector.</li> <li>• Identification and promotion of business opportunities for the land based and forestry sectors.</li> </ul>

#### Strategic Objective 4 (Continued)

Continue to develop market understanding and promote opportunities in the renewable energy supply chain for the agriculture and forestry sectors

Action	Action Details	Supporting tasks	Timescale	Lead	Outcomes :
13	Establish accurate baseline of those farms/forestry enterprises meeting their own energy needs.	13.1. Review and evaluate baseline exercise to date.	31 March 2014.	CAFRE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and promotion of business opportunities for the land based and forestry sectors.</li> <li>• Support an informed and skilled sector.</li> <li>• Increased adoption of on-farm RE technologies.</li> </ul>
		13.2. Explore options to routinely collect and publish data on advice provision and adoption rates.	31 March 2014.	CAFRE.	

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