

Agriculture

One of the major challenges facing rural areas is the decline of farm numbers. This is highlighted in the attached table.

Viability Status of Farms – Regional Analysis, 1999 NFS

Region 6: Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary SR, Waterford, Wexford

Category	Number	Mean Family Farm Income (£)	Mean Size (ha UAA)
Large Viable	6,455	27,650	58
Small Viable	996	13,681	28
Part-time Farmers	3,513	3,759	30
Non-Viable “Young”	4,235	5,417	42
Non-Viable “Old”	507	2,821	46
ALL	15,705	14,624	45

Source: 1999 Teagasc NFS, M. Cushion July 2001

(Retaining the farm family population is addressed in a matchmaking measure under the Economic Development Innovation Programme).

The present system of one-off housing may appear to suit farmers who are in financial trouble, who can sell off a site to relieve the burden. The Rural Development Review Group argued that farmers in serious financial difficulty would be better off in the long run selling their farms, rather than selling sites on a piecemeal basis. However, some farmers sell sites to fund vital farm development projects such as pollution control, investments which do not provide any extra cash for the debts incurred.

Another concern of the Rural Development Review Group is that many new residents into the countryside who have no empathy with farming continuously complain about farming smells, putting additional psychological pressure on farmers. Ireland’s bovine population is the country’s main contributor to greenhouse gases. The Three Rivers Project has innovative actions in South Tipperary with the farming community/TEAGASC in targeting pollution control and nutrient management planning. The main EU innovative action in relation to agriculture and the environment has been REPS (Rural Environment Protection Scheme)

