

PRESS RELEASE

ACA reaffirm their commitment to assisting farmers with forthcoming deadlines

28th March 2020

The ACA reaffirm their commitment to assisting Irish farmers with important deadlines in the forthcoming weeks whilst continuing to work in line with HSE and government guidelines. According to ACA President Tom Canning 'As an important service in the agricultural industry, ACA members are on target to submit all applications for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and associated applications before the 15th of May and other deadlines such as the Nitrates derogation on the 24th of April'.

'Our members continue to abide by the HSE recommendations in our role as farm advisors during the current coronavirus crisis' stated Canning. He added 'Members' offices are closed to the general public but their businesses' are operating as best they can in the current circumstances. At any other time of the year our members could reduce their working hours but regrettable this crisis coincides with the most important date in the farming calendar (the BPS deadline of the 15th of May) and ACA and its members are committed to helping our clients and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in ensuring all applications are submitted on time. We will play our part in ensuring there are no delays to our clients' payments later this year'.

Canning added 'We have been working very closely with the DAFM since the coronavirus restrictions were put in place and we fully support all efforts to keep the critical agricultural sector operational whilst abiding by government recommendations. Over 130,000 BPS applications must be submitted by the 15th of May and ACA members will be involved in the submission of 55,000 of those. To ensure farmers payments remain on course for the end of this year, ACA members will continue to work hard to help our clients over the next number of weeks'.

ACA will closely monitor the situation and will continue to engage with the DAFM to find solutions to any additional challenges that occur. Canning concluded by stating 'We are currently compiling and proposing solutions to a number of challenges we envisage over the next number of weeks and months in our sector and we will present them to the DAFM within days. It is important to thank our members and their staff during this difficult time, the DAFM for working with us and also our farmer clients who continue to be extremely cooperative and understanding. We will ensure that no farmer will be forgotten in the next few weeks and in the meantime, everyone's health and wellbeing is of utmost importance'.

ACA's updated arrangements as of the 28th of March 2020:

- ACA members' offices continue to remain closed to the public until further notice for the benefit of our clients and staff.

- The **priority for ACA members is to work from home or remotely if at all possible** but where members and their staff must attend their workplaces, health and safety guidelines as recommended by the HSE, will be strictly implemented.
- Pre-arranged essential meetings with clients are being postponed. This will be reviewed again after the current restrictions are assessed on the 12th of April.
- **All farm visits are being postponed immediately.** Again, this will be reviewed after the current restrictions are assessed on the 12th of April.
- **Communications with clients** will be completed **through phonecalls and emails** until further notice.
- ACA members will be **entirely flexible to meet the needs of our clients** as we understand these are exceptional times for both them and their families.
- ACA members will ensure to **keep their clients informed** and work closely with them to meet all deadlines. If a farmer is concerned about any aspect of their farm management or business, then they should contact their ACA farm consultant/advisor for assistance.
- Working hours and circumstances may change for some ACA members and their clients will be informed directly by the individual member.
- Updates on behalf of ACA and its members will be available on our website www.aca.ie

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For further information contact: **Mr. Breian Carroll,**
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Note to Editors:

The Agricultural Consultants Association (ACA) are the sole representative body for private agricultural consultants and advisors in Ireland. Currently the ACA have 166 member offices across all of Ireland and employ 262 Agricultural and Environmental graduates, 17 Forestry Consultants and 120 employed as either administration or technical staff. Members of ACA advise in the region of 55,000 Irish farmers, confirming the private advisory service as the largest in Ireland.

New Vision and Mission Statement of ACA

1. Our vision is to be the most influential and dynamic Agri-business association consulted nationally and internationally and recognised for its excellence in representing the world-class independent professional Agri-business advisors in Ireland
2. The Mission statement: to bring our Vision into reality the Association represents and supports its members and is the professional body consulted on policy by government. The Association ensures that standards of excellence are maintained among the members through its code of ethics, admission qualifications and continuous professional education. This allows members to independently advise and assist the Irish farming community to be profitably sustainable economically, environmentally and socially to ensure an enhanced quality of life for all in Ireland.