

Policy Brief

BBioNets

The Circular Bioeconomy in Ireland: What is Needed to Foster the Growth of Bio-Based Technologies

October 2026

A Strategic Agenda for Policy Recommendations

Point of Attention	Target Audiences	Funding Instruments	Timeline
Number of EIP-AGRI projects on high-value bio-based materials	Government and all sectors; co-ops; primary producers; industry	Alternative funding sources	Medium-term
Economic performance and modernisation of farms	Farmers; grain processors, breweries, feed companies and mills	Infrastructure investment; ingredient validation support	Short to long term
Unclear funding streams/guidelines and announcement of calls	Primary producers; research-industry partnerships; DAFM, CAP Network Ireland	EIP-AGRI Phase 2 consultation support; application drafting grants	TBD
Rural development and youth attraction	Rural communities, government bodies, farmers, foresters, educators	Cross-government and rural development funds; private investment	Long-term
Integration of primary producers into the agri-food chain	Farm forest owners	Payment for farm products (e.g. wool)	Medium-term
Low number and short duration of agri/forestry bio-based EIP-AGRI projects	Farmers, foresters, side-stream processors, DAFM	ISIF; co-fund open to side-stream processors; EIP-AGRI continuation funding	Medium-term
Inclusion of forestry in the Irish CAP	Forest growers and small woodland owners; DAFM	Post-2027 CAP (incl. EIP-AGRI)	Long-term
EIP-AGRI OG co-fund model (ERDF, national or industry)	Farmers; industry co-funders; DAFM, regional assemblies (ERDF)	ERDF; national or industry co-fund	TBD

CAP: Common Agricultural Policy; DAFM: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; EIP- AGRI: The European Innovation Partnership for agricultural productivity and sustainability; ERDF: European Regional Development Fund; ISIF: Ireland Strategic Investment Fund; OG: Operational Group; TBD: To be defined

1. Policy Context

In Ireland, bio-based activity in agriculture and forestry still focuses mostly on energy, while higher-value materials are underexplored. Funding exists but is fragmented and poorly signposted, and many EIP-AGRI Operational Group applicants are first-timers. One-year EIP-AGRI projects limit scale and technology readiness, and forestry is not funded under the Irish CAP, leaving the two sectors disconnected. Weak farm performance, low generational renewal and the limited position of small farmers and foresters in value chains add to these barriers.

2. Stakeholder Priorities

Stakeholders identified eight priorities: more EIP-AGRI projects on high-value bio-based materials; modernising farms; clearer funding streams and advance announcement of calls; rural development and youth attraction; integrating primary producers into value chains; more, and longer, agri and forestry

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bio-based Operational Groups; forestry in the Irish CAP; and a co-fund model with the ERDF, government or industry.

3. Methodology

The evidence derives from a preparatory analysis of the Irish policy framework and EIP-AGRI Operational Groups, and two workshops with farmers, foresters, co-operatives, advisors, researchers and government representatives. Points of attention were validated at Teagasc Johnstown Castle on 14 October 2025; the results were then discussed and validated during the online Policy Workshop held on 14 November 2025 and analysed thematically.

4. Priority Areas for Policy Action

The key message is clear: farmers and foresters must be at the centre of Ireland's bioeconomy, with clearer funding routes, practical skills and a fair share of the value they create.

1. Skills and peer learning. Modernised farming curricula and peer-to-peer learning to help farmers and young entrants adopt bio-based practices.

2. On-farm innovation. Longer EIP-AGRI projects (ideally 3–5 years), a published call schedule with planned themes, Phase 2 application support and a co-fund model.

3. Evidence and case studies. Research on successful bio-based cases, especially high-value materials, shared through the CAP Network.

4. Cross-government coordination. A cross-sector market framework that reduces adopters' risk and integrates forestry into the CAP.

5. Regional co-op led hubs. Co-operative hubs and infrastructure so small farmers and foresters can aggregate biomass and side streams and capture value.

In summary, the Irish experience shows that Bio-Based Technologies can diversify farm incomes and strengthen rural communities, provided that EIP-AGRI support becomes clearer and longer-term and that agriculture and forestry are brought closer together.

Main Recommendations for Ireland

Recommendations	Categorisation
Farming curriculum modernisation & peer-to-peer learning	Training & capacity building
Integrated on-farm innovation &acceleration framework	Access to public & private support
Promote research to identify successful bio-based case studies	Communication & information
Cross-sector bio-based market development & cross-government coordination framework for risk mitigation	Policy coherence & regulatory simplification
Regional co-op led bioeconomy hubs & infrastructure programme	Market development

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