

# An overview of the Pearl Mussel Project 2018-2023

The Pearl Mussel Project was established to address concerns around the pressures from agricultural land-use on the conservation of the rare and endangered freshwater pearl mussel in Ireland.



The project aimed to answer the following:

Can a **results-based approach** be adapted to target freshwater ecosystems?

Can learnings feed into mainstream agri-environment schemes?

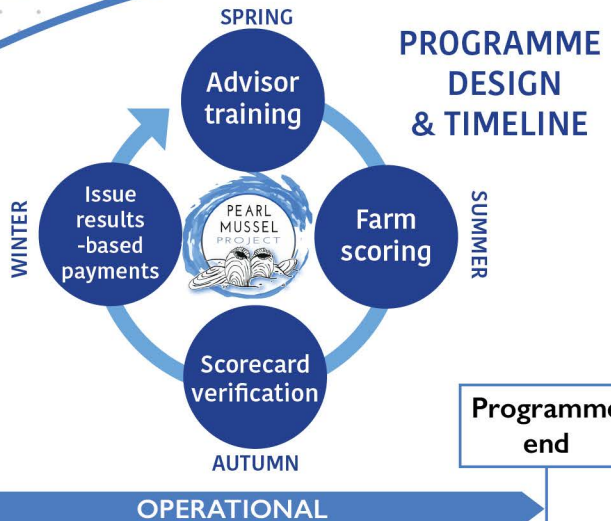
Can a **locally-led approach** be successfully upscaled to a regional level, with a large number of participants?



**Programme design** with input from farmers and other stakeholders.



**Launch** of results-based programme.



**Programme end**

May 2018

March 2019

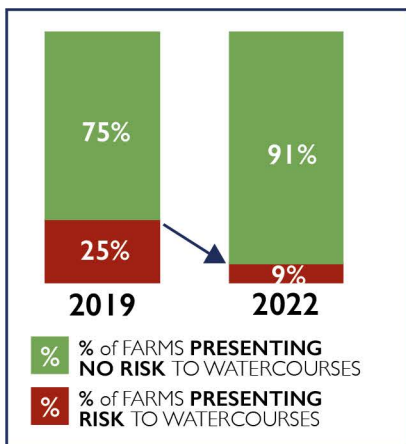
December 2023



# Pearl Mussel Project

# Key outcomes

## RISK TO WATERCOURSES



Verena Berard interviewed our hill farmers to research.

## HABITAT QUALITY



Average grassland habitat score increased from **5.5 to 6.0** ↑ 9%

Average peatland habitat score increased from **6.9 to 7.5** ↑ 9%

Average woodland habitat score increased from **7.4 to 7.5** ↑ 1%

## SUPPORTING ACTIONS

In excess of **1,250** supporting actions approved by the project team.

Over **€265,000** paid out to farmers for delivering supporting actions.

**35%** of supporting actions were not claimed.



SUPPORTING ACTIONS BY POPULARITY



Peatland restoration as part of supporting actions

## FARM PAYMENTS

Over **€7.5 million** in payments issued to farmers throughout the project.

Average annual payment to farmers was **€4,086**.



## PARTICIPATION

In all **492** farmer participants across 8 catchments, **>35,000ha** (85%) of farmland in catchments scored **>95%** retention rate of participants.

## OUTREACH & TRAINING

**1,729** attendees at **84** farmer training events, with an average of **21** at each event.

**95%** of farmers attended training each year.

**20** farm advisor training events with an average of **25** attendees per event.

**63** farm advisors formally trained in results-based methods.

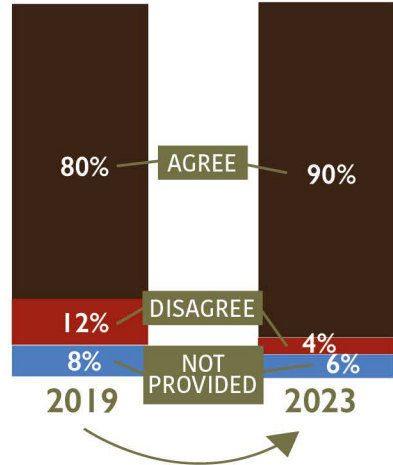
Regular posting on social media with overall reach of over **950,000**.

Extensive **stakeholder engagement**.

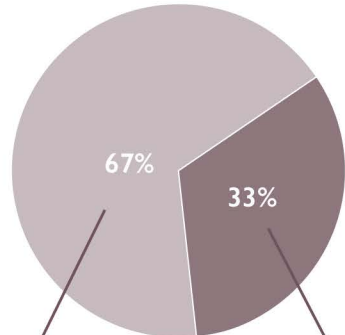
Media engagement included multiple appearances on **TV & radio**.

## FARMER OPINION

WILDLIFE IS A VALUABLE ASSET ON MY FARM



## FARM ADVISOR OPINION TOWARDS PMP TRAINING



The training provided by the PMP team has...

Provided me with the skills to carry out my role as PMP advisor effectively.

Increased my knowledge and is useful for my career progression.



## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Added benefits of the Pearl Mussel Project to aid biodiversity, carbon, and water; were investigated throughout the project on participant farms.

Research was carried out by Mark O'Connor (left) and Poppy Overy (right) during the project.



**THANK YOU**

On behalf of the team and our partners, we would like to extend thanks to all participants for their involvement with the project over the last 5 years.

**We couldn't have done it without you!**



The Pearl Mussel Project is an EIP (European Innovation Partnership) Locally Led Scheme. The Project is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine as part of Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

