



National Fertiliser Database Information Note

Updated: 23/08/2023

Background

The Veterinary Medicinal Products, Medicated Feed and Fertilisers Regulation Act 2023, which amends the Fertilisers, Feeding Stuffs and Mineral Mixtures Act 1955, was signed by the President and became law on 11th July 2023.

The Veterinary Medicinal Products, Medicated Feed and Fertilisers Regulations Act 2023 was signed by the President and became law on 11th July 2023. Secondary legislation has been enacted to commence the provisions in the Act that relate to the establishment of a National Fertiliser Database, including registration of Fertiliser Economic Operators and Professional Fertiliser End Users and dates for data submission.

The timeline for the implementation of the provisions of the legislation is as follows:

Date	Provision
24 July	The day on which Part 3 of the Veterinary Medicinal Products, Medicated Feed and Fertilisers Regulation Act 2023 comes into operation (<i>Commencement Order Statutory Instrument</i>)
	Registration opens for Professional Fertiliser End Users (farmers, landscape gardeners, sport's club etc.)
	Registration opens for Fertiliser Economic Operators (manufacturers/blenders, merchants, importers etc.)
1 September	Date from which a person entered in the Registers must submit information to the Minister for the purposes of section 7D (2) of the Fertilisers Feeding Stuffs and Mineral Mixtures Act 1955 (<i>National Fertiliser Database Statutory Instrument</i>)
	Legislative requirements on the purchase/sale/import of fertiliser come into force. Date from which it is an offence to sell or purchase fertiliser without being registered. Date from which imports into the State must be notified to the National fertiliser Database (within 72 hours of import). Date from which all data on fertiliser transactions to be recorded.
14 September	Declaration Date of Closing Stocks for Professional Fertiliser End Users
30 September	Declaration Date of Closing Stocks for Fertiliser Economic Operators
15 October	Date by which Professional Fertiliser End Users and Fertiliser Economic Operators must submit closing stocks, including NIL stock where relevant, to the National Fertiliser Database.
15 December	Date by which Fertiliser Economic Operators must submit September, October and November 2023 sales data to the National Fertiliser Database.
15 January 2024	Date by which Fertiliser Economic Operators must submit December 2023 sales data to the National Fertiliser Database. All monthly sales data from 1 st December 2023 required by the 15 th of the subsequent month

Information in the National Fertiliser Database will primarily be entered by merchants (Fertiliser Economic Operators) selling fertiliser. The database will also be populated with data from farmers or other Professional Fertiliser End Users in terms of closing stocks on farms/premises on a specified date.

There are two ways in which a Co-op or Agri-merchant will be able to provide data:

1. The data can be uploaded through an Application Programming Interface (API), facilitating automatic upload of data from the Co-op or agri-merchant's IT system directly to the National Fertiliser Database;
or
2. The data can be entered manually through the Department's digital online service www.agfood.ie.

Farmers will provide the data via the Department's online portal www.agfood.ie.

Establishing the National Fertiliser Database will meet a commitment that Ireland agreed to during negotiations with the European Commission to secure the current extension to Ireland's Nitrates Derogation. At this stage all EU Member States availing of a Nitrates Derogation have, or are in the process of setting up, a National Fertiliser Database.

Farmers and other professional fertiliser end users will have the option to view and download their data, if they wish, allowing them to easily verify their compliance with voluntary scheme or regulatory limits. The database will significantly reduce the existing reporting burden for farmers availing of the Nitrates Derogation. By minimising the reporting burden, the database will also benefit farmers who wish to participate in Eco-Scheme actions relating to fertiliser or the use of lime from 2024 onwards.

In addition, the National Fertiliser Database will provide reliable data back to farmers which they can then use to qualify for possible voluntary industry sustainability initiatives that will reward farmer actions. For example, in relation to the use of lime or the use of 'protected' urea rather than alternative forms of chemical nitrogen.

This information note outlines how farmers, other professional fertiliser end users and agri-merchants will interact with the database. It also provides answers to a number of frequently asked questions in relation to the database.

What the National Fertiliser Database means for farmers and other professional fertiliser end users

Under the legislation, a farmer who wishes to purchase fertiliser (including lime) must register as a Professional Fertiliser End User. Farmers and other professional fertiliser end users will be able to do this themselves, or through their Agent, using the Department's online portal www.agfood.ie.

From 1st September, all fertiliser dispatched from merchants' premises to farms or other premises storing fertiliser, moving from farm-to-farm or imported directly by a farmer must be recorded and the data submitted to the National Fertiliser Database by the set deadline. The information in relation to all fertiliser dispatched from merchants' premises to farms or other premises storing fertiliser must be entered by the merchant.

If a farmer or other professional fertiliser end user wishes to purchase fertiliser, he/she must be registered as a Professional End User with the Department and his/her herd number will be assigned as the unique professional fertiliser end user registration identification number. For those professional fertiliser end users that do not have a herd number, the Department will issue a unique fertiliser identification number.

A merchant who wishes to sell fertiliser must check that the person who wishes to purchase the fertiliser is registered as a professional fertiliser end user and will request the professional fertiliser end user's registration

identification number (which will be the herd number in the case of a farmer) and record this with the transaction details. The database will record quantities of product transferred to each farmer; it will not record any financial information.

During the year, each farmer will be able to view and download their data from the database if they wish. When the fertiliser spreading season for nitrogen and phosphorous ends on the 14th of September, farmers will have one month to enter details of closing stock of fertiliser (including nil stock) on their farm (i.e fertiliser on-farm at 23:59 on 14th September). This data, together with any fertiliser purchases from the 15th of September, will be the opening stock value for the following year. Having a record of opening and closing stock of fertiliser on farm will allow farmers accurately and easily record their overall fertiliser use during the year.

Similarly, non-farmer professional fertiliser end users will also be required to enter details of any closing stock (including nil stocks) of fertilisers held on their premises; this will occur in the same manner as for farmers.

What the National Fertiliser Database means for agri-merchants

Under the legislation, fertiliser retailers must register with the Department as a Fertiliser Economic Operator. A Fertiliser Economic Operator can only sell fertiliser to a Professional Fertiliser End User if the end user is registered as a Professional Fertiliser End User Register. Farmers who register will be assigned their herd number as their unique professional fertiliser end user registration identification number. Non-farmer Professional Fertiliser End Users will be assigned a unique identification number by the Department.

From 1st September, each consignment of fertiliser leaving a merchant's premises for use by a Professional Fertiliser End User must be entered on the National Fertiliser Database. The merchant will do this in one of two ways:

1. Through an Application Programming Interface (API) facilitating automatic upload of data from the fertiliser economic operator's IT system, or
2. Through data being entered manually by the fertiliser economic operator on the Department's online portal www.agfood.ie

Data must be entered on the database within a specified timeframe from when the fertiliser dispatched to the Fertiliser End User. These dates are set down in legislation. September, October and November 2023 data can be submitted by 15th December 2023. From 1st December, monthly returns must be submitted by the 15th of the subsequent month. The database will record physical quantities of product transferred to each fertiliser end user; it will not record any financial information. A Fertiliser Economic Operator will be able to look up, the information they provided to the database regarding each customer.

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1.0 Legislation and National Fertiliser Database (NFD) Update

1.1 What is the new legislation governing the National Fertiliser Database?

The Veterinary Medicinal Products, Medicated Feed and Fertilisers Regulations Act 2023 was signed by the President and became law on 11th July 2023. Secondary legislation has been enacted to commence the provisions in the Act that relate to the establishment of a National Fertiliser Database, including registration of Fertiliser Economic Operators and Professional Fertiliser End Users and dates for data. The legislation has the following definitions:

- A *professional fertiliser end user* is defined as any person who uses fertiliser products in the course of his or her professional activities, including as an operator, technician, employer or self-employed person, whether in the farming or other sectors, but excludes private domestic use.
- A *fertiliser economic operator* is defined as a manufacturer, authorised representative, importer or distributor (whether wholesale or retail) of a fertilising product.

1.2 Why was this legislation introduced?

This legislation establishes a National Fertiliser Database, which will meet a commitment that Ireland agreed to during negotiations with the European Commission to secure the current extension to Ireland's Nitrates Derogation. Currently, all EU Member States availing of a Nitrates Derogation have, or are in the process of establishing, a National Fertiliser Database.

In addition, as part of its climate action plans, the Department seeks to encourage farmers and other professional fertiliser users to reduce their use of fertiliser products. To this end, as part of the CAP Strategic Plan the Department will operate Schemes that will financially reward farmers who demonstrably reduce their fertiliser use.

However, in order to roll out such schemes and verify compliance with Nitrates regulations, the Department first needs to introduce a system that will enable it to monitor the manufacture, importation, retail and use of fertiliser products in the State. Such a system will thereafter enable the Department to, *inter alia*, verify compliance with regulations and Eco schemes.

The National Fertiliser Database will record fertiliser sales along the supply chain and will inform policy decisions on environmental and water ambitions with a view to achieving compliance. The Database once established will provide reliable data to farmers that they can use to demonstrate their compliance with any future voluntary industry sustainability/quality assurance initiatives.

1.3 What is the National Fertiliser Database and when will it be launched?

The National Fertiliser Database is a new database designed to record the registration of fertiliser economic operators and professional end users and to record quantities of fertiliser moving from point of import/manufacture to end user.

The National Fertiliser Database will be launched on the 24th July, when registration will open for fertiliser economic operators and professional end users.

The database will contain fertiliser transaction data from 1st September 2023, submitted by the Fertiliser Economic Operators (largely Agri-Merchants/Co-ops) and Professional Fertiliser End Users (largely farmers).

1.4 What information will be held on the Register of Professional Fertiliser End Users?

The following details will be held on the register:

- The person's name
- The name and address of his or her place of business or activity
- The nature of the business or activity operated
- The phone number, email address and other relevant contact details
- The unique Fertiliser End User registration identification number (which in the case of farmers will be their herd number)

Essentially, this is information already held by the Department regarding each herd number.

1.5 Following registration, what information will a Professional Fertiliser End User have to submit?

Each Professional Fertiliser End User will have to submit details of fertiliser products (including nil) on their farm/premises at 23:59 on 14th September by 15th October each year. This declaration, together with fertiliser purchases to year end, will form the opening stock for the following year.

1.6 What information will be held on the Register of Fertiliser Economic Operators?

The following details will be held on the register:

- The person's name
- The name and address of his or her place of business or activity
- The nature of the business or activity operated
- The phone number, email address and other relevant contact details
- The unique Fertiliser Economic Operator registration identification number

1.7 Following registration, what information will a Fertiliser Economic Operator have to submit?

A Fertiliser Economic Operator who is an **importer/manufacturer** must submit:

- their unique Fertiliser Economic Operator registration number,
- the trade name of the fertiliser product imported or manufactured,
- the quantity of the product imported or manufactured
- the quantity of product sold
- the unique registration identification number of the Fertiliser Economic Operator or Professional Fertiliser End User, as the case may be, acquiring the product,
- the declared nutrient content of the fertiliser product,
- the inhibitor used, if relevant,
- the manufacturer of the fertiliser product, if relevant,
- if the fertiliser product was repackaged or re-labelled, the relevant details,
- if the fertiliser product is intended for the domestic market only, export only, or both, and
- the neutralising value, reactivity and grain size for liming materials only,
- the date of import, manufacture or transfer of product.

A Fertiliser Economic Operator who is a **wholesaler/retailer** must submit:

- their unique Fertiliser Economic Operator registration number,
- the trade name of the fertiliser product concern,
- the unique registration identification number of the Fertiliser Economic Operator or Professional Fertiliser End User, as the case may be, acquiring or returning the product,

- the date of transfer of the fertiliser product, and
- the quantity of the product acquired or returned

The legislation states that the Minister may prescribe additional information, as required, by a Fertiliser Economic Operator for entry on the database.

1.8 What is the definition of fertiliser?

A fertiliser means (subject to any exemptions which may be prescribed) any article (including, in particular, lime and ground limestone) manufactured for use as a fertiliser of the soil and includes any substance or mixture, applied or intended to be applied on plants or their rhizosphere.

1.9 What fertiliser details will be recorded on the database?

The quantity of product supplied along with its nutrient content will be recorded. The following details are required:

- the trade name of the fertiliser product
- the quantity of the product
- the declared nutrient content of the fertiliser product,
- the inhibitor used, if relevant,
- the manufacturer of the fertiliser product, if relevant,
- if the fertiliser product was repackaged or re-labelled, the relevant details,
- the neutralising value, reactivity and grain size for liming materials only,
- the date of import, manufacture or transfer of product.

1.10 What are the benefits for farmers and other professional fertiliser end users?

The National Fertiliser Database will provide reliable data back to farmers which they can then use to qualify for possible voluntary industry sustainability initiatives that reward farmer actions, for example, in relation to the use of lime or the use of protected urea rather than alternative forms of chemical nitrogen.

Once established the National Fertiliser Database will cut down on requirement for paper records that farmers must maintain.

Having the National Fertiliser Database will be important in terms of securing any future Nitrates Derogation which will benefit those farmers availing of same.

1.11 Is the data live and can I use the database to check the quantity of fertiliser I have purchased from various merchants in the year?

The National Fertiliser Database will not operate as a real-time system. Data on fertiliser transactions will be uploaded by merchants to the database and merchants will have to enter data within a specified timeframe after the end of the month when the fertiliser was dispatched to the end-user. This timeframe is set down in secondary legislation. Once the data is recorded on the database, a farmer will be able to see all their fertiliser purchases regardless of where they bought the product.

2.0 Fertiliser Economic Operators and Fertiliser End User Queries

2.1 As a farmer, how do I access the National Fertiliser Database?

Each farmer (or their agent) will register with the Department and access the National Fertiliser Database through the Department's online portal www.agfood.ie. To do this, the farmer will need an active herd number and be registered on agfood.ie.

Where a farmer has already authorised an agent to complete their Basic Payment Scheme application on agfood.ie, that agent will automatically be given permission to act as the farmer's agent for the National Fertiliser Database. If a farmer wishes, they will be able to assign a different agent to apply for registration as a Professional Fertiliser End User or Fertiliser Economic Operator, where applicable, enter their opening/closing stock or view their details on the National Fertiliser Database.

2.2 I am a farmer. What do I have to do if I am involved in transfer of fertiliser from farm-to-farm?

For a farmer to transfer fertiliser to another farmer they must also register as a Fertiliser Economic Operator (which is a separate registration to that of a Professional Fertiliser End User) and then they must enter details of these fertiliser movements on the National Fertiliser Database in accordance with the timelines prescribed in secondary legislation.

2.3 I am a farmer. What do I have to do if I import fertiliser from Northern Ireland or elsewhere for my own use?

If a farmer wishes to import fertiliser they must also register as a Fertiliser Economic Operator (which is a separate registration to that of a Professional Fertiliser End User) and then they must enter details of all fertiliser imports on the National Fertiliser Database in accordance with the timelines prescribed in secondary legislation (as outlined in the table above).

2.4 How will non-farmer fertiliser users be facilitated?

All non-farmer Professional Fertiliser End Users (for example groundskeepers of sporting organisations, those involved in landscaping, turf grass management etc.) must register with the Department to purchase fertiliser.

On registration, each non-farmer Professional Fertiliser End User will be allocated a unique Professional Fertiliser End User registration identification number and they will use this number as their identifier on the National Fertiliser Database..

2.5 After I have registered, what do I have to do before I can buy fertiliser from my local co-op/agri-merchant?

When a farmer or other Professional Fertiliser End User, wishes to purchase fertiliser (including lime), he/she must provide his/her unique Professional Fertiliser End User identification number to the person supplying the fertiliser. For farmers, this will be their herd number.

The co-op/agri-merchant will input details of the transaction onto the National Fertiliser Database and the transaction details will be registered against this unique identifier.

2.6 What is considered the transaction date for fertiliser movements?

The National Fertiliser Database will record the date of dispatch of fertiliser as the transaction date, NOT the date the fertiliser was purchased or paid for. In many cases this may well be the same date. The database will not record any financial information pertaining to the transaction.

2.7 Do farmers certified as “Organic” need to register with the National Fertiliser Database?

Farmers certified as “Organic” will need to register if they intend purchasing lime, or other fertilisers authorized for use in organic production.

2.8 Following registration, what information will a Professional Fertiliser End User have to submit to the Department?

Annually, Professional Fertiliser End Users will have to declare the closing stock of fertiliser held on their farm/premises at 23:59 on 14th September by 15th October.

2.9 What information will be held on the Register of Fertiliser Economic Operators?

The following details will be held on the register of fertiliser economic operators:

- The person’s name
- The name and address of his or her place of business
- The nature of the business operated
- The phone number, email address and other relevant contact details
- The unique Fertiliser Economic Operator registration identification number

2.10 Following registration, what information will a Fertiliser Economic Operator/merchant have to submit?

A Fertiliser Economic Operator, who is an **importer/manufacturer** must submit:

- their unique Fertiliser Economic Operator registration number
- the trade name of the fertiliser product imported or manufactured
- the quantity of the product imported or manufactured
- the quantity of product sold
- the unique registration identification number of the Fertiliser Economic Operator or Professional Fertiliser End User, as the case may be, acquiring the product
 - the declared nutrient content of the fertiliser product
 - the inhibitor used, if relevant
 - the manufacturer of the fertiliser product, if relevant
 - if the fertiliser product was repackaged or re-labelled, the relevant details
 - if the fertiliser product is intended for the domestic market only, export only, or both, and
 - the neutralising value, reactivity and grain size for liming materials only

A Fertiliser Economic Operator who is a **wholesaler/retailer**, such as a merchant or co-op, must submit:

- their unique Fertiliser Economic Operator registration number
- the trade name of the fertiliser product concerned
- the unique registration identification number of the Fertiliser Economic Operator or Professional Fertiliser End User, as the case may be, acquiring or returning the product
- the date of transfer of the fertiliser product
- the quantity of the product acquired or returned

In essence, the merchant will be required to submit data on the amount and type of fertiliser dispatched to the fertiliser end user. Under the proposals additional information to be supplied may be prescribed for entry on the database (for instance if required having regard to environmental factors and the need to produce agricultural products).

2.11 What fertiliser details will be recorded on the database?

- their unique Fertiliser Economic Operator registration number
- the trade name of the fertiliser product concerned
- the unique registration identification number of the Fertiliser Economic Operator or Professional Fertiliser End User, as the case may be, acquiring or returning the product
- the date of transfer of the fertiliser product
- the quantity of the product acquired or returned

2.12 Will the data submitted be available to those that supplied the data on the National Fertiliser Database?

All registered users and operators will be able to view and download their own data on the National Fertiliser Database. Having access to this data will allow farmers to easily check their compliance with regulatory limits and possible voluntary industry sustainability initiatives. The database will significantly reduce the existing reporting burden for farmers availing of the Nitrates Derogation and those participating in certain Eco scheme practices.

2.13 What do farmers have to do when they go into their co-op or merchant to buy fertiliser next year?

Under the legislation the farmer or other professional fertiliser end user must provide his/her unique Professional Fertiliser End User identification number to the person supplying the fertiliser. In the case of farmers, the identification number will be their herd number.

Subject to the legislation being enacted, farmers and other professional fertiliser end users, as a once off, will be required to submit details of fertiliser products that are on their farm/premises on a specific date within a specified timeframe, which will be agreed as part of the consultation process. This will be the opening fertiliser stock. All data on subsequent fertiliser movements onto the farm/premises will be supplied by the merchants/Co-ops, unless the farmer imports fertiliser.

In addition, annually a farmer/professional end user will have to declare the closing stock of fertiliser held on their farm/premises at 23:59 on 14th September by 15th October. Farmers who are importing or selling fertiliser will have to register as A fertiliser Economic Operator and comply with the requirements on uploading data.

2.14 Does a farmer need to give consent to the merchant to share his fertiliser purchase information.

The legislation provides a legal basis for sharing the information and as such consent is not required.

2.15 If I am the agent for BPS/BISS will I automatically become the agent for Fertiliser register?

Yes

2.16 Do farmers have to register as Professional Fertiliser End Users?

Yes, under the legislation there is a statutory obligation on farmers to register to purchase chemical fertiliser and lime. Farmers, or their Agent, will be able to register using the Department's online portal www.agfood.ie. This will be a very simple process.

If a farmer has more than one herd ID, he/she will be required to register separately for each.

2.17 What will farmers involved in farm-to-farm transfers have to do?

Farmers wishing to transfer fertiliser to another farmer must first register as a Fertiliser Economic Operator on www.agfood.ie. Then they must enter details of all farm-to-farm fertiliser movements on the National Fertiliser Database.

2.18 Why can't the registration be linked to BPS/BISS for farmers?

This was examined but was not possible, considering the timelines.

2.19 How are non-farmer professional users going to be dealt with?

All professional fertiliser end users, including non-farmers, GAA and other sports clubs using fertilisers, will be required to register with the Department. Non-farmer professional users will be assigned a unique professional fertiliser user number, which will be used when recording transactions. All non-farmer professional end users must complete a registration form (available at gov.ie - [National Fertiliser Database \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)) to register with the Department.

2.20 How will the National Fertiliser Database impact agri-contractors?

An agri-contractor is a Professional Fertiliser End User according to the definition in the legislation and therefore must register with the Department. If the agri-contractor is also a farmer, the unique identifier will be his/her herd number. However, if the contractor is not a farmer, he/she will be required to complete a registration form and will be given a unique identifier.

Contractors must submit data, as required by all Professional Fertiliser End Users, on fertiliser held on their premises at 23:59 on 14th September by 15th October annually. If the agri-contractor imports/sells fertiliser to a farmer, he/she must register as a Fertiliser Economic Operator and will be subject to the same data reporting requirements as all Fertiliser Economic Operators.

2.21 How will controls operate?

The Department will use data from the National Fertiliser Database to confirm farmer compliance with obligations under Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme and the Nitrates Derogation, both of which include limits on Nitrogen and Phosphorus use. For Nitrates Derogation farmers, information from the database will also be used to verify application of lime where necessary. The National Fertiliser Database will also provide information to verify farmer compliance with Eco-Scheme actions relating to fertiliser or the use of lime.

All of these checks will be done using information from the database. This will significantly reduce the administrative burden that would otherwise be placed on farmers.

Risk based physical checks on farm, as well as checks at merchant level by the Department will be used to confirm the accuracy of information being uploaded to the database. The National Fertiliser Database will also provide information to verify farmer compliance with Eco-Scheme Agricultural Practice 3 (limiting chemical nitrogen

usage), Agricultural Practice 5 (using a GPS controlled fertiliser spreader/sprayer) and Agricultural Practice 6 (soil sampling & appropriate liming) from 2024 onwards.

2.22 What are the powers of an authorised officer?

An authorised officer may at all reasonable times enter and inspect any land or premises etc. in which he/she has reasonable grounds for believing that any fertiliser (feeding stuffs, compound feeding stuffs or mineral mixtures) is manufactured for sale, kept or carried for sale or sold, or a document or record related to a fertiliser is kept or any equipment or machinery relating to such.

The authorised officer may:

- examine and take samples and stock of any fertilisers
- examine a document or record related to a fertiliser
- inspect a vehicle, a vessel, an aircraft, a railway wagon, a container, equipment, machinery, a computerised information management system or other thing used in connection with a document or record and require the person in charge or control of such to refrain from moving it
- require the owner to produce records and inspect and take copies of any record
- make a record, including by means of writing, sound recording, photograph, video or other means

2.23 What penalties will apply in the event of non-compliance with the requirements in the legislation?

A person who contravenes a regulation commits an offence.

A person who

- fails to comply with the requirement to register as a Fertiliser Economic Operator or as a Professional Fertiliser End User
- fails to supply details required by Fertiliser Economic Operator or Professional Fertiliser End User
- provides information knowing it to be false or misleading commits an offence, and is liable on summary conviction to a class A fine (a fine up to €5,000)

The penalties depend on the offence committed and are specified in the legislation.

2.24 What is being done about farmers importing directly from Northern Ireland?

There is a highly integrated supply chains on the island of Ireland. Farmers and other Professional Fertiliser End Users can continue to purchase fertiliser from Northern Ireland and *vice versa* and the Department is keen to ensure that trade carries on as normal between the two jurisdictions. However, the legislation places a legal obligation on anyone importing fertiliser into the State (whether that is from a Third Country or another Member State) to register as a Fertiliser Economic Operator and to submit data on imports to National Fertiliser Database. The Department has developed a system to make the registration process as simple as possible for farmers.

On-farm controls, which are risk-based, will include specific checks in relation to imports of fertiliser. These checks will be a key focus of on-farm controls following the roll-out of the National Fertiliser Database

2.25 Are agri-contractors Professional Fertiliser End Users and will they be required to register with the Department?

An agri-contractor is a Professional Fertiliser End User according to the definition in the legislation and therefore there is a legal obligation on him/her to register with the Department. If the agri-contractor is also

a farmer, the unique identifier will be his/her herd number. However, if the contractor is not a farmer, he/she will be given a unique identifier.

Contractors will be required to submit data, as required by all Professional Fertiliser End Users, on fertiliser held on their premises on specified dates. If a contractor wishes to import fertiliser they will also have to register as a Fertiliser Economic Operator and comply with the relevant obligations in the Bill.

2.26 How will better compliance with water quality and environmental ambitions be achieved?

Currently, data in relation to fertiliser sales and use is available in paper form at farm level or supplied electronically to the Department on a voluntary basis by manufacturers and blenders. The National Fertiliser Database will provide for accurate tracking of fertiliser sales and will assist with the regulation of the fertiliser industry. In addition, it will support sustainability objectives, including supporting payments under the upcoming Common Agricultural Policy. The National Fertiliser Database will allow the Department to verify compliance with regulations and schemes and reduce the need for paper records.

2.27 How will the National Fertiliser Database help with Ireland’s Nitrates derogation?

Establishing the National Fertiliser Database will meet a commitment that Ireland agreed to during negotiations with the European Commission to secure the current extension to Ireland’s Nitrates Derogation. Currently, all EU Member States availing of a Nitrates Derogation have, or are in the process of establishing, a National Fertiliser Database. The database will significantly reduce the existing reporting burden for farmers availing of the Nitrates Derogation. The Database once established will provide reliable data to farmers that they can use to demonstrate their compliance with any future voluntary industry sustainability/quality assurance initiatives, for example, in relation to the use of lime or the use of protected urea rather than alternative forms of chemical nitrogen.

2.28 How will the National Fertiliser Database assist with those availing of the Eco-Scheme measure in relation to fertiliser?

By minimising the reporting burden, the database will also benefit farmers who wish to participate in Eco-Scheme Agricultural Practice 3 (limiting chemical nitrogen usage), Agricultural Practice 5 (using a GPS controlled fertiliser spreader/sprayer) and Agricultural Practice 6 (soil sampling & appropriate liming) from 2024 onwards.

2.29 What have been the historical level of sales of fertiliser in recent years?

Fertiliser Year	Total Sales (Tonnes)
Oct. 2016/Sept. 2017 Totals	1,552,809
Oct. 2017/Sept. 2018 Totals	1,714,729
Oct. 2018/Sept. 2019 Totals	1,547,082
Oct. 2019/Sept. 2020 Totals	1,592,218
Oct. 2020/Sept. 2021 Totals	1,685,412
Oct. 2021/Sept. 2022 Totals	1,377,595

2.30 When will the details regarding the API interface be available to allow work to begin on the merchant side?

The API interface has been developed and has been available to test for a number of months. The API will facilitate the bulk upload of data from merchants.

2.31 How can merchants register for the API?

Merchants and other interested operators can email nationalfertilisersdb@agriculture.gov.ie to express their interest in using the API.

2.32 What is considered the transaction date for fertiliser movements?

The National Fertiliser Database will record the **date of dispatch** of fertiliser as the transaction date. The database will not record any financial information and it will not matter when the fertiliser was purchased/paid for.

2.33 What will the impact of the National Fertiliser Database be on merchants?

Co-ops or merchants must register with this Department as Fertiliser Economic Operators. Under the legislation Co-ops or merchants will only be permitted to sell fertiliser or lime to farmers and other professional end users that have registered with my Department. The merchant/co-op will need to ask the farmer buying the fertiliser if they are registered as a professional end user and use the registration checker to verify that the herd number belongs to a registered user.

Furthermore, under the legislation each consignment of fertiliser leaving a Co-op or Agri-merchant's premises must be entered on the National Fertiliser Database. The Co-op or Agri-merchant will upload this data automatically using the API or enter it manually within a specified time frame.

2.34 Does a lower transaction limit apply below which sales do not need to be recorded?

No, there is no transaction limit and all sales to professional end users must be recorded. All fertiliser products, including specialist product that can be sold in small package sizes, are covered by the legislation and therefore a transaction limit may have excluded those products which is one of the reasons why we didn't have a transaction limit.

We also considered that setting a lower limit might encourage multiple transactions below the set limit to circumvent the recording requirement. Sales for domestic use, such as for private gardens, do not need to be recorded.

2.35 Are there any plans to support merchants financially to implement the system?

The Department recognises that the introduction of the National Fertiliser Database may result in some IT development costs for those that wish to develop their systems to link into DAFM's API (Application Programming Interface).

At the Fertiliser IT Steering Group meeting in October, DAFM asked stakeholders to come forward with their estimated IT development costings. To date no stakeholder has provided such an estimate for DAFM.

DAFM has scoped out the available supports. Enterprise Ireland have previously advised that there isn't a support currently available that appears to be a direct fit for the requirements that have been outlined. However, the support that is currently available that they consider has potential in this area is the Trading Online Voucher (TOV) – this is available to all microenterprises, through the Local Enterprise Offices. Microenterprises are those companies that have fewer than ten employees and a turnover of less than €2 million per annum.

The primary objective of the TOV is to help companies develop an online trading presence and website – eligible costs include IT consultation/purchasing of internet-related software. Some of the activities that will be required of merchants to meet their reporting requirements for the NFD may fall into this area for support.

Enterprise Ireland also provide a 50% grant for digital expansion options for companies to assist "Development of processes and services". This could include developing an IT system to work with the Department's systems via the API.

2.36 Does the Act allow merchants to share Herd numbers with DAFM?

Yes, under the Act, all professional fertiliser end users will be assigned a unique identifier when registering with the Department. In the case of farmers, the unique fertiliser identifier will be the herd number and this number must be recorded by the merchant with the sales transaction data and provided to the Department together with fertiliser transaction details through the National Fertiliser Database. The Act provides the legal basis for sharing this data.

2.37 Do we need a verification process to ensure correct herd numbers are attributed to customer accounts?

The Department has developed a registration checker, which will allow merchants to check if a farmer is registered as a professional end user by entering the herd number provided.

Some farmers have multiple herd numbers and the responsibility for ensuring the fertiliser is assigned to the correct herd number rests with the farmer and the merchant.

2.38 How will merchants send fertiliser sales data to DAFM?

Merchants must register with the department as Fertiliser Economic Operators. **A registration form, as well as videos are available on the website gov.ie - National Fertiliser Database (www.gov.ie).**

Merchants will have two options to send fertiliser sales data to DAFM

1. Via Agfood.ie -> National Fertiliser Database system.
2. Via application programming interface (API). An API test environment for merchants will be available from early October 2022. For details on how to access the test API environment please contact NFD_IT@agriculture.gov.ie

Screenshots of the API interface below.

transaction-controller Transaction Controller

POST /external/submit-transaction Submits a new sale transaction

Parameters Try it out

Name	Description
Transaction * required object (body)	Transaction Example Value Model

```
{
  "fromBusinessId": "string",
  "orgTransactionId": "ID1234",
  "productId": "FP0005143",
  "quantity": 2.003,
  "toBusinessId": "string",
  "transactionDate": "2022-08-20",
  "transactionType": "Sales"
}
```

Parameter content type: application/json

Responses Response content type: application/json

Code	Description
200	OK Example Value Model
201	Created
401	Unauthorized
403	Forbidden
404	Not Found

```
{
  "errorMessage": "Business ID(From) provided is not valid for National Fertiliser Database.",
  "message": "Transaction Successfully Submitted",
  "submitStatus": "V",
  "transaction_id": 1234
}
```

```

Models
Transaction {
  fromBusinessId* string
    Business ID the transaction is being submitted from
  orgTransactionId string
    example: ID1234
    Transaction identifier
  productId* string
    example: FP0005143
    Product ID
  quantity* number($double)
    example: 2.001
    Quantity of the product in Tonnes (min : 0.001, max : 1000)
  toBusinessId* string
    Business ID the transaction is being submitted to
  transactionDate* string
    example: 2022-08-20
    Date of transaction (yyyy-mm-dd)
  transactionType* string
    example: Sales
    Type of transaction being submitted
  Enum:
    > Array [ 2 ]
}

TransactionResponse {
  errorMessage string
    example: Business ID(From) provided is not valid for National Fertiliser Database.
    Error message returned if submission is unsuccessful
  message string
    example: Transaction Successfully Submitted
    Message returned if submission is successful
  submitStatus string
    example: Y
    Status of submission
  Enum:
    > Array [ 2 ]
  transaction_id string
    example: 1234
    Transaction identifier
}

```

2.39 How will DAFM communicate with farmers with regard to what is required of them in terms of registration and recording opening and closing stock?

The Department has developed a comprehensive communications plan. This includes engaging directly with each individual farmer by writing to them setting out the requirements. We will also have a Help Desk to deal with any farmer queries. This communication activity will be complemented by print, online and social media activity at the appropriate times. In addition, there will be further reminders around key dates for those farmers that have registered to receive SMS text messages.

In addition, a leaflet outlining the requirements for farmers, namely registration and the recording of opening and closing stock, will be distributed at the National Ploughing Championships, where there will be a dedicated stand on the National Fertiliser Database.

DAFM will continue to update the website with key messages. The website contains a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and videos demonstrating how to use the database. In addition, media updates and webinars will be organised in the coming weeks.

2.40 How will DAFM communicate with Farm Advisors?

Representatives from both Teagasc and the Agricultural Consultants Association sit on the Stakeholder Consultative Committee. The Department is actively engaging with Farm Advisors through that Consultative Committee and other meetings. The Department will be guided by Teagasc and the Agricultural Consultants

Association regarding how best to engage with individual advisors, however our current Communication Plan includes hosting a webinar open to all accredited FAS advisors and we are about to write to individual farmers. We will use email around key dates to issue reminders to all accredited FAS advisors.

2.41 Who will the data from the National Fertiliser Database be shared with?

The data collected by the National Fertiliser Database will be held within the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. There are provisions in the legislation (i.e. the Fertilisers, Feeding Stuffs and Mineral Mixtures Act 1955 and 2023 provides the legal basis) for the data to be shared with:

- other Ministers of the Government or bodies established under statute data or reports produced from data provided under section 7D where required for the performance of their functions
- food and feed processors, prescribed by the Minister, data or reports produced from data provided under section 7D, where, in the opinion of the Minister, such sharing may bring about a change in fertiliser use, improve water quality or achieve other environmental and sustainability targets

The data will be subject to Data Sharing Agreements, which will specify—

- the relevant data, or categories of relevant data, to be disclosed and the general purposes of that disclosure
- the security measures to apply to the transmission, storage and accessing of relevant data
- the requirements in relation to the retention of the relevant data to be disclosed for the duration of the agreement and in the event that the agreement is terminated

Steps have been taken to ensure that the data collected under the Act complies with all aspects of Data Protection, including GDPR, rules.

It is anticipated that a number of Government Departments, Agencies and other third parties may require access to data on fertiliser sales and stock levels. Robust data sharing provisions in the legislation will allow the specific sharing of data with other bodies to achieve environmental and sustainability targets and will be fully in line with GDPR and other data protection legislation. The legislation was sent to the Data Protection Commissioner (DPC) for consultation, and the DPC welcomed the inclusion of the listed bodies and the reasons for data sharing. Data sharing agreements will be put in place with each body before any data sharing takes place. Any data sharing agreements put in place will be in both the national interest and in collaboration with all the relevant stakeholders.

In relation to requests for data from private companies, such requests will also require consent from the “farmer” (the data owner) before the request can be facilitated.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 Fertiliser

A fertiliser means (subject to any exemptions which may be prescribed) any article (including, in particular, lime and ground limestone) manufactured for use as a fertiliser of the soil and includes any substance or mixture, applied or intended to be applied on plants or their rhizosphere.

3.2 Professional Fertiliser End User

Any person who uses fertiliser products in the course of his/her activities, including as an operator, technician, employer or self-employed person, whether in the farming or other sectors, but excludes private domestic use.

3.3 Fertiliser Economic Operator

A manufacturer, authorised representative, importer or distributor (whether wholesale or retail) of a fertilising product.

3.4 National Fertiliser Database

A database established containing the register of Fertiliser Economic Operators and Professional Fertiliser end users and the details uploaded by both fertiliser economic operators and professional fertiliser end users.

3.5 Use

Means all operations carried out with a fertiliser product, including storage, handling, mixing and application, including application by third parties