

Food Vision 2030

Environmental Working Sub-Group Meeting (through Webex)

Wednesday 14 September 2022 at 10am

Attendees:

Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine: Bill Callanan (Chair), John Clarke, Ian Fox, Bernard Harris, Wila Bruce, Oisín O'Kelly, Brian Kennedy, Brian Murphy.

Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications: Kelli Howard

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage: Colin Byrne, Andy Bleasdale

EPA: Brian Donlon

Bord Bia: Mick Houlihan

Teagasc: John Spink

Independent: Michael Hamell

Secretariat: Maria Talbot, Emma Guerin

Apologies:

Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine: Jack Nolan, Niall Ryan, Ted Massey, Edwina Love, Pamela Boyle, Fergus Moore, Shane Flanagan, Dale Crammond, Corina Roe.

Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications: Niall McLoughlin, Marc Kierans

Bord Bia: Deirdre Ryan

Bord Iascaigh Mhara: Rory Campbell

Bill Callanan, Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the meeting. The Chair welcomed input from all members of the Group to the monitoring report and reiterated that the focus in the first instance is on SEA compliance. The Group is also required to monitor progress on the Food Vision Mission 1 key targets.

The minutes of the previous meeting of 19 May were proposed and adopted.

First Annual Report to the HLIC

The Group discussed the format of its first report.

Option 1: Letter detailing key findings, and Monitoring Tables as an annex.

Option 2: 'detailed' written Report and Monitoring Tables as an annex

A discussion followed regarding the benefits and shortcomings of these two options, with the group agreeing in principle with the suggested approach at option 1.

The Chair noted that progress on the SEA indicators is included in the monitoring tables, and the additional letter will reflect the key messages identified in that table. It was agreed that the report should be submitted to the HLIC in advance of the Food Vision Event on 13 October 2022.

The Group identified areas where further updates/data is available and provided comments on the draft report. It was acknowledged that the data required will not be available for all indicators for this first report, but this report will be a step in the right direction towards having indicators available in future versions.

The secretariat welcomed members comments on the details of the report and asked that they submit further comments in writing.

Action: Members to submit their comments/submissions to the secretariat for the Annual report by cob 14/09/22.

Action: Secretariat to submit draft of Annual Report to Chair by cob 19/09/2022.

Discussion points

Two discussion points raised by a member of the Group were discussed:

I. Balance Sheet for Fertiliser Use

The Group discussed the above and the benefits of having a picture of fertiliser use and agricultural output for Irish agriculture over the past 20 years for N, P and K to get a true indication of any progress made.

The Group were advised that DAFM complete on an annual basis the Gross Nutrient balance for Ireland (N and P). This is reported to Eurostat and the trend in surpluses has been increasing for N and P in recent years. Ireland has submitted data for 2019 and is working on completing a return for 2020 and 2021.

It was considered important to get an understanding of these trends and what they mean for sustainability to the non-scientists.

Teagasc maintain a soil fertility database which will be relevant when looking at N and P use.

The fertilizer register is seen as critically important part of the Nitrates Action Programme. Members were advised that plans to develop the new fertilizer register required primary legislation and that the aim of having the register in place in Q 1 next year.

Action: Teagasc to be invited to present soil analysis results at the next meeting.

DAFM to circulate information on methodology of Gross Nutrient Balance. See link below:
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/aei_pr_gnb_esms.htm#meta_update1554295074476

Discussion point

II. Review of carbon content of different horizons of Irish Mineral Soils

Discussion was held regarding the availability of carbon content data for lower horizons of Irish soils.

The Signpost Farm program has completed its first samples and will be doing deep soil sampling at a later stage. In addition, the DAFM pilot Soil Sampling Pilot Program went to 10cm level but there are proxies that can be used to estimate levels of carbon in deeper levels of soil. There have been discussions with GIS to look at joining up data to get a picture of carbon levels in soils for the whole country.

It was suggested that there may be opportunities to work with the Joint Research Centre (JRC) to bring this area to attention at EU level.

Action: Secretariat to contact Research Division/Nitrates Division to provide details of ongoing research on soil testing 'at depth'.

AOB

Bord Bia is working on a revision of the Livestock Standards and is updating and future proofing them in line with the Climate Action Plan.

Date of next meeting

Proposed date for next meeting on 23 November.