

Agriculture Water Quality Working Group

Minutes 12th Meeting

Date: 20th December 2023, 9:30am

Venue: The Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise

Attendance list: see Appendix 1.

1. Welcome by the Chair and Minutes of recent meetings.

The Chair (Louise Byrne) opened the meeting by welcoming the various stakeholders.

Updated minutes of meetings held on 27/09/23 and 05/12/23 were taken as read. Any comments from the Group regarding the minutes of the meeting on 15/12/23 are to be submitted by email to agwatergroup@agriculture.gov.ie by close of business on 21/12/23.

Two items were added to the Agenda under AOB.

Action: Secretariat to publish all minutes, not previously published, up to and including the minutes from 15/12/23 (assuming no written comments received by 21/12/23).

2. Group's Recommendations to improve water quality under the Interim Review (continued)

The Chair reminded those in attendance that the Nitrates Expert Group recommendations were stand-alone recommendations, and it is this Group's function to develop their own recommendations.

The Chair also reminded those in attendance that any submissions and comments made in relation to the discussion document are to assist this Group to formulate its recommendations to be submitted to the Minister. It was important people felt they could speak freely and openly, and the Group should respect that process.

There was a discussion on the outstanding elements of Theme 1: Reducing nutrient load/loses in the discussion document which had been discussed by the Group at the last meeting.

Discussion then focussed on the remaining four themes:

- Theme 2: Sustainability measures with other environmental benefits
- Theme 3: Improving Compliance and Enforcement
- Theme 4: Advisory and nutrient use efficiency
- Theme 5: Research/policy development

The Group's views and recommendations were added to the working document as the discussions progressed. The updated document will be circulated by 22/12/23. Group members are to provide written comments on the discussion document and views on the Nitrates Expert Group Recommendations by 09/01/24. The Secretariat will then develop a clean document by 11/01/24 for circulation in advance of the next meeting on 15/01/24.

The timelines for the interim review process were also discussed.

Action: Secretariat to develop and circulate updated discussion document by 22/12/23.

Action: Group to provide written comments on the discussion document and views on the Nitrates Expert Group Recommendations by 09/01/24.

Action: Secretariat will develop a clean document by 11/01/24 and circulate to the Group.

3. AOB and date of next meeting

Two items were added to Agenda under AOB as follows.

A) Update on progress regarding the transitional measures

The Group were advised that:

- UCD has agreed to conduct a peer review of Teagasc's work regarding crude protein in concentrates and the nutrient excretion rate for young bovines.
- The updated Teagasc data on 1-2 year old cattle is due shortly.
- DAFM is engaging with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage regarding the appropriate assessment process for the transitional measures.

The need to provide clarity for farmers as soon as possible was re-stated and understood.

B) 2022 Nitrates Derogation rejections for minor administrative errors.

Some stakeholders raised the issue of the severity of the sanctions and the two year exclusion from derogation for minor administrative errors. There was a request for all farmers to be given a "clean slate" for 2024.

DAFM pointed out that it is obliged to apply the rules as set out in the Commission's Implementing Decision, however in addition to the commitments given at the last meeting, DAFM committed to a review of penalty cases for 2022 breaches.

Action: Secretariat to carry out a review of Nitrates Derogation rejection cases and revert to the Group at the next meeting.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting is proposed for the morning of 15th January 2024, details will follow once venue is confirmed.

The Chair wished all attendees a very Happy Christmas and thanked them for their continued co-operation.

Appendix 1: Agriculture Water Quality Working Group Attendance List, 20th December 2023.

Stakeholder	Invitee
IFA	Tadhg Buckley
IFA	Paul O'Brien
ICMSA	Denis Drennan
ICMSA	John Enright
ICMSA	Eamonn Carroll
MACRA	Liam Hanrahan
MACRA	Maria Snell
ICSA	Eddie Punch
ICSA	Daniel Lynam
Irish Grain Growers	James Kelly
ICOS	Eamonn Farrell
ACORN Group of Private Merchants	Barry Larkin
Meat Industry Ireland	Dale Crammond
Carbery	Liam Bohane
Dairygold	Billy Cronin
Tirlan	TJ Phelan
ACA	Tom Canning
Teagasc	David Wall
Teagasc	Eddie Burgess
LAWPRO	Anthony Coleman
LAWPRO	Eoin McAleer
DAFM	Louise Byrne
DAFM	Ted Massey

DAFM	Bernard Harris
DAFM	Joanne Purcell
Apologies	
DAFM	Bill Callanan
DAFM	Noeleen McDonald
Dairy Industry Ireland	Conor Mulvihill
LAWPRO	Ruth Hennessy
INHFA	Vincent Roddy
An Forum Uisce	Matt Crowe
DHLGH	Marie Archbold

Ends.