

## **Agriculture Water Quality Working Group**

### **Minutes 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 9:30am

**Venue:** The Anner Hotel, Thurles, Co. Tipperary

Attendance list: see Appendix 1.

#### **1. Welcome by the Chair and Minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> meeting, 20/12/23**

The Chair (Louise Byrne) opened the meeting by welcoming the various stakeholders. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

#### **2. Update on Teagasc research**

DAFM informed the Group that since the last meeting Teagasc presented data regarding excretion rates broken down by gender for 1–2 year old cattle. For a female 1-2 old, the data shows a slight reduction, while it shows a slight increase for her male counterpart. The Group had mixed views regard whether a distinction should be made based on gender. Some stakeholders felt in the interest of minimising complexity for farmers one average value should continue to be used for the 1-2 year old category. Other stakeholders felt a distinction should be made based on gender. The matter needs further consideration.

DAFM informed the Group that UCD have conducted their peer review of Teagasc's work regarding crude protein in concentrates and the nutrient excretion rate for young bovines. UCD provided positive feedback. They have made some comments that they feel could lead to a strengthening of the documents. These comments have gone to Teagasc who are expected to respond shortly.

The process regarding Appropriate Assessment for these measures was outlined to Group. Some stakeholders expressed concerns regarding any delays to implementation of the measures. DAFM outlined its objective that the measures would apply for the full year. DHLGH are to seek clarification regarding whether the changes to excretion rates can apply for the full year if signalled early.

**Action:** DHLGH to seek clarification regarding whether the changes to excretion rates can apply for the full year if signalled early. DAFM to liaise with DHLGH on this.

### **3. Finalisation of Group's Recommendations to improve water quality under the Interim Review**

The Chair thanked those who submitted written comments over the previous week. The document had been updated to reflect those written comments.

The Group discussed the updated document focusing on the updated text and areas where there had not been an agreed recommendation arising from the previous meeting.

The Group's views and recommendations were added to the document as the discussion progressed. DAFM agreed to update the document further where necessary based on the Group's views and to circulate to the Group on 16/01/24.

**Action:** Secretariat to develop and circulate updated document by 16/01/24.

**Update:** Update document circulated for comments on 16/01/24.

**Action:** Group to provide written comments on the document by 17/01/24.

**Update:** Group members responded with feedback. These suggested changes were incorporated as far as possible and the final draft showing tracked changes was circulated to the Group on 22/01/24 seeking their endorsement.

### **4. Update from Meeting with Commission Services**

DAFM and DHGLH officials outlined that while they were in Brussels in December, they had a separate bi-lateral meeting with Commission Officials. During that discussion Ireland sought clarification regarding Commissioner Sinkevičius' comments about the need for stable water quality compared to the point made previously by Commission Officials about water quality having to be good and improving for a future derogation to be granted. The Group were advised that the Commission Officials clarified the position by stating that where water quality is good it needs to be stable, and where water quality is poor, it needs to be improving for a derogation to be granted.

In response, members of Group confirmed their previous position regarding the need for the sector to work towards improving water quality. They also outlined the need for them to fully understand what is meant by good water quality and the context of how it is monitored. It was agreed this would be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

The Group were also informed that the European Commission has opened a public consultation regarding an evaluation of the Nitrates Directive. The matter will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.

**Action:** Secretariat to include the evaluation of the Nitrates Directive and understanding and communicating water quality as Agenda Items for the next meeting.

#### **5. AOB and date of next meeting**

No points were raised under AOB.

The next meeting will take place on 29/01/24, in Portlaoise. Details will follow when venue is confirmed.

**Appendix 1: Agriculture Water Quality Working Group Attendance List, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024.**

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Representative</b>
IFA	Tadhg Buckley
IFA	John Murphy
ICMSA	Denis Drennan
ICMSA	Eamonn Carroll
ICMSA	Mairead Longe
MACRA	Maria Snell
MACRA	Liam Hanrahan
ICSA	Eddie Punch
INHFA	John Joe Fitzgerald
ICOS	Eamonn Farrell
ICOS	Niall Matthews
ACA	Ton Canning (via webex)
ACORN Group of Private Merchants	Barry Larkin
Meat Industry Ireland	Dale Crammond
Carbery	Liam Bohane
Dairygold	Billy Cronin
Tirlan	Matthew Moylan
Teagasc	Eddie Burgess
LAWPRO	Anthony Coleman
LAWPRO	Eoin McAleer
An Forum Uisce	Matt Crowe
DHLGH	Marie Archbold
DAFM	Louise Byrne

DAFM	Ted Massey
DAFM	Noeleen McDonald
DAFM	Dymphna Kehoe
DAFM	Bernard Harris
<b>Apologies</b>	
Irish Grain Growers	James Kelly
Dairy Industry Ireland	Conor Mulvihill
Tirlan	Thomas Ryan
Teagasc	David Wall
LAWPRO	Ruth Hennessy
EPA	Jenny Deakin
DAFM	Bill Callanan
DAFM	Joanne Purcell