

Agriculture Water Quality Working Group

Minutes 1st Meeting

Date: 29th May 2023

Venue: The Killeshin Hotel, Portlaoise

Attendance: See Appendix I.

1. Welcome and introduction

The Chair (Bill Callanan) opened the meeting. Members introduced themselves and the Chair outlined the Working Group's proposed objective of reversing Ireland's negative water trends that are attributed to Agricultural pressures with the view of also securing Ireland's nitrates derogation post-2025.

He highlighted the changes and challenges at a European level with respect to the Nitrates Directive and how the number of Member States (MS) that avail of a nitrate's derogation has reduced in recent years. Denmark, Ireland and The Netherlands are currently the only countries in receipt of a derogation. Highlighting that as The Netherlands are currently being phased out of derogation, post-2025, Ireland alongside Denmark may be the only MS seeking, or in receipt of, a derogation.

2. Irish Water Quality

Ruth Hennessy, LAWPRO presented an overview of water quality trends, the methodology used to measure water quality, and the main pressures on Irish water quality, highlighting those that are linked to agricultural sources, and the types of mitigation impacts currently being implemented.

The Chair then opened the meeting to the floor. Working Group members responded with comments that included the need for farmer education and awareness raising measures, need for recognition of efforts and investment already made by farmers and industry, the scale of changes in the current Nitrates Action Programme, concerns regarding the pace of change and the need for time to see the impact of new/strengthened measures, how all farmers actions can impact on water quality so the solution should involve all farmers, the need for enhanced enforcement activity, the impact of losing the derogation on land use

and climate targets, the need for a roadmap to allow the industry plan for the future (medium term and longer term), how water quality measures can have co-benefits both environmentally (climate and biodiversity) as well as economically, that a lot of data has been gathered by the EPA and the Agricultural Catchments Programme that should help inform approaches to drive improvements in water quality.

In response the Chair stated these items should feed into the Group's future discussions

3. Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme and the overall context – Ted Massey DAFM

Due to time constraints, Ted Massey summarised the key messages from this presentation.

4. AOB and Date of next meeting

AOB

A member suggested a change to the draft **Terms of Reference (TOR)**

Action: Edits to be made by DAFM Secretariat to the draft TOR and circulated in advance of the next meeting. Agreement on the Group's TOR will be sought at the next meeting.

Date of next meeting

Monday 19th of June, in-person. Time and location to be confirmed.

Appendix 1: Agriculture Water Quality Working Group Attendance List 29th May 2023

Organisation	Representative in attendance
ACA	Tom Canning
ACORN Group of Private Merchants	Barry Larkin
An Forum Uisce	Matt Crowe
Carbery	Aoife Healy
DAFM	Bill Callanan
DAFM	Ted Massey
DAFM	Noeleen McDonald
DAFM	Joanne Purcell
Dairy Industry Ireland	Conor Mulvihill
Dairygold	Billy Cronin
DHLGH	David Flynn
DHLGH	Maire Archbold
ICMSA	Denis Drennan
ICMSA	Alisha Ryan
ICOS	Eamonn Farrell
ICSA	Eddie Punch
IFA	Tadhg Buckley
IFA	Paul O'Brien
INHFA	Apologies
Irish Grain Growers	James Kelly
LAWPRO	Ruth Hennessy
LAWPRO	Eoin McAleer
Macra na Feirme	Liam Hanrahan
Meat Industry Ireland	Dale Crammond
Teagasc	Edward Burgess
Teagasc	David Wall
Tirlán	Thomas Ryan