

# Advice for growers this spring

There are a number of areas which should be considered in this late growing season.

*These are outlined below:*

## Plant spring wheat and beans

With an eye on crop margins, planting spring wheat and beans should be considered for as long as possible to maximise the area of tillage crops in Ireland.

- Late planted spring wheat could be considered for whole crop silage if a suitable client is available.

## Keep break crops (beans and oats) in the rotation

- It allows the entry of higher yielding/margin crops next year (first wheats)
- Cross Compliance rules, specifically crop rotation rules, state at least two different crops need to be sown in each parcel over a four year cycle. Where a farm plants the same crop again, the farm may be forced to make significant changes to cropping in 2025 or 2026
- Consider all crop options – Given the current weather there may be more opportunity to sell forage crops to neighbours. Always ensure there is a contract in place before planting. [Find an example of a forage contract here](#)

## Crop diversity

Crop diversity will allow a spread in planting dates, fertiliser/spraying, and harvesting.

- Relying on just one or two crops over a very large area can increase workloads for critical jobs to a point where it is unsustainable for either the equipment or operator
- Later planted crops will be harvested later (into September) decreasing the number and length of harvest days and substantially increasing the risk of harvest losses
- Consider planning a crop type area around realistic combining rates, where harvest days of over 4-5 days for any one crop could be deemed very risky.

## Examine the crop margin carefully

Examine the crop margin (not yield) carefully. The following factors should be considered:

- Avail of fixed price offers where available, e.g. beans, as these may offer considerable value compared to the falling grain prices.
- For the Gross Margins below
  - They are based on expected yield range (black highlighted boxes) within each sowing period with normal growing conditions, i.e. no drought
  - Grain prices are based on current forward price offers @ 20% moisture for cereal & beans
  - Maize and beet not included as there is no change from the published version in January.

		Sowing April 11 - 20						
		Wheat	Barley	Barley	Oats	<sup>2</sup> Oats	Beans	<sup>3</sup> SOSR
		Feed	Feed	Malting	Feed	Contract	Contract	
<sup>1</sup> Variable costs		1430	1318	1305	1307	1307	1064	1058
€/t		190	180	240	180	190	250	400
SIM/Protein payment		250	250	250	250	250	450	150
Yield t/ha	t/ac	Gross Margin (€/ha)						
1.9	0.75						-139	-148
2.5	1						11	92
3.1	1.25						167	342
3.8	1.5	-468	-393	-155	-382	-345	324	592
4.4	1.75	-349	-281	-5	-270	-226	480	842
5.0	2	-230	-168	145	-157	-107	636	1092
5.6	2.25	-111	-56	295	-45	12	792	
6.3	2.5	8	57	445	68	131	949	
6.9	2.75	126	170	595	181	249		
7.5	3	245	282	745	293	368		
8.1	3.25	364	395	895	406	487		
8.8	3.5	483	507	1045	518	606		
<sup>1</sup> Teagasc Crop costs & Returns 2024								
<sup>2</sup> Oats contract - based on export market. Other higher value markets available, food grade, gluten free etc								
<sup>3</sup> SOSR, forward price of €415/t available. €400/t used to account for moisture deductions								
Margin < €1/ha				Indicates expected yield range in normal growing conditions				
Margin €1 - 250/ha								
Margin > €250/ha								

		Sowing April 21 - 30						
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## Assess ground conditions

Assess ground in the coming days as to the real potential for this land to dry out. Examine all solutions to increasing ploughing efficiency or perhaps use min-till equipment to speed up planting will be useful where large areas remain to be planted. [Read more here](#)

## Risk of a drought period

Given the total rainfall so far this year and looking at past experience there is a risk of a drought period following this prolonged wet spell. All efforts should be made to complete cultivations when the soil conditions are suitable but at the same time reduce the chances of the soil drying out too quickly

- In April when ploughing or completing other primary cultivations strive to press or roll the soil as soon as possible.
- Where ploughing and one passing endeavour to rolling the seedbed as quickly as possible.

## Risks when delaying planting crops

Based on past experience on many farms of delayed planting crops into wet ground can be a loss making exercise. Many may be forced into considering a crop type they did not plan for, if there is not enough spring cereal seed available. Consider the following:

- Fallow or leaving the land without a crop for the year is not something to be taken likely as weed growth during the summer will increase the weed bank, ground with no cover can become compacted and can lead to runoff, reserves of nitrogen will be lost and financial fixed costs (light, heat, car, depreciation, etc.) are all spread over this land. In all this should be a last resort for any farmer.
- Other alternatives such as red clover, or summer cover crops can be considered.

## Seed rates and fertiliser application

- Cereal crops planted now will tiller less as they race through the growth stages quickly. Higher seed rates for spring barley will be needed e.g. 175-200 kg/ha to establish 325 plants/m<sup>2</sup>. Check the thousand grain weight before deciding on the final seed rate
- Malting barley requires low proteins however a reasonable yield is necessary to diluting the protein levels. Consider the potential yield and reduce nitrogen rates by 20-25 kg N/ha from the normal N rates needed to make the protein specification on your farm.

## Grow forage for livestock farmers

Consider growing forage for livestock farmers, however ensure there are clear terms with a binding payment structure. [Find a Contract Forage template here](#)

Growers can get access to more technical information on the [Teagasc Crop Report here](#)

## Further advice

If you are struggling to make some of these critical decisions on your farm, chat to your advisor or call the Tillage Helpline on 059 918 3533, which is open from Monday to Saturday from 9am-9pm.