



# Better Farming *for* Water

## 8-Actions for Change







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# Executive Summary

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D., requested Teagasc to lead a multi-actor water quality advisory campaign to deliver clear, simple and positive messaging to enhance farmers', as well as the broader agri-food industry's understanding of the agriculture pressures on water quality and the need for improvement. As a result of this request, Teagasc has developed this document '**Better Farming for Water**' to guide the campaign.

Agriculture in Ireland has a significant role to play in helping the country to achieve good water quality targets as set by the Water Framework Directive. However, farmers require technical support to increase their understanding of the impacts of farming on water quality and the actions to minimise the losses of nutrients, sediment and pesticides to water bodies. The '**Better Farming for Water**' campaign will build on existing water quality programmes such as ACP, ACRES, ASSAP, Farming for Water EIP, Waters of LIFE, Blue Dot Catchments, Slaney project (and others) to improve water quality. The multi-actor (farmers, advisors/researchers, agri-food industry, community, government) approach to support farmers will ensure that challenges and solutions to address local water quality are delivered at farm, catchment and regional scale. This campaign is part of a wider whole-of-government approach to improve water quality.

## Aim and Objectives

The aim of the '**Better Farming for Water**' campaign is to support and accelerate the adoption of actions on all farms to improve all water bodies (where agriculture is a significant pressure) to *Good or High Ecological Status*.

The objective of the '**Better Farming for Water**' campaign will be to support all farmers to reduce the loads of nitrogen, phosphate, sediment and pesticides entering our river network through either diffuse or point source pathways from agricultural sources. This will be achieved through the on-farm adoption of **8-Actions for Change**, which involve better nutrient, farmyard and land management. These **8-Actions for Change** provide a structured, relatable approach for farmers to effectively engage with improving water quality. They will help to advance the understanding of the need for actions, and instill confidence that the actions undertaken are worthwhile and will result in sustained, positive improvements in water quality.

## The 8-Actions for Change of the campaign aim to:

1. **Reduce purchased nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) surplus** per hectare.
2. **Ensure soil fertility is optimal** for lime, phosphorus and potassium.
3. **Ensure application of fertiliser and organic manure** at appropriate times and conditions.
4. **Have sufficient slurry and soiled water storage** capacity.
5. **Manage and minimise nutrient loss** from farmyards and roadways.
6. **Fence off watercourses** to prevent bovine access.
7. **Promote targeted use of mitigation actions** such as riparian margins, buffer strips and sediment traps to mitigate nutrient and sediment loss to water.
8. **Maintain over-winter green cover** to reduce nutrient leaching from tillage soils.

## Delivery of the campaign

The '**Better Farming for Water**' campaign will be delivered by way of six key pillars:

1. Stakeholder engagement through a **Multi-Actor Approach**.
2. **Building Awareness** by acquisition and utilisation of water quality data.
3. **Upskilling** farmers, students, advisors, teachers and industry professionals.
4. An impactful **Knowledge Transfer** programme.
5. A supporting **Research Programme** to identify and develop effective mitigation actions.
6. A strong **Communications Plan** with the target audiences.

## Deliverable Impacts

- Enhance farmers' knowledge of local water quality and pollution pressures
- Reduce nutrient, sediment, pesticide and pathogen loss to water bodies
- Increase the proportion of river water bodies with agriculture as significant pressure to high/good ecological status



# Introduction and Context

Abundant, clean and good quality water is a fundamental cornerstone of any thriving society and is necessary for a vibrant economy and enjoyable living environment. A strong and healthy aquatic ecosystem offers vital goods and services, such as the provision of drinking water. Whilst water quality in Ireland is good in a European context, water quality has not improved in recent years. Encouraging improvements are being made in some catchments; however, these are being offset by declines in water quality in others.

The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) (WFD) requires EU Member States to achieve at least good status in all surface water and groundwater bodies by 2027. Good or high ecological status is important for sustaining healthy aquatic ecosystems to support abundant communities of fish, insects and plants. Currently, just over half of Irish surface water bodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters) are achieving at least good status.

The latest Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Water Quality in Ireland report (EPA, 2022) covering the period 2016-2021, found that 54% of our surface water had satisfactory ( $\geq$  good) ecological

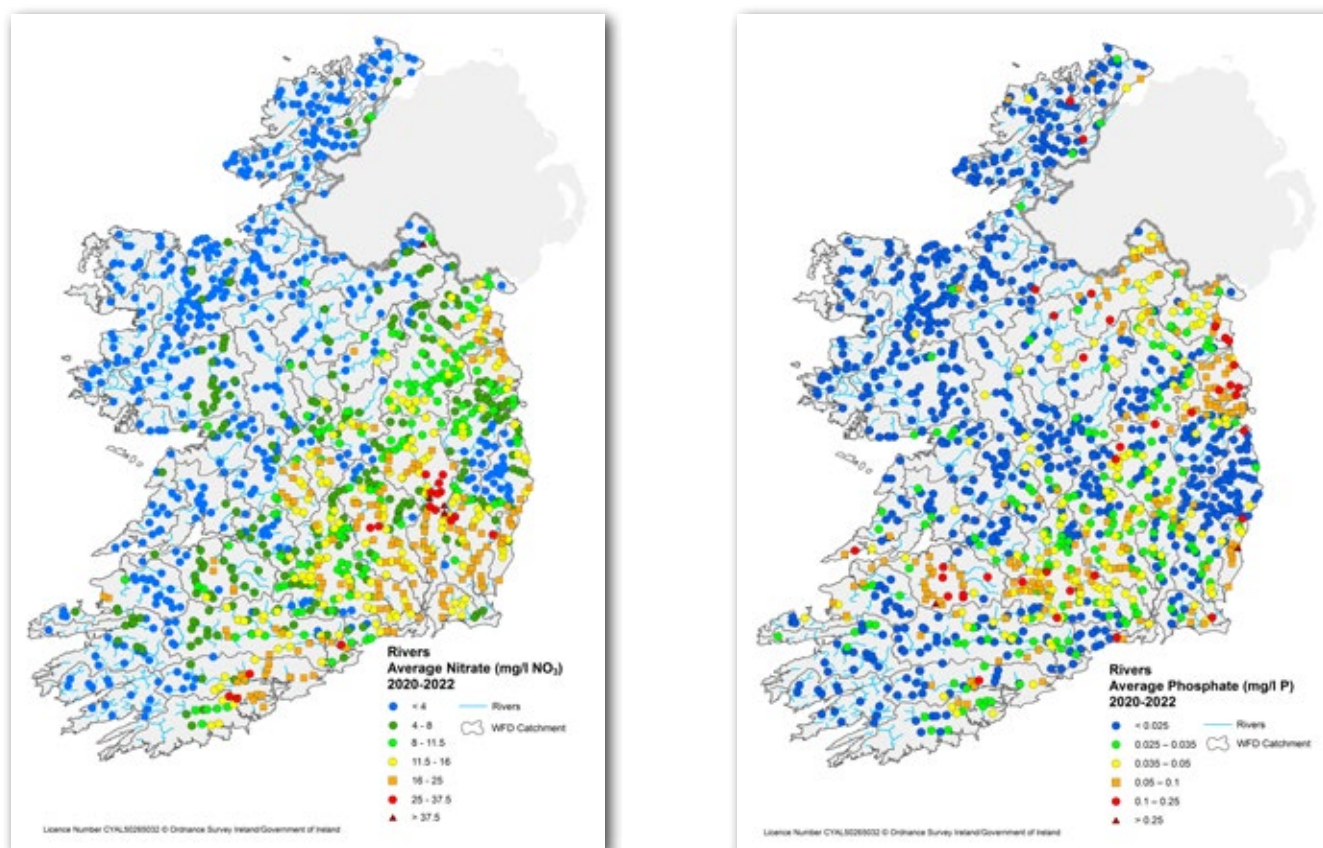
status. The assessment indicated that the primary challenge facing our water was the presence of too much phosphorus (P) and nitrogen (N), leading to increased eutrophication in these waters (Figure 1). The European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 set out the environmental quality standards that are required to maintain a healthy aquatic ecosystem. The environmental quality standard for good status for P is less than 0.035 mg/l of P. Ireland does not have a statutory standard for nitrogen in rivers. The EPA guideline is less than 8 mg/l of  $\text{NO}_3$  for having good ecological health for rivers and subsequent good ecological status downstream in marine waters.

In 2022, 44% of Irish rivers had concentrations higher than 8 mg/l  $\text{NO}_3$ . This is having a negative impact on the ecological health of both rivers and estuaries. In 2022, 25% of Irish rivers had concentrations greater than the 0.035 mg/l of P. Similar to N, this is having a negative impact on the ecological status of these rivers. High N concentrations are mostly in areas of free draining soil in the south and south east, while high P concentrations are typically found in areas with poorly draining soils.

The primary challenge facing our water was the presence of too much Phosphorus (P) & Nitrogen (N)

Agriculture can also contribute to the diffuse loss of sediment, pesticides and pathogens to waters, which also contribute to the overall pressures and factors that need to be taken into account when attempting to reduce the impact of agriculture on water quality. There also needs to be a focus on reducing other pressures from agriculture including loss of sediment, contamination from pesticides and the contamination from potentially harmful pathogens.





**Figure 1: Average nitrate and phosphate concentrations at Water Framework Directive river sites for 2020 to 2022 (EPA, 2022)**

The Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC), in place since 1991, aims to protect surface water from pollution by agricultural sources and to promote good farming practice. The current (fifth) Nitrate Action Programme (NAP) covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2025. The NAP regulations contain specific new measures to enhance the protection of surface waters from nutrient pollution arising from agricultural sources. These include dairy cow banding (linking milk yield to organic N), reduced chemical N allowances, shorter organic and chemical fertiliser spreading periods and an increased requirement for soiled water storage. Ireland has availed of a derogation from the maximum limit of 170 kg/ha of livestock manure nitrogen (organic N) as provided in the Nitrates Directive. A recent review of the Nitrates Directive resulted in a number of areas of the country having a reduction in the derogation limit to 220 kg/ha of organic N application, while other areas remained at 250 kg/ha of organic N from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024. There are currently approximately 7,000 grassland farmers availing of a derogation from the Nitrates Directive. While the levels of nitrate and phosphorus loss to water is highest in the areas with the most intensive agriculture, it is important to realise that sub-optimal water quality is a problem for all farmers throughout the country. The objective of the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign will be to reduce nutrient, sediment, pesticides and pathogen loss to all water bodies.

Agriculture in Ireland has a significant role to play in helping the country to achieve good water quality targets as set by the Water Framework Directive. However, farmers require technical support to increase their understanding of the impacts of farming on water quality and the actions to minimise the losses of nutrients, sediment and pesticides to water bodies.

# Proposal

Teagasc is launching a 7-year (2024-2030) national multi-actor campaign focused on improving water quality in Ireland. The campaign will support the active participation of all farmers, agri-food industries, local communities, advisors/researchers and government stakeholders.

This campaign is being initiated at the request of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D., and forms part of a wider whole of government approach to improving water quality.



## Building on On-going Water Quality Initiatives

The **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign will build on existing water quality programmes such as ACP, ACRES, ASSAP, Farming for Water EIP, Waters of LIFE, Blue Dot Catchments, Slaney project (and others) as part of the campaign to improve water quality. This will require the creation of strong collaboration between these initiatives and the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign. An industry stakeholder group will be established to ensure this will be implemented.





# Aim of Better Farming for Water Campaign

To *support and accelerate the adoption of actions on all farms to improve all water bodies* (where agriculture is a significant pressure) to good or high ecological status.

## Objective of Better Farming for Water Campaign

The objective will be to support all farmers to focus on three critical management areas, namely:

**1) Nutrient management; 2) Farmyard Management and 3) Land Management.**

This will be achieved through the on-farm adoption of the following **8-Actions for Change**.

### 8-Actions for Change

#### Nutrient Management

01

Reduce purchased nitrogen (N) & phosphorus (P) surplus per hectare



02

Ensure soil fertility is optimal for lime, phosphorus and potassium



03

Ensure application of fertiliser and organic manure at appropriate times and conditions



#### Farmyard Management

04

Have sufficient slurry and soiled water storage capacity



05

Manage and minimise nutrient loss from farmyards and roadways



#### Land Management

06

Fence off watercourses to prevent bovine access



07

Promote targeted use of mitigation actions such as riparian margins, buffer strips & sediment traps to mitigate nutrient and sediment loss to water



08

Maintain over-winter green cover to reduce nutrient leaching from tillage soils



# Key Performance Indicators

The success of the '**Better Farming for Water**' multi-actor campaign will be measured at three levels: Enablers; Adoption of Key Actions and Impacts.

## ENABLERS

- Multi-actor participation
- Raising awareness
- Pollution Impact Potential (PIP) maps and local knowledge to identify and manage high risk areas
- Common messaging
- Information sharing
- Detailed farm plan and visits
- Best-practice demonstration on-farm
- National & regional events
- Regular and timely training
- Research outputs

## IMPACTS

- Enhance farmers' knowledge of local water quality and pollution pressures
- Reduce nutrient, sediment, pesticide and pathogen loss to water bodies
- Increase the proportion of river water bodies with agriculture as significant pressure to high/good ecological status

## ADOPTION OF KEY ACTIONS

**Adoption of the right measure in the right place at the right time**

- Reduced purchased N & P surplus/ha
- Improved nutrient management & soil fertility
- Only apply fertiliser and organic manure at the appropriate time and conditions
- Sufficient slurry and soiled water storage capacity
- Reduce nutrient loss from farmyards and roadways
- Bovine exclusion from watercourses
- Targeted use of mitigation measures such as riparian margins, buffer strips and sediments traps
  - Increase over winter green cover

Figure 2: 'Better Farming for Water' campaign enablers; adoption of key actions and impacts



# Delivery of the Better Farming for Water Campaign

The objectives of the campaign will be delivered by way of 6 key pillars:

1. Stakeholder engagement through a **Multi-Actor Approach**.
2. **Building Awareness** by acquisition and utilisation of water quality data.
3. **Upskilling** farmers, advisors, teachers, industry professionals and students.
4. An impactful **Knowledge Transfer** programme.
5. A supporting **Research Programme** to identify and develop effective mitigation actions.
6. A strong **Communications Plan** with the target audiences.

The six pillars are interlinked and will be underpinned by a coordinated campaign of dissemination, demonstration, communication and events/activities.

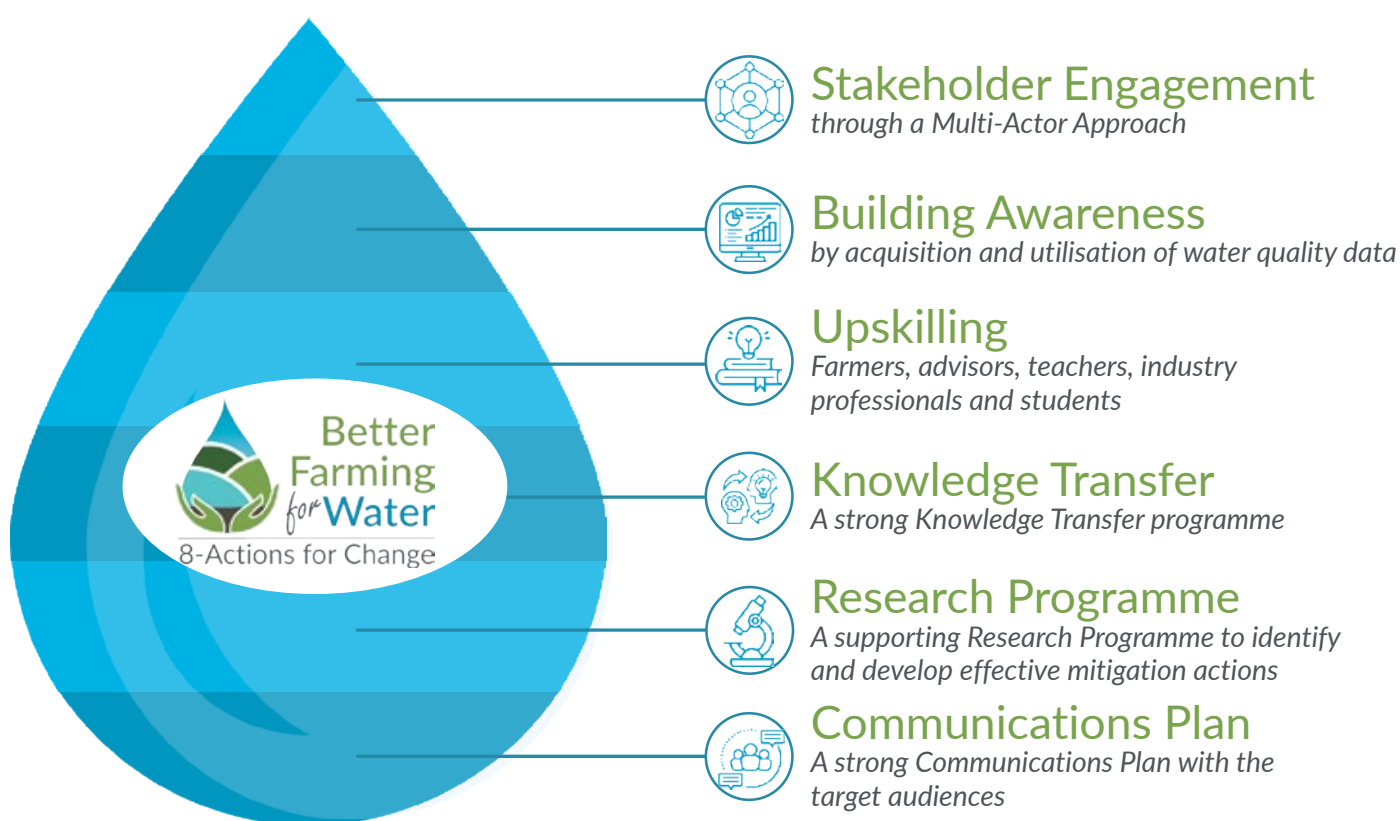


Figure 3: The 'Better Farming for Water' campaign consists of 6 pillars which are designed to deliver a comprehensive campaign to achieve improvements in water quality



Pillar 1:

## Stakeholder engagement through a Multi-Actor Approach

### Objective:

To develop a multi-actor (farmers, industry, community, government) approach to support farmers to implement the 8-Actions for Change

### Key Actions:

- Collaborate with key stakeholder (as outlined in Figure 4) using a multi-actor governance structure to guide the '**Better Farming for Water**' campaign.
- Collaborate closely with programmes such as Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP), Agricultural Catchments Programme (ACP), Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES), Farming for Water EIP, Waters of LIFE, Blue Dot Catchments, Slaney project (and others) as part of the campaign.
- Leverage dairy co-ops links through ASSAP, and links to the meat, tillage and horticulture industries involved in existing programmes (e.g. Signpost Programme) to support them to utilise their infrastructure for promotion of water quality and distribution of information.
- Appoint Teagasc Water Catchment Co-ordinators to co-ordinate the efforts of all partners.
- Engage with LAWPRO and local authorities to identify local water pressures which will guide the 'right measure in the right place' approach.
- Identify 'best-practice demonstration farmers' and 'community leaders' to influence others to participate in the '**Better Farming for Water**' campaign".





**Figure 4: Key stakeholders required to develop a multi-actor approach**

Achieving sustained environmental improvements requires coordinated action at river catchment scale. The multi-actor approach is thus a fundamental pillar of the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign. Ensuring active engagement with farmers, industry, community, and government stakeholders is crucial for effectively tackling the needs and challenges of landowners in addressing water quality. By fostering collaboration among these key actors, we can help ensure that diverse perspectives and insights inform management decisions.

Engagement and involvement of multi-actors, from the outset (and over the full duration of the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign) will ensure that challenges and solutions to address water quality are captured at farm, catchment and regional scale.

The multi-actor approach will help foster a sense of collegiality and build relationships of trust between farmers and local actors. This co-operative approach will accelerate the transformation of existing scientific knowledge into targeted solutions (Pillar 4: Knowledge Transfer Programme) to address challenges to water quality.

The multi-actor network will also play a key role in dissemination, demonstration and communication activities. Dialogue and co-learning will lead to improved understanding and sustained behavioural change amongst all stakeholders.

A key principle of the campaign is to collaborate closely with existing programmes such as ACP, ACRES, ASSAP, Farming for Water EIP, Waters of LIFE, Blue Dot Catchments the Slaney project (and others). It will be particularly important that the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign links closely with ASSAP and builds on its work.

## Key Deliverables





## Pillar 2:

# Building Awareness by acquisition and utilisation of water quality data

## Objective:

Building awareness amongst farmers and other stakeholders of their local water quality and specific challenges facing agriculture to improve water quality

## Key Actions:

- Enable farmers and stakeholders to access water quality data/maps for their local area through [www.catchments.ie](http://www.catchments.ie).
- Enable farmers and stakeholders to access Pollutant Impact Potential (PIP) maps through [www.catchments.ie](http://www.catchments.ie) showing risk areas for losses of N, P and sediment to waters in their local area.
- Develop AgNav to estimate purchased N (and P) surplus and N use efficiency.
- Inform farmers and stakeholders of the current practices that may be negatively impacting water quality in their local area.
- Promote the concept of water stewardship by providing context as to why actions are necessary to improve water quality.
- Highlight and showcase areas where successful mitigation measures (for N, P and sediment) have been implemented.
- Share water quality information in their local area with farmers at farm walks, discussion group meeting and BISS engagement.
- Share information through social media, public events, and discussions with local communities.



Ireland is a European leader with regard to the collection and sharing of information on water quality and threats to water quality. The EPA makes data from each monitoring point available through the website [www.catchments.ie](http://www.catchments.ie) and also provides a full assessment of the ecological status of Ireland's waters every three years (in line with WFD reporting requirement). This assessment reports on the water quality status of over 3,000 waterbodies (i.e. rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal, and groundwaters). Coupled with this, the EPA provides an annual update on trends in the biological quality and nutrient status of our waterbodies, resulting for example in maps highlighting average nitrate and phosphate concentrations at river sites (see Figure 1). In addition, Pollution Impact Potential (PIP) maps help identify the risk areas for losses of N, P and sediment to waters at the field-to farm scale.

These data and PIP maps are a hugely valuable resource and using them to build awareness among farmers and other stakeholders of their local water quality and specific local challenges will be a central element of the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign.

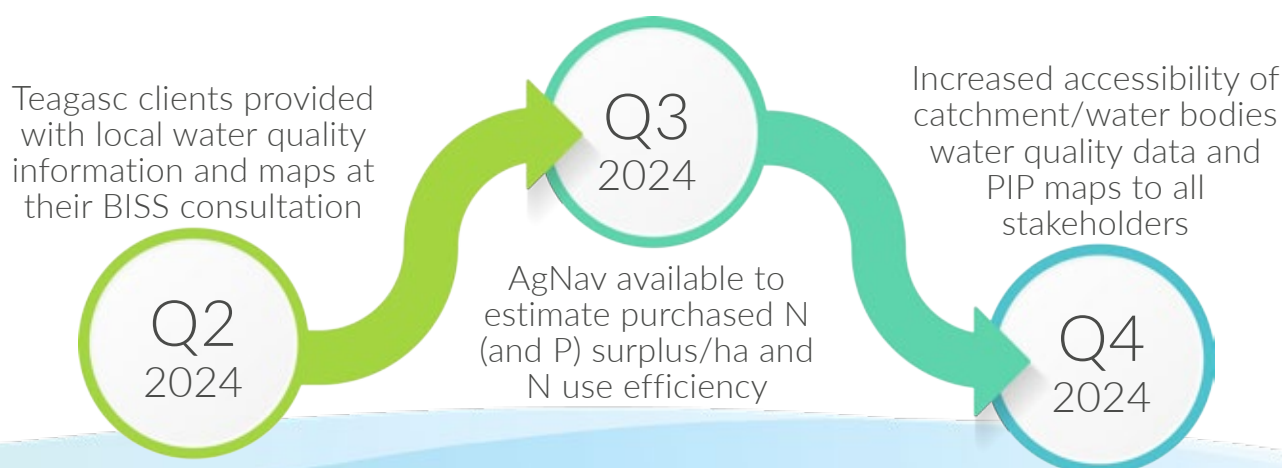
Facilitating farmers to access, navigate and interrogate these maps, assessments and reports is key to building awareness amongst farmers and other stakeholders of their local water quality and specific local challenges facing agriculture to improve water quality.



Another key initiative will be to develop AgNav so that it can estimate purchased N (and P) surplus and N use efficiency for a farmer, and its decision support function will allow a plan to be developed to help reduce these surpluses. AgNav is the farmer-centric sustainability support platform developed by Teagasc, the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) and Bord Bia.

Sharing tools and technologies with farmers to reduce nutrient loss (e.g. improved nitrogen use efficiency); coupled with identifying and demonstrating successful implementation of mitigation measures (for N, P and sediment), will help build farmer awareness of, and confidence in, the actions that can be undertaken on their own farm to improve their local water quality.

## Key Deliverables





### Pillar 3:

## Upskilling farmers, advisors, teachers, industry professionals and students

### Objective:

Upskilling farmers, advisors, teachers, industry professionals and students through the provision of targeted training using a toolbox of tailored solutions and the revision of curricula

### Key Actions:

- Provide training to all Teagasc Knowledge Transfer staff (including advisory and education) and partner stakeholders (e.g. co-ops, farmers, contractors, private consultants) to enhance their knowledge and skills on key aspects relating to reducing nutrient loss to water bodies and a toolbox of targeted solutions.
- A range of courses from a basic introductory course to an accredited course will be made available to farmers and professionals. These will include online self-directed and face-to-face courses.
- Develop specific catchments/waterbody advice factsheets highlighting the water quality challenges and targeted solutions for that catchment/waterbody.
- A 'Better Farming for Water' campaign manual will be published covering all relevant aspects relating to reducing nutrient loss from agriculture including: nutrient management, design and use of nutrient mitigation measures to reduce diffuse pollution, farmyard design to limit point source pollution; roadway design to limit sediment runoff.
- Teagasc teaching resources for students will be revised and updated to ensure that all aspects of best practice relating to reducing nutrient loss to water from agriculture are included in the curriculum.



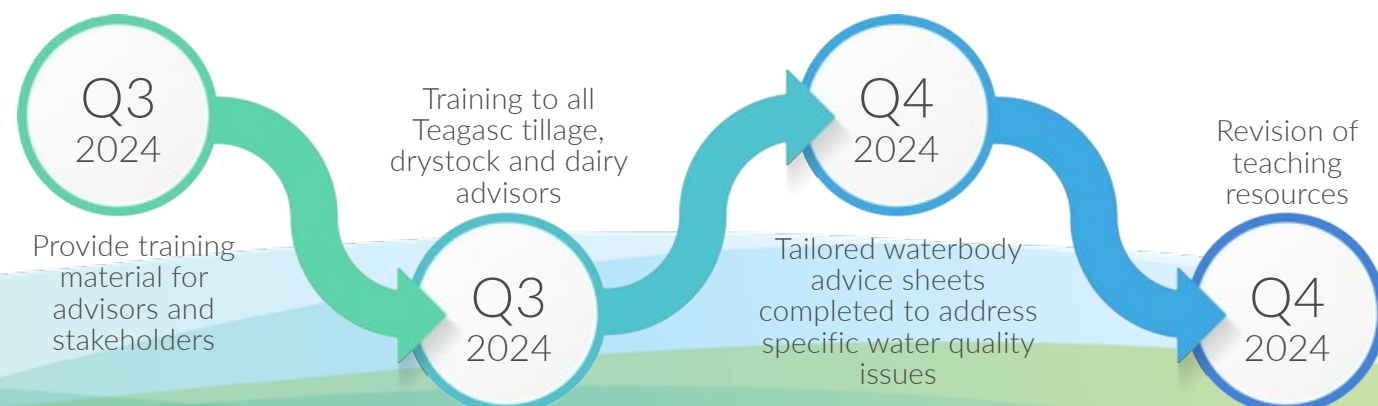
Improving water quality is not a new concept and therefore considerable knowledge and skills already exists amongst a variety of stakeholders. The **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign will build on existing skills and focus on enhancing the knowledge and capacity of all stakeholders through a combination of training material and courses. These will include a range of courses from a basic introductory course to accredited courses which will be made available to farmers, advisors and other stakeholders.

A specific resource will be the publication of the **'Better Farming for Water'** manual which will address the relevant key aspects relating to improving water quality. The manual will be developed for usage in a range of formats/media. Coupled with the manual, the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign will develop waterbody/soil type/enterprise specific advice factsheets, highlighting the water quality challenges and targeted solutions.

Students are a very important group. Teagasc courses will be assessed, revised and updated to ensure that all aspects of best practice relating to reducing nutrient loss to water from agriculture are included in the curriculum.



## Key Deliverables







Pillar 4:

## An impactful Knowledge Transfer programme

### Objective:

To deliver an impactful Knowledge Transfer programme to support the implementation of 'The 8-Actions for Change'.

### Key Actions:

- Advisors will co-develop tailored solutions with farmers to address specific water quality issues (nutrients, sediments, pesticides, protection of the watercourse habitat) in their catchment area.
- Teagasc will offer all clients the opportunity to develop a water quality improvement plan for their farm; this will focus on a number (c. 5) of critically important mitigation measures that are specific to and can be impactful on each farm.
- At least four public 'Better Farming for Water' campaign events held in each of Teagasc's 12 advisory regions annually in collaboration with campaign partners.
- The 'Better Farming for Water' campaign in each advisory region will be coordinated by a lead advisor, ensuring strong collaboration with the ASSAP – Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme advisor in that region.
- Six water catchments (Boyne, Slaney, Barrow/Nore, Suir, Blackwater and Lee/Bandon) will be prioritised in the first two years of the programme; a Water Catchment Coordinator will be allocated to each of these catchments to coordinate the KT programme and ensure the multi-actor approach is used.
- The current discussion group network will prioritise improvement in water quality as part of their programme over the next two years.



Knowledge transfer between advisors and farmers is a core element to improve water quality. All drystock, dairy and tillage advisors will engage in the delivery of information and advice to farmers. Information sharing will include discussion groups, regional events and one to one consultations, to focus on the most relevant mitigation measures from the **8-Actions for Change**.

In running this campaign, Teagasc will seek to coordinate the Knowledge Transfer campaign with other stakeholders to the maximum extent. It will build on the excellent work currently ongoing in the ASSAP programme and link out to other initiatives such as ACP, ACRES, Farming for Water EIP, Waters of LIFE, Blue Dot Catchments, Slaney project and others.

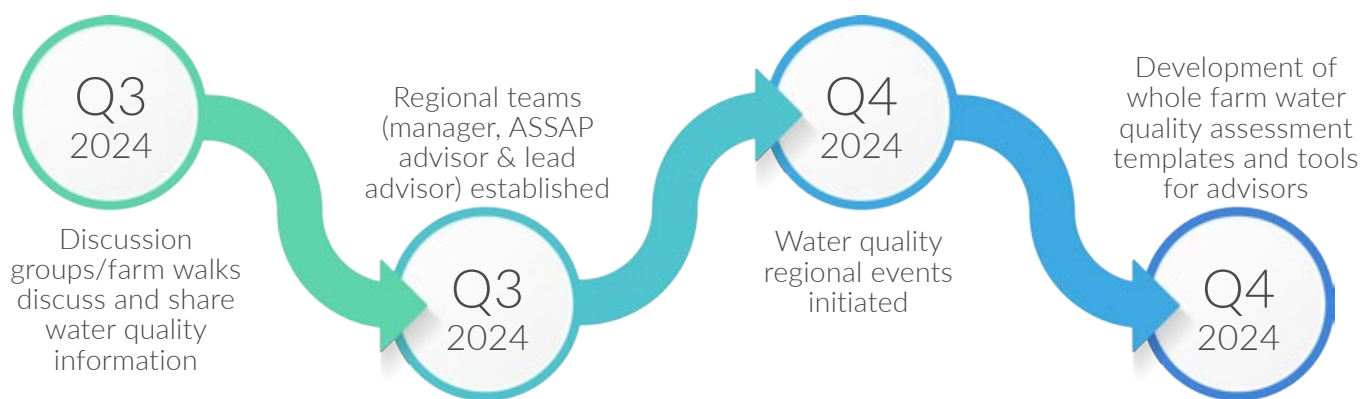
Teagasc will also integrate water quality messaging into the Signpost Programme and AgNav will be developed to estimate purchased N (and P) surplus and N use efficiency for a farmer, and its decision support function will allow a plan to be developed to help reduce these surpluses. The plans farmers develop with Signpost Climate and Sustainability Advisors will include reducing N (and P) surplus.

A lead advisor will be identified in each of the 12-Teagasc Advisory regions to coordinate the campaign in the region, supported by a corresponding ASSAP Advisor. The campaign events will include elements which serve both Teagasc clients and non-clients.

**The 'Better Farming for Water' campaign knowledge transfer programme will focus on the 8-Actions for Change:**

- Reduce purchased N and P surplus per hectare
- Ensure soil fertility is optimal for lime, P and K
- Ensure application of fertiliser and organic manure at appropriate times and conditions
- Have sufficient slurry and soiled water storage capacity
- Manage and minimise nutrient loss from farmyards and roadways
- Fence off watercourses to prevent bovine access
- Promote targeted use of mitigation actions such as riparian margins, buffer strips and sediment traps to mitigate nutrient and sediment loss to water
- Maintain over-winter green cover to reduce nitrate leaching from tillage soils

## Key Deliverables





Pillar 5:

## A Supporting Research Programme

### Objective:

Align the research programmes to investigate the processes of nutrient loss, and develop mitigation technologies

### Key Actions:

- Enhanced Teagasc capabilities in water quality environmental modelling at field, farm and catchment level.
- Environment proof all major farm system research projects/farms with the inclusion of ceramic cups and drainage lysimeters to evaluate the impact of soil type, farming system (cropping/grassland) and pasture/crop composition on nutrient losses.
- Assess water quality data in all major river catchments to identify where knowledge transfer campaigns need to focus.
- Assess the cost effectiveness of nature based solutions (constructed wetlands, riparian margins, buffer strips and sediments traps) to reduce the loss of N, P and sediment from Irish farming systems.
- Investigate the influence of fertiliser N timing, rate, type on varying soil types and farming systems on N leaching.
- Investigate animal nutrition and management strategies to increase N use efficiency and reduce nutrient losses to water bodies.
- Assess current slurry storage capacity and infrastructure on farms to minimise nutrient loss to water bodies.
- Design and evaluate new farm infrastructures that mitigate nutrient loss to water.
- Identify the synergies and trade-offs for wider ecosystem services (GHG, biodiversity, production) associated with water quality mitigation measures.
- Integrate learnings from socio-economic and biophysical research to enhance the uptake and performance of management and mitigation practices.
- Build on ACP learnings to evaluate and demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of water quality mitigation measures.



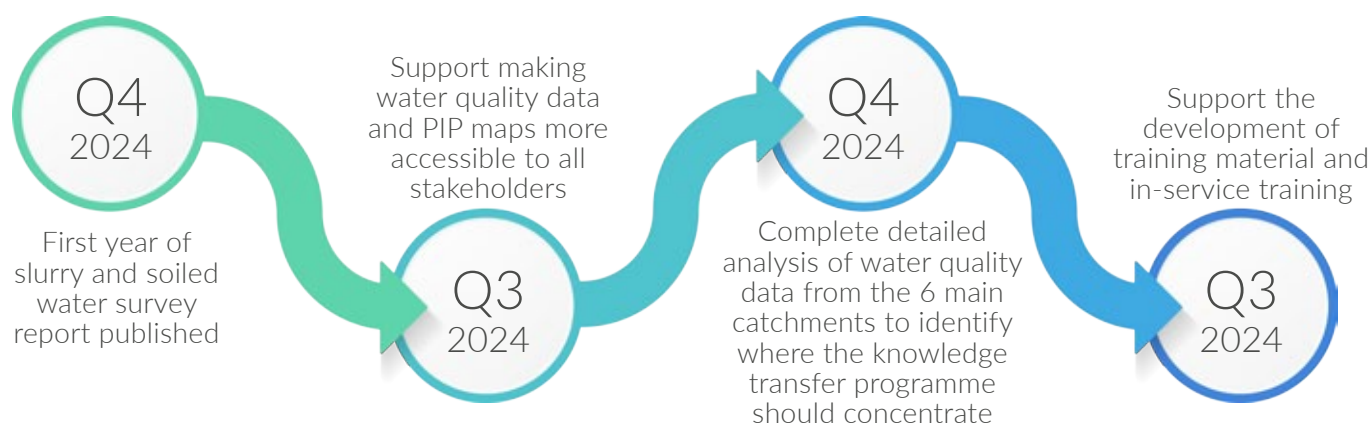
Science-based evidence is key to enhancing our understanding of the processes (hydrological and biogeochemical) that govern the transport of pollutants (e.g. nutrients, sediments, pesticides) to water. Research is also essential to develop technologies to reduce losses from land to water. Modelling and data analysis is important to identify trends in local water quality and areas where the campaign knowledge transfer programme should focus. Integrating this information, with socio-economic learnings, can enhance the uptake and sustained performance of management and mitigation practices.

Key to this is strong integration between research, specialists, advisors and other stakeholders to identify potential new mitigation methods and distil and disseminate existing knowledge. As part of the process of building the capacity of advisors, the **‘Better Farming for Water’** campaign will focus on supporting the engagement of advisors with the ongoing research projects and the research outcomes.

**This will be achieved in a number of ways, including:**

- Inclusion of advisors in research project steering groups;
- Adopting a bottom up approach with advisor input into potential research areas;
- Regular research updates (website, e-mail, newsletters, webinars etc.) to address research findings, ongoing trials and emerging issues;
- An annual forum will be established for the sharing of research initiatives, new projects and outcomes with advisors;
- Revise the Water Quality Research webpages to facilitate sharing of outputs with advisors, researchers, farmers, policy-makers and other stakeholders;
- An annual research insights event will be undertaken for the sharing of research initiatives, new projects and outcomes with farmers and the wider industry. The format for the event is likely to include a conference/seminar element combined with a farm walk; and,
- Input from researchers into training/upskilling activities for advisors, lecturers/teachers, technicians and farm staff.

## Key Deliverables





## Pillar 6: A Communications Plan

### Objective:

To develop a Communications Plan to deliver clear, positive and simple messaging to enhance the understanding of agricultural pressures on water quality, to reinforce the need for improvement and to highlight positive actions taken by farmers and local communities.

### Key Actions:

- Communication with a range of industry stakeholders to deliver consistent, coordinated and targeted messages to support the adoption of the 8-Actions for Change to achieve a reduction of nutrient loss to water bodies.
- Campaign brand and identity (including a campaign logo) built.
- The 'Better Farming for Water' campaign will be included as part of all Teagasc events (e.g. open days, conferences; programme launches etc.,)
- The campaign will be promoted at all showcase events in which Teagasc participates.
- Regular and timely newsletters distributed to all farmers and maximise usage of social media including webinars and podcasts.
- Annual research conference/event sharing up-to-date information held in conjunction with a farm walk.
- A specific section on the Teagasc website will be developed as a repository of all information on the 'Better Farming for Water' campaign. This will include relevant research projects, reports, press articles, newsletters, farmer profiles and be updated on an ongoing basis.



A comprehensive communication effort will be central to the delivery of the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign. One of the key elements of the campaign will be the communication of the opportunities to improve water quality within the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign and the delivery of key messages regarding best practice farm management and the **8-Actions for Change**. Communication will cover a range of audiences including: dairy, beef, sheep and tillage farmers; students; general agri industry and stakeholders.

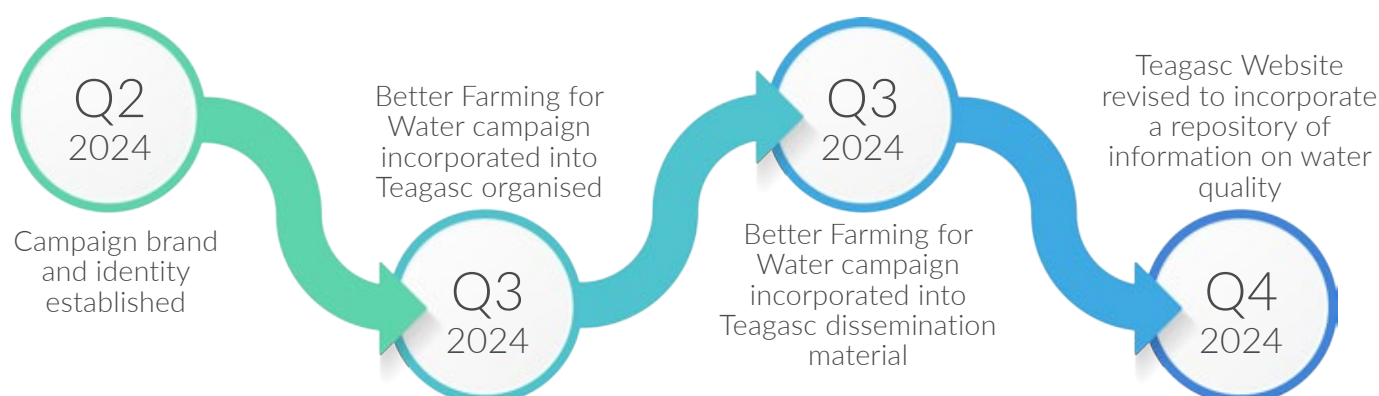
In order to maximise the reach of the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign messages across different audiences a range of communication channels will be used including:

- Events (farm walks, open days, discussion group meetings, training courses, education courses, public events e.g. the national ploughing championships/shows).
- Publications (reports, weekly newsletters both print and electronic and articles in farming press)
- Website will be regularly updated; website to serve as a hub for collation of material for easy access.
- Media (including local & national TV/radio; local newspapers; farming publications); and
- Social media (including live streaming of events; podcasts; webinars; YouTube clips; Twitter; and other relevant media).

The initial focus of the communication initiatives will be building brand recognition of the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign. All efforts will focus on the clear referencing and identification of all activities/events as being part of the campaign.



## Key Deliverables



# Campaign Management

The resources and expertise required for the successful delivery of the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign will be drawn from across the multi-disciplinary spectrum of resources from key stakeholders. Teagasc existing staff (which includes managers, advisors, specialists and researchers) as well as new staff (6 Water Catchment Coordinators, a Water Quality Catchment Research Officer plus a Programme Manager) will be available to support the delivery of the campaign.

The activities of the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign will be integrated with other advisory and research programmes/campaigns within Teagasc including: ASSAP, Signpost Advisory Programme, Grass10 and ACP, ensuring consistency of agronomic and environmental messaging.

## The specific resources will include:

1. The campaign will utilise existing national multi-actor governance structures to establish a multi-actor (farmers, industry, community, government) stakeholder steering group (Quarter 3 2024). This group will give overall responsibility for the direction and coordination of the campaign, chaired by a stakeholder collaborator, that will meet three times yearly for the duration of the campaign.
2. A high level management team will provide overall support for the operation of the campaign which will be chaired by a Teagasc Head of Directorate that will meet 6 times yearly.
3. An action/implementation plan will be developed outlining key actions, lead and supporting organisations and time lines.
4. The Campaign Manager will take overall responsibility, drive the campaign and ensure that the objectives are met on time.

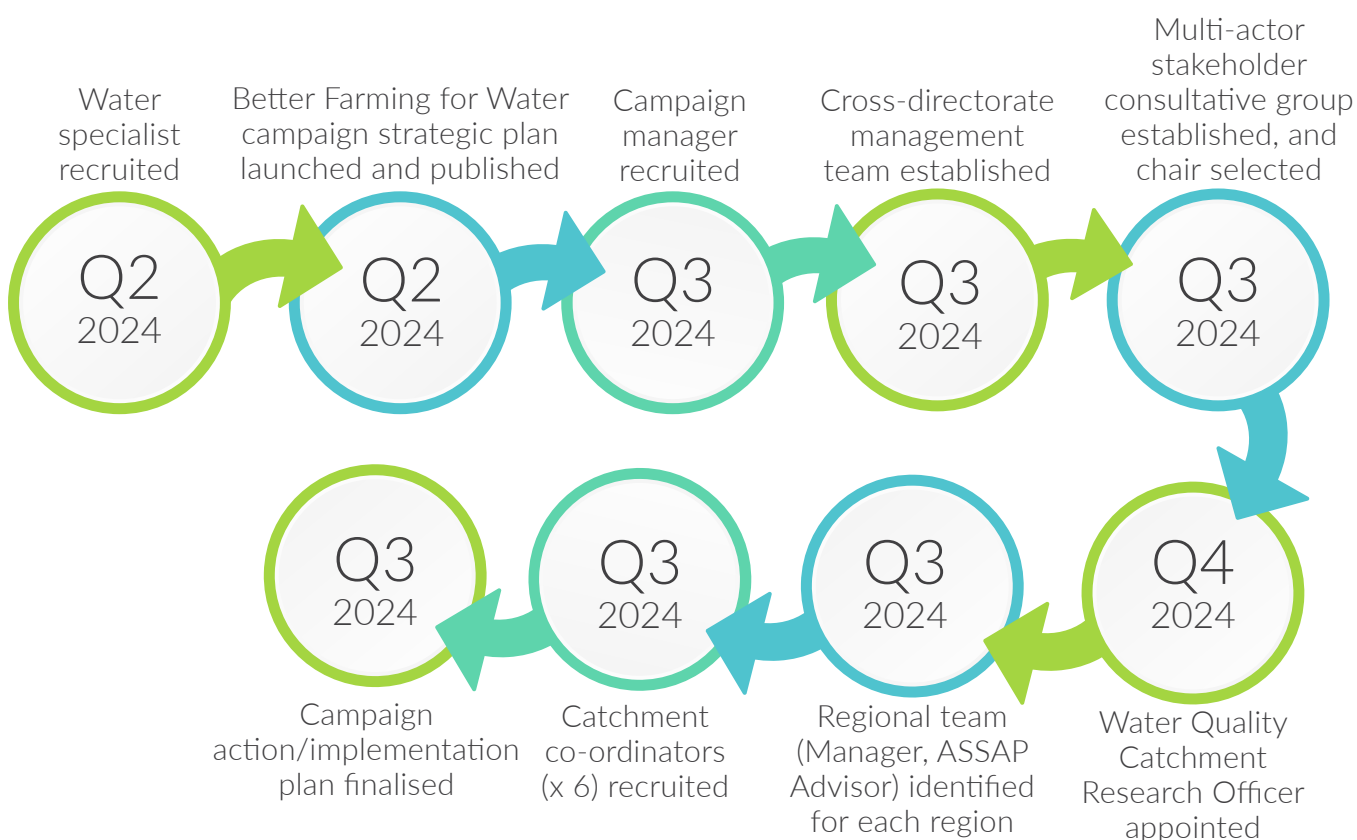




5. The Campaign Manager will have the support of a water specialist and a part time campaign administrator.
6. The Campaign Manager will be supported by 6 Water Catchment Coordinators; one each to the Boyne, Slaney, Barrow/Nore, Suir, Blackwater and the Lee/Bandon.
7. At advisory region level, an ASSAP advisor and a lead regional advisor will take the co-lead on the delivery of the campaign within the region while all tillage, drystock and dairy advisors will engage with the campaign.
8. A targeted media campaign will be required to build awareness, promote the campaign and the emerging messages.

In addition to the specific resources outlined above, specialist Teagasc resources will support the **'Better Farming for Water'** campaign across the organisation including those related to the Environment Knowledge Transfer Department.

## Key Deliverables



# Key Deliverables in 2024

<b>Multi Actor Approach</b>	
Multi-actor stakeholder group established and chairperson appointed	Q3
Best practice demonstration farmers identified	Q3
Protocols agreed with dairy (DII), meat (MII) and tillage (TII) industries to promote and disseminate outputs from the <b>'Better Farming for Water'</b> campaign	Q4
<b>Building Awareness</b>	
Teagasc clients provided with local water quality information and maps at their BISS consultation	Q2
AgNav available to estimate purchased N (and P) surplus/ha and N use efficiency	Q3
Increased accessibility of catchment/water bodies water quality data and PIP maps to all stakeholders	Q4
<b>Upskilling Farmers, Advisors, Teachers, Industry Professionals &amp; Students</b>	
Provide training material for advisors and stakeholders	Q3
Training to all Teagasc tillage, drystock and dairy advisors	Q3
Tailored waterbody advice sheets completed to address specific water quality issues	Q4
Revision of teaching resources	Q4
<b>Knowledge Transfer Programme</b>	
Discussion groups/farm walks discuss and share water quality information	Q3
Regional teams (manager, ASSAP advisor & lead advisor) established	Q3
Water quality regional events initiated	Q3
Development of whole farm water quality assessment templates and tools for advisors	Q4
<b>Supporting Research Programme</b>	
First year of slurry and soiled water survey report published	Q4
Support making water quality data and PIP maps more accessible to all stakeholders	Q3
Complete detailed analysis of water quality data from the 6 main catchments to identify where the knowledge transfer programme should concentrate	Q4
Support the development of training material and in-service training	Q3
<b>Communication</b>	
Campaign brand and identity established	Q2
Better Farming for Water campaign incorporated into Teagasc organised national events	Q3
Better Farming for Water campaign incorporated into Teagasc dissemination material	Q3
Teagasc Website revised to incorporate a repository of information on water quality	Q4
<b>Campaign Management</b>	
Water Specialist recruited	Q2
Better Farming for Water campaign strategic plan launched and published	Q2
Campaign Manager recruited	Q3
Cross-directorate management team established	Q3
Multi-actor stakeholder consultative group established, and chair selected	Q3
Water Quality Catchment Research Officer appointed	Q3
Regional team (Manager, ASSAP Advisor) identified for each region	Q3
Catchment co-ordinators (x 6) recruited	Q3
Campaign action/implementation plan finalised	Q4









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