

# ENVIRONMENT

June 2021

## REAP the benefits

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*Species for LIG:*  
*Forget me not.*



*Ragged robin.*



*Self-heal.*



*Lady's smock or  
cuckoo flower.*



*Greater bird's foot  
trefoil.*

If you are one of the many farmers who applied for the Results-based Environment-Agri Pilot (REAP) and are fortunate to be accepted – you may be interested to know more.

The purpose of REAP is to test the 'results-based' approach to agri-environment schemes and to prepare farmers, advisors and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) for the next rural development programme. The duration will be two years: 2021 and 2022.

If accepted into REAP, you must choose between two and 10ha of grass fields on your farm. Tillage fields or peatland with heather are

not eligible. Your advisor will walk these grass fields in June or July and score each field with you using one of two scorecards: one for low input grassland (LIG), or one for multi-species ley (MSL). The score determines the level of payment. The advisor will also discuss with you the option of planting trees or hedges.

The field score is based on: the number and abundance of non-grass species; the extent of field boundaries including hedges, stone walls, earth banks and watercourses; the width of grassy margins – either one, two or three metres; and, an additional five metre option for MSLs.

## Measures to reduce nutrient and sediment run-off to waters from January 1, 2021

### ISSUE

### TO REDUCE NUTRIENT AND SEDIMENT RUN-OFF TO WATERS

Bovine exclusion  
and fencing of  
watercourses



Water trough  
(20m from  
watercourses)



Crossing  
watercourses  
with cows daily



Farm roads  
(waters/surface  
waters)



## WORKS TO BE COMPLETED

All bovine access (with the exception of crossing points) to be excluded from watercourses including drinking points. Watercourses are marked as solid blue lines on OSi layer 1:5,000. All fences must be 1.5m back from top of the bank.

Water troughs (including nose pumps) must be moved 20m away from watercourses on OSi layer 1:5,000 as above.

Bovines can cross watercourses without a bridge/culvert. Fences required both sides of watercourses (cattle cannot have access into watercourse or up/down stream). Best practice to install bridges/culverts where animals cross.

Camber roadways away from waters. Divert direct run-off away from waters. Applies to all surface waters and waters (all water courses, rivers/streams/drains/dry drains).

## WHICH FARMS?

All three **orange boxes** here apply to:

1. Farms with a grassland stocking rate (GSR)  $\geq 170\text{kg nitrogen (N)/ha}$ .
2. Derogation farms.
3. Farms exporting slurry to reduce whole farm stocking rate (WFSR) that comes under  $170\text{kg N/ha}$ .
4. Tillage farms with a  $\text{GSR} \geq 170\text{kg N/ha}$   
**GSR** = *organic N (before exports) produced by grazing livestock on the holding/grassland area.*
5. All farms where  $\text{WFSR} \geq 170\text{kg N/ha}$ .

### Whole farm stocking rate excluding N exports $\geq 170\text{ kg N/ha}$

*Organic N (before exports) produced by grazing livestock (excludes pigs and poultry)/ holding area (grassland plus arable/tillage/WBC).*

Applies to every farm, regardless of stocking rate

## MESSAGE FROM ASSAP

# Protect our bathing waters

In Ireland we are fortunate to have a large number of beaches and lakes that are suitable for bathing purposes, including swimming and water sports. Bathing waters are a great resource to have in the country from a recreational and tourism point of view, and there is great pride in seeing the public availing of these facilities. The EPA monitors 147 different locations for their suitability for public bathing during the bathing season which runs from June 1 to September 15. The majority of these bathing locations are on the coast (with a number of lakes also being monitored) with 95% meeting or exceeding the minimum required standard. While the results are positive, there is a risk of bathing locations being impacted from contamination with pathogens. *E. coli* or intestinal enterococci are pathogens of particular concern, the source of which can be human or animal.

Farming activities with a risk of pathogen losses are poor practice in the application of slurry during summer, and cattle access to lakes or streams that flow into lakes. Slurry is a source of pathogens and summer is the time it has the greatest impact on bathing waters. Rainfall during or after land spreading can lead to surface runoff of slurry into the drainage network. Buffers between the spreading area and watercourses help break the pathway and reduce pathogen losses. Animal access to streams and watercourses can lead to direct excretion of pathogens while animals are drinking.



*95% of our bathing locations meet or exceed minimum standards.*



*Places to swim are a great resource for everyone.*

### Top tips

- ▶ Check the weather forecast and do not spread slurry if heavy rainfall is predicted.
- ▶ Adhere to the required buffer zones for slurry spreading – 5m from drains or streams and 20m from lakeshores. In fields that are of high risk with many drains or prone to flooding, increased buffers are recommended or in some cases that no slurry is applied.
- ▶ Prevent cattle access to watercourses, providing alternative water supplies to livestock.