

Update on Progress with Adaptation Strategies for Extreme Weather Conditions

Siobhán Kavanagh, Michael O'Donovan, Joe Patton

Recommendations

- Adaptation strategies will mean that farmers both on heavy and dry land will need to have a feed reserve available of 400kg DM per LU, over and above normal winter feed reserves.

Progress: The Fodder Survey July 2020 indicated that farmers are retaining a reserve of silage for the difficult years. Any communications on silage making in the March – June period must highlight the need for a reserve of silage for the difficult years. Adviser training will continue to highlight the requirement for a reserve of silage.

- A national fodder budget survey should be completed each July in Ireland to ensure sufficient feed stocks are available in the country

Progress: A Fodder Survey is conducted each July by Teagasc advisers in every region, using Pasturebase to record the information. Participating farms are selected to reflect ranges of scale and enterprise within regions. In 2020, over 700 farmer surveys were uploaded to Pasturebase. The report from this survey is published extensively.

- Teagasc need to continue to promote grassland measurement within Pasturebase Ireland to improve grassland production and utilisation on farms.

Progress: The number of farmers using Pasturebase continues to grow with 2,600 farmers doing more than 10 covers in 2020, 700 greater than in 2019. Local advisers, along with the GRASS 10 team, continue to develop new grass groups to promote the use of grass measurement. The requirement of derogation farmers to measure grass from 2022 will further increase the number of farmers measuring grass.

- Grazing, feed storage and feeding infrastructure needs to be improved to allow for better feed management in extreme weather conditions

Progress: Significant progress has been made by all farmers to improve grazing infrastructure, particularly on drystock farms. Progress on feed storage infrastructure has been slower. It is agreed that upskilling of advisers on the requirement for additional feed storage when farms are expanding needs to be built into training programmes.

- Good silage making practices need to be adopted by all livestock farmers

Progress: Silage making practices have improved in general with many farmers cutting silage earlier. Rates of silage quality testing remain low; however the advent of stand-alone analysis devices may be leading to more unreported testing being carried out. Extensive training of advisers and students in our colleges on making good silage and feed budgeting has occurred in the last few years.

- Met Eireann should make more use of the Teagasc MOST grass growth prediction model to forecast weekly grass growth nationally.

Progress: Each Friday Met Eireann are sent the PBI growth for the week and the predicted growth for the following week. This information is used for the Sunday pm farming weather report. Every Tuesday, the Grass 10 newsletter is sent to Met Eireann and this is posted on their twitter account and website.