

Impact of 2026 drought on grass production and fodder supply on livestock farms and on crop and vegetable production

Teagasc Update

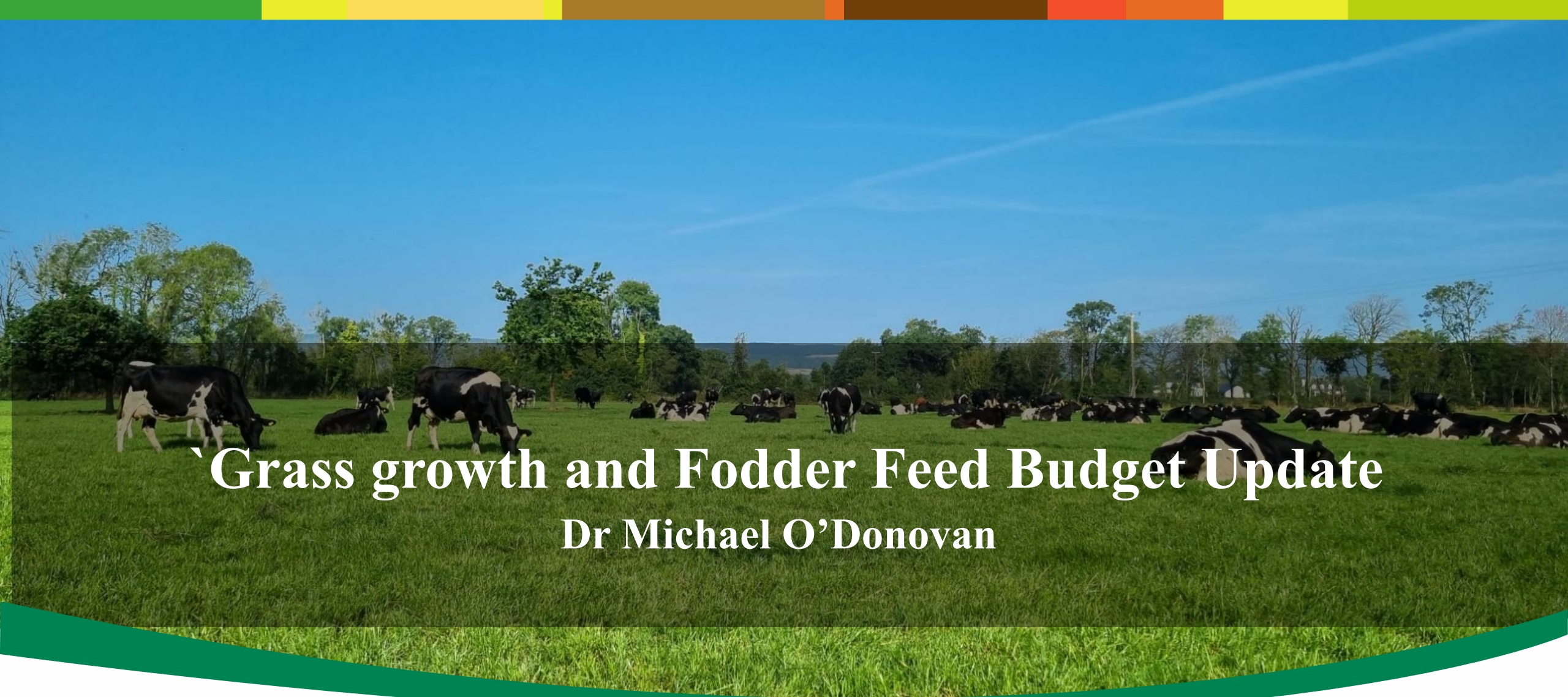
**National Fodder and Food
Security Committee**

Fri 21 August 2026

Teagasc, Oak Park, Carlow

Outline

- Analysis of current grass growth and supplementary feeding data based on PastureBase Ireland (PBI), and current fertiliser advice (*Michael O'Donovan & David Wall*)
- Teagasc Fodder Survey Results (*Joe Patton*)
- Crops and Horticulture Update (*Shay Phelan*)
- Ongoing Advisory activities and supports (*Tom Curran*)



Grass growth and Fodder Feed Budget Update

Dr Michael O'Donovan



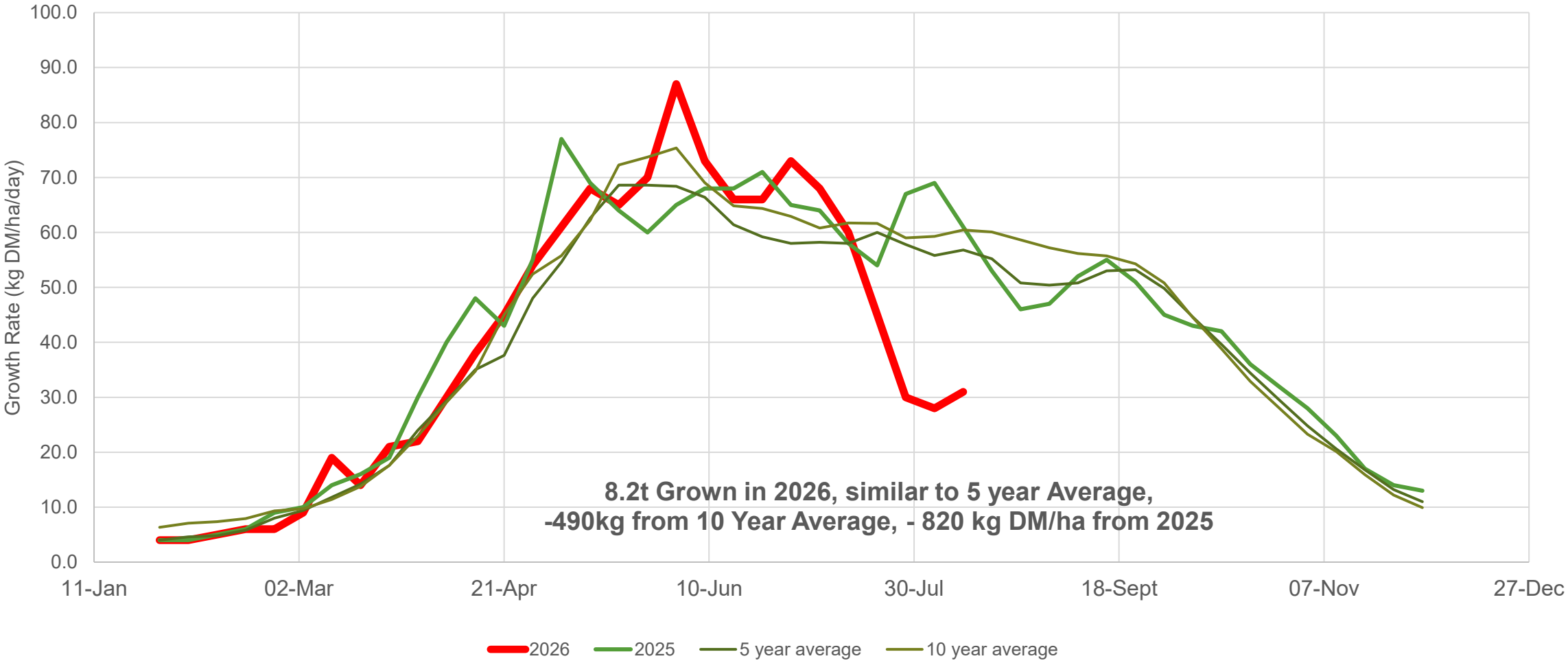
National Fodder Meeting August 2026



Presentation Overview

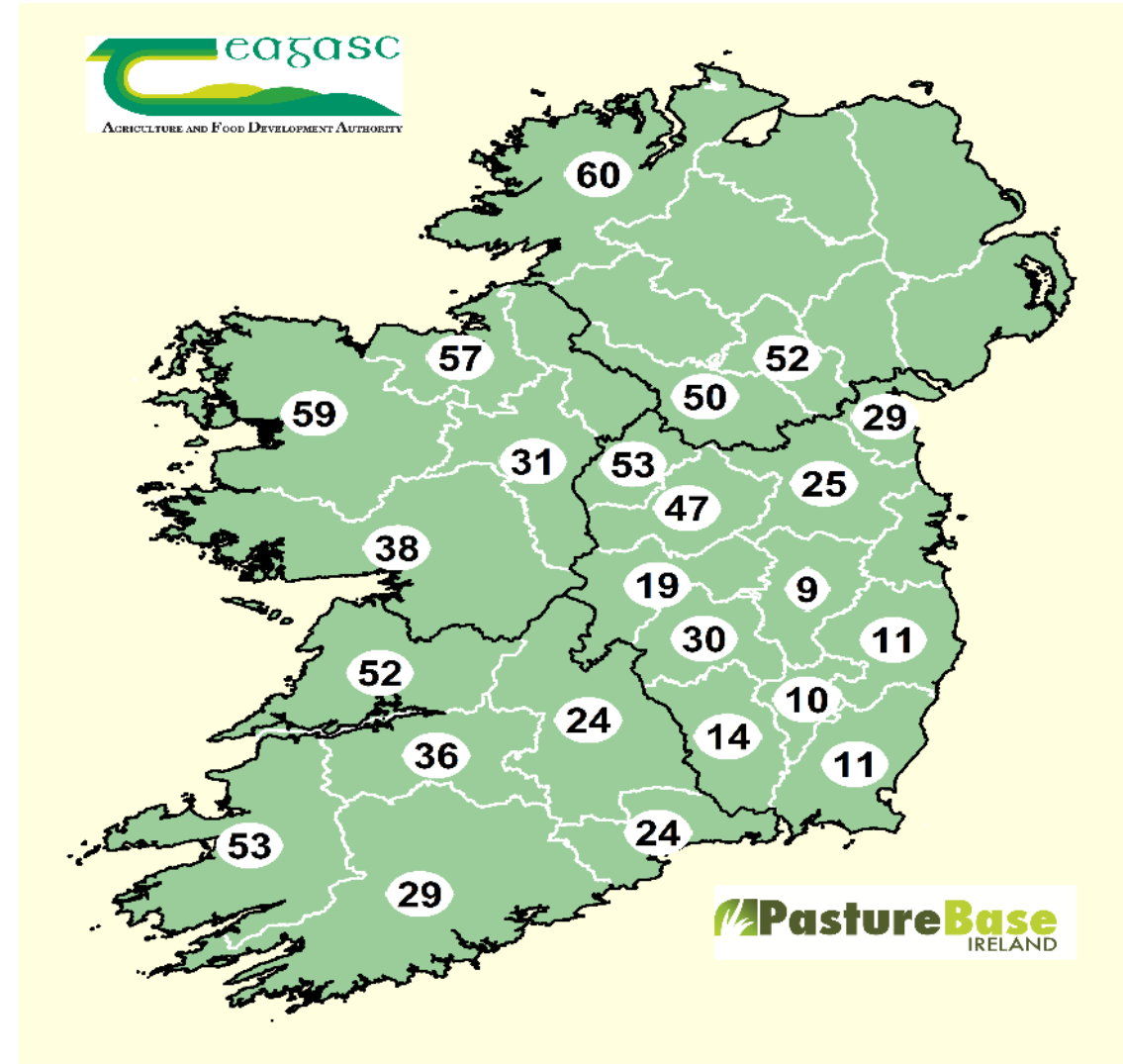
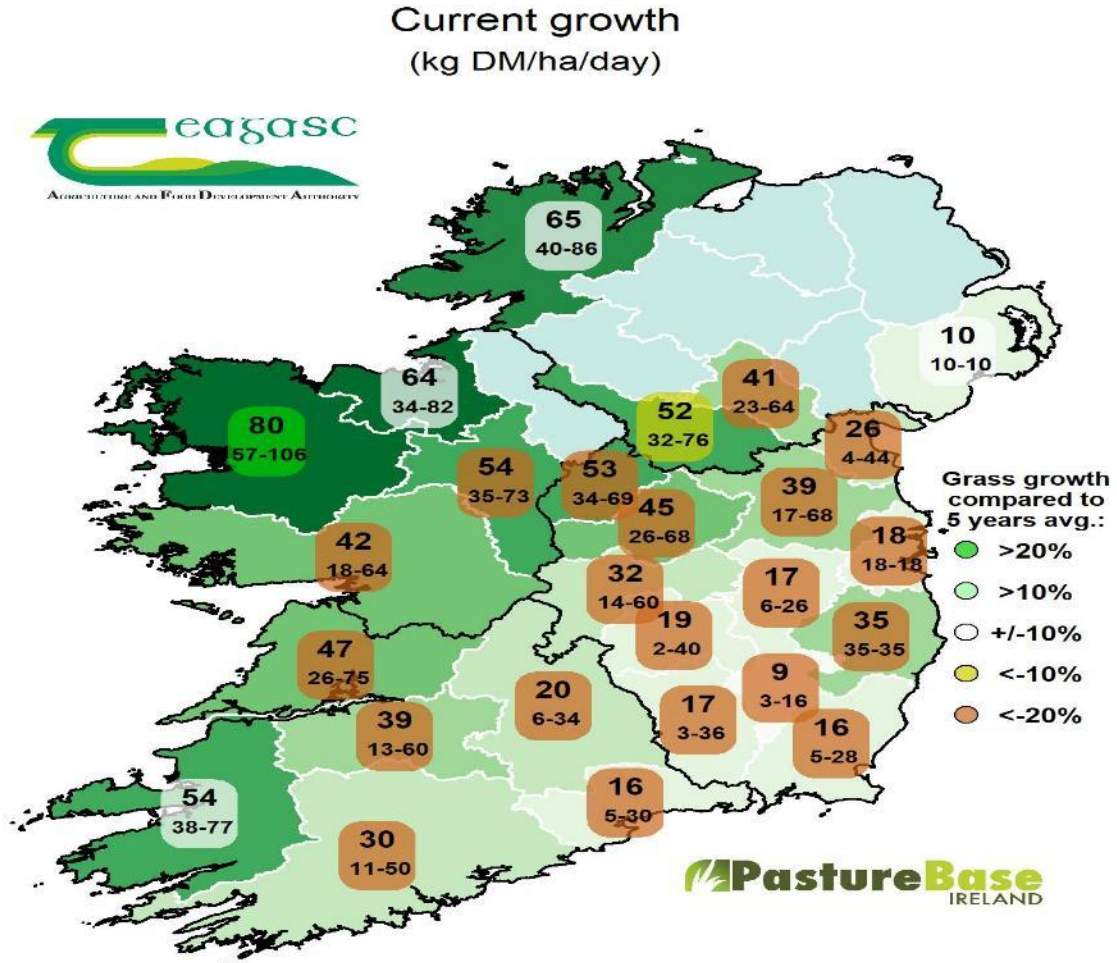
- Current and Predicted grass growth
- Soil Moisture Deficits
- Current grass supply and feeding management
- Fodder budget Assessments

Weekly Grass Growth Curve 2026



Current and Predicted Grass Growth Nationally

Grass growth predictions
Next week (kg DM/ha/day)

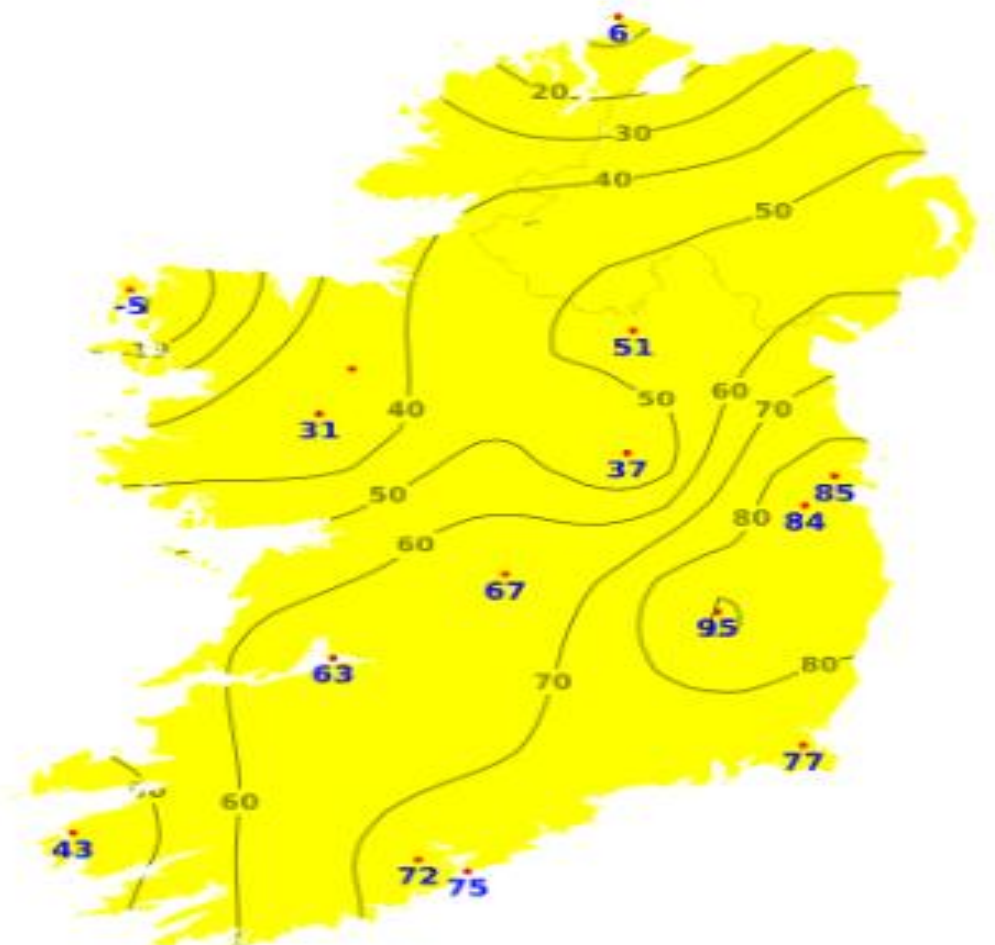


Rainfall (mm) & Soil Moisture Deficit Map

Site	June	July	August
Athenry	126	16	29
Moorepark	81	1.1	24
Johnstown Castle	107	1.5	17
Ballyhaise	110	10.4	29
Oakpark	72	1.5	2.6

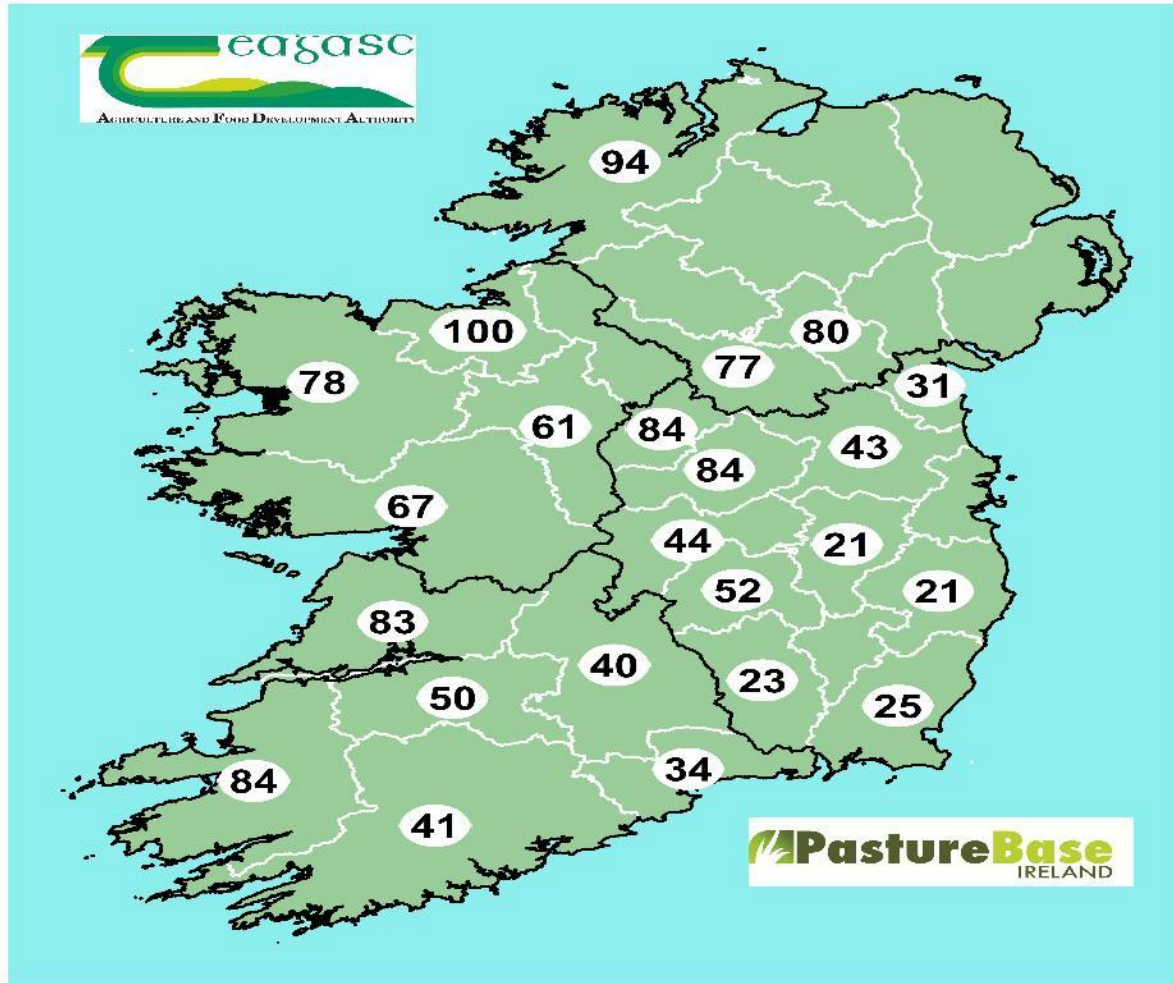
7 Stations observed Heatwaves (5 days >25 degrees) in 2026
Moorepark observed a 13 day Heatwave

Thu 13th Aug

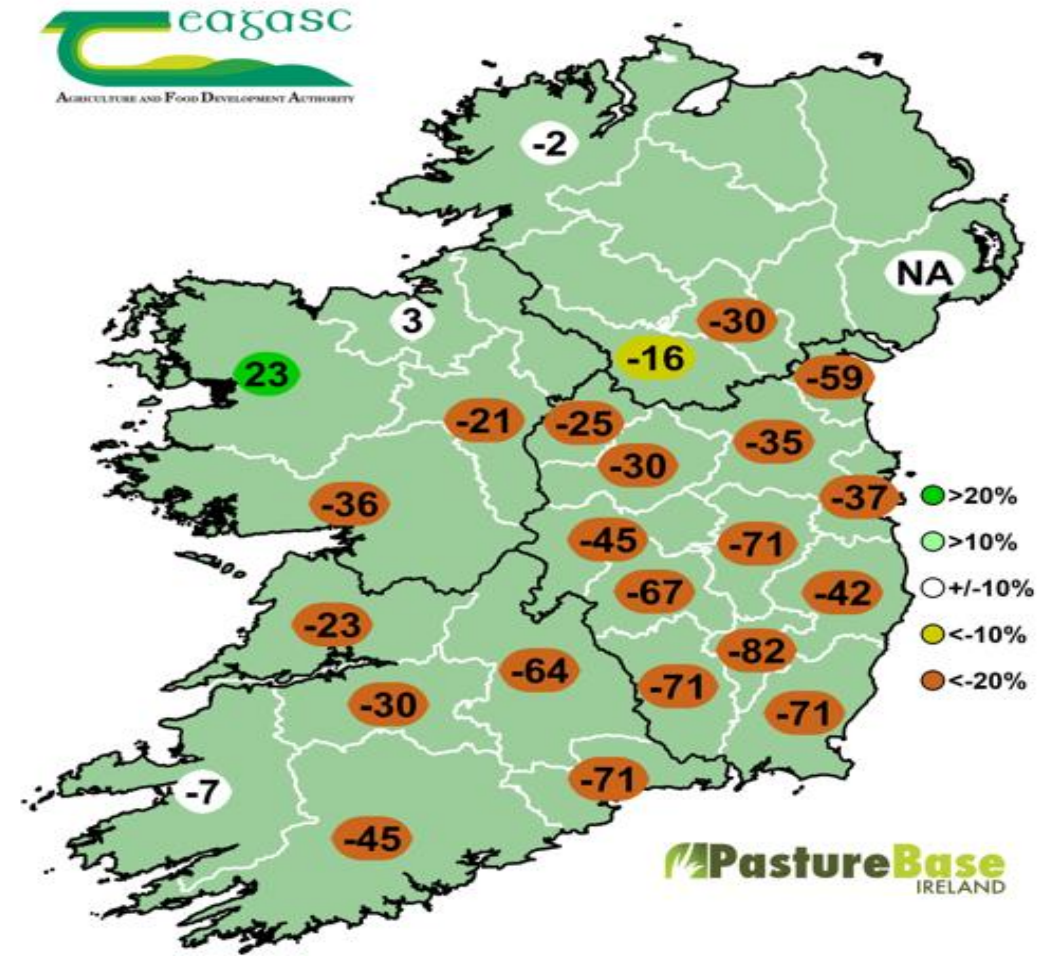


Soil Moisture Deficits and Water Capacity

Water availability
%



% of change
up to 1 week interval



Grazing Management 16/8/2026

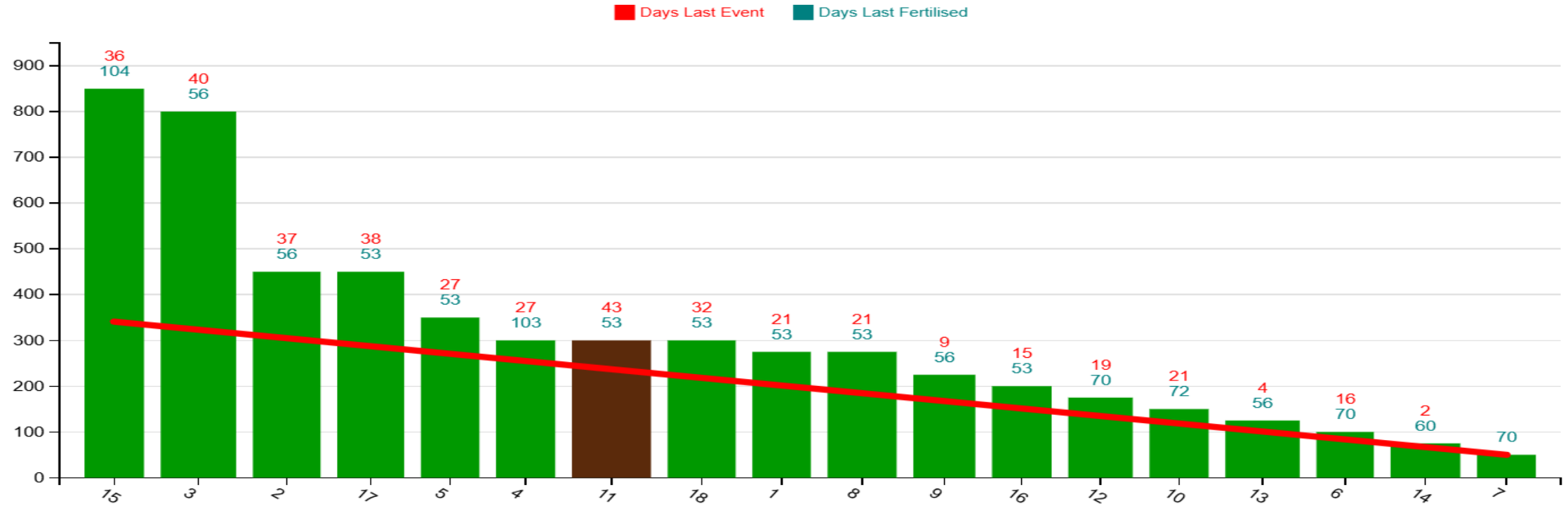
	Farm Cover (kg DM/cow, Cover per Cow)	Grass growth(kg DM/ha/day)	Grass Demand(Kg DM/cow)	Grazing Stocking rate (Cows/ha)
Munster (1218 Farms)	427 (137)	16	29	3.0
Leinster (396 Farms)	482 (152)	25	36	3.1
Carlow/Kilkenny/Laois/ Kildare/Wicklow/Wexford	381 (128)	14	32	2.85
Connacht/Ulster (273 Farms)	685 (227)	69	50	3.1

Current Feeding levels- 16/8/26

	Grass (kg DM/cow)	Conc (Kg DM/cow)	Silage (Kg DM/cow)	% Diet as Supplement
Munster (1218 Farms)	9.0	4.8	5.2	55%
Leinster (396 Farms)	10.5	4.8	4	46%
Carlow/Kilkenny/Laois/ Kildare/Wicklow/Wexford	9.3	4.9	5.0	52%
Connacht/Ulster (273 Farms)	14	4.1	2.0	30%

*N.B. Average figures based on current PBI data. – Ranges occur around average figures.
There are farms where there is no grass in the diet at this stage.*

Example of Farm Cover & Feeding management on Individual Farm – Major deficit scenario



Farm Cover: **307** **Cover/LU: 101** Growth/ha: **10** Demand/ha: **12** Stocking Rate: **3.03**

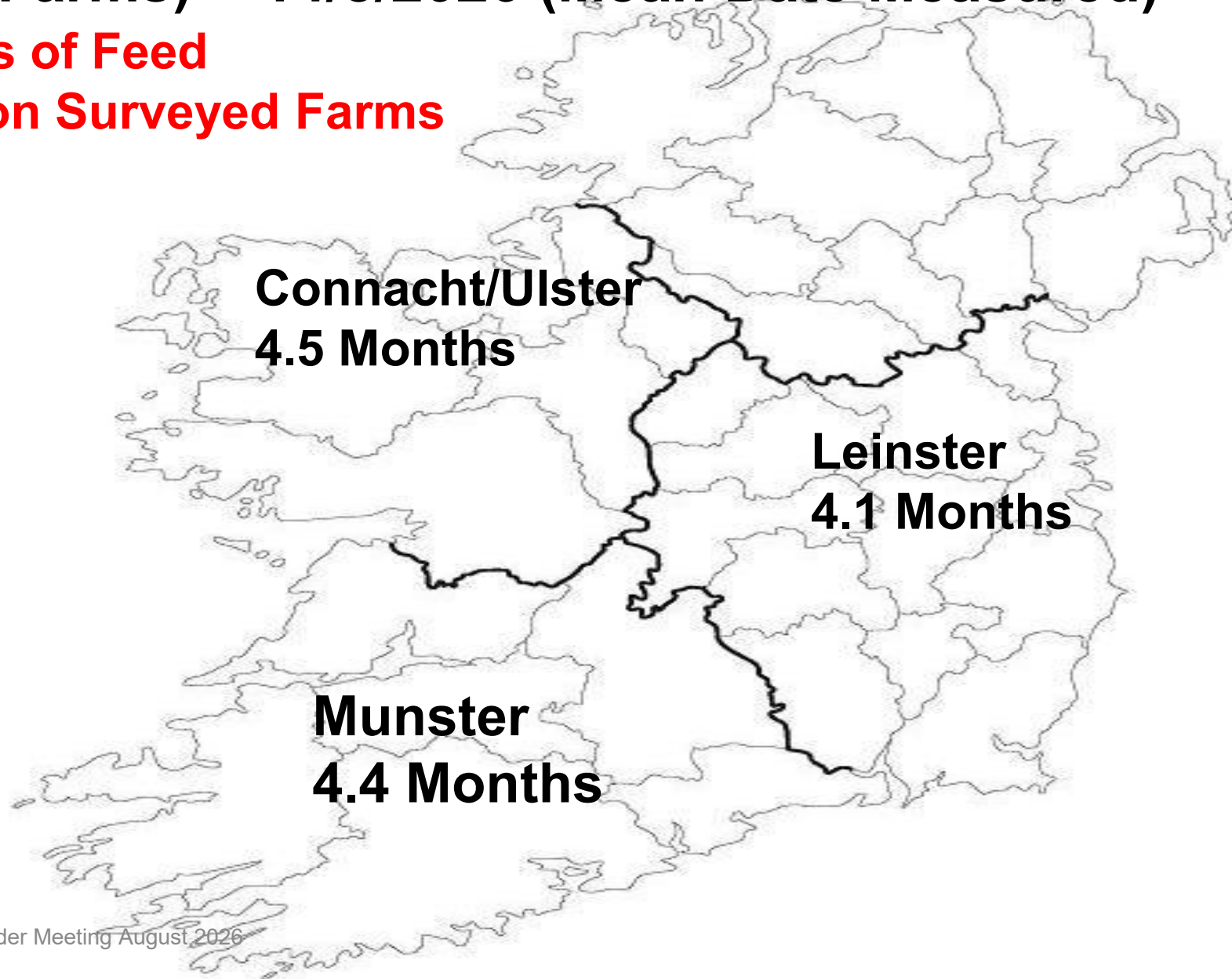
	Number of stock	Grass intake	Meal intake	Silage intake	Zero Graze Grass intake
Spring Milkers	100	4	4	10	
Dairy Milkers Group 3	8	0	4	14	

Fodder Budgets Completed

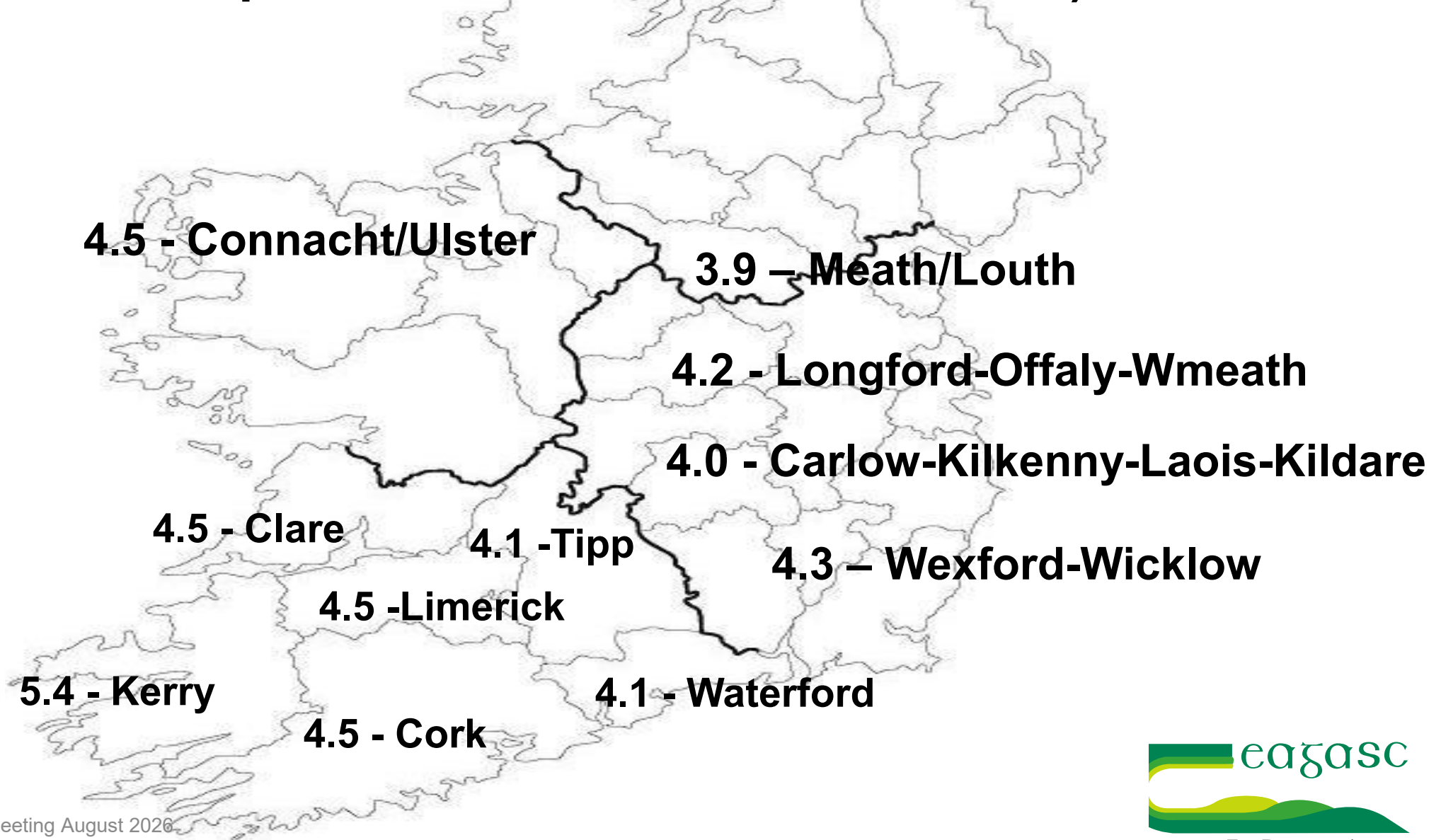
- Completed in Pasturebase Ireland
- Dairy and Drystock Farms
- Feed stocks on the Farm (14/8) with Stock Numbers retained for Winter period

Current Conserved Feed Availability on Farms (365 Farms) - 14/8/2026 (Mean Date Measured)

**4.3 Months of Feed
available on Surveyed Farms**



Current Conserved Feed Availability (Months Feed) - (365 Farms quantified on Pasturebase Ireland)



Fodder Budget Summary

- Require **5 months** Feed stock at a Minimum, require 5.5 - 6 months in Wetter/Later regions
- Assessments is based on what is in yards today
- Counties with shortages – Kilkenny / Laois / Carlow / Kildare / Wexford / Wicklow / Tipp / Waterford / Louth / Meath / Offaly / Westmeath / North Cork
- More New Farm Assessments in next weeks
- Require ongoing monitoring in PBI

Feeding Costs

- 5 kg Conc – approx. - **€2/Cow/day** – Conc cost (€350/ton)
- 4-5 kg Grass silage - approx. **€1.50/Cow/day** (€250/ton DM) – feed out loss (€315/ton)
- Feedings costs on approx **€4+/Cow/day**
- **€400/day for 100 cow herd - (€3K/week)/€12k/month**
- Worst affected farms closer to €6/cow/day

Grass and Feeding Advice

- Continue to ensure animals have adequate feed and Water
- Assess Feed Stocks now and monitor
- Identify the Stock retained for Winter and move saleable stock (Empty and non preforming stock, etc)
- Begin sourcing feed where possible

Fertiliser Advice in the weeks ahead

- **Most important grazing management decision now is to be on a long rotation – 30 days plus**
- **Long rotation, ensure farm is able to capitalise on N mineralisation when rain arrives**
- Farms growing >35kg, rain received, swards green, fertiliser should be spread
- Farmers growing <35kg, brown swards, little rain received, hold off N
- Apply Watery slurry to grazed paddocks, reseeded paddocks

Utilise slurry and dirty water

Current situation on the ground

- Slurry accumulating on some farms where cows are being buffer fed or housed early for feeding.
- Plan to have slurry tanks empty by start of the closed slurry spreading period which commences 1st October (~5 weeks time). Better nutrient utilisation the earlier slurry is spread in autumn!

Slurry advice

- Slurry and dirty water can be utilised to replace some of the fertiliser N requirements on farms.
- Mix slurry with dirty water and apply (diluted slurry) at lower application rates ($\leq 2,500$ gallons/ac) to match grass growth requirements.

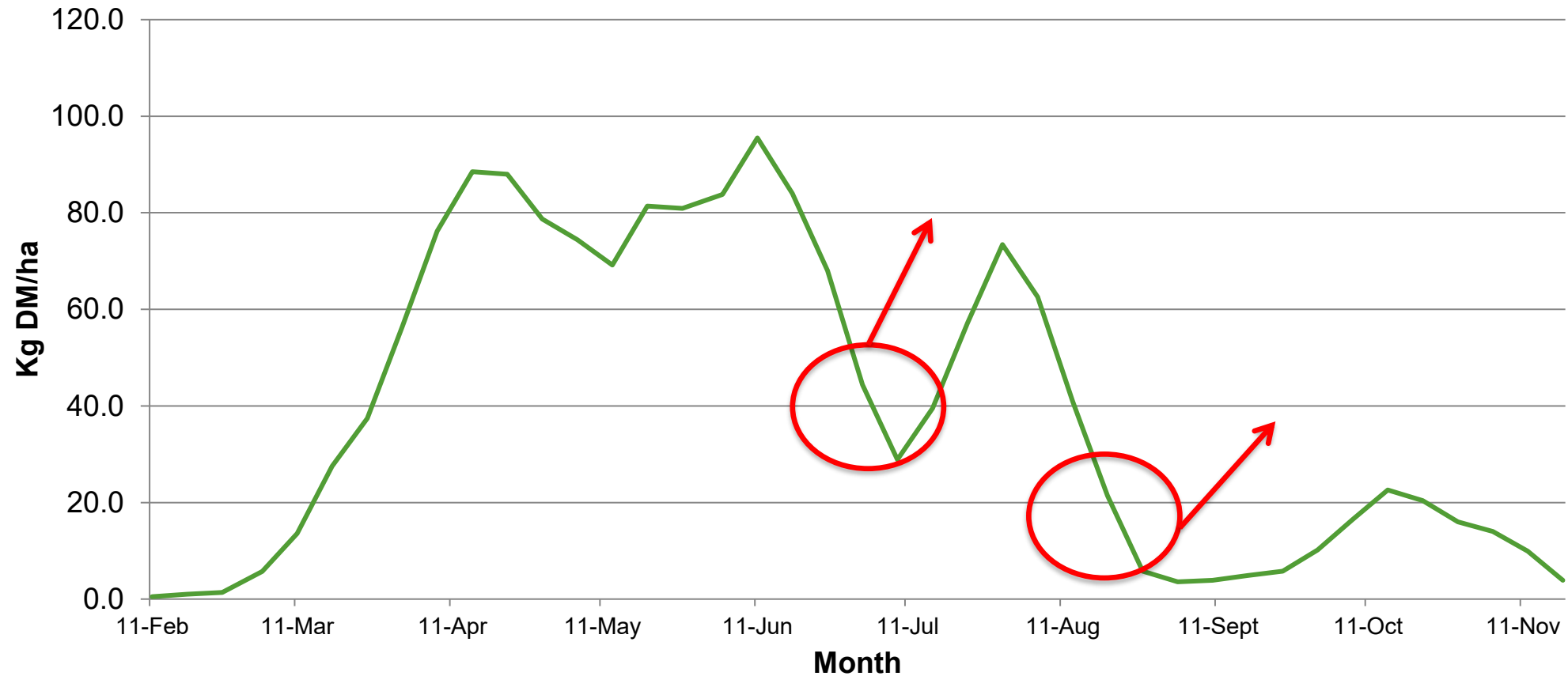
Nutrients supplied by cattle slurry

Cattle slurry application rate		N application rate		P application rate		K application rate	
m ³ /ha	gallons/ac	kg/ha N	units N /ac	kg/ha P	units/ac	kg/ha K	units/ac
16,500	1,500	17	14	9	8	60	48
22,000	2,000	23	18	13	10	80	64
27,500	2,500	28	23	16	13	100	80

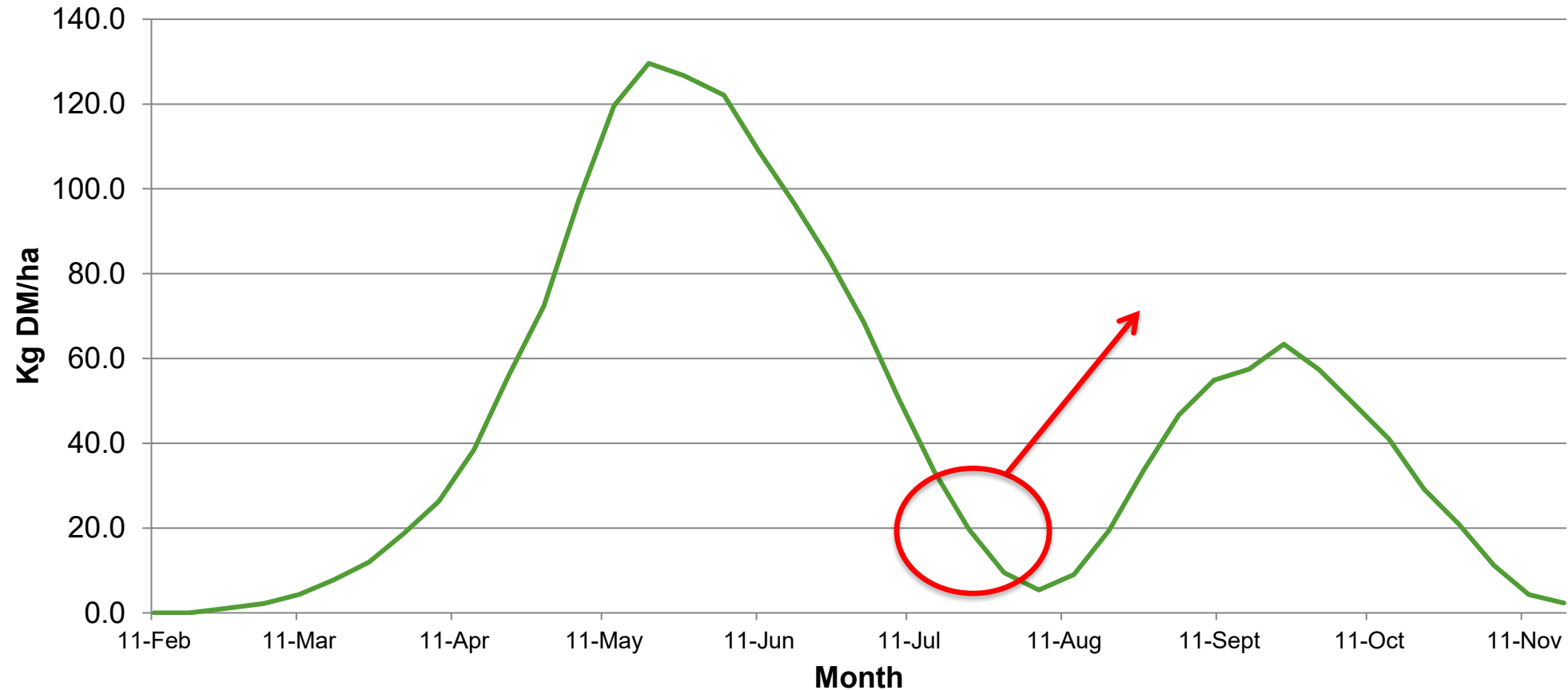
- 11 m³/ha (1,000 gallons/ac) of dirty water will supply 5-6 kg N/ha (4-5 units N/ac).



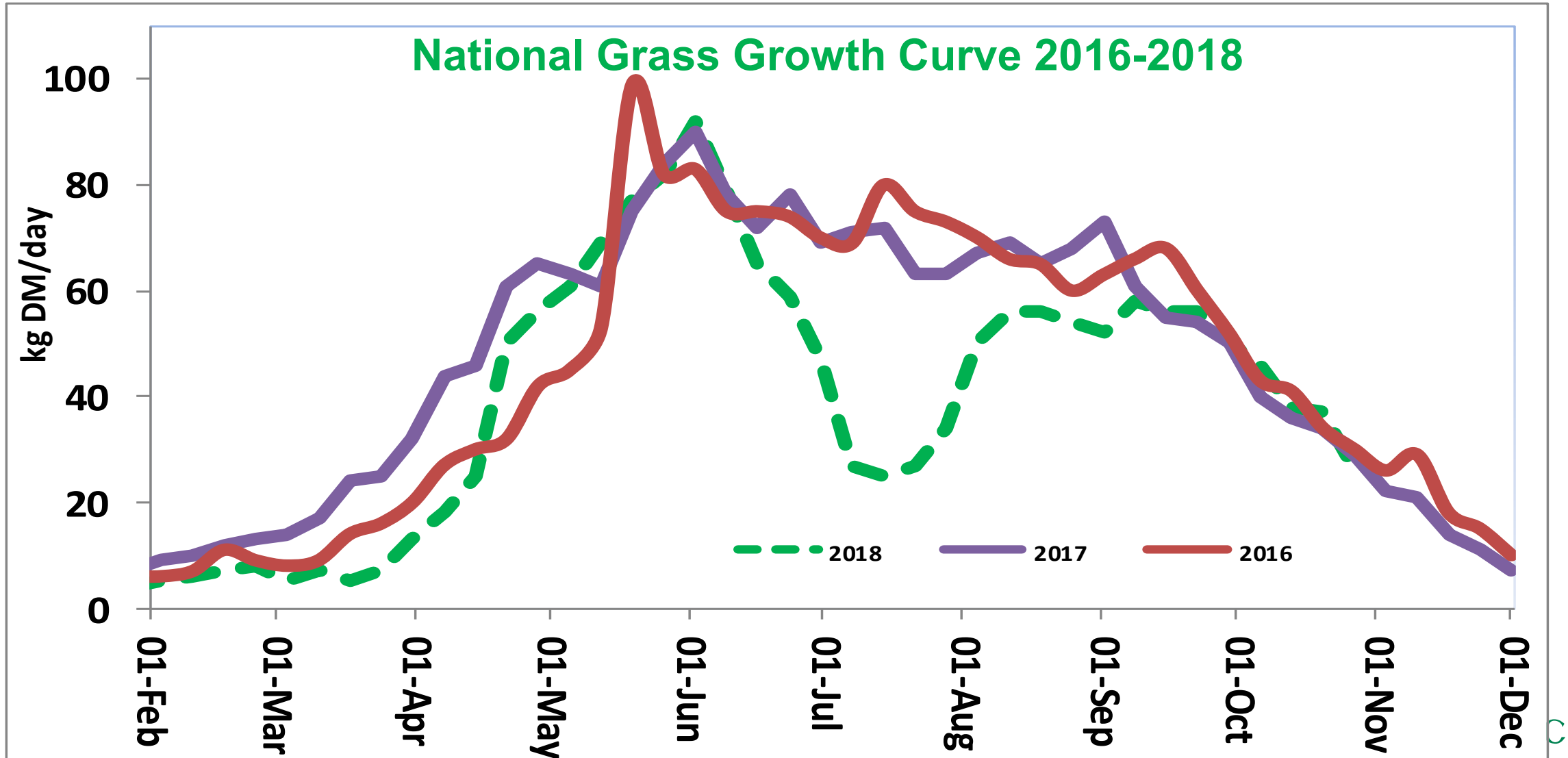
1995 – three droughts – recovery after each – 11.3t grown in that year



1989 Droughts – recovery after each – 12.7t grown in that year



Grass Growth Recovery Post Drought



Drought response

- 4/5 weeks after rainfall to peak response (2 weeks in) – providing no overgrazing has occurred
- 4/5 weeks response of sustained growth (60-70% of peak response)
- Rotation length needs to be at Autumn targets (30 - 35 day rotation now and extending)

Fodder Survey Results Aug 26

Current Fodder Supply by Region

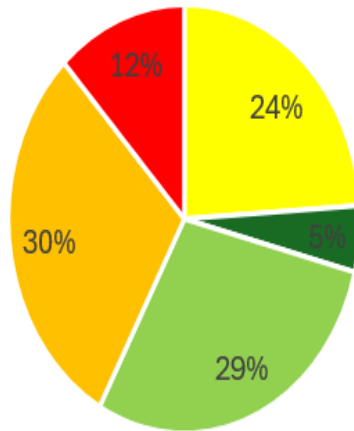
Feed Stock*	Midlands/NE	South East	North West	South West	Overall
Surplus	19	6	12	7	11
On Target	32	23	34	36	31
Short <10%	25	31	27	23	27
10-20%	12	24	17	22	19
Short >20%	12	16	10	12	12
	100	100	100	100	100

Based on 396 valid responses balanced across region and enterprise

- Overall **144 days** feed available per farm on average
- 22% of farms have <100 days feed available on farm
- South East region- some farms on 100% winter diets for prolonged period

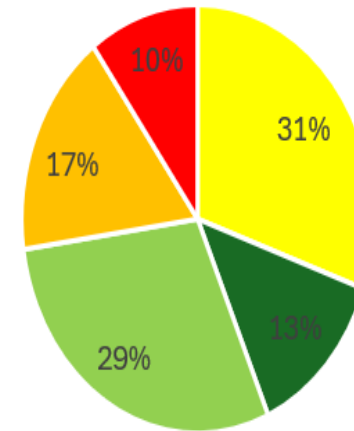
Current Feed Stocks by Enterprise

Dairy



■ Short <10% ■ Surplus ■ On Target ■ Short 10-20% ■ Short >20%

Drystock

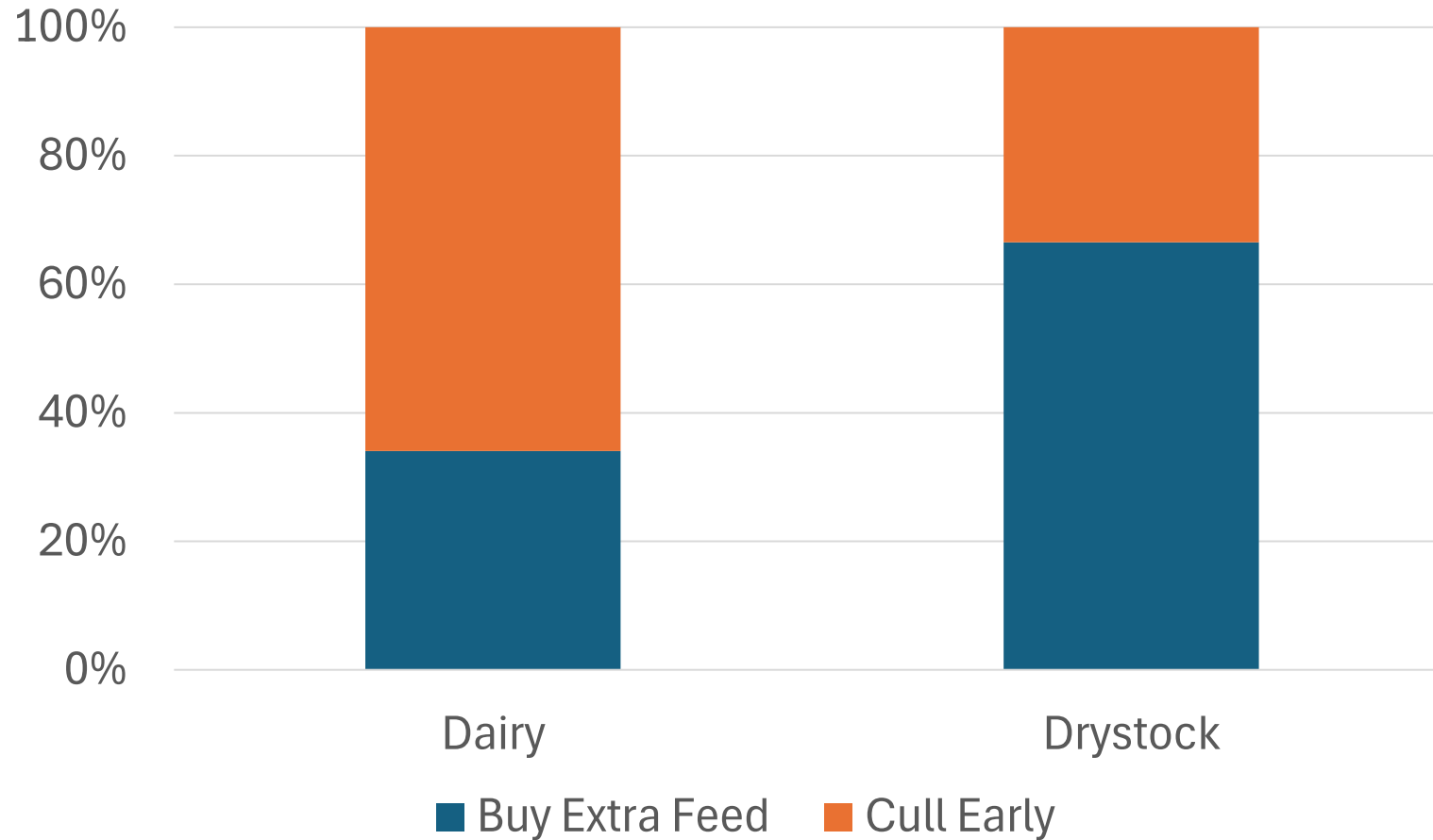


■ Short <10% ■ Surplus ■ On Target ■ Short 10-20% ■ Short >20%

Summer Feeding July/Aug

	Midlands/NE	South East	North West	South West
No Extra Feed	32	16	41	20
Extra Meal Only	4	9	29	8
Buffer Silage	39	33	20	48
Heavy Silage Feeding	25	42	10	24
	100	100	100	100

Management Options to Reduce Deficit



DAFM fodder meeting August 2026 Crops update

Shay Phelan
Teagasc



Current situation in tillage

- Cereal harvest is approximately 90% complete
- Yields overall are slightly disappointing – likely total harvest below 2M tonnes
- Quality is variable
- Straw yields also low (80-90% of normal) – likely increase in the price
- Autumn drilling of OSR and catch crops delayed

Grain and Straw Yield Estimates 2026

	Cereal Area ('000 ha)				Yield (t/ha)		Cereal Production ('000 tonnes)			
	<u>2026¹</u>	<u>2025[*]</u>	<u>Diff</u>	<u>%*</u>	<u>2026**</u>	<u>2025*</u>	<u>2026 \$</u>	<u>2025 *</u>	<u>Diff</u> (<u>'000 tonnes</u>)	<u>%</u>
W. Wheat	54.9	59.7	-4.8	-8%	9.42	10.50	492	596	-103.7	-17%
S. Wheat	3.7	4.7	-1.0	-20%	6.88	7.40	24	33	-8.6	-26%
W. Barley	60.0	57.3	2.7	5%	8.76	9.20	499	501	-2.0	0%
S. Barley	109.5	115.3	-5.8	-5%	6.60	7.30	687	800	-113.0	-14%
							0	0		
W. Oats	12.0	18.0	-6.0	-33%	8.53	9.10	97	156	-58.3	-37%
S. Oats	12.2	15.9	-3.7	-23%	7.00	7.50	81	113	-31.9	-28%
W. Rye	4.9	3.7	1.2	31%	8.75	10.30	40	36	4.2	12%
Total Cereals	257	275	-17.3	-6.3%	-	-	1921	2234	-313.3	-14%
			0.0							
WOSR	18.9	11.2	7.7	69%	4.9	5	-	-	-	-
S Beans	16.6	13.4	3.2	24%	5.1	5				

Straw supply		2026	2025	2024
Total straw t ('000)		583.91	670.31	730.23

Fodder crops

- Soil moisture deficits of approaching 100 mm in main east and south east
- Beet, maize yields also likely to suffer
- Beet crops may be left to grow longer into the autumn to increase yields
- Poor leaves on crops may lead to increased losses with leaf pulling harvesters

Potatoes & Vegetables

- Drought and significant SMD have had an impact on all field veg crops.
- Irrigation access is a significant issue €175+ /application
- Crops which have received multiple applications are average
- Access to reliable supply of water is an issue
- Crops with no irrigation are poor and will struggle to meet market specifications
- Dry Matters are very high in potatoes – potential for increased losses at harvest
- Other issues with germination and heat stress (bolting etc.)
- Market gaps which will have financial implications for 2026 & beyond

Solutions?

- **Short term**
- Oats and rye in store – can we increase usage/inclusion rates, ration formulations etc.
- Waste vegetables??
- Straw for silage swaps?
- Catch crops – unless we get rain in the next two weeks will be of limited value
- **Long term**
- Potatoes irrigation infrastructure??
- Rye more suited to dry conditions

Advisory messages on Farming through the Drought

Tom Curran, Teagasc



Dealing with Drought

Teagasc advisors have been actively working on managing drought conditions and completing fodder budgets with farmers through one-to-one consultations, discussion groups, farm walks, targeted fodder clinics and national and local media since early July.

- **Fodder Budget:**
 - Seek advisor help
 - Complete Fodder budget now
 - Review weekly
 - **Take Action Early,**
 - Identify local sources of additional fodder for purchase where needed
- **Water:**
 - Adequate Supply
 - Clean,
 - Refill Capacity,
 - Additional water to take pressure off wells
 - Grants for solar pumps

Dealing with Drought

- Cashflow
 - Allow for additional feed costs
 - Monitor Cash flow impacts
 - Prioritise spending on forage purchases
- Winter 2026/2027*
 - Looking ahead
 - Close for third cut where conditions allow
 - Consider Low-Quality Forage options
 - Look at Farm infrastructure for feeding
 - Review Stock Numbers for autumn and winter

A key learning from fodder surveys is farmers need to plan for a reserve of forage over and above winter requirements (long-term priority)

* The situation is fluid and must be kept under constant review as there may be opportunities to rectify or partially rectify the situation depending on how the weather comes in the next 4-6 weeks. Advice in regions will vary depending on the severity of the drought and individual farm circumstances.

Advisory Response

- Actively completing fodder budgets
- Fodder Clinics at Farm Walks
- One to One Consultations
- Discussion Groups – Fodder Budgets completed and actions discussed from early July
- Featured in local papers and radio.
- New Actions
 - Drought/Fodder Webinars next week covering Carlow, Wicklow, Wexford, East cork Waterford, South Tipperary, Meath Louth, Dublin
 - National Campaign of Drought/Fodder Clinics set up in all local offices nationally
 - Option of Fodder Clinic at National Ploughing Championships