

Update and outlook on grass & fodder  
supply, fertiliser usage and current advisory  
activities on grassland and crops

**NATIONAL FODDER AND FOOD SECURITY COMMITTEE**

**Fertiliser sub-group meeting**

Teagasc, Oak Park

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2023

# Outline

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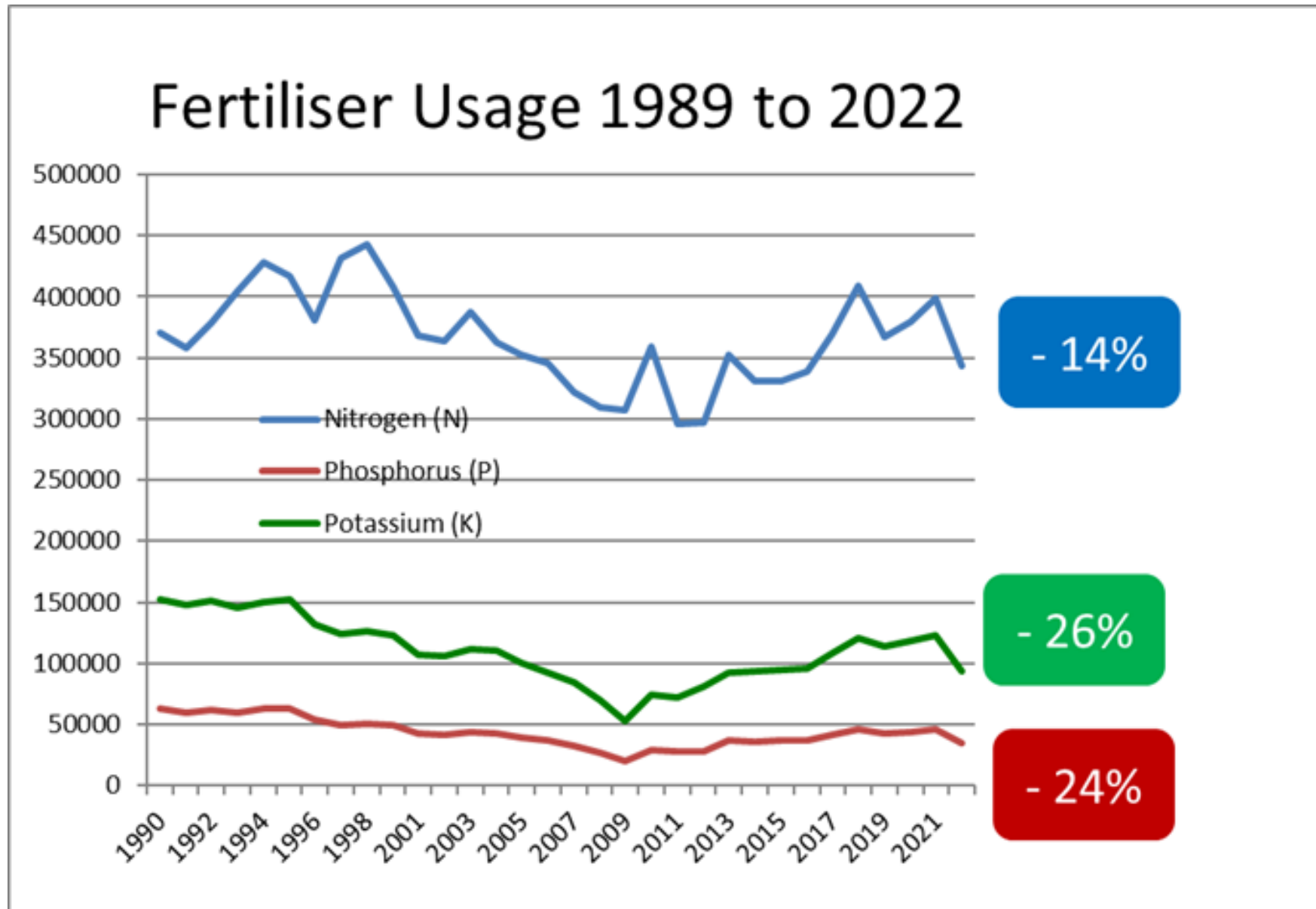
Soil  
Fertility

Tillage  
Crops

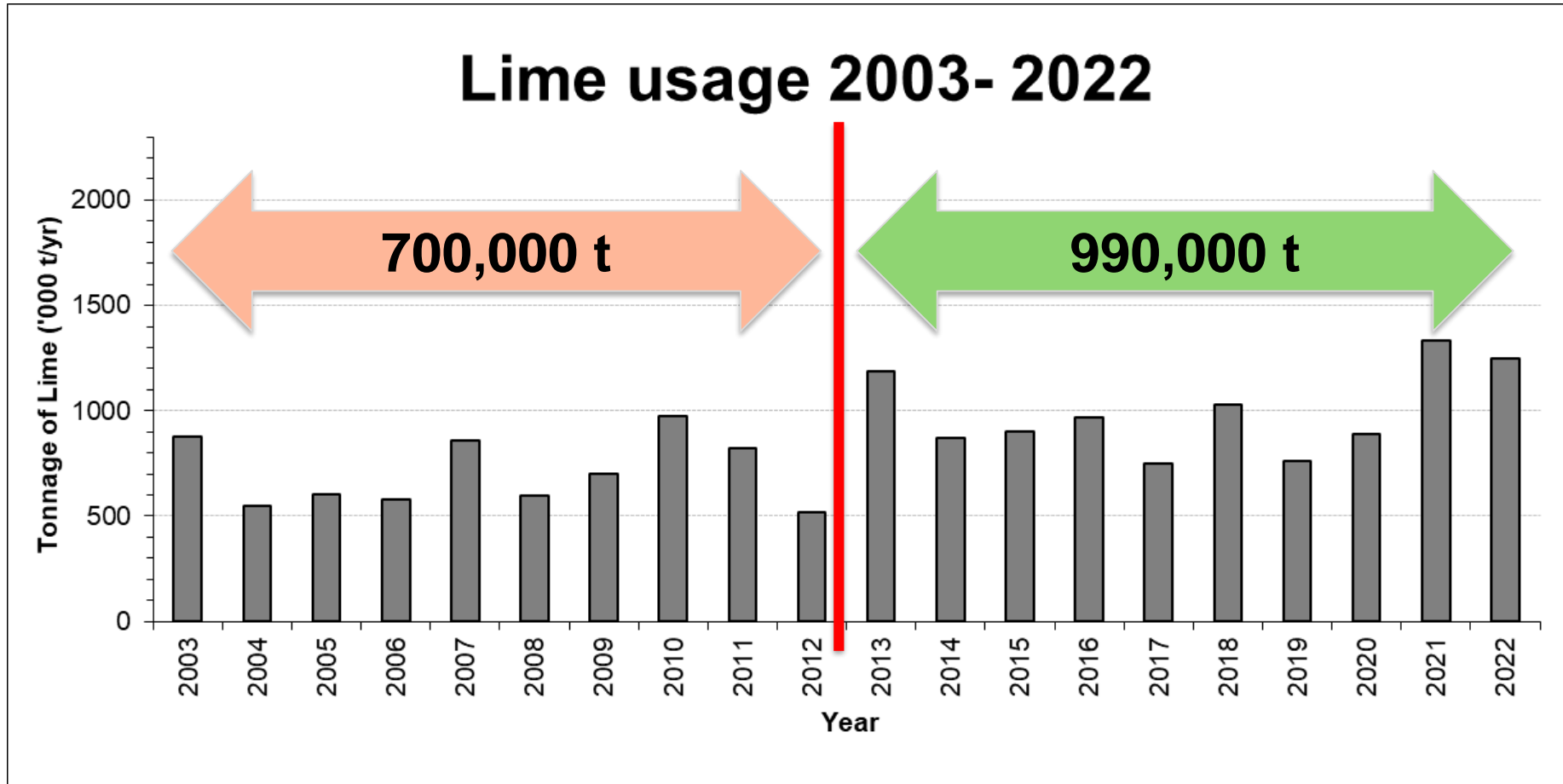
Grass  
Growth

Dairy &  
Drystock

# Fertiliser, Lime Use & Soil Fertility



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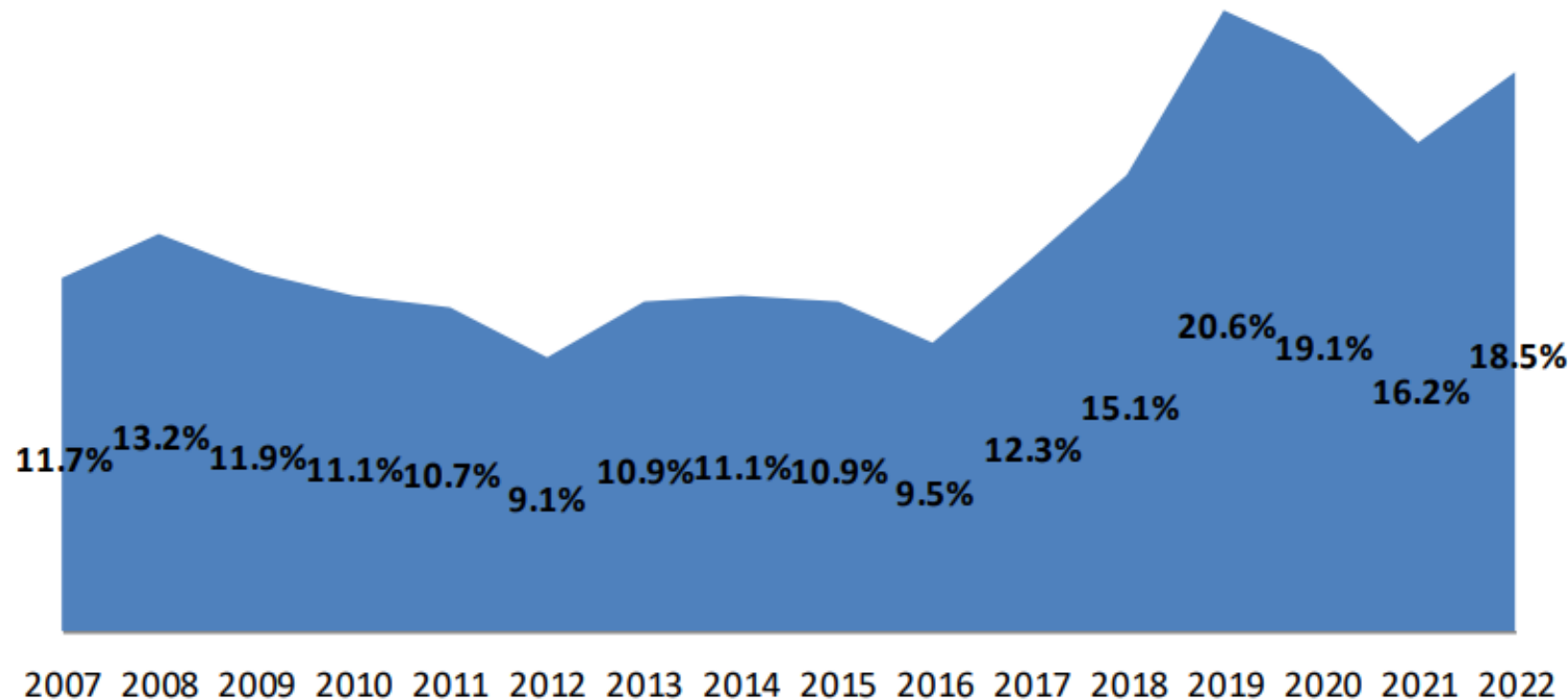


**Good Overall Fertility -**  
Soil pH > 6.2; Soil P and K Index 3 or 4

Overall improvement  
since 2016

But.....

- Reversal since 2019
- Impact of 2022 P & K reductions yet to come through
- Considerable scope for soil fertility (lime / P / K) to improve N efficiency



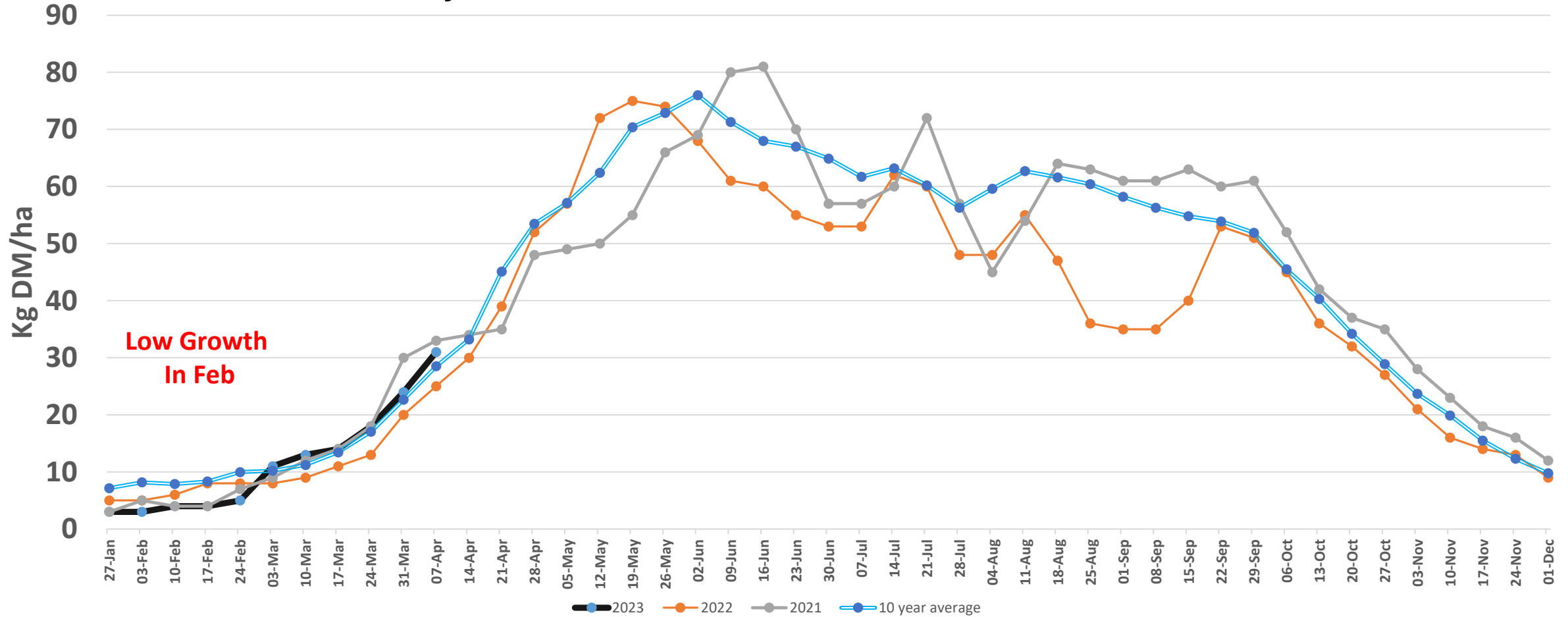
## Current Issues

- Delayed drilling will affect yields
- Some poor winter cereals
  - Limited yield potential due to
    - » Poor establishment
    - » Late fertilisation
- Options for spring drilling running out
- Profitability of many crops likely to be poor this year

## Messages to Farmers

- Late for drilling spring beans, oats and wheat
- Urea better value than CAN
- Incorporate compound fertiliser with late drilled crops
- Maize/ Beet are options where market outlet is secured
- Use of OM for spring crops
- Be realistic about yields when deciding input levels

## Weekly Grass Growth 2023 Versus 2022, 2021 and 10 Year mean



- Grass growth - Year to date 910kg DM/ha
  - Growth Reduced by 25%
  - Impacted by Low February growth
- Supplementation levels remain high in adverse of Grazing conditions
  - March extremely interrupted
  - Loss of grazing days especially on heavy farms
- Fertiliser applications are reduced by 25-30% in 2023 relative to previous 4 years
  - Lack of window to spread in March
  - Slurry up to date from February.
- Currently farm covers high > 820kg DM/ha
  - Decision time regarding closing ground, some ground not grazed pre-closing.
- Silage ground needs to be spread and closed for early silage harvests - should be good quality if fertilised



## September 2022 Fodder Survey Results

	South West	BMW/North West	Midlands/East	South East
<b>Silage - winter feed in stock</b>				
>120%	23	47	17	21
100 - 120%	36	41	40	38
80 - 100%	30	10	24	26
<80%	11	2	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>

1. Dairy (and beef) farms had carried 20% surplus silage (average across all regions) into 2022
2. Reserves were employed in South/East during July-Aug 2022 in response to drought conditions
3. Survey autumn 2022 indicated risk of feed shortages in areas affected by drought summer 2022

# Feed and Fodder Situation - Dairy

Soil  
Fertility

Tillage  
Crops

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Dairy &  
Drystock

1. Excellent grazing conditions in Feb promoted early grazing: significant silage-saving effect in most regions
2. Situation dis-improved during March-early April. Re-housing and silage feeding at time of rising feed demand
3. Advisors report plentiful grass supply but much delayed grazing due to conditions (especially in Kerry/Limerick, Cork, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Meath, Wexford, and western counties)
4. Fertilizer N application reduced overall (verified by PBI)
5. Silage reserves:
  - West & North: reported as okay (grazing probably ahead of usual due to Feb conditions)
  - East & South: Very tight - some farms purchasing at high cost for low quality. (Artefact of 2022 drought)
6. High spot prices for con-acre land and high fertilizer costs may be causing delayed decisions on securing silage stocks
7. Summary - situation points to risk of feed supply issues if drought occurs in summer 2023

# Feed and Fodder Situation - Drystock

Soil  
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Drystock

1. Increased number of beef farms grazed swards in February saving on winter feed supplies
2. Highly stocked beef farms that fed silage during the drought last summer are now running very tight on fodder due to wet conditions
3. More typical, lower stocked beef farms do not currently have an issue with fodder supplies
4. Slurry was spread on many beef farms in February
5. Very little N has been spread to date on drystock farms due to wet weather conditions in March
6. Some heavier stocked beef farms have spread their silage fertiliser
7. No issues being reported on fertiliser availability – most drystock farms have delayed purchasing due to the weather and price

# Key points

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- P, K, Lime (& Sulphur) continue to be high priority in addition to Nitrogen
- Opportunities for organic manures where available
- Grass available if weather conditions permit grazing
- Rebuilding fodder stocks needs to be prioritised
  - Close and fertilise to ensure yield and quality