

environment

Changes resulting from the derogation review

The Nitrates Derogation permits higher stocking rates. In order for this to continue, new environmental targets must be reached

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Ireland's Nitrates Derogation allows stocking rates, above 170kg livestock manure nitrogen/ha up to 250 nitrogen/ha, (up to 2.9LUs cows/ha) across the entire land declared on BPS). This concession is subject to additional conditions designed to protect the environment. However, recent declines in water quality and increases in greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions, unless reversed, will make it difficult to secure future derogations.

If you are one of the roughly 7,000 derogation applicants in 2020, then the following changes will affect you and you will need to discuss the changes with your agricultural advisor. You must then put a plan in place to meet these requirements in 2020 and beyond. If you don't follow these new rules, you may well not be eligible for derogation.

A national review of the Nitrates Derogation was carried out in 2019. As a result, the following measures are being introduced in 2020 to further protect water quality and to assist in the application process for NAP 5 in 2021.

New measures for applicants

1 *Compulsory liming programme* Q: What are the requirements of the new liming programme?

A: From 2020, the liming programme must be implemented and based on a current Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) and associated soil analysis results. Lime must be applied based on soil test results and invoices should be retained for inspection.

Check what your NMP says you need for 2020 and apply to paddocks during spring/summer and on to silage ground after silage has been cut for the year.

Farms that must soil-sample for derogation 2021 should leave six months between liming and sampling.

2 *Low-emission slurry spreading (LESS)*: LESS equipment shall be used for any slurry applications; and all slurry remaining on the holding after 15 April 2020 must be spread using LESS. All slurry on the holding from the 12 January 2021 must be spread using LESS.

Q: How will DAFM capture and record the volume of slurry spread by LESS?

A: From 2020, DAFM will request the volume of slurry spread by LESS for 2019, 2020 and 2021 in m³ (1m³ = 220 gallons) on a yearly basis. It is anticipated that TAMS II grants may be available up until 15 April 2021 (one year after the mandatory introduction of LESS for farmers in derogation).

3 *Crude protein*: a reduction is required in the crude protein in concentrate feeds for grazing livestock. Q: What will be the level of crude protein in concentrate feeds to complement grazing livestock at grass?

A: From 2020, livestock with a 100% grass forage diet during the main



grazing season (1 April to 15 September) must follow these rules:

- A maximum of 16% CP between 1 April and 15 September in 2020.
- A maximum of 15% CP between 1 April and 15 September in 2021.

Note: If higher levels of crude protein are required, this must be certified by an appropriate advisor.

4 *Training programme*: farmers must attend a training programme in adopting best practice in nutrient use efficiency and management and the protection of water. This must be completed by the end of 2021.

Q: What mandatory environmental training has to be completed by farmers?

A: Farmers in derogation must complete training, and the course content must contain modules including, but not limited to nutrient management planning, water quality, gaseous emissions and biodiversity.

5 *Clover*: new grass reseeding completed by derogation farmers must include clover.

Q: What will be inclusion rate of clover/ha?

A: From 2020:

- A minimum of 1.5kg/ha naked clo-



Intensive dairy and beef farming systems will come under increasing pressure to reduce the environmental impact if they wish to continue farming at higher stocking rates.

THE NEXT DEROGATION?

A full review of the derogation and Nitrates Action Plan will take place in 2021. Given the deterioration in water quality, it is likely that a wide range of options will be considered to help reverse this trend. DAFM has indicated that the following could be considered:

- A recalculation of dairy cow excretion rates, increasing from 85, to reflect changes in genetics and feeding.
- Reduced chemical fertiliser allowances to reflect increases in N retention from the use of low-emissions slurry spreading.
- Additional requirements for farmers above 130kg NpH and those exporting organic manures to come below 170kg NpH.
- Protected urea use could be mandatory to replace % overall chemical N usage and limits on the use of unprotected urea. (There is a provision for this to be regulated in 2021).
- Modified requirements for slurry storage time, and facilities may be reviewed considering the number of slurry spreading extensions in the past.
- Stocking rate restrictions on the grazing platform.
- An extension of the LAWPRO/AS-SAP initiative to work with farmers to reduce impact on water quality.

ver seed, ie un-pelleted clover seed is required for all new grass reseeds.

- Either white (grazing) or red (cutting) or a mixture of clovers can be used.
- Over-sowing of grass seed mixtures with clover post weed control will be permitted.

6 *Derogation allowance:* commonage/rough grazing will not be eligible for the derogation allowance of 250kg livestock manure N/ha.

Q: How will DAFM define commonage/rough grazing for the purposes of the nitrates derogation?

A: From 2020, this will be defined based on the declaration of commonage/rough grazing on the Basic Payment Scheme application.

Stocking rate calculations will need to be done for these farms on a case-by-case basis as this change will affect approximately 350 derogation applicants with commonage.

7 *All-Island Pollinator Plan:* implementation of measures from the All-Island Pollinator Plan

Q: What measure will farmers have to adopt from the All-Island Pollinator Plan?

A: Farmers must adopt at least one measure from the following list:

- Leave at least one mature whitethorn/blackthorn tree within each 300m of hedgerow.
- Maintain hedgerows on a minimum three-year cycle. Cutting annually stops the hedgerow flowering and fruiting.

8 *Record:* derogation farmers must record, through appropriate software technology, the grass produced annually on the farm from 2020.

If derogation farmers do not have the required skills to undertake this measure, they must undertake training in grassland management and complete it by the end of 2021.

Q: How many grass measurements are required?

A: A minimum of 20 grass measurements (falling plate meter or cut and weigh only) on the main grazing platform only, must be taken per annum and inputted in the months below.

The following measurements are required per month over the season:

- February (one).
- March (two).
- April to September (14).
- October (two).
- November (one).

Summary

It is very noticeable that many farms are taking ongoing action on climate change, water quality, emissions and biodiversity. This will benefit their environmental footprint but more needs to be done by more farmers. Collectively, we must use all the tools available in order to deliver the improvements required. These measures can provide a win-win for biodiversity, nutrient use efficiency, GHGs, water quality and increased profitability and sustainability for the dairy industry.