

ENVIRONMENT

April 2020

Sowing wild bird cover



Spraying is recommended if docks or thistles are present.

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A fine firm seedbed is essential.

Wild bird cover: sow by May 31 unless there is an area of second-year kale. Animal access now may help decomposition. Pre-sowing weed control is recommended if noxious weeds are present, or if vegetation growth will make cultivations difficult. A fine firm seedbed is essential. Harrow after broadcasting cereal to cover the larger seed. Broadcast smaller linseed separately and roll.

Sowing depth:

- cereals: 5cm; and,
- linseed/kale: 1cm.

Broadcasting seed rates:

- cereals: 110kg/ha;
- linseed: 20kg/ha; and,
- kale: 4kg/ha.

Other Green Low-carbon Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS) dates:

- traditional hay meadow: close from April 15; and,
- geese and swans: grassland may be grazed from April 1.

New nitrates derogation

MEASURE	COMMENTS
1. Compulsory liming programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) From January 1, 2020, a full-scale farm liming programme to be carried out on farm where identified by soil sample results.b) Only con-acre (one-year land) excluded.c) Lime applications must be recorded on annual fertiliser records.d) Invoices will be required on inspection.e) Lime spread since date of soil samples will be taken into account.
2. Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS)	<p>2020: Applies to all slurry spread post April 15. 2021: Applies to all slurry spread post January 12.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Volume of slurry spread by LESS to be recorded on annual records.b) Farmers required to have evidence of own machinery/contractor receipts.
3. Reduction in crude protein percentage of meals at grass	<p>Livestock with 100% grass diet from April 1-September 15. 2020: Max of 16% crude protein rations. 2021: Max of 15% crude protein rations. Crude protein percentage to be recorded on feed statements.</p>
4. Attendance at compulsory environmental training course	<p>Mandatory course to be attended by all farmers in derogation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Course details and content to be specified by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).b) Proof of attendance will be required!c) Must complete course before December 31, 2021.



Liming as recommended by soil analysis allows fertiliser to be utilised effectively.



All slurry spread after April 15 must be by Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS).

Requirements for 2020

MEASURE	COMMENTS
<p>5. Grassland management</p>	<p>From January 1, 2020 there are two options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ complete a minimum of 20 grass measurements on PastureBase Ireland; or, ■ attend a grassland management course – details to be finalised by the DAFM and course to be completed by December 31, 2021.
<p>6. Inclusion of clover in grass seed mixtures</p>	<p>From January 1, 2020, grass seed mixtures must include a minimum of 1.5kg per hectare of naked white or red clover seed, or 2.5kg of pelleted clover seed.</p>
<p>7. Exclusion of commonage/rough grazing</p>	<p>From January 1, 2020, lands declared as commonage or rough grazing on your Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application will be allocated a maximum of 170kg organic nitrogen (N) per hectare, with a resultant reduced allowance of chemical fertiliser.</p>
<p>8. Improve farm biodiversity</p>	<p>From January 1, 2020, you must choose one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ leave at least one mature whitethorn or blackthorn tree in every 300m of hedgerow; or, ■ maintain hedges on a minimum three-year cycle to encourage hedgerow flowering and fruiting.



Clover must be included in seed mixes.



New whitethorn sapling retained in a topped hedgerow, which will provide flowers for bees and haws for birds.

EIP update: Caomhnú Árann

Farmers have started on field works on the Aran Islands under the European Innovation Project (EIP)-Agri project, Caomhnú Árann. The project is working with 127 farmers on the three islands addressing some of the issues affecting the condition of the species-rich grassland habitats. The condition of these grasslands is dependent on adequate grazing levels that remove the existing vegetation, allowing wildflowers, sedges and grasses to flourish. Inadequate grazing leads to encroachment of scrub and an overall reduction in biodiversity. Inadequate water facilities is one factor limiting optimal grazing, so the project is working with the farmers on increasing the number of water tanks or rain catchers, which catch rain and store it allowing improved grazing. Another element of work

the farmers are undertaking is to remove the encroaching scrub, followed by adequate grazing to favour the return of species-rich grasslands.

Caomhnú Árann is trialling the use of remote sensing, aerial photos, and drone footage using standard photography and multispectral imaging, to see if such technology can help in determining different levels of grassland condition, and incorporating that into a simple outcome-based scoring system that could be used in future agri-environment programmes. Caomhnú Árann is a partnership programme involving the islands' farmers, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG), the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), Teagasc and Fáilte Ireland, and is co-funded by the DAFM and the EU.



Encroaching scrub on species-rich grasslands on the Aran Islands is being cleared.



A water tank to gather rainwater will improve the grazing in the field, aiding in continued grazing and maintaining the areas of species-rich grassland, which support a range of plants, bees and butterflies.