

Press Release 2nd August 2019

‘Derogation Farmers must start planning immediately’ according to ACA

ACA Vice President Tom Canning has welcomed the publication of the Nitrates Review from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). He stated ‘The 170kg of organic N/ha and the 85kg/dairy cow figures remain in place after this review as there had been a fear that both limits were in line for a change but this and all the other recommendation from the review report now gives clarity to our derogation farmer clients in planning for the future’

The DAFM Nitrate Derogations Review sought views from all stakeholders earlier this year and a number of changes will come into effect from 2020. Following the consultation process, a number of recommendations have been presented and the final outcome of the review is expected to be published shortly to give farmers enough time to plan for 2020. ‘ACA received many contributions from our members during the consultative process and we are pleased to note the DAFM have included a number of these in the review recommendations’ according to Canning.

The ACA welcome many measures recommended in this report which are designed to improve fertiliser use efficiencies on intensive farms and provide additional protection of the environment. ‘Measures such as slurry spreading using Low Emission Slurry Systems are proven to reduce ammonia emissions and improve responses from slurry applied’ said Canning.

According to Canning ‘The ACA are recommending that farmers must plan now and take action to ensure that these recommendations do not limit output and affect the profitability of their enterprises. For the future, it is critical that lands available to farmers are capable of sustaining planned stocking levels. Intensive farmers must take action now to address over stocking of their lands. Many of the difficulties that arose in 2018 when drought hit Ireland were caused mainly by such over stocking’

The ACA are recommending a number of measures to ease stocking rate pressures including:

1. Contract rearing of replacement stock for dairy farms
2. Contract growing of forage
3. Securing additional lands through long term lease arrangements or reviewing existing rental/leasing agreements to extent the agreed periods.
4. Identifying ways of reducing livestock including moving drystock earlier off the farm.
5. Operating a “flying herd” where all replacement stock are purchased in rather than reared on the farm.

‘The most important thing a derogation farmer can do now is to have a preliminary discussion with their farm consultant/advisor’ added Canning. ‘ACA members across the country are available to discuss all of their clients challenges for 2020 and it is advisable to have that meeting now rather than next year when land and stock issues might not be as easy to rectify’ concluded Canning.

ENDS

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Note to Editors:

Key Recommendations of the Nitrates Review Report are:

- A. Effective from the 15th of April, 2020, all slurry produced on farms with stocking rates exceeding 170kg/ha must spread **ALL** of their cattle slurry using a low emission slurry spreading system.
- B. All farmers applying for Derogations must have a detailed Nutrient Management Plan prepared for their farm. The main focus of this will be addressing the serious lime deficiencies that exist on Irish farms. Derogation farmers will have to apply the recommended quantities of lime, each year based on the results of their soil samples.
- C. Farmers who exceed the 170kg/ha limit but are exporting slurry to avoid having to enter into a Nitrates Derogation, will be required to soil sample their lands and have a liming plan prepared for their holding.
- D. Where stocking rates on farms exceed 170kg/ha farmers will have to attend annual training on efficient fertilizer use and protection of water quality from 2020.
- E. Intensive farmers will be required to measure grass growth or attend grassland management training by 2021.
- F. Records of slurry exports to other farms will have to be submitted earlier in the year.
- G. When reseeded, all farms exceeding the 170kg stocking rate limit will be required to use over 20% clover in the seed mixes they use.
- H. Farmers will be encouraged to use animal feed with a reduced protein content.
- I. Farmers exceeding the 170kg/ha will be required to select a biodiversity option from a measure of options in the national Pollinator Plan.
- J. Rough grazing and commonage lands will not be eligible for Derogations. Restrictions on these areas will limit the overall fertilizer usage on intensive farms.

Note on ACA:

The Agricultural Consultants Association (ACA) are the sole representative body for private agricultural consultants and advisors in Ireland. Currently the ACA have 158 member offices across all of Ireland and employ 248 Agricultural and Environmental graduates, 17 Forestry Consultants and 120 employed as either administration or technical staff. Members of ACA advise in the region of 55,000 Irish farmers, confirming ACA as the largest farm advisory service in Ireland.