# Water Quality in Ireland

Currently Ireland is not meeting its commitment under the EU water quality framework directive to improve water quality nationally to 'good' status.

When water quality declines, it means that these water bodies are less able to support healthy ecosystems for fish, insects, and plants.

The EPA has identified priority areas for action across the country where the quality status of the water is at risk of falling due to a range of both agricultural and non-agricultural pressures.

If water quality does not improve dramatically, the Nitrates Derogation may not be renewed in Ireland post 2028.

When targeted actions are taken by milk suppliers on farm, water quality improvements can be made within these rivers.

As part of ArraTipp Milk Supplier Sustainability Bonus, each ArraTipp milk supplier has undertaken a water quality farm assessment on their farm. Throughout 2026, we will engage with our suppliers in priority areas to showcase improvements in water quality.

ArraTipp is also the leading organisation in the Suri River catchment improvement programme.

For any information on any of the above, please contact Paddy Purcell on 087 0963869.

**Farming for Water Quality**

The farmyard is the focal point for most farms. It is the location for storing fodder, handling and housing of livestock, storing chemicals and toxic substances and maintenance and storage of machinery. It is the most frequently used location on the farm.

**Effective clean, grey and soiled water management is critical to prevent sediment and nutrient loss to watercourses.**

Farmyards face several challenges when it comes to water management. Soiled water is defined in the Nitrates Directive as water from concentrated areas, hard standing areas for livestock and other farmyard areas where such water is contaminated by contact with livestock faeces and urine, silage effluent, dairy washings or chemical fertilisers.

**Steps for Good Management of Clean and Soiled Water in the Farmyard:**

Minimising Soiled Water Production: The first step is to reduce the amount of soiled water generated. This can be achieved through maintenance of farm buildings and management of farmyard activities.

Clean Yard Surfaces: Regularly scrape dirty areas of the yard, especially high traffic zones. This helps to reduce the number of contaminants that could be washed away during rainfall. Measures available through the Farming for Water EIP, such as the farmyard bucket and brush could help to minimise the creation of soiled water in the yard by keeping concreted areas clean.

Separation of Clean, Grey and Soiled Water in the Farmyard: Diverting clean water away from soiled areas can significantly reduce the volume of contaminated run off.

Rainwater Management: Repair and maintain gutters and downpipes on buildings to collect rainwater and divert it away from dirty yard areas. By ensuring that clean water from roofs does not flow across the yard, farmers can prevent the dilution and spread of pollutants. The roofing of soiled water tanks will minimise the amount of soiled water that must be collected.

Silage Pit and Bale Management: Silage pits and bales can generate large amounts of effluent, which is extremely potent and harmful to water quality if not stored correctly. Proper management of silage storage facilities is crucial to avoid contamination.

Effluent Collection: Ensure that silage pits and bale storage areas have proper effluent channels that are free of blockages. These channels should be designed to prevent rainwater from mixing with the effluent.

Structural Integrity: Regularly check silage pits for leaks or cracks in the concrete to ensure that effluent does not escape into surrounding soil or water sources.

Bale Storage: Store round bales on a concrete base with a surrounding channel to collect effluent. Bales should be stacked to a maximum height of 2 bales high if not on a concrete base.

**Farming for Water European Innovation Partnership (EIP)**

Farmers in priority river catchments can apply for a number of appropriate water protection measures from the suite of forty-three measures which are available under the Water EIP. An example of the minimum payment to Farmers would be Rainwater Management Plan (€250) + Nitrogen Surplus (€250) + Training Course (€156) = €656.

For further information please see below or contact Michael O` Dwyer, ArraTipp Co-op on 0872667153.

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Together we grow

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

Funding is provided for measures that are over and above regulatory requirements, i.e. supplementary measures like sediment traps, riparian areas, catch crops, etc.

**FARM VISIT**
Farmer receives a free advisory visit from a Teagasc or Dairy ASSAP advisor

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**FARM ACTION PLAN**
ASSAP advisor completes a rainwater management plan to identify and target areas where actions are required to reduce sediment, nutrient and/or pesticide loss to water.

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**APPLICATION**
ASSAP advisor submits application for funding of actions.

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**ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED & PAYMENT MADE**
Once the application for funding is approved, farmer implements the actions identified in plan.

## WHAT IS FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR?

Funding is provided for measures that are over and above regulatory requirements, i.e. supplementary measures like sediment traps, riparian areas, catch crops, etc.

## WHAT DO FARMERS NEED TO DO?

Each applicant receives a farm visit and rainwater management plan on application. The rainwater management plan is a simple map drawn by the ASSAP advisor with the famer, showing where rainwater moves across the farm during wet weather. This helps identify direction of waterflow across the farm to highlight areas at risk of nutrient, sediment or pesticide loss. This informs where measures like riparian buffers or hedgerows, to intercept phosphorus, are placed. These measures, on agreement are then added to the plan.

## CAN FARMERS PARTICIPATE IN OTHER SCHEMES AND EU FUNDED PROJECTS?

Yes. Participation in ACRES and other EU funded schemes where they apply, is encouraged to maximise environmental benefits. Note, double funding is not allowed – i.e., measures such as riparian buffers, can only be paid for once, irrespective of schemes. Talk to your advisor for more information.

## AVAILABLE MEASURES FUNDED

The measures available will depend on what is impacting water quality. Where **nitrate** is the nutrient of concern the key actions include:

- rainwater management plan
- farmer training course
- nitrogen surplus calculations
- multi species swards
- nutrient management planning
- cover/catch crops
- slurry testing

Where **phosphorus and sediment** is the nutrient/issue of concern the key actions include:

- rainwater management plan
- farmer training course
- nutrient management planning
- wetland ponds
- riparian areas and strips
- earthen bunds
- hedgerow and tree planting
- sediment traps
- culverts/bridges
- settlement tanks
- willow filter beds
- vegetated bunded drains
- livestock exclusion from streams
- alternative water supplies
- swales

Measures to help reduce **pesticide and sheep dip losses** to water are also available. In some cases, the EIP will accept applications for 'bespoke measures', agreed between the farmer and advisor, which have a water quality benefit.

## EXAMPLE OF PAYMENT TO FARMERS

Rainwater management plan (€250) + nitrogen surplus (€250) + training course (€156) = €656
Additional measures to protect water quality from agricultural impacts, identified in the rainwater management plan, are each funded separately.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Email the EIP office: info@watereip.ie
Contact your local Teagasc / Co-Op Adviser
Scan the QR code or visit
www.farmingforwater.ie

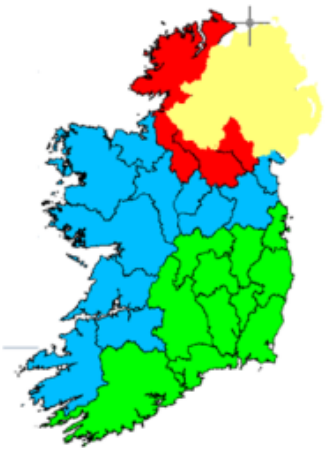
**The 8-Actions for Change of the campaign aim to:**

1. Reduce purchased nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) surplus per hectare.
2. Ensure soil fertility is optimal for lime, phosphorus and potassium.

3. Ensure application of fertiliser and organic manure at appropriate times and conditions.
4. Have sufficient slurry and soiled water storage capacity.
5. Manage and minimise nutrient loss from farmyards and roadways.
6. Fence off watercourses to prevent bovine access.
7. Promote targeted use of mitigation actions such as riparian margins, buffer strips and sediment traps to mitigate nutrient and sediment loss to water.
8. Maintain over-winter green cover to reduce nutrient leaching from tillage soils.

**Create a slurry spreading plan**

| Organic Storage Fertiliser Period | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zones | Zone A | Zone B | Zone C | Zone C |
| Storage Capacity Required | 16 weeks | 18 weeks | 20 weeks Donegal & Leitrim | 22 weeks Cavan & Monaghan |



**Right Place -** Use your soil tests to guide manure to low P and / or low K fields, target fields with the highest demand for P and K i.e silage ground, set-aside 2,500-3,000 slurry/ac for the silage ground on grassland farms, use a dribble bar/trailing shoe to get the best N value from the slurry.

**Right Rate -** Match your slurry application to the demand for P and K, adjust application rate based on your slurry test results or the type of tank you are taking the slurry from.

**Right Timing -** Retain enough slurry to cover the 1st cut silage ground as it has the highest nutrient demand.

**Right Source -** Identify the tanks in your farmyard that are better suited to silage ground or Index 1 or 2 ground vs grazing ground