



For issue, 17 May 2013 by the Fertilizer Association of Ireland.

Fertilizer Association of Ireland proposes relaxation of fertilizer N and P limits in response to fodder crisis.

The Fertilizer Association of Ireland has written to the Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney TD, to propose a relaxation of the limits to chemical nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) application on farms within the Nitrates Regulations to help alleviate the on-going fodder crisis on farms. Sufficient fertilizer application is essential in order to boost grass growth to help replenish fodder stocks on farms to avoid a repeat of the current fodder shortage on farms during next winter and into 2014.

For P fertilizer, the Fertilizer Association has proposed that P from concentrate feeds should be discounted when calculating chemical P fertilizer allowances in 2013 and 2014. The nitrates regulations require farmers to account for P that is fed to animals on the farm when calculating P fertilizer allowances. Due to the bad weather and reduced grass growth rates since summer 2012, the concentrate feed use on farms has been exceptionally high in 2012 and 2013. This will substantially reduce, if not exclude entirely, the allowance of chemical P fertilizer on farms in 2013 and 2014. Given the low grass growth rates and fodder stocks on farms, the capacity to apply plant available P in fertilizer is a critical requirement to ensure sufficient grass growth for the grazing season and to replenish winter fodder stocks. The Fertilizer Association also highlight that the extra P that has come onto farms in concentrate feeds is unlikely to pose a significant threat to the environment, as it will reach the soil in a mainly unavailable organic form of P. Any increase in soil P as a result can be detected by future soil testing, which is already required on the more intensive farms operating under a nitrates derogation.

The Fertilizer Association also highlight that fertilizer N allowances on farms that are restricted within the nitrates regulations will also restrict the potential for grass growth to fully recover. The letter to the Minister also includes a proposal to allow farmers apply an additional 10% of fertilizer N on farms in 2013 over their normal allowance. This additional N is required on many farms to achieve the additional grass yield required in 2013 to rebuild winter fodder stocks on farms.

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Issued on behalf of The Fertilizer Association of Ireland 17 May 2013

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