



# National Fodder & Food Security Committee

*Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2024*

# Agenda

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- 1) Update across Grassland and Tillage farms (Teagasc)
- 2) Situation reports from around the NFFSC members
- 3) Situation summary & concluding remarks



# National Fodder & Food Security Committee

## *Update across Grassland and Tillage farms*

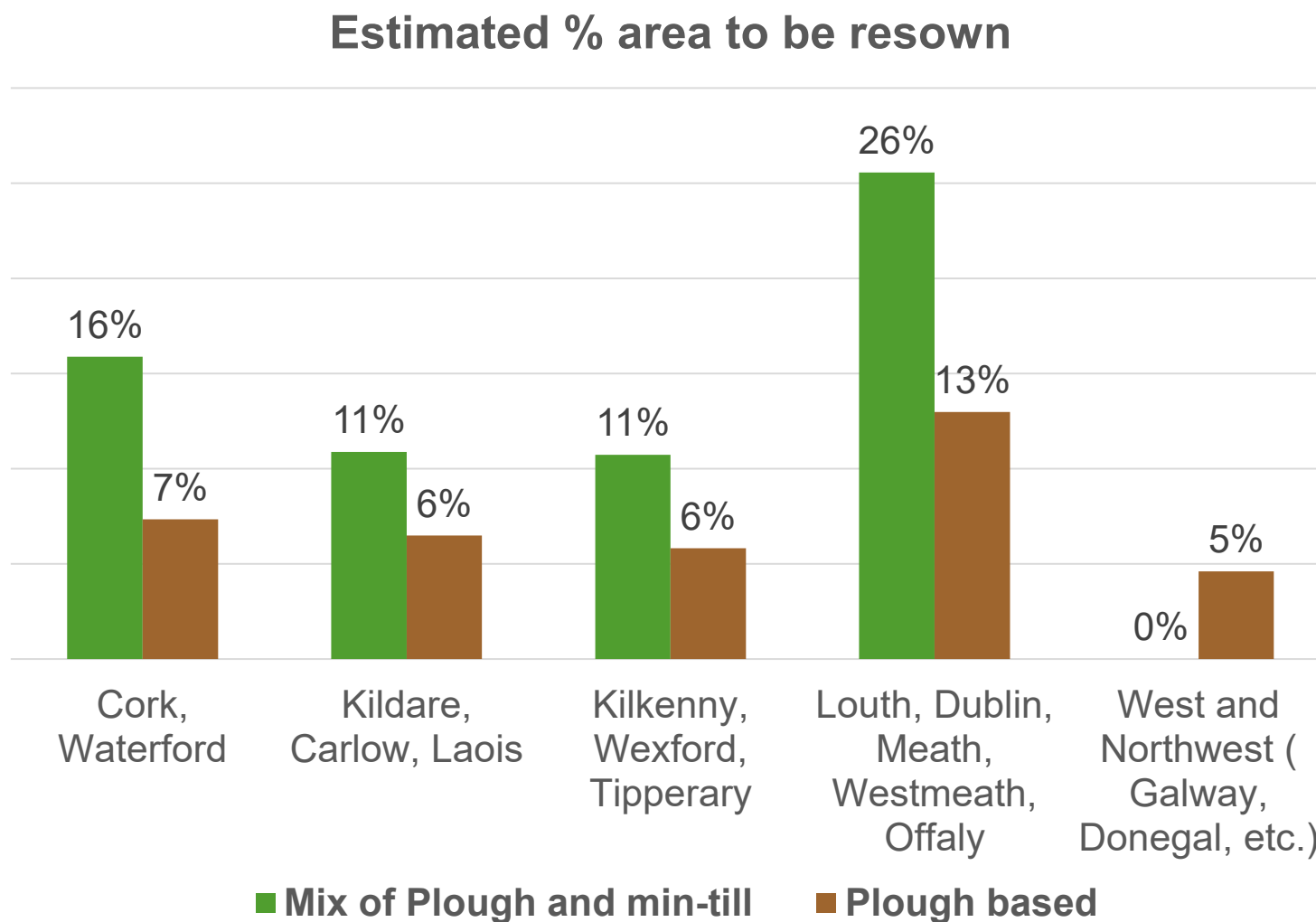
### **Contributors:**

Joe Patton, Pearse Kelly, Michael O'Donovan, Ciarán Hearn, Michael Hennessy

# TILLAGE CROPS UPDATE

# Autumn / Winter sown crops

- Data from Dec/Jan survey
- Approx. 11% overall to be replanted
  - Range 8-26%
- Plough-based system faring better



# Prospects based on weather

- Planting:
  - Very little planting done (max. 10-15% in some areas)
  - Minimum of 1 week (2 weeks on heavier ground) of dry weather needed before planting based on current soil conditions
  - Mid-April is best case scenario for a lot of crops
  - Land after crops harvested in late autumn (Maize, beet, potatoes, veg) will take even longer
  
- Winter crop husbandry:
  - Most winter crops have some fertiliser (compound) applied
    - » Some fields too wet to travel
  - Spraying very limited (Weed control, disease control & PGR on winter barley & OSR)

# Remaining Opportunity for sowing

- Too late for winter wheat (Mid Feb)

- Getting late for:

- Spring Wheat
- Beans
- Spring Oats

(Ideally mid March)  
*Still may be an option  
where spring barley  
seed may be tight*

- Sowing dates of crops:  
*(Beyond which crops considered "late")*

Early April

- Spring Wheat
- Beans
- Spring Oats

Mid April

- Beet


Late April

- Spring Barley
- Spring OSR
- Peas

Early May

- Maize

# Impact of late planting

- Later (after mid-April) planting = Higher risk
  - Require 'perfect' growing conditions after sowing
  - Harvest window (later) also a risk / challenge
- Yields of late-sown crops (Normal conditions) 
- Based on previous years, late sown crops can be badly impacted where it is followed by a short or moderate drought in May / June drought (up to 3-4 t/ha yield reduction)

Spring Beans	3 – 3.5 t/ha
Spring Wheat	5.5 – 6.5 t/ha
Spring Barley	5 – 6 t/ha
Spring Oats	5 – 6 t/ha



# Additional points

- Harvest Impact:

- Reduced winter crop area
- Spring crops later sown



Pushing harvest timings later

- Less winter crops to cut early
- Slower ripening of spring crops

- Risk of high proportion of harvest running into September

- Normal advice would be more Spring Barley

- Limited option due to seed – need to still consider other crops
  - » Spring wheat (already getting late for sowing) often follows potatoes/maize/beet
  - » Will take longer for ground to dry to allow sowing

# Risk Mitigation & Advice (1)

- Planting spring wheat, spring oats and beans should be considered for as long as possible to maximise overall tillage area.
  - Not planting these crops will put pressure on spring barley seed availability
  - Late planted spring wheat could be considered for whole crop silage if a suitable client is available
  - Keeping break crops (beans and oats) in the rotation is important
  - Opportunity to sell forage crops to neighbours (with contract in place before planting)
- Examine the crop margin (not just yield) carefully
  - Avail of fixed price offers where available (e.g. beans - may offer value compared to the falling grain prices)
  - Direct payments such as Protein Payment (~ €350-600/ha) and the Straw Incorporation Measure (€150-250/ha) as part of the income
  - Contact your usual straw customers and look for a solid commitment and an agreed price for straw purchases in 2024

# Risk Mitigation & Advice (2)

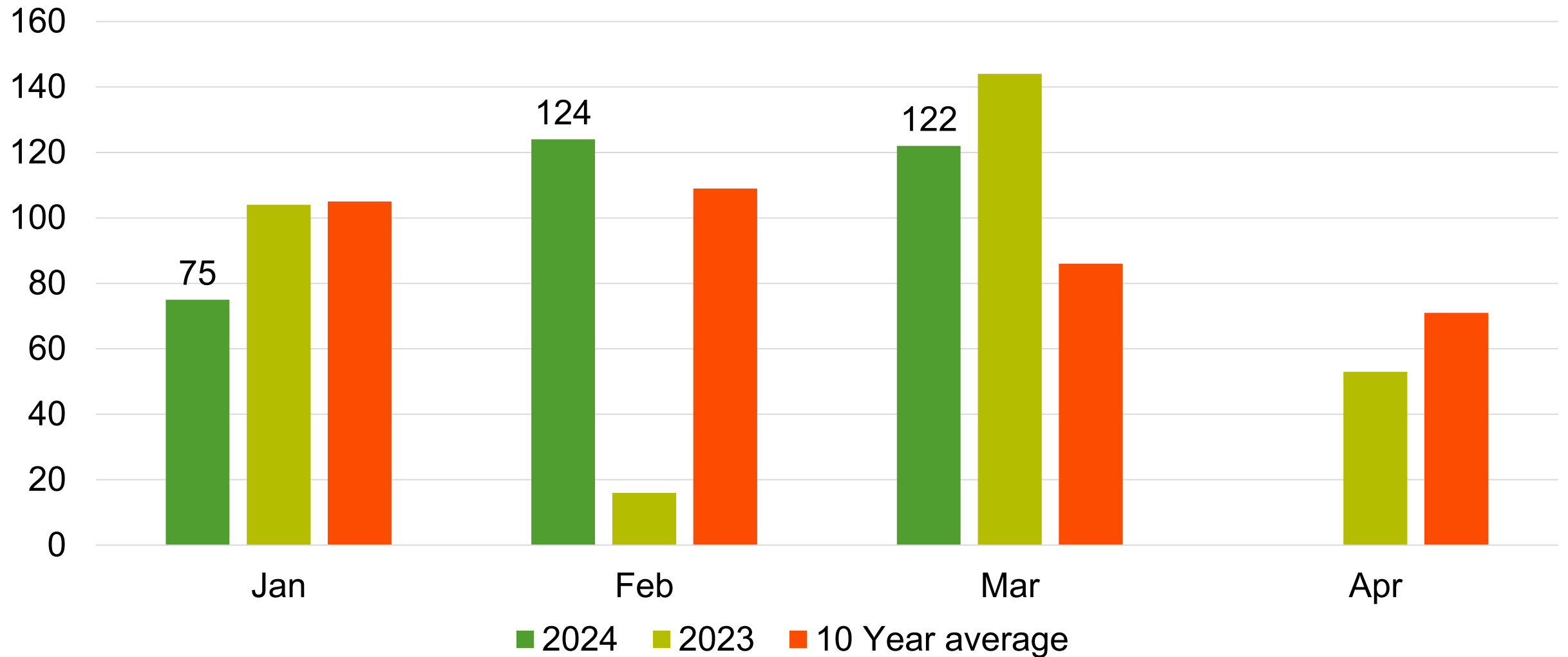
- Assess ground in the coming days as to the real potential for this land to dry out
  - Consider harvest date as well as likely window for planting
- Crop diversity will allow a spread in planting dates, fertiliser/spraying, and harvesting. Consider the following:
  - Relying on just one or two crops over a very large area can increase workloads for critical jobs (unsustainable for equipment or operator)
  - Later planted crops will be harvested later (into September) decreasing the number and length of harvest days and substantially increasing the risk of harvest losses
  - Consider planning a crop type area around realistic combining rates
- Impact of drought if it followed this prolonged wet spell
  - Complete cultivations when the soil conditions are suitable
  - But, reduce the chances of the soil drying out too quickly
    - » Press or roll the soil as soon as possible after ploughing / primary cultivation
    - » Where ploughing and one-passing - endeavour to roll the seed bed as quickly as possible
- Other alternatives such as red clover (scheme available), or summer cover crops



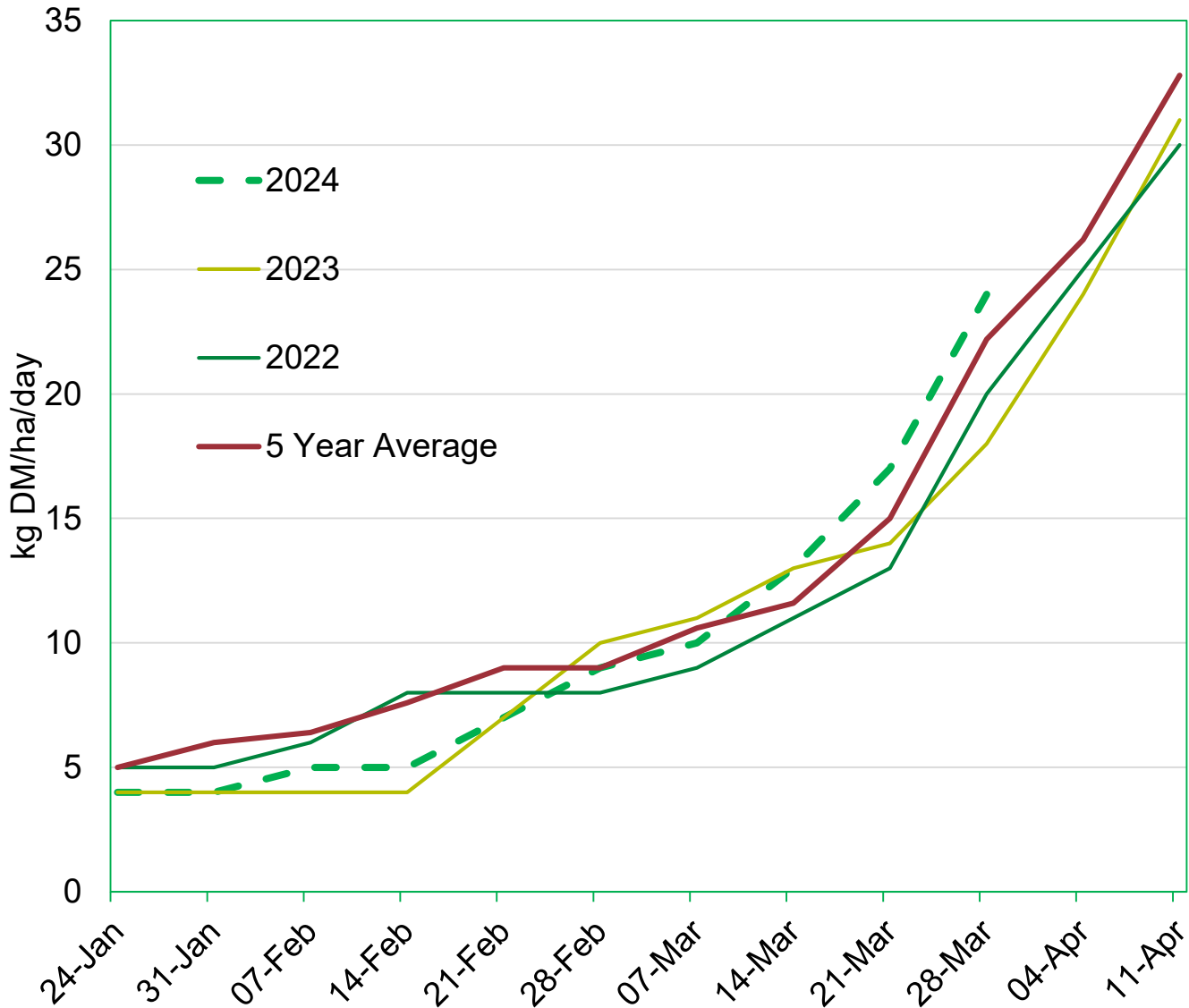
Michael O'Donovan, Ciaran Hearn

# GRASS UPDATE

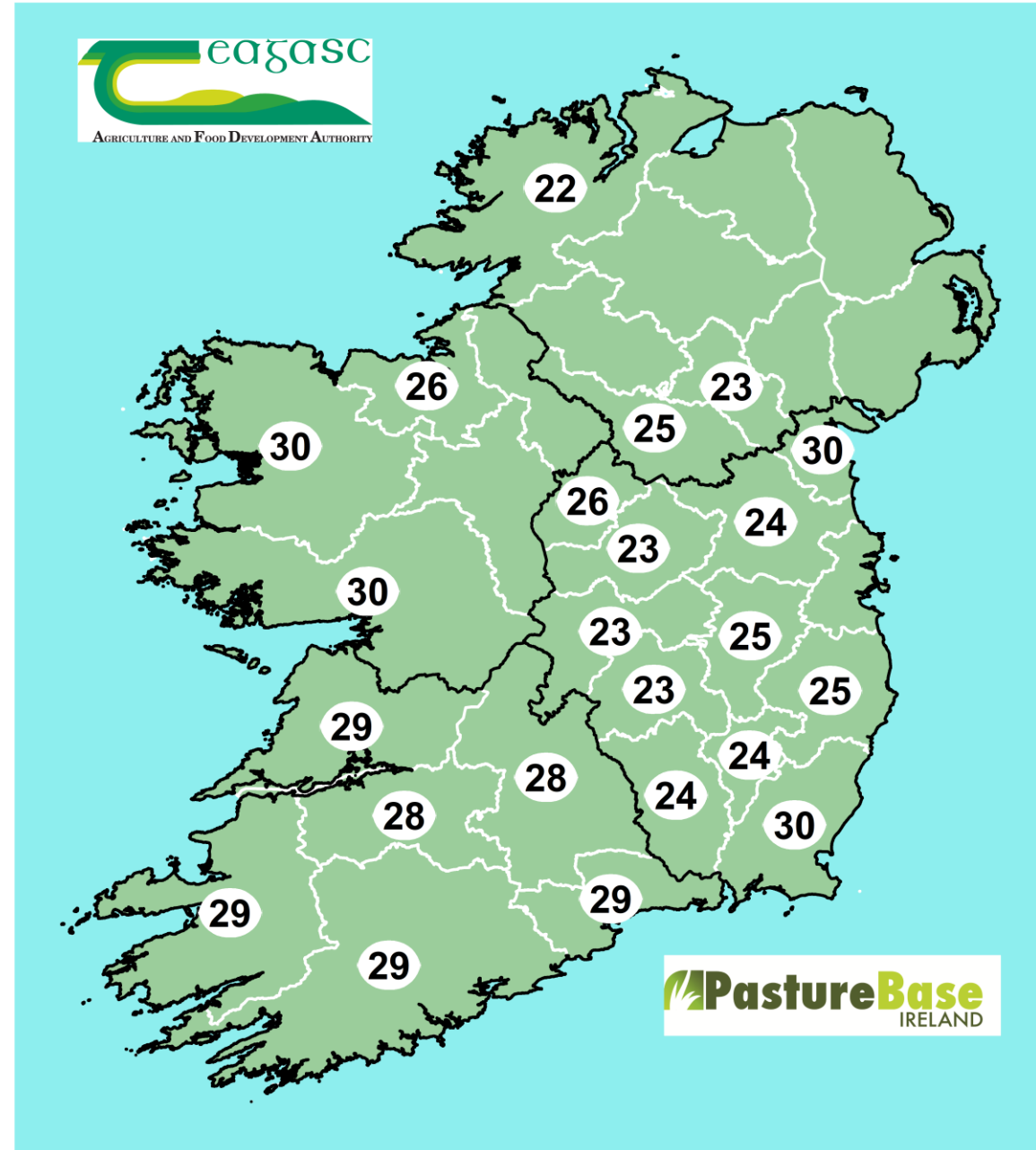
# Moorepark Rainfall 2024 versus 2023 (10 Year Average)



# PastureBase Ireland National Spring Grass Growth



## Grass growth predictions Next week (kg DM/ha/day)



# Grazing Management Performance

	2024	2023
Farm Cover	917	822
Grass growth	22	25
Area grazed %	54 (9-98)	84 (30 -100)
N spread	70% of farms No N spread 30% of Farms with - 36kg N/ha	70% Farm had N spread 36 kg N/ha spread
Feeding	8 kg grass / 4.5 kg Conc / 5 kg Silage <i>When farms are at grass</i>  <i>Otherwise</i> Silage 10 kg + Conc 5.5 kg	10 grass / 4 Conc / 2 Silage
Notes	No or Partial Grazing on many farms	Full time or Partial grazing

# Summary - Dairy

- Grazing stopped on many farms – farmers trying hard to get cows to grass (On/off grazing)
- Ground conditions - Challenging on dry farms
- High Supply of Grass on Farms, grass growth promising
- Slurry and Chemical N applications delayed
- Cow performance - Lack of grass in diet (Milk protein %)
- Slurry storage issue - Time animals indoors



# Summary – Dry Stock (Cattle & Sheep)

- Drystock farms - no major indications of grazing
- Ground conditions extremely challenging
- **No Fertiliser applied** - land not trafficable
- Slurry storage issue
- Sheep – lambed ewes being supplemented
- No Fertiliser spread

# Nitrogen Application Strategy 2024

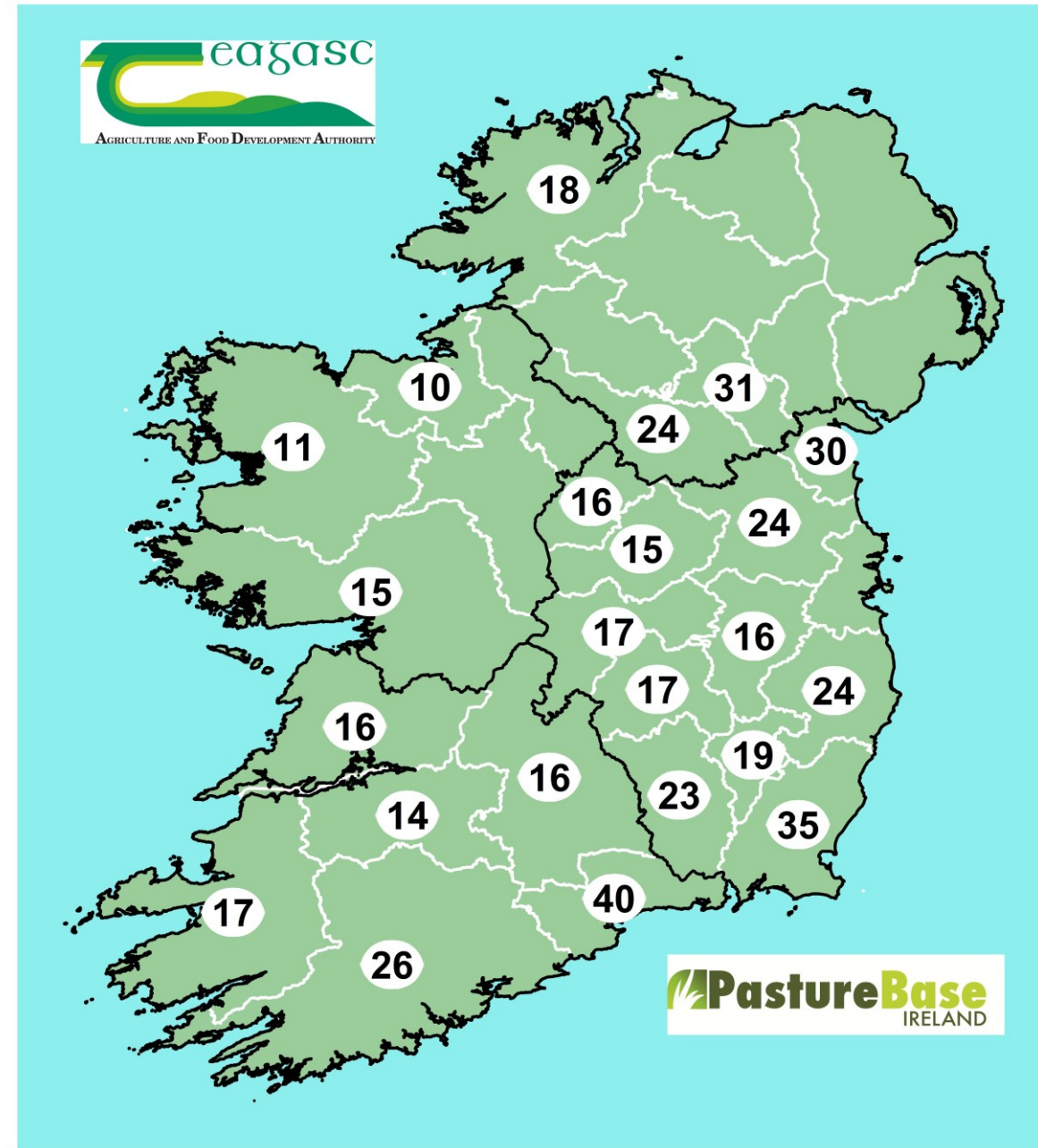
Clover content (%)	Feb	Mar	April	May <i>2 rotations</i>	June <i>2 rotations</i>	July <i>2 rotations</i>	Aug	Sept	Total
<b>April</b>	←----- N (kg/ha) ----->								
<b>Grass sward</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>5%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>10%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>15%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>*SW</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>20%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>SW</b>	<b>SW</b>	<b>SW</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>105</b>

- **\*Soiled water used whenever zero chemical N application**
- **+25kg organic N applied**

# Outlook - Weeks ahead

- Grass available
  - On/off grazing whenever possible
- Plan 10 days ahead, source feed locally
- Nitrogen needs to be purchased and applied when ground is suitable
- Silage will be need to be early this year
  - Farmers will need to plan this
- **P K S for Silage**

Predicted rainfall  
Next week (mm)



## For More Information Contact

Pearse Kelly

Head of Drystock Knowledge Transfer

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087-6184287

[pearse.kelly@teagasc.ie](mailto:pearse.kelly@teagasc.ie)

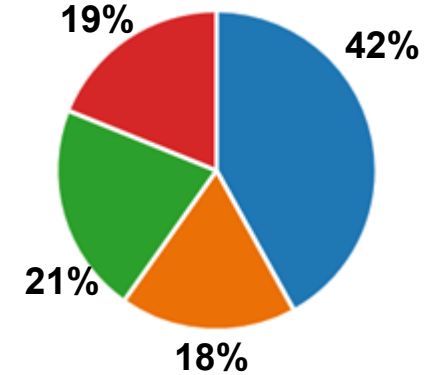
Impact of Wet Weather on

# DRYSTOCK FARMS

# Survey sent to Teagasc Clients

- Short survey circulated on Wed 27<sup>th</sup> March through text messages
- Advisors and specialists circulated the survey to Teagasc Clients
- 784 responses

● Sucklers	329
● Dairy calf to beef	140
● Finishing cattle	167
● Mixed beef & sheep	148

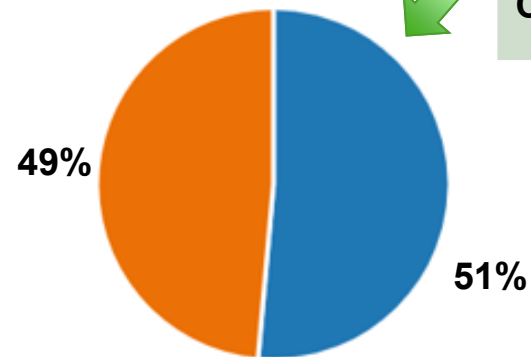


● Munster	261
● Leinster	404
● Connaught	53
● Ulster	66

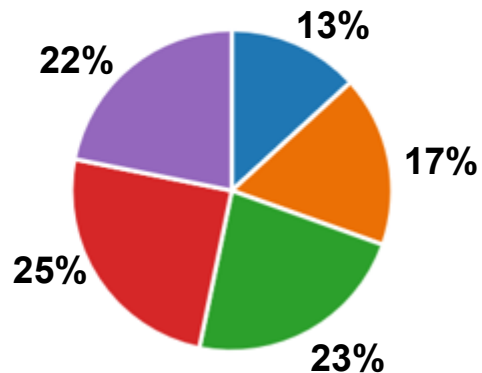
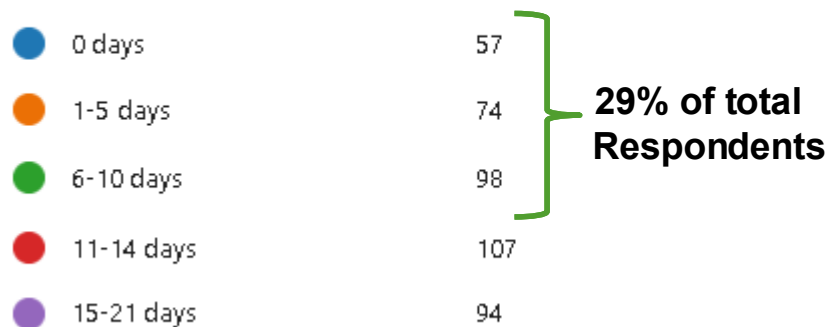


# Silage Stocks Remaining

Do you have enough silage to feed stock for the next three weeks?

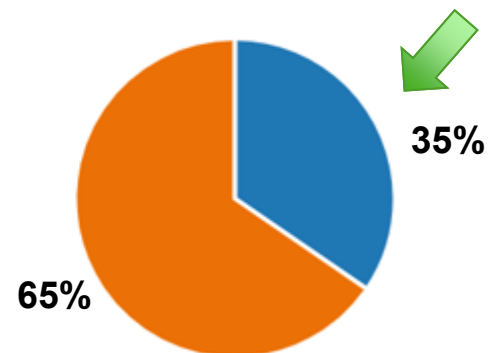


If you answered no to question 4, how many days silage have you left?



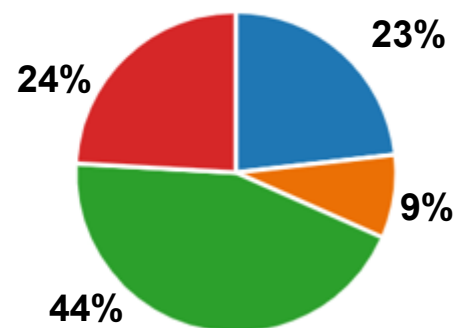
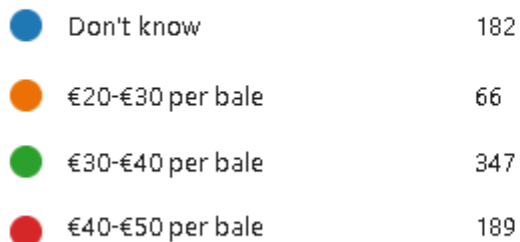
# Purchasing Silage

## Are you buying silage?



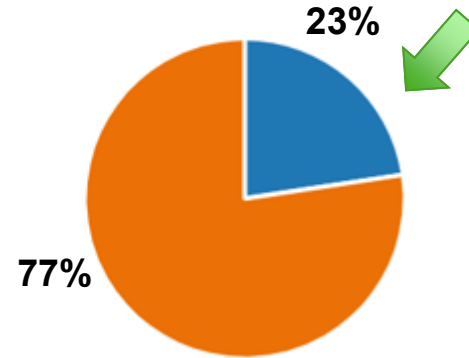
Connacht	30%
Leinster	37%

## What is silage costing to buy in your region?



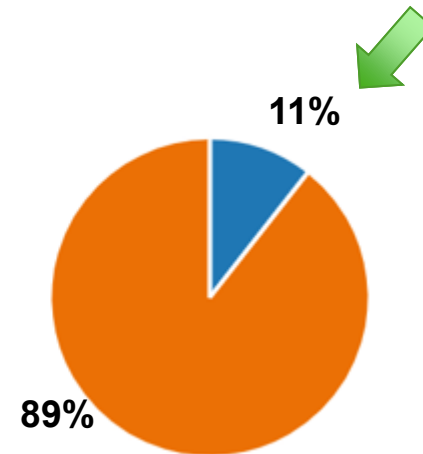
# Grass & Fertiliser

If you have cattle, are any out at grass now?



<b>Ulster</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Munster</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Connacht</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Leinster</b>	<b>28%</b>

Have you any fertiliser spread in 2024?

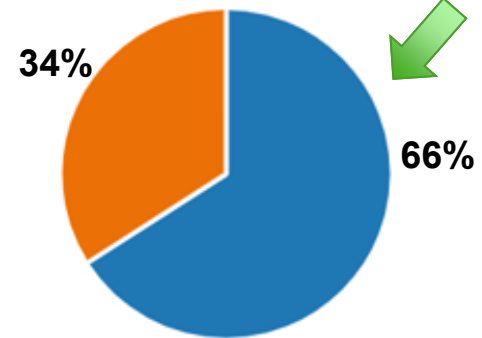


<b>Ulster</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Munster</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Leinster</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Connacht</b>	<b>15%</b>



# Housed Cattle

Is slurry storage becoming an issue?



Connacht	62%
Ulster	74%

# Feedback from Advisors & Specialists

- Majority of the DairyBeef 500 & Future Beef demonstration farms have adequate silage for the next number of weeks but most have slurry tanks close to full
- Most drystock farms are at least 7 -10 days from turning large numbers of stock out
- Silage is moving between farms in the south & south east – no issue with supply yet – no significant rise in bale costs  
Lack of straw is still a bigger issue
- Most drystock farms will not now be in a position to graze heavy covers on silage ground and complete the first rotation in a reasonable amount of time:-
  - » Advice for a lot of farms will be: Do not attempt to graze silage ground, apply small amount of N (40 - 50 units) and cut in early May
- Slurry will not be able to be spread on silage ground – fertiliser plans will have to be adjusted to include more artificial P & K on silage ground
- Some grazing fields may end up having to be cut for silage to finish first rotation
- BETTER Sheep farms are getting ewes and lambs out to grass on the dry days and there is plenty of grass .....but utilisation is very poor
- Very little fertiliser has been spread on most sheep farms – demand for grass will increase substantially over the coming weeks – risk of a shortage by end April
  - » Advice will be to feed meal to ewes to slow down the rotation to allow time for fertiliser to grow grass

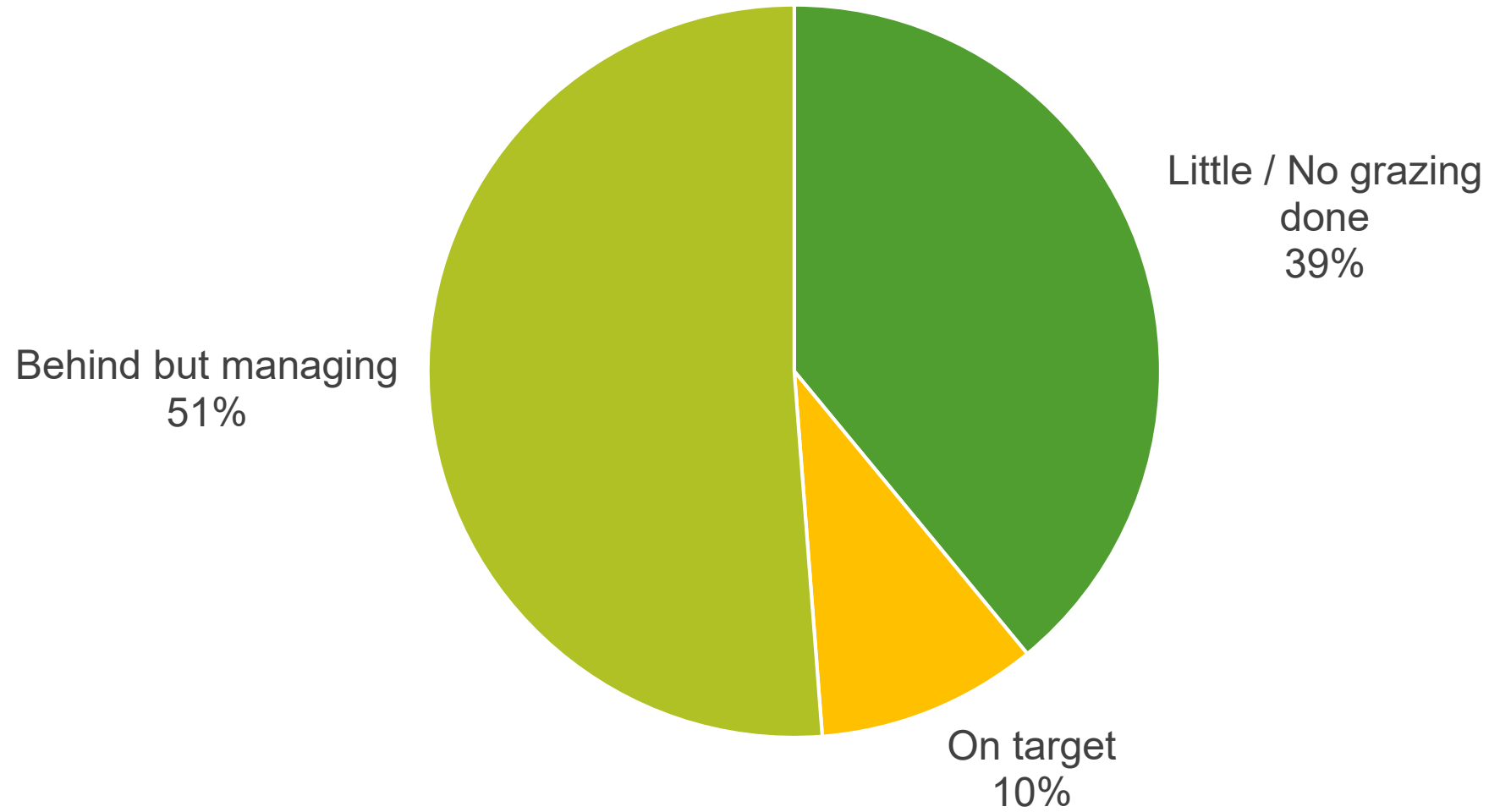
**Joe Patton**  
**Head of Drystock Knowledge Transfer Department**

Impact of Wet Weather on  
**DAIRY FARMS**

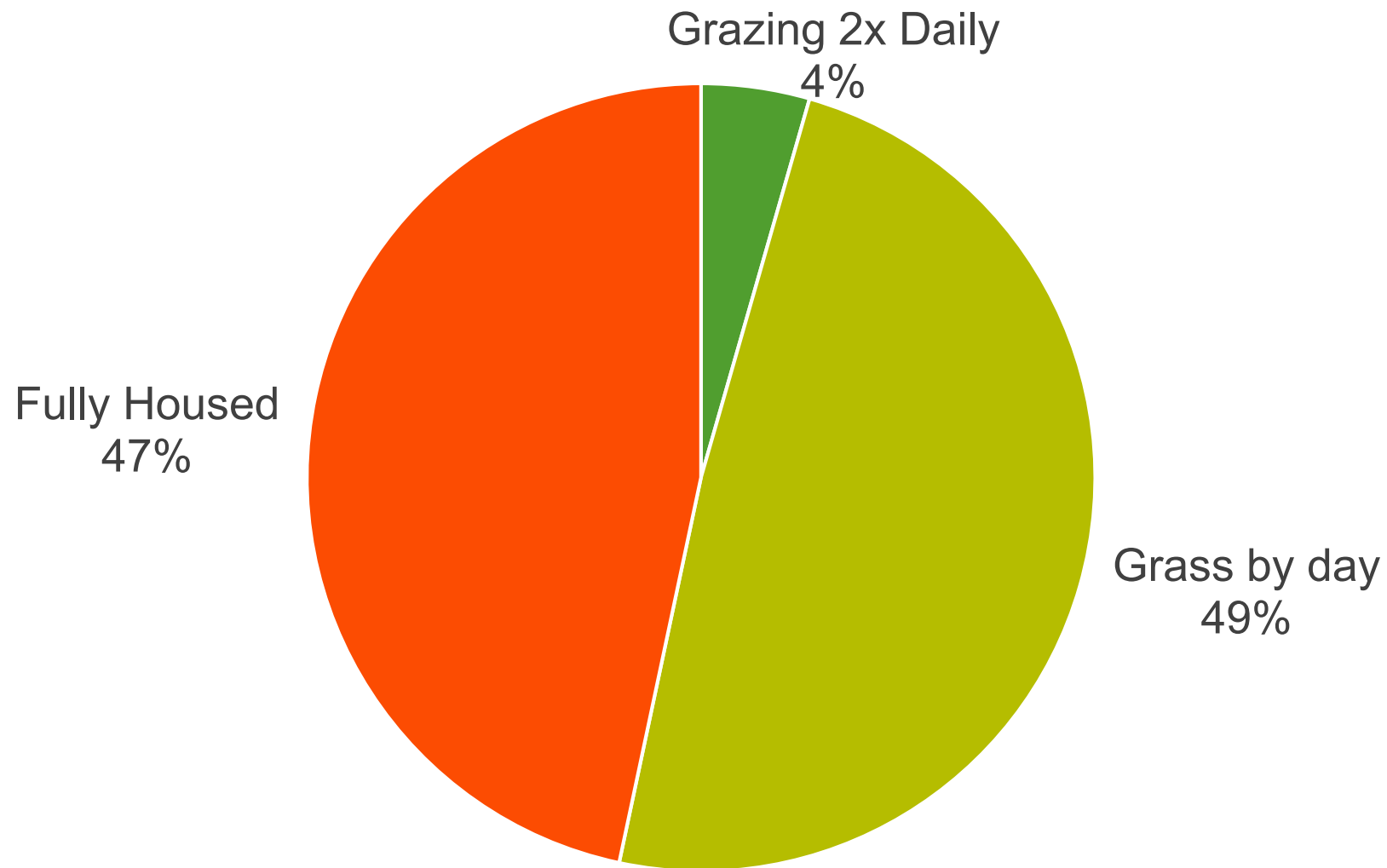
Survey across Teagasc Dairy advisors to assess situation based on current feedback across clients & discussion groups

Responses from 58 Dairy Advisors

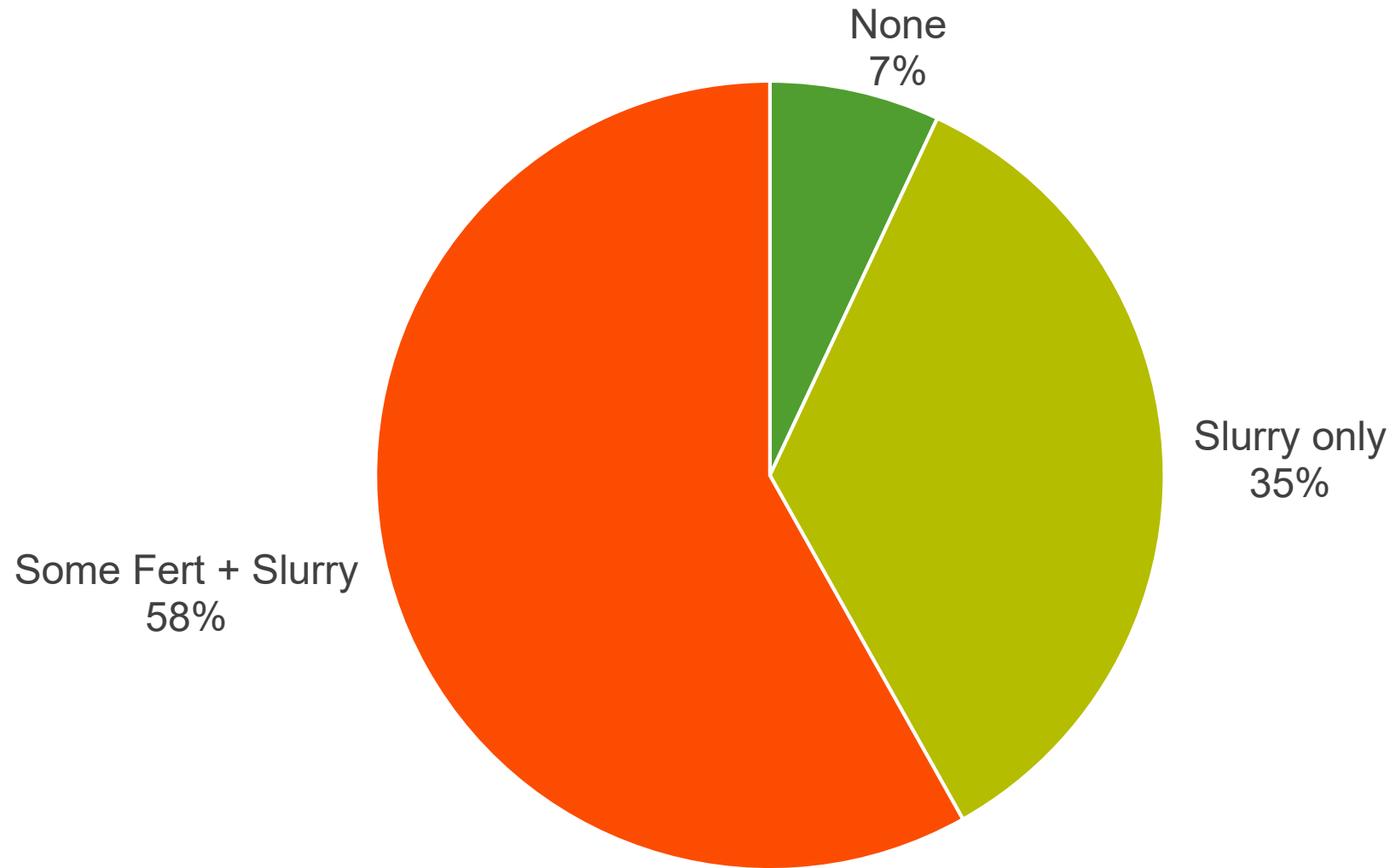
# Spring Grazing Rotation Progress



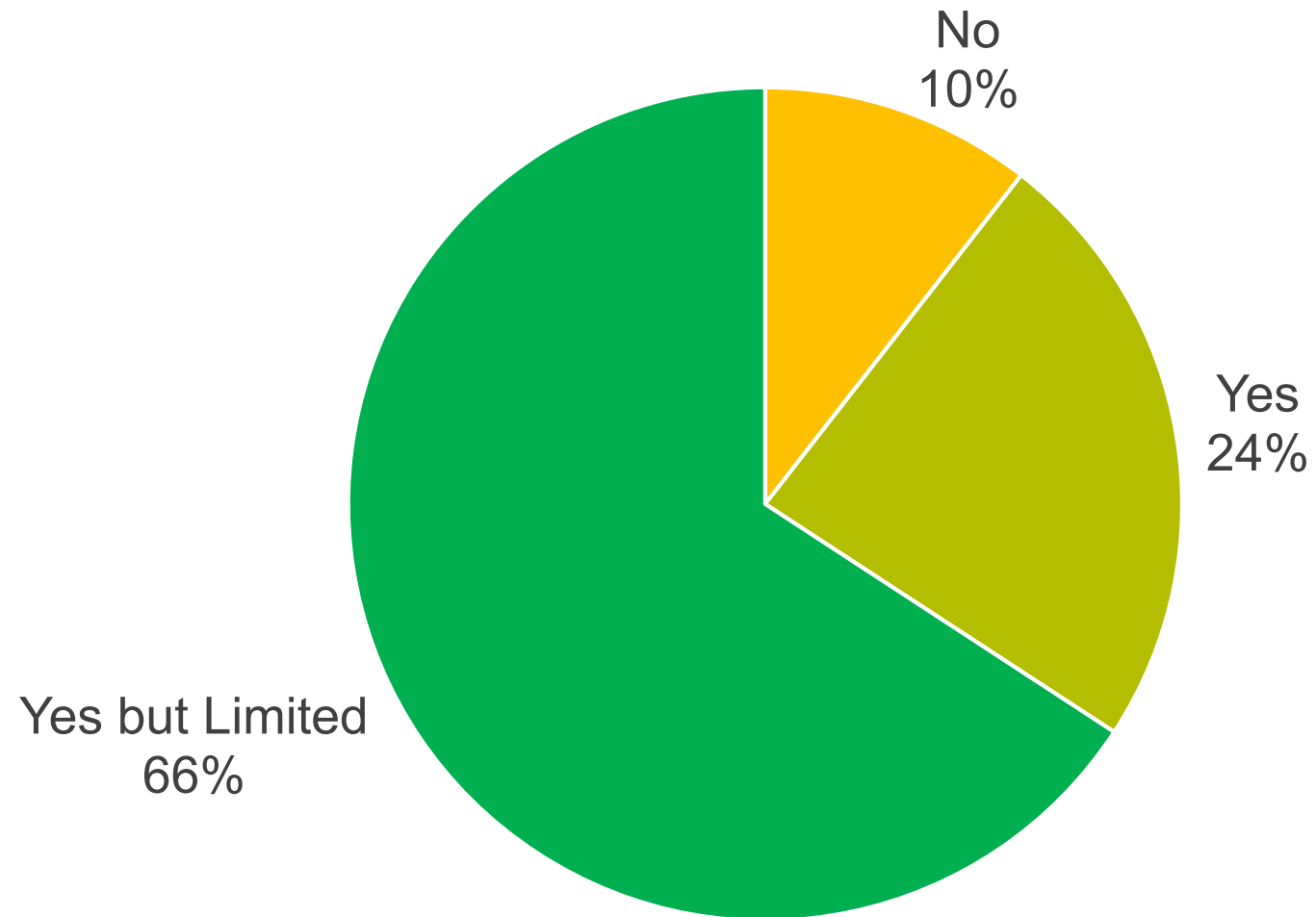
# Current Grazing 25-28 March



# Fertilizer and Slurry to date

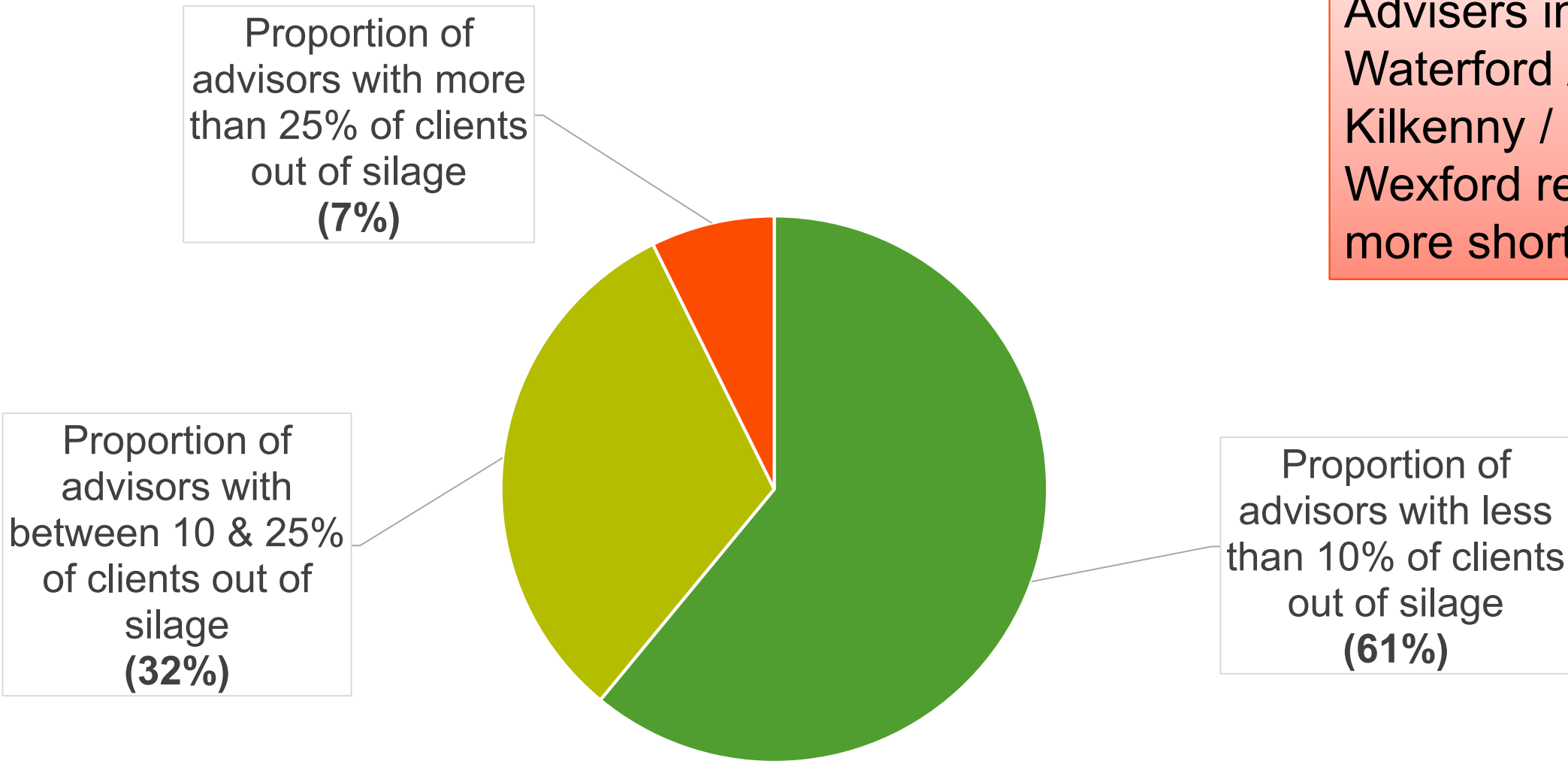


# Silage available to buy locally?



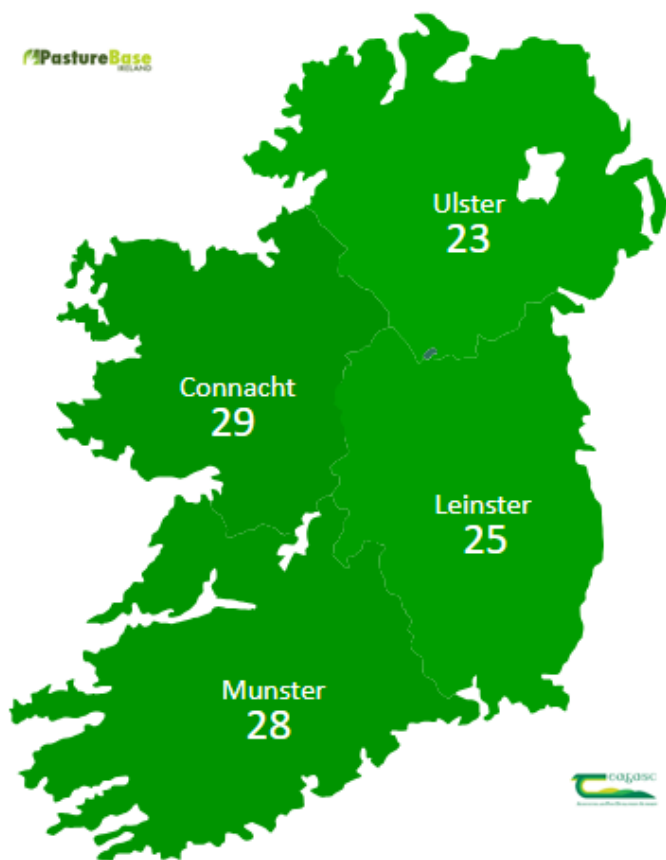
# Proportion of Advisors Clients that are out of silage

Advisers in Waterford / Kilkenny / Wexford reported more shortages





# Current Dairy Farm Conditions



Applicable From 27/03/2024  
To 02/04/2024



## ■ Pasture Base Ireland farms

- Average Farm cover 920 kg
- Cover 360kg per cow
- Above normal supply of grass on farm
- **Access and grazing conditions (Weather) is the issue**
- But:
  - » Things can change quickly - 2 dry days will make a big difference
  - » Grass by day (until lunchtime) ASAP
  - » Don't worry too much about residuals at first
  - » Keep fresh cows in a separate group for 4 or 5 days
  - » Be flexible - let a portion of the herd out to grass if needed

## • Seek ways to make workload simpler and effective

- Earlier evening milking
- Calf feeding and management
- Help with machinery work, feeding, etc

# Advisory messages- herd nutrition

	Indoors Fulltime	Indoors Fulltime	Grass by Day	Grass Fulltime
70 DMD Silage	11	10.5	6	-
Grass	0	0	7	13.5
16 CP Ration	5	6.5	5	4.5
Hi Fibre/Energy Straight	0	2	0	0
Total DMI	15.7	17.3	17.1	17.4
Energy (UFL) Supply	14.2	16.1	16.5	17.2
Protein (PDI) Supply	1330	1520	1630	1880
<b>Milk kg Supported</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>24.2</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>25.4</b>
<b>Protein % (diet potential)</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>3.68</b>

- Assess situation every day and get 3-4 hours grazing ASAP
- Avoid complicated diets and feeding solutions (labour)
- Getting grass in the diet is the priority

# Ongoing Focus

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- Forage production across 2024 for winter 2024/25
- Focus on:
  - Rebuilding stocks
  - Buffer stocks for weather resilience
  - Silage Quality
  - Securing straw as well as fodder