

# Soil testing and fertiliser planning changes for 2018

Now is the ideal time to take soil samples and check soil fertility levels (lime, P and K).

Take soil samples every 2ha to 4ha to a depth of 10cm and take a minimum of 20 soil cores per sampling area. This will provide the basis for planning lime and fertiliser applications.

## Changes to Nitrates Action Programme (Nitrates Directive)

• **Soil sampling:** Under Nitrates Regulations (SI 605, 2017) soil sampling area has reduced from 8ha to 5ha, soil samples are now required every four years. Soil sampling intensity has increased under the new NAP as it is an effective tool to ensure the efficient use of P applied as either manures or fertilisers and reduce the risk of nutrient loss to water. Check farm fertiliser plans and take additional soil samples where required.

• **Additional P on grassland farms:** The rates of chemical P for index 1 and 2 soils have increased to facilitate the buildup of low fertility soils to increase their productive

capacity. Higher P rates are available on grassland farms with the following criteria – a grassland stocking rate above 130 kg Org N/ha, soil test results for every 5ha and engage with an FAS advisor to complete a farm fertiliser plan. Update farm fertiliser plans to avail of additional chemical P to build soil fertility levels.

• **Autumn P for cereals:** As part of the recent changes to the Nitrates Directive winter cereals can now receive an application of chemical P up until 31 October provided that the P is either soil incorporated or placed at sowing time. An application of 20kg and 10kg P/ha is permitted to index 1 or 2 soils, respectively. The application of P in the autumn to winter cereals on low fertility soils is required to aid plant rooting and tillering over the winter. There are no restrictions on the application of potassium (K) during the growing season.

Remember, before applying additional P, correct soil pH to the optimum of pH 6.3 in grassland and pH 6.5 in cereals. Now is an ideal time on either



grassland or tillage farms to apply lime and correct soil pH cost effectively. Optimising soil pH will firstly release soil P and secondly increase the availability of applied P as either chemical or organic fertilisers.

• **Lime:** Over the coming weeks and months it will be optimum to spread lime. Only apply lime based on a recent soil test result (last three to five years). Lime is the one nutrient that offers a very good rate of

return on investment. For example, every €1 spent on lime will return up to €7 extra grass production.

## Extension for fertiliser and slurry spreading

An extension to the deadlines for spreading of chemical and organic fertilisers has been granted by the Minister for Agriculture due to the exceptional weather conditions in the spring and summer of 2018. The aim is

to boost grass growth in the autumn to try and alleviate the current shortage of winter feed. The closed periods for chemical fertilisers in 2018 is now 30 September and organic fertilisers 31 October. Ensure to comply with buffer zones for both chemical and organic fertilisers at time of application to protect water bodies.

– Mark Plunkett, Johnstown Castle

# Teagasc at the Ploughing

Teagasc will again have a major presence at the National Ploughing Championships in September. The exceptionally dry weather means that fodder remains a key issue for many farmers. Our open-air arena beside the Teagasc marquee proved highly popular last year and we will use it again to address this crucial topic.

Teagasc researchers, specialists, advisors and nutritionists will address real examples by interviewing farmers about their situations and how they optimise their feed and fodder strategy this autumn, winter and next spring. As well as viewing live interviews on our outdoor screen farmers can have one-to-one discussions about individual fodder or financial issues with advisors at the event.

The Teagasc stand will not just be about fodder of course. It is a one-stop-shop for the full range of issues confronting farm families. So if you want to discuss education opportunities (Teagasc has several exciting new initiatives and partnerships in the pipeline); farm succession (we will have experts present); forestry; environment related issues; diversification; food; health and safety; horticulture; farm management as well as the main stream enterprises drystock, dairy or tillage there will be free advice available.

We are very close to the NPA headquarters and if you would like to come and work for Teagasc, our HR colleagues will tell you about careers with us.

• Block 3, Row 13, Stand 277.

# PastureBase Ireland launches new app

PastureBase Ireland (PBI) is an internet-based grassland management programme for all grassland farmers.

In operation since 2013, and with the ongoing merger with AgriNet Grass since 2017, it offers farmers grassland decision support and stores grassland data from dairy, beef and sheep farmers in a central national database.

## Does PBI have an offline app? How and who should download it?

Earlier this summer PBI launched an offline app which is available to download from the app store and Google Play store. Search for "PBI Grass". All farmers currently using PBI should download the app right now. The app is free.

## What can I record on the offline app?

The objective of the offline app is to

record grass covers, graze dates, fertiliser application and livestock number/intakes, as well as milk data quickly while undertaking the task in the paddock, independent of mobile coverage.

## Why choose to develop an offline app?

Internet access is rarely available in fields so the app needed to be offline.

## So what steps do you take once you have the app on your phone?

You need the most up-to information on the app before you can add new information offline. So, before you head out to the field download the most up-to-date farm covers from www.pbi.ie on to the app in your phone. You can then enter newly measured covers offline (no need for coverage and Wi-Fi in the

field) and when you have completed taking these new measurements you will need internet coverage or Wi-Fi again (at home probably) to upload the information to www.pbi.ie.

## What does the future hold for the app?

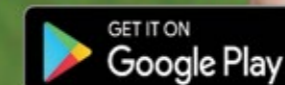
The current app is basic but functional; however we are currently developing a daily grazing planner and hope to display an image of the grass wedge once a full farm cover is completed. These additions should help farmers even further in managing their grass.

PastureBase Ireland is available to all Teagasc clients.

If you wish to sign up or require more information please call our dedicated help centre 046-9200965 or email support@pbi.ie.

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**PastureBase  
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Search for **PBI Grass** on iPhone & Android



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