

## National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group (NPDWAG)

Backweston AgriLabs Building – 25 May 2023

### **Attendees**

The following organisations were represented at the meeting:

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Chair)	[DAFM]
Animal and Plant Health Association	[APHA]
Cork County Council	[CCC]
Environmental Protection Agency	[EPA]
Federation of Agrochemical Retail Merchants	[FARM]
Golf Ireland	[G]
Health Service Executive	[HSE]
Irish Farmers Association	[IFA]
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association	[ICMSA]
Local Authority Waters Programme	[LAWPRO]
National Federation of Group Water Schemes	[NFGWS]
Teagasc/ASSAP	[Teagasc/ASSAP]
Uisce Éireann	[UÉ]
Wicklow County Council	[WCC]

### **1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed attendees to this hybrid meeting of the NPDWAG. Apologies received in advance from several members were noted. New participants (representing existing stakeholders) were welcomed.

### **2. Minutes of previous meeting**

There were no comments on the minutes of the previous meeting (2 March 2023). If anybody had any suggestions subsequently for amendments they were asked to forward specific text to the Chair by 16 June 2023. The Chair noted that the minutes would be published on DAFM's pesticides website in due course –

[www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/waterprotection/nationalpesticidesanddrinkingwateractiongroup](http://www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/sud/waterprotection/nationalpesticidesanddrinkingwateractiongroup)

### **3. Update on work of the National Aquatic Environmental Chemistry Group**

DAFM gave an update on the work of the National Aquatic Environmental Chemistry Group (NAECG), which is chaired by the EPA. The group is currently engaged in the task of revising the national River Basin Specific Pollutants (RBSP) list, which specifies substances of national interest for inclusion in Ireland's Water Framework Directive monitoring programme. There are 16 substances on Ireland's RBSP list at present, including several pesticides (S.I. No. 272/2009 - European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009).

The process for the revision was outlined. This included a review of the current RBSP list, identification of potential additional candidate substances (based on assessments of available information) and a bespoke monitoring programme to determine if various potential candidate substances would be likely to be present in Irish surface water bodies.

Appropriate national Environmental Quality Standard (EQS) values are also being established for the substances on the updated RBSP list. This involves a review of existing national EQS values

and an exercise to set EQS values for new substances on the list, based on relevant scientific data and assessment guidelines.

The NAECG is currently reviewing the monitoring results and intends to recommend a revised RBSP list, and associated EQS values, during Q3 of 2023, if possible. A few additional pesticides are likely to feature on the updated list.

It was noted that the outputs from the NAECG work could help inform the design of future monitoring programmes for drinking water.

#### **4. Uisce Éireann updates on drinking water exceedances and Catchment Focus Group activities**

There are currently 21 EPA pesticide compliance plans open, serving a population of 290,229. Three EPA pesticide compliance plan files have been closed to date in 2023 (Borris in Ossory PWS, Longford Central, Newcastle West Water Supply) and also two EPA Directions (Belturbet PWS, Newport PWA). It is hoped that it will be possible to close some more EPA files later on in the year.

Four parametric failures for 2023 were reported by the time of the meeting (2 for MCPA, 1 for 2,4-D, 1 for triclopyr). It was noted that continued vigilance is necessary, since it only takes a single misplaced drop of product to cause an exceedance.

Recent Catchment Focus Group (CFG) activities were also noted. CFG meetings were held recently in the Newport, Belturbet and Lough Forbes catchments. The first meeting of the newly established Clonroche CFG is scheduled to take place shortly (31 May 2023). The CFG for the River Feale and River Deel catchments will also be re-established.

#### **5. APHA catchment monitoring results and stewardship activities**

##### Monitoring programme

Raw water monitoring results to date in 2023 were reviewed. The programme commenced in week 15 (10 April) for Lough Forbes, Belturbet, Emy Lough and Newport, and in week 18 (1 May) for the Feale and Deel catchments.

The number of exceedances to date in the Belturbet and Lough Forbes catchments is ahead of the number recorded in these catchments over the same period in 2022. In contrast, the number of exceedances to date in the Newport and Deel catchments is below the number recorded over the same period in 2022. There have been no exceedances recorded so far this year in Newport. The Emy Lough catchment is also performing well, with a low number of exceedances so far.

##### Stewardship

APHA continues to work with Teagasc to promote good farm practice in the storage and use of pesticides, and is progressing the IASIS web-based learning courses. Regarding container management, it was noted that very good progress is being made to reach the industry commitment of a 75% average collection rate of containers in the EU by 2025. The collection rate in Ireland has increased significantly in recent years. The most recent estimate is 79.78% for 2022 but this may be an over-estimate due to various factors, such as the inclusion of detergent containers in the collected material rather than plant protection product (PPP) containers only. Work is planned to take samples of collected containers in order to determine the proportion of PPP containers, so that more accurate estimations of the PPP container collection rate can be

made in future. APHA will continue to work with the Irish Farm Film Producers' Group this year to encourage farmers to recycle empty, triple-rinsed PPP containers.

## **6. Communications activities**

The communications campaign for 2023 was launched by UÉ towards the end of April (Spray with Care National Campaign). The campaign is using an integrated approach, covering traditional media outlets, web and social media platforms, marketing and engagement with stakeholders. There has been notable positive national media coverage so far, with the Irish Independent, RTE and the Irish Examiner highlighting the advice in relation to responsible pesticide use. The topic has also been covered online in the Farmers Journal and agriland.ie, and has obtained widespread regional pick-up on press and broadcast, with over 70 individual pieces of coverage reaching over 3.4 million people.

A targeted Facebook campaign was also promoted in priority areas. This digital campaign reached approximately 180,000 people and had over 280,000 impressions.

## **7. Updates on actions planned for 2023**

Participants were reminded to submit details of planned actions for 2023, both national and priority area actions, to UÉ, using the action tracker spreadsheet.

## **8. Other stakeholder updates**

- WCC gave an update on their policy to reduce, and eliminate where possible, the use of glyphosate. The policy was adopted in July 2022 and is available online at the following location – [www.wicklow.ie/Portals/0/adam/Content/VldsPAYUBEKGdXDQxduTOA/Link/WCC%20Glyphosate%20Policy.pdf](http://www.wicklow.ie/Portals/0/adam/Content/VldsPAYUBEKGdXDQxduTOA/Link/WCC%20Glyphosate%20Policy.pdf)  
It was noted that extra labour is involved in maintaining areas without glyphosate.
- GI informed the group that they are in the process of appointing a full-time sustainability manager.
- ASSAP indicated that they are considering one-to-one engagement with agricultural contractors in particular areas.
- Some participants noted that the recently announced WATER European Innovation Partnership project could include some support for measures to reduce the impact of pesticides on water quality, such as drip trays and low-drift nozzles.
- UÉ noted that the drinking water source protection project funded by them (Erne-Larah Water Source Protection Project) is ongoing. Further information is available online at the following location – [www.water.ie/projects/national-projects/erne-larah/](http://www.water.ie/projects/national-projects/erne-larah/)  
An update on the project will be provided at the next NPDWAG meeting.

## **9. AOB**

No AOB items were raised.