

## National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group

Backweston AgriLabs Building - 30 November 2022

### **Attendees**

The following organisations were represented at the meeting:

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Chair)	[DAFM]
Animal and Plant Health Association	[APHA]
Federation of Agrochemical Retail Merchants	[FARM]
Health Service Executive	[HSE]
Irish Farmers Association	[IFA]
Irish Water	[IW]
Local Authority Waters Programme	[LAWATERS]
National Federation of Group Water Schemes	[NFGWS]
Teagasc/ASSAP	[Teagasc/ASSAP]
University of Ulster	Guest presenter

### **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 (25-05-2022). If anybody had any they were asked to forward to the Chair for inclusion and revision. The Chair commented that it was DAFM's intention to publish the minutes of the current and all future NPDWAG meetings. These would be uploaded on DAFM's pesticides website.

### **3. MCPA pressures and mitigation at catchment scale (University Ulster)**

The main findings from MCPA monitoring in the Derg catchment, carried out as part of the *Source to Tap* project ([www.sourcetotap.eu](http://www.sourcetotap.eu)) were presented. The mitigation measures used in the project, which included weed-wiping rushes with glyphosate instead of boom spraying with MCPA, were estimated to have contributed to a reduction of the MCPA load in water of more than 40% and a reduction in the MCPA concentration of 24%. Trained advisors interacting with farmers on a regular basis was also identified as pivotal to the successful adoption of mitigation measures.

There was some discussion about the potential use of 'sticking agents', either contained in or added separately to product formulations, to help minimise loss to the environment following rain. Ways to incentivise greater use of drift-reducing nozzles were also discussed, including whether they could be included in future as part of the specification for boom sprayer purchases supported under DAFM's Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS) and if it would be possible to require that new sprayers be fitted with such nozzles.

### **4. Irish Water update on drinking water exceedances**

The population receiving water from a Public Water Supply that has an open EPA compliance plan for pesticides is 234,711. Fourteen pesticide compliance plans were closed by the EPA in 2022 and 22 remain open. This represents good progress in dealing with pesticide issues. The good progress made is also reflected in the number of exceedances for individual pesticides, with 37

such exceedances recorded in 2022 by the time of the meeting (compared to 47 individual exceedances in 2021). MCPA still accounts for the majority of exceedances (15 incidences) but has declined compared to 2021 (32 exceedances).

## **5. Irish Water updates on other items**

### Interim Pesticide Strategy

An update on progress in implementing the strategy was presented. NPDWAG members progressed a range of relevant actions in 2021, with the main efforts focusing on awareness raising actions. The strategy is available online at [www.water.ie/projects/strategic-plans/interim-pesticide-strategy](http://www.water.ie/projects/strategic-plans/interim-pesticide-strategy)

An analysis of pesticide exceedances during 2016-2021 suggests that the actions of NPDWAG members are contributing to better practices and reduced impacts on drinking water sources. The average percentage of analysed drinking water samples with pesticide exceedances has halved compared to the period before the NPDWAG commenced work (1.56% to 0.76%). This improvement is not correlated to weather patterns or trends in pesticide sales.

### Catchment focus activities

Recent activities in the Clonroche and Newport catchment areas were noted.

### Pilot Drinking Water Source Protection Project

Preparatory work carried out during 2022 included a baseline monitoring programme from March to October. The project will be officially launched in early 2023 and there will be a project website.

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

### Monitoring programme

Raw water monitoring results from the catchments included in the programme were reviewed. The Lough Forbes catchment continues to record a higher number of exceedances than the other catchments but has improved slightly compared to 2020 and 2021. The Newport catchment performed well and has improved significantly compared to 2021 (approximately 50% decrease in the number of exceedances). There was also a 30% decrease in the number of exceedances recorded in the Belturbet catchment compared to 2021. Most of the 2022 exceedances in Belturbet occurred later on in the year. The Deel catchment recorded some exceedances early in the monitoring programme and also towards the end of the programme but had relatively few exceedances during the middle of the year.

The pattern of late exceedances, up to early October in some catchments, was discussed during the meeting. It was noted that the use of MCPA products is prohibited from the end of September until the beginning of March. It was suggested that awareness of this point could be emphasised at a local level through advisory services.

### Stewardship

An update was given on the use of closed transfer systems for transferring products from a container to a sprayer. It has now been agreed by all the major product suppliers that the *easyconnect* system is the preferred option, and this will be rolled out across Europe in the coming years. It was suggested that the possibility of TAMS funding to retrospectively fit sprayers with the appropriate technology could be explored.

An update was also given on container management. CropLife Europe has committed to ensuring that a Container Management System (CMS) is available in every EU Member State by 2025 and to achieve a 75% average collection rate of containers within the EU.

Ireland's CMS has increased the container collection rate to an estimated level of 55% by the end of 2022. Working is ongoing to reach the industry commitment of a 75% collection rate by 2025. APHA operated a successful targeted text message campaign, in conjunction with Farm Plastics, to encourage farmers to use the scheme in Ireland.

#### **7. Review of baseline pesticides for monitoring**

Thirteen of the 33 baseline pesticide active substances included in IW's treated water monitoring programme are no longer used in plant protection products in Ireland due to being non-approved at EU level. The possibility of removing some, or all, of these substances from the monitoring programme could be considered if they have never been detected or it has been a long time since there were any detections. It was noted that there is also a need to consider if other pesticide active substances should be added to the programme.

#### **8. Communications activities**

DAFM indicated that it would consider updating an article on impacts of pesticide use on biodiversity that appeared in the Irish Farmers Journal in summer 2022 to reflect current ACRES payment rates. DAFM also briefly outlined a communications initiative it intends to roll out beginning in 2023, including an essay competition for second-level students.

#### **9. Other stakeholder activities for noting**

No specific activities were noted.

#### **10. Regulatory updates (Sustainable Use Regulation (SUR), glyphosate)**

##### SUR

The European Commission published its SUR proposal in June 2022 (to replace the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive). The proposal is first being examined at EU Council level by Member State representatives. Important issues highlighted so far include the need for additional information on the impacts of the proposal and restrictions/prohibitions on use in sensitive areas. Other issues will be raised as the examination process continues. DAFM is currently holding a national consultation process and welcomes input from all interested parties.

##### Glyphosate

It is expected that a proposal to extend the current EU approval period by one year (to 15 December 2023) will shortly be adopted by the European Commission, in order to allow the EU peer review process to fully consider all the relevant scientific information. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) scientific conclusions from the peer review process are expected to be submitted to the Commission towards the end of July 2023. The Commission will then formulate a proposal for renewal or non-renewal of approval, based on EFSA's conclusions, which will be voted on by Member State representatives at the Standing Committee dealing with pesticide legislation. It is currently expected that this vote will take place during Q3 of 2023.

#### **11. Planning for 2023 – general actions, priority area actions**

Members were asked to complete the action tracker spreadsheet outlining their main actions/initiatives proposed for 2023 and to submit this information to IW.

**12. AOB**  
No AOB items were raised.