



SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND THE MARINE

**REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF
PESTICIDES 2018**

JUNE 2018



Introduction to An Fóram Uisce

An Fóram Uisce (the Water Forum) was launched on an administrative basis in April 2017 and has been established as a statutory body, in accordance with the Water Services Act 2017, since the 11th June 2018. An Fóram is the only statutory body representative of all stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Ireland's water bodies. An Fóram consists of 30 members including representatives from a wide range of organisations with direct connections to issues relating to water quality and also public water consumers. Approximately 50 different organisations were involved in the nomination of members.

In representing the various stakeholders, An Fóram has been actively engaging with the agencies and departments who have responsibilities under the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland (2018 – 2021) as well as the wider water community. It is hoped that this will result in improved understandings and enable the emergence of a common policy platform on particular catchment management issues and on the overall area of water services-drinking water and waste water treatment.

Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive – National Action Plan 2018.

In its consideration of the River Basin Management Plan 2018 – 2021, An Fóram noted the references to pesticides as a pressure in the context of agriculture diffuse pollution and the consequential impact on the quality of surface water bodies and drinking water. An Fóram also noted the provisions of the Directive and the National Action Plan as measures in the Plan and the important role the implementation of same will play in the context of minimising this pressure on the quality of our waters.

An Fóram notes the 2018 review of the National Action Plan and acknowledges the many actions and initiatives aimed at securing the sustainable use of pesticides, including the setting of objectives, targets, measures and timeframes for achieving same.

A key focus for An Fóram are all actions and activities that contribute either negatively or positively to the wellbeing of our water environment and consequently to human health. As part of its future work programme, An Fóram intends to consider the use of pesticides and insecticides and their impact on environmental and human health. During the course of those deliberations, An Fóram will engage with the relevant statutory agencies and the provisions of this NAP can be discussed in more detail at that stage.

In its submission with regard to the River Basin Management Plan and subsequent submissions in the context of other consultation processes, An Fóram has repeatedly noted the importance of effective public engagement, awareness and education activities in order to highlight the specific concerns relating to the impact of human activity on the quality of our waters which in turn impacts on human health.

As with all such programmes, it is clear that there is a significant amount of information available but that the dissemination of that information continues to be a challenge. Furthermore, the impact of this awareness and education in terms of behavioural change (in this case, the sustainable use of pesticides) continues to present a challenge. This clearly indicates the necessity to engage in a significantly enhanced and expanded engagement programme, led by experts in the field.

This is a recurring theme in relation to environmental issues which An Fóram has noted since its establishment. The traditional methods including the collection of data, the undertaking of scientific research, the development of guidance and policy and indeed the enactment of legislation are all necessary and indeed essential tools in relation to identifying the cause, effect and mitigation issues associated with any environmental concerns. However, the ultimate step in terms of creating public/stakeholder awareness which results in behavioural change continues to be a major challenge.

An Fóram intends to address these issues in the context of its work programme and will most likely engage with the National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group in this regard.

Conclusion

An Fóram considers that the environmental and operational issues associated with the sustainable use of pesticides to be of concern, having regard to the impact on water-bodies and drinking water sources as a result of improper use. An Fóram Uisce notes the provisions of the National Action Plan and while welcoming same, understands the challenges associated with its implementation.

An Fóram intends to engage with the appropriate agencies in due course in order to establish if there are any further actions that might be taken to address this issue and, in the meantime, will remain available to assist in any way it can in relation to same.

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