



The National Agricultural Inspection Programme

Summary Report 2023

Highlights/Key Findings



The National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP) was established by the EPA in late 2022, and the initial guidance, templates, and training programmes for carrying out farm inspections have been developed.



A risk-based inspection plan was developed, and the EPA allocated specific numbers of inspections to be completed by each local authority.



Resourcing for the NAIP was sanctioned in late 2023 and recruitment by local authorities commenced in early 2024.



1,137 initial farm inspections were carried out by the local authorities during 2023.



The rate of non-compliance for initial inspections was approximately **37%** in 2023.



55% of follow-up inspections were found to be compliant.



85 farms were cross-reported by local authorities to DAFM in 2023 for non-compliance, of which 83 farms received penalties in their Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) payments (of between **5%** to **80%**).



DAFM carried out an additional **552** GAP inspections on behalf of the local authorities in 2023, of which **133** farms received penalties in their BISS payments for non-compliance.



Five prosecutions were initiated by Local authorities in 2023, and one was concluded in the district court.



Introduction

National Agricultural Inspection Programme

The fifth Nitrates Action Programme/GAP Regulations 2022 assigned an expanded enforcement role to the EPA in relation to the oversight of local authority agricultural inspections. In consultation with other relevant bodies the EPA has developed a local authority National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP) to protect Ireland's water quality from agricultural pressures. The NAIP has been established and is currently being rolled out and involves the:

- Implementation of a risk-based National Inspection Plan for local authorities.
- Development of templates and tools for the selecting farms for inspections and reporting the findings to the EPA.
- Development of a NAIP Guidance and Training Handbook which includes a methodology for carrying out inspections and follow-up enforcement actions.
- Development of a training programme for all local authorities to implement these guidelines and protocols in conjunction with the Local Authority Services National Training Group.

- Provision of recommendations for an ICT system to record and report on inspections undertaken by local authorities.
- Completion of a report to the Minister on progress made on implementing the GAP Regulations and recommendations for additional measures to prevent/reduce water pollution from agricultural sources.

Through the NAIP the EPA's overall strategic approach is to focus on strengthening the level of enforcement to achieve a higher level of compliance and to reduce the agricultural pressures on water quality. This includes achieving a national consistency for dealing with non-compliances including follow-up actions such as enforcement notices, cross-reporting and prosecutions to deliver on improvements and protection of Ireland's water quality. For 2024 and 2025, the EPA has allocated specific numbers of inspections to be completed by each local authority, using a risk-based methodology, which ensures that inspections are focused in areas where water bodies are significantly impacted by agriculture.

The EPA's overall strategic approach is to achieve a stronger focus on strengthening the level of compliance and enforcement in relation to agricultural pressures on water quality.



Inspection findings

There was a slight increase in the number of initial GAP inspections undertaken by local authorities in 2023 (1,137) when compared to 2022 (1,041). The number of initial and follow-up GAP inspections undertaken by each local authority in 2023 is illustrated in Figure 1 below. The rate of non-compliance for initial GAP inspections was approximately 37% in 2023. 55% of follow-up inspections were found to be compliant. Some local authorities, such as Sligo and Limerick, did more follow-up inspections than initial inspections in 2023 due to a carryover of issues detected in 2022. Some local authorities did not undertake any GAP inspections in 2023; however, 1,474 other types of agricultural inspections were undertaken in response to planning applications, incidents, and complaints.

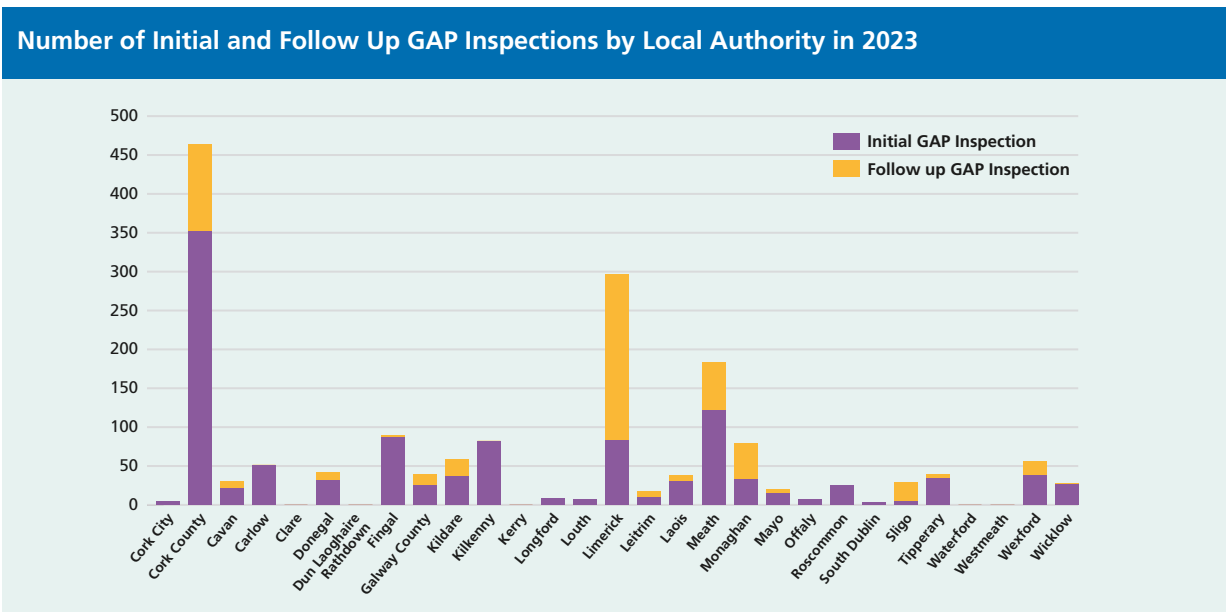


Figure 1: The number of initial and follow-up GAP inspections undertaken by each local authority in 2023.

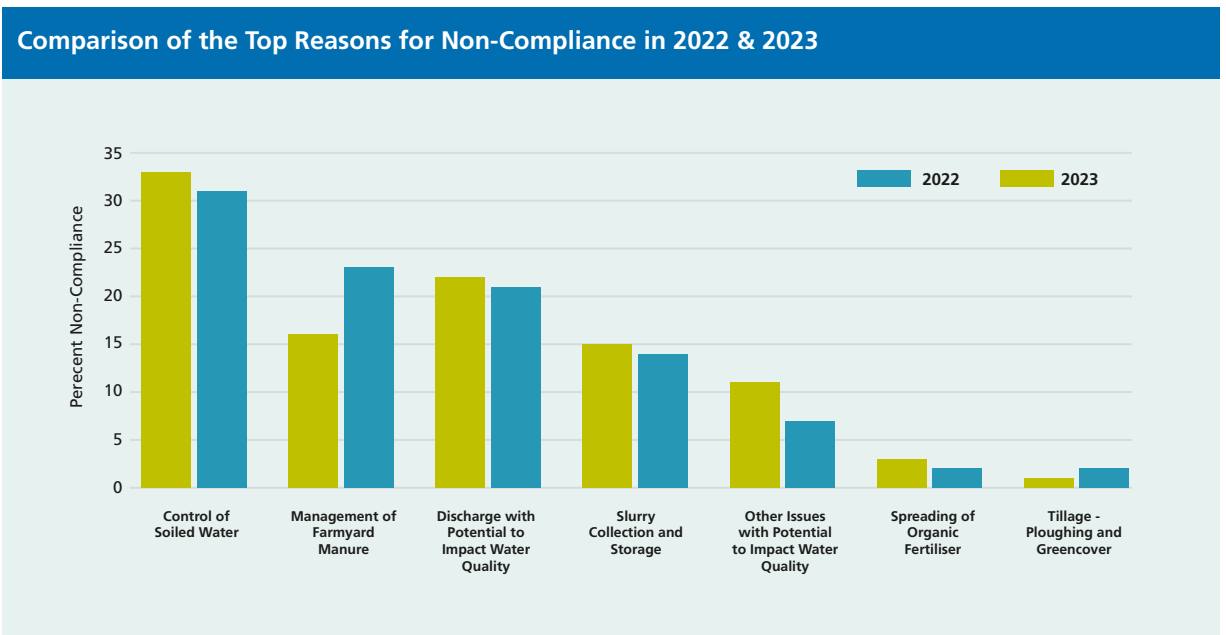


Figure 2: Comparison of the main reasons for non-compliance in 2022 and 2023.

The four main reasons for non-compliances detected during local authority GAP inspections have not changed significantly between 2022 and 2023 (Figure 2). These are the control of soiled water, management of farmyard manure, discharges with potential to impact water quality, and slurry collection and storage.

Types of corrective actions requested by local authorities to address non-compliances in 2023

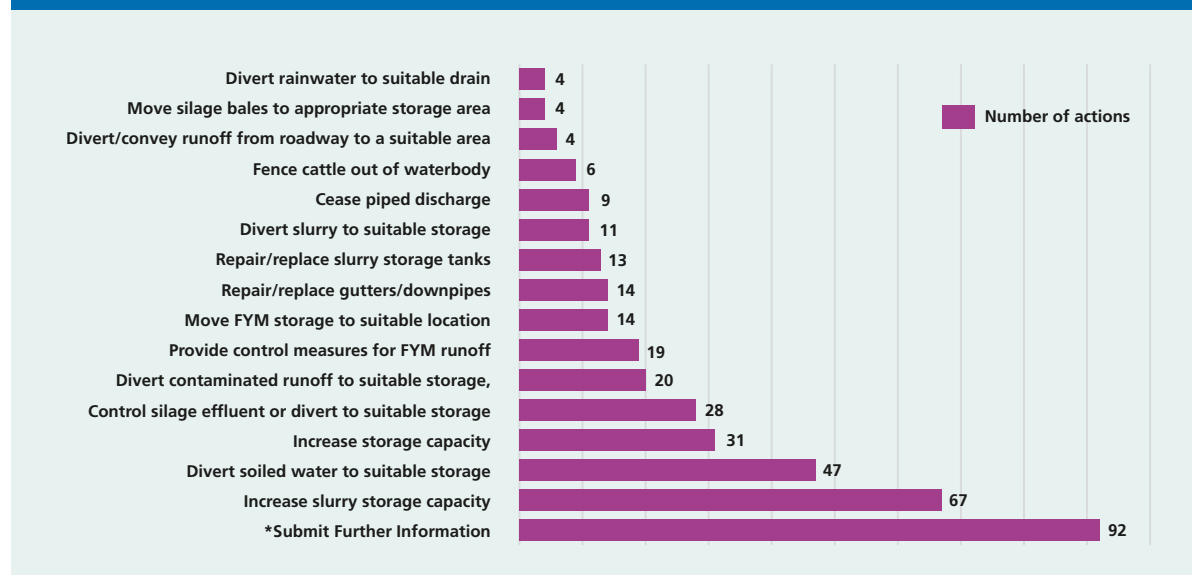


Figure 3: Types of corrective actions requested by local authorities to address non-compliances in 2023.

As can be seen from Figure 3, the main actions requested by local authorities to address non-compliances detected during GAP inspections in 2023 included increasing slurry and soiled water storage capacity, and diverting/controlling run-off of slurry, soiled water, silage effluent and farmyard manure. *Requests for further information typically related to storage capacity.

Number of enforcement actions taken by each local authority in 2023

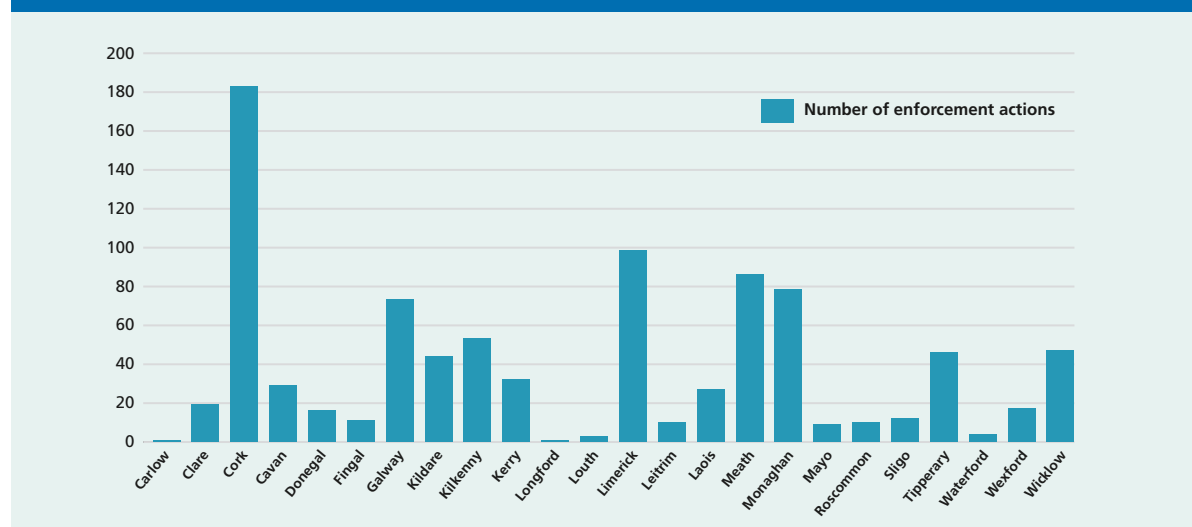


Figure 4: The number of enforcement actions taken by each local authority in 2023.

A total of 908 enforcement actions were taken by local authorities following farm inspections in 2023 (including from GAP inspections and other farm inspections undertaken in response to planning applications, incidents, and complaints). Most enforcement actions were taken by Cork (182), Limerick (98), Meath (86), Monaghan (78) and Galway (73) County Councils (see Figure 4 above). The types of enforcement tools used by local authorities in 2023 are illustrated in Figure 5 below.

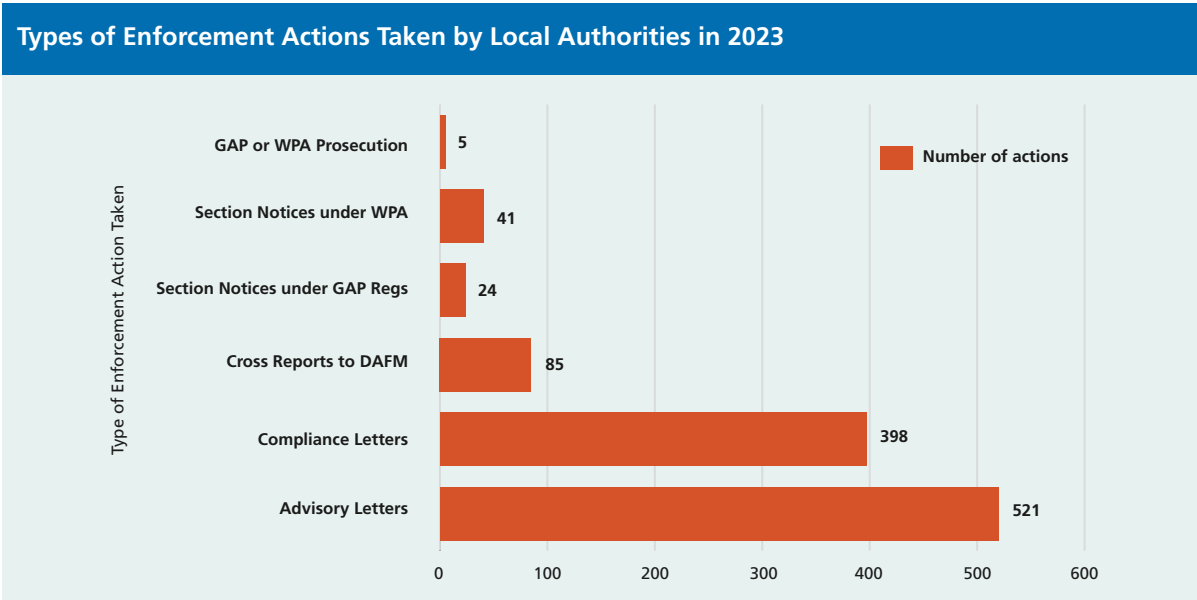


Figure 5: Types of enforcement actions taken by local authorities in 2023.

The main enforcement actions used by local authorities were advisory letters (521) and compliance letters (398) issued to farm operators/landowners following farm inspections. Other enforcement actions included issuing section notices under the Water Pollution Act (41) or the GAP Regulations (24), and/or cross-reporting farm operators/landowners to DAFM (85). Five prosecutions were initiated by local authorities in 2023, and one case was concluded in the district court.

Summary of DAFM farm inspections carried out on behalf of the local authorities

The Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM) also undertakes various types of farm inspections, including those carried out on behalf of the local authorities under the GAP Regulations. In 2023, DAFM carried out 552 inspections on behalf of local authorities, with a non-compliance rate of 30%.

Key Messages

1. Local authorities must increase the number of initial farm inspections to meet the target as specified by the EPA and set out in the [Water Action Plan 2024](#).
2. Local authorities shall proactively assess compliance with the GAP Regulations, increase the number of follow-up inspections and use appropriate enforcement actions to restore compliance.
3. The EPA will continue to oversee how local authorities use their full suite of enforcement powers and where necessary hold local authorities to account where they fail to meet their inspection and enforcement obligations.





Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

Headquarters

**PO Box 3000,
Johnstown Castle Estate
County Wexford, Ireland**

T: +353 53 916 0600

F: +353 53 916 0699

E: info@epa.ie

W: www.epa.ie

LoCall: 1890 33 55 99

Regional Inspectorate

McCumiskey House,
Richview, Clonskeagh Road,
Dublin 14, Ireland

T: +353 1 268 0100

F: +353 1 268 0199

Regional Inspectorate

Inniscarra, County Cork,
Ireland

T: +353 21 487 5540

F: +353 21 487 5545

Regional Inspectorate

Seville Lodge, Callan Road,
Kilkenny, Ireland

T +353 56 779 6700

F +353 56 779 6798

Regional Inspectorate

John Moore Road, Castlebar
County Mayo, Ireland

T +353 94 904 8400

F +353 94 902 1934

Regional Inspectorate

The Glen, Monaghan, Ireland

T +353 47 77600

F +353 47 84987

Regional Offices

The Civic Centre
Church St., Athlone
Co. Westmeath, Ireland
T +353 906 475722

Room 3, Raheen Conference Centre,
Pearse House, Pearse Road
Raheen Business Park, Limerick,
Ireland
T +353 61 224764



Printed on environmentally friendly paper stock