

# The National Agricultural Inspection Programme

Summary Report 2025

# Highlights/Key Findings



**4,315** initial GAP farm inspections were carried out by local authorities – **66%** higher than in 2024 and **96%** of the 2025 target of 4,500 inspections.



The rise in inspection activity is encouraging, **22** of the 28 local authorities that carry out farm inspections have met their 2025 targets, compared with only 8 local authorities in 2024.



The non-compliance rate for initial GAP inspections was **43%**.



The top three reasons for non-compliance were:

- poor control of soiled water,
- discharges with potential to impact water quality,
- inadequate management of farmyard manure.



Local authorities carried out **1,280** follow-up GAP inspections (double the previous year), with **48%** found to be compliant.



An additional **1,555** non-GAP farm inspections were conducted arising from planning applications, incidents and complaints.



A total of **2,935** enforcement actions were taken by local authorities – **68%** higher than the previous year. However, prosecutions and cross-reporting remained low.



**199** farms were cross-reported to DAFM for non-compliance, resulting in Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) payment penalties.



DAFM carried out **631** inspections on behalf of local authorities; **129** farms received BISS payment penalties following these inspections.



# Introduction

## National Agricultural Inspection Programme

The Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) forms a central pillar of Ireland's approach to protecting water quality from agricultural pressures. The Sixth NAP places increased emphasis on compliance and enforcement, with an expanded oversight role for the EPA in respect of local authority agricultural inspections. The EPA's strategic priority is to drive higher levels of compliance and to strengthen enforcement in order to mitigate the impacts of agricultural activity on water quality. This objective is being pursued through an expansion in the number of agricultural inspections carried out by local authorities, the consistent identification and follow-up of non-compliances, and the application of appropriate and proportionate enforcement measures. A core element of this approach is the National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP), which provides a nationally consistent, risk based framework for agricultural inspections across all local authorities.

EPA has set inspection targets for each local authority using a risk based methodology that prioritises areas where agricultural activity poses the greatest risk to water quality. Through the NAIP, local authorities are expected to increase the number of initial Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) inspections undertaken, with the aim of reaching the target of 4,500 farm inspections per annum as set out in the Water Action Plan 2024. Delivery of these outcomes is supported

through targeted training, guidance, and resources for local authority inspectors, ensuring inspections are effective, consistent, and focused on environmental risk. The EPA will continue to exercise its oversight role to monitor performance, drive continuous improvement, and ensure that the objectives of the NAIP are met and that inspection and enforcement activity contributes effectively to the achievement of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) water quality objectives and the long-term protection of Ireland's waters.

## Inspection findings

In 2025, local authorities carried out 4,315 initial inspections under the GAP Regulations, representing a significant increase of 66% compared with the 2,598 inspections completed in 2024 and indicating continued expansion of inspection capacity nationwide. Total farm inspection activity also rose sharply, with 7,150 inspections conducted across all categories in 2025, up from 4,408 for the same period in 2024. Initial GAP inspections continued to account for the majority of inspection activity, supported by steady levels of follow up GAP inspections and a substantial number of other (non GAP) agricultural inspections undertaken in response to environmental incidents, planning applications, and public complaints.



In 2025, the non-compliance rate for initial GAP inspections was 43%. The number of follow-up GAP inspections doubled to 1,280 compared with the previous year, with 48% achieving compliance. Cork County Council again recorded the highest level of inspection activity, completing 1,244 farm inspections in 2025, followed by Tipperary (496), Meath (488), and Wexford (433). Most local authorities increased their inspection output relative to 2024, reflecting the full-year impact of staffing enhancements under the National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP). While inspection levels varied considerably between local authorities, the overall rise in activity demonstrates the strengthening of local operational capacity and an increased focus on regulatory oversight. A detailed breakdown of inspection activity by local authority for 2025 is presented in Figure 1 below.

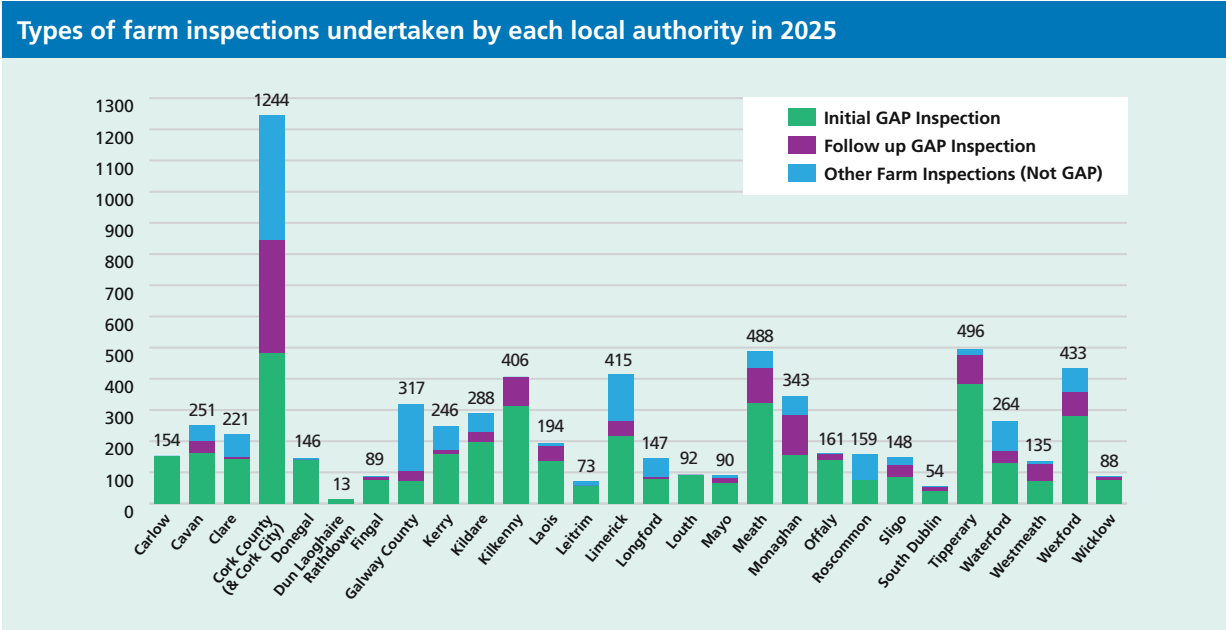
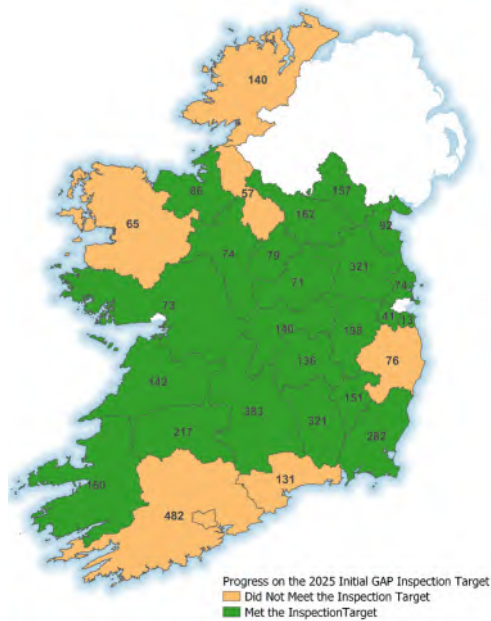


Figure 1: Number and type of farm inspections undertaken by each local authority in 2025

The majority of local authorities increased their inspection activity in 2025, largely attributable to the recruitment of dedicated personnel under the National Agricultural Inspection Programme (NAIP). By the start of 2025, local authorities had successfully recruited 54 of the 57 additional staff allocated to the NAIP. As a result, twenty-two local authorities met their Initial GAP inspection targets assigned by the EPA, a significant improvement compared with only eight local authorities in 2024. Of the six local authorities that did not meet their inspection targets, four nonetheless increased their inspection numbers compared with the previous year, indicating continued progress in inspection delivery.

In addition to GAP inspections, a further 1,555 non-GAP agricultural inspections were carried out by local authorities in 2025 in response to planning applications, environmental incidents, and public complaints. A detailed breakdown of progress against the 2025 inspection targets established under the NAIP and the 2024 Water Action Plan, together with a comparison with 2024 performance, is provided in Figure 2.

Progress on the 2025 Initial GAP Inspection target and comparison with 2024



Local Authorities	Initial GAP Inspections 2024	Initial GAP Inspections 2025	Increase (+) /Decrease (-) inspections	Inspection Target 2025
Carlow	112	151	+39	141
Cavan	111	162	+51	152
Clare	64	142	+78	139
Cork	505	482	-23	587
Donegal	60	140	+80	214
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	2	13	+11	12
Fingal	18	74	+56	74
Galway County	47	73	+26	72
Kerry	36	160	+124	139
Kildare	84	198	+114	196
Kilkenny	240	312	+72	308
Laois	99	136	+37	134
Leitrim	4	57	+53	79
Limerick	38	217	+179	194
Longford	22	79	+57	77
Louth	49	92	+43	92
Mayo	81	65	-16	154
Meath	256	321	+65	318
Monaghan	111	157	+46	156
Offaly	77	140	+63	140
Roscommon	41	74	+33	74
Sligo	0	86	+86	79
South Dublin	29	41	+12	40
Tipperary	209	383	+174	350
Waterford	81	131	+50	170
Westmeath	37	71	+34	70
Wexford	167	282	+115	271
Wicklow	18	76	+58	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>2598</b>	<b>4315</b>		<b>4513</b>

Figure 2: Progress on the 2025 Initial GAP Inspection target and comparison with 2024

Main reasons for non-compliance

The main reasons for non compliance identified during local authority GAP inspections remained broadly consistent between 2024 and 2025. The predominant issues continue to relate to the control of soiled water, discharges with potential to impact water quality, management of farmyard manure and slurry collection and storage, which collectively account for the majority of risks to water quality. As shown in Figure 3, notable increases occurred across all major categories in 2025, with the most significant rise observed in non-compliances relating to the control of soiled water.

Comparison of the main reasons for non-compliance during Initial GAP inspections

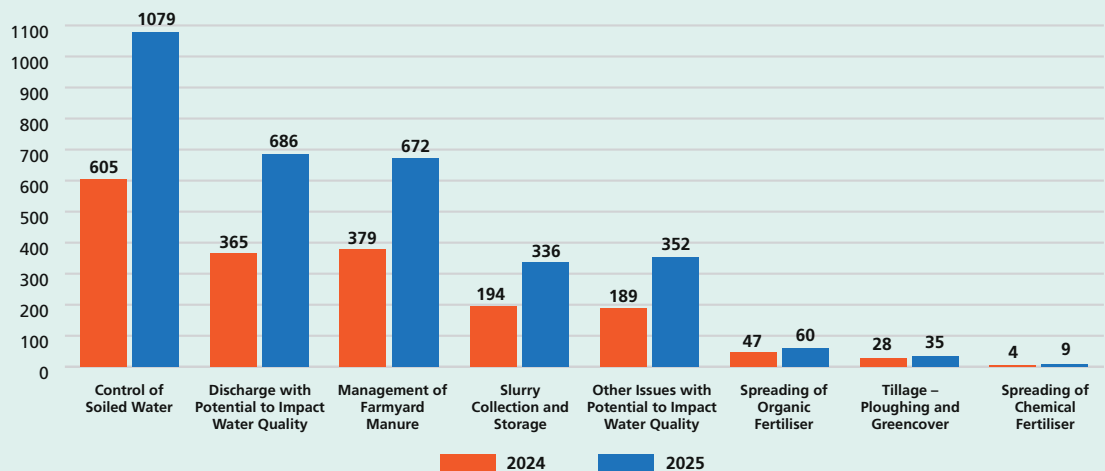


Figure 3: Comparison of the main reasons for non-compliance in 2024 and 2025

Figure 4 illustrates the comparison of non-compliance percentages by main causes identified during initial gap inspections. As shown in Figure 4, levels of non-compliance across these key categories have remained relatively stable, with control of soiled water continuing to represent the most significant pressure, accounting for approximately one-third of all issues recorded. A slight increase is also evident in non-compliances relating to the discharges with potential to impact water quality. Many of the non-compliances recorded during these initial inspections appear to stem from management practices rather than structural deficiencies, indicating that a substantial proportion could be resolved without major capital investment during follow up inspections.

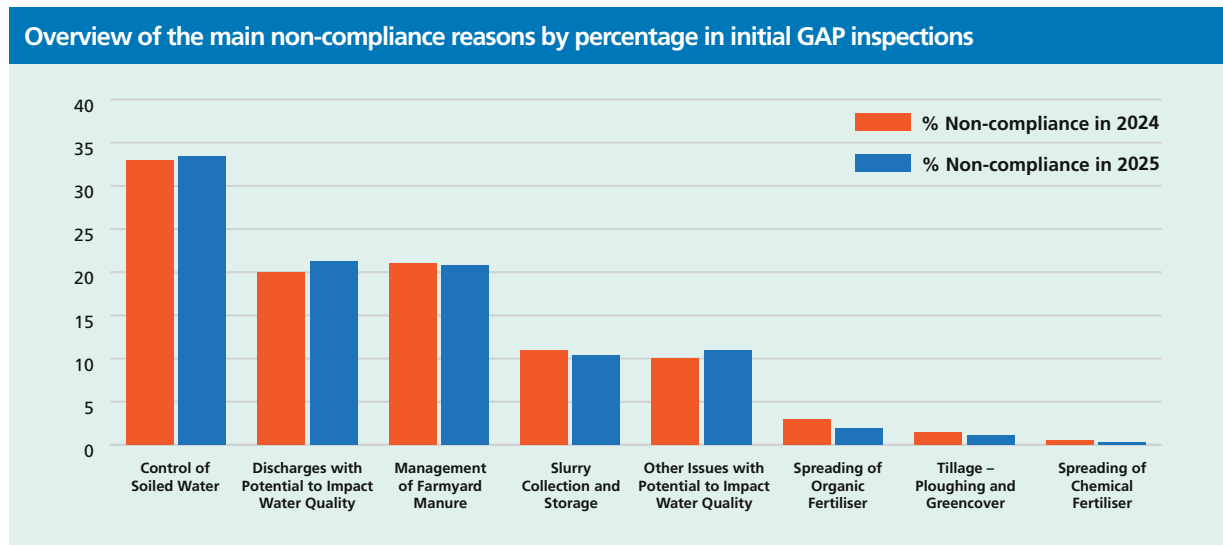


Figure 4: Overview of the main non-compliance reasons by percentage in initial GAP inspections

### Specific issues for Non-compliance

The most frequently identified specific issues contributing to non compliance under each of the main categories, as detected by local authorities during farm inspections nationally in 2025, are presented in Figure 5. These are dominated by uncontrolled runoff from farmyard manure (856 cases), followed by inadequate gutters and downpipes (535 cases), clean water not properly segregated (517), insufficient control of soiled water (356 cases), and poor management of silage pits (305 cases). Other issues include inadequate slurry storage capacity (248), storage of silage bales in proximity to watercourses (231), and silage effluent discharging to groundwater (222). Overall, the findings reaffirm that the principal areas of non-compliance continue to relate to the separation of clean and dirty water and the effective containment of manures, silage effluent, and slurry. These issues are largely associated with management practices and routine maintenance and, in many cases, can be addressed without substantial capital investment. This is consistent with previous findings showing that over 48% of non-compliant farms achieved compliance by the follow-up inspection.



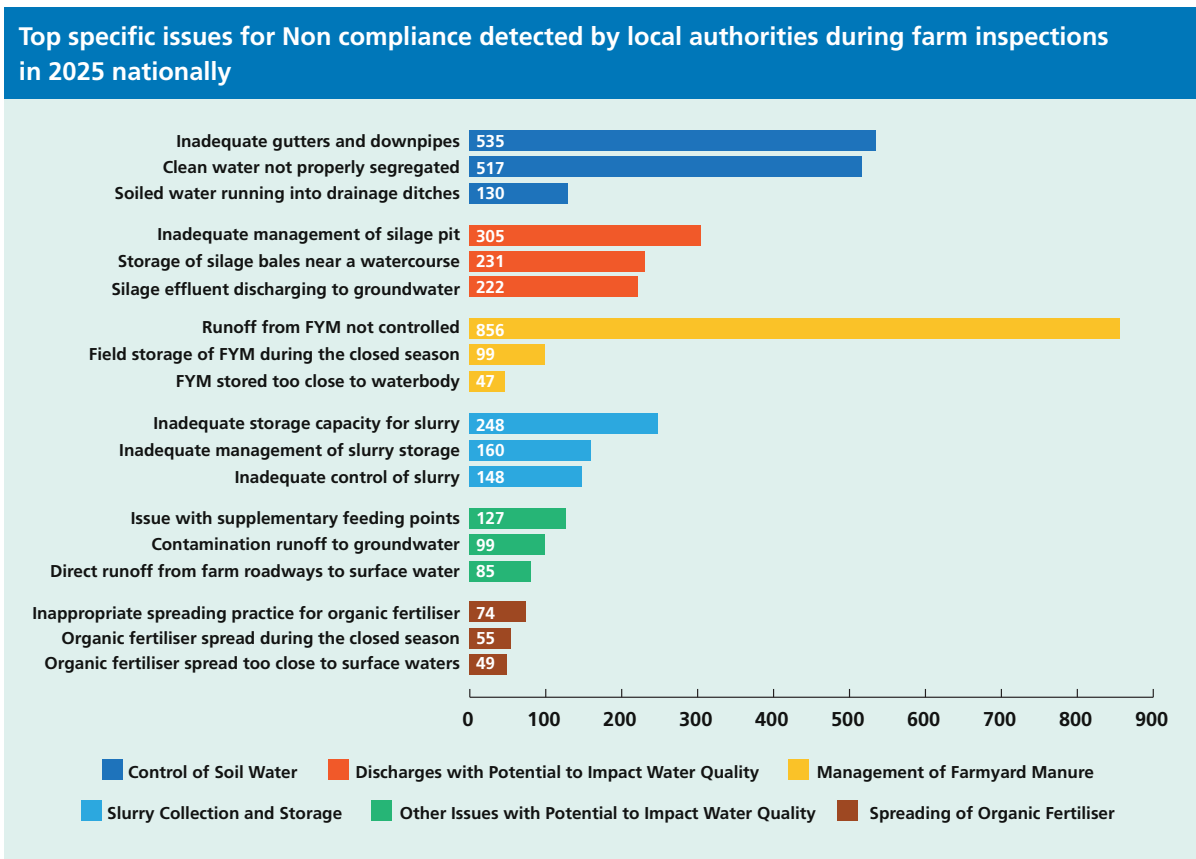


Figure 5: Top specific issues for non-compliance in 2025

### Corrective Actions requested by local authorities

Figure 6 presents the types of corrective actions requested by local authorities in 2025 and the frequency with which each action was issued. The data indicates the key areas where local authorities concentrated their efforts to restore compliance with the GAP Regulations. The most frequently requested corrective actions were in relation to providing control measures for farmyard manure runoff (579 actions), repairing/replacing gutters and downpipes (552 actions), diverting soiled water to suitable storage (527 actions) and controlling silage effluent or divert to suitable storage ( 519 actions). Additional recurring actions included moving farmyard manure, silage bales and slurry to a suitable storage location, moving feeding points, diverting contaminated runoff, increasing slurry storage capacity and repairing or replacement of yard surfaces and drains. Overall, the pattern of corrective actions in 2025 demonstrates a continued emphasis on preventing nutrient and pollutant losses to water, with local authorities expected to verify completion of required actions and escalate enforcement where compliance is not achieved within reasonable timeframes.



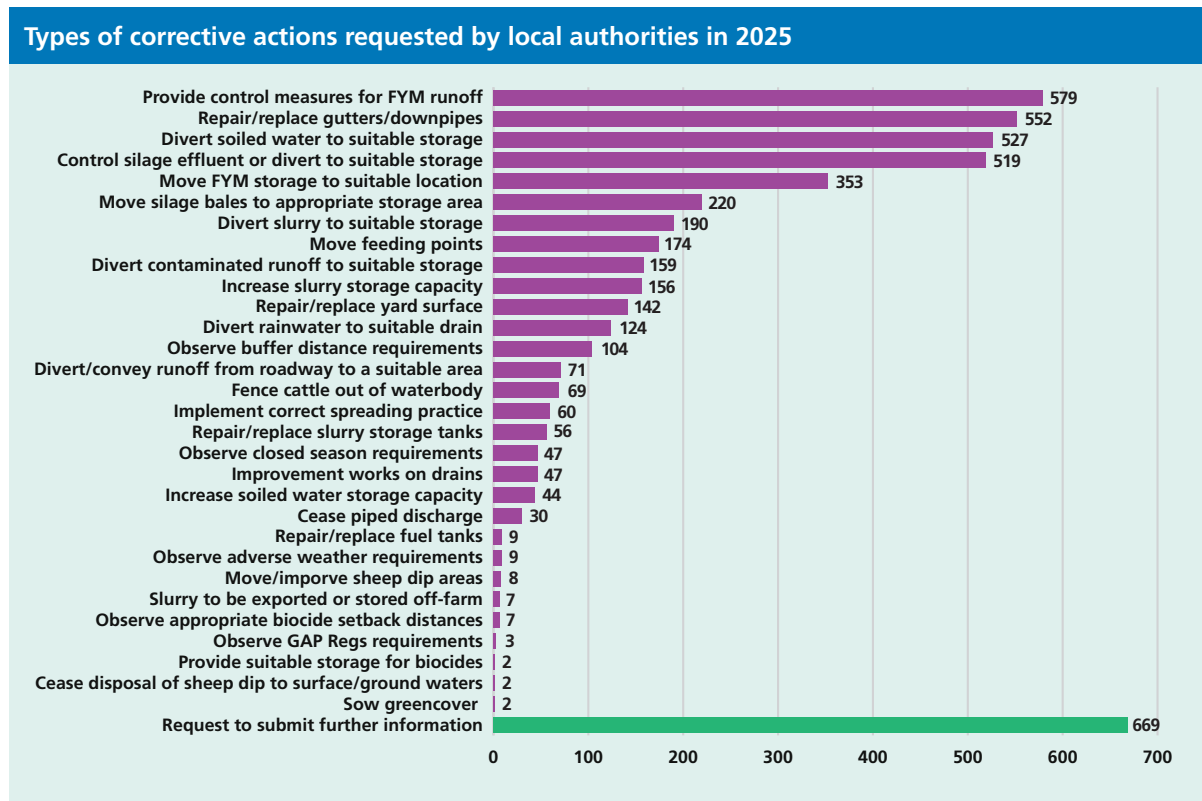


Figure 6: Types of corrective actions requested by local authorities to address non-compliances in 2025

### Enforcement Actions

A total of 2,935 enforcement actions were taken by local authorities in 2025 following farm inspections, reflecting a continued strengthening of enforcement activity compared with 2024. Figure 7 compares the number of enforcement actions taken in both years and highlights a 70% increase in the use of compliance letters, which rose from 1,484 in 2024 to 2519 in 2025. Compliance letters remain the primary enforcement tool and are issued where farms are found to be non-compliant, setting out the required corrective actions and associated timeframes.

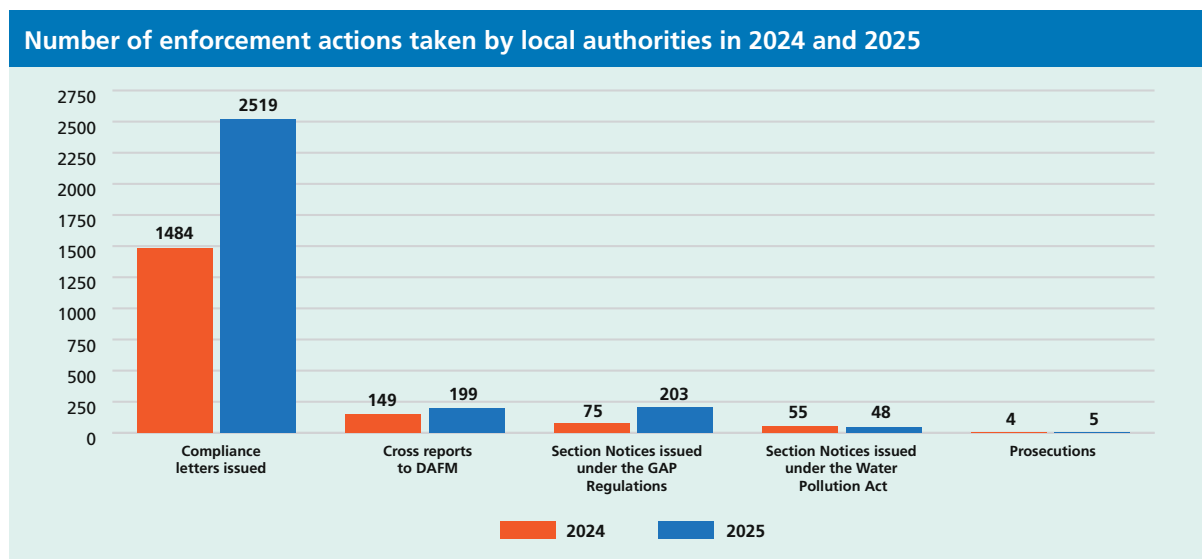
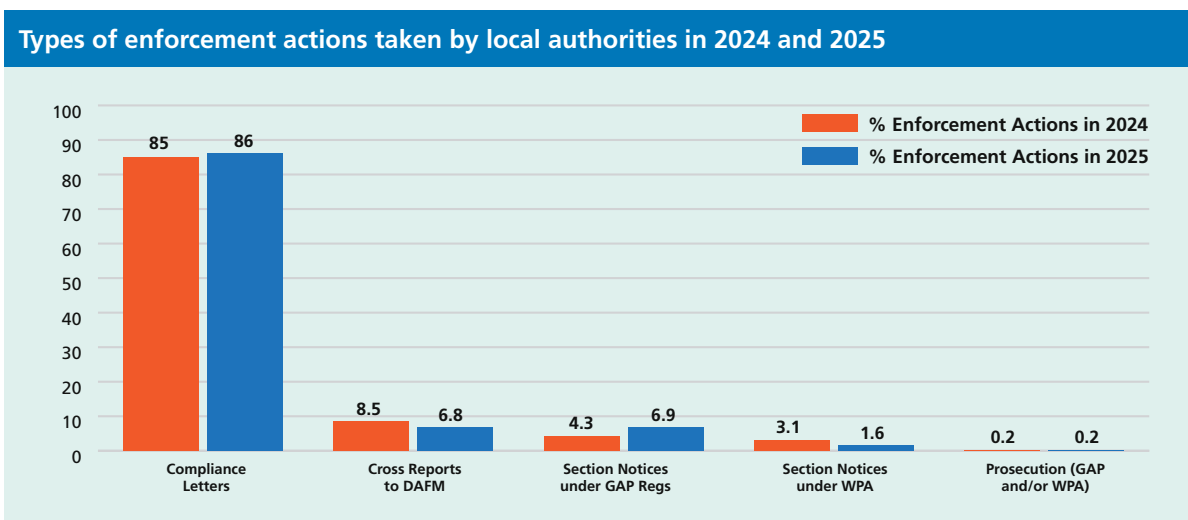


Figure 7: Number of enforcement actions taken by local authorities in 2024 and 2025

As illustrated in Figure 8, compliance letters accounted for the majority of actions in both years, increasing slightly from 85% in 2024 to 86% in 2025. Cross reports submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) also increased, rising from 149 in 2024 to 199 in 2025. However, Figure 8 indicated the proportion of cross report decreased from 8.5% in 2024 to 6.8% in 2025. In the context of persistently high non-compliance rates and increased inspection activity, the number of cross reports remains relatively low and should be increased to ensure appropriate escalation and effective enforcement. Notably, the number of section notices issued under the GAP Regulations more than doubled from 75 to 203, indicating a more assertive regulatory response where environmental risks were identified. Section notices issued under the Water Pollution Act declined slightly, from 55 in 2024 to 48 in 2025. Prosecutions continued to be used only in the most serious cases, with a small increase from four in 2024 to five in 2025. Local authorities must continue to apply their enforcement powers fully and proportionately to ensure timely corrective actions and sustained compliance. In parallel, advisory services and industry partners should further strengthen compliance promotion and awareness raising initiatives to support farmers in meeting the requirements of the GAP Regulations.



**Figure 8:** Types of enforcement actions taken by local authorities in 2024 and 2025 as a percentage of enforcement actions

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

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) also carry out farm inspections on behalf of local authorities under the GAP regulations and selects farms based on its established risk analysis and selection procedures. In 2025, DAFM carried out 631 farm inspections on behalf of the local authorities, identifying regulatory breaches on 174 farms. As a result, 129 farms received penalties ranging from 1% to 40% of their Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) payments. One farm that refused inspection received a 100% penalty on their BISS payments. The overall non compliance rate in 2025 was **27.6%**, an increase from **25%** in 2024.

## Priorities for 2026



- Local authorities must sustain the increased level of farm-inspection activity achieved in 2025. Any local authority that did not meet its inspection target must prioritise actions to ensure full delivery of their 2026 inspection targets.
- Non-compliance rates remain unacceptably high, and local authorities should increase follow-up inspections to close out outstanding cases and ensure full compliance with the GAP Regulations. In parallel, local authorities, advisory services, and industry stakeholders must also strengthen compliance-promotion and awareness-raising activities to support farmers in meeting their regulatory obligations.
- Local authorities must adopt a stronger enforcement approach to implementing the GAP Regulations. This should include increased cross-reporting to DAFM and the use of prosecutions where necessary to restore compliance. The EPA will continue to monitor and assess how local authorities utilise the full range of enforcement powers available to them.



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](mailto:info@epa.ie)**

**W: [www.epa.ie](http://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

