

For the life you're after

AIB Grass10 progress report

September 2026

Grass10 Programme Progress Report



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The Grass10 programme is designed to place increased emphasis on pasture production and utilisation within grazing systems for farmers in Ireland. Launched in 2017, the programme is supported by AIB, FBD, Grassland Agro, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Irish Farmers Journal. Now in its third four-year cycle, Grass10 has been highly successful in reinforcing the importance of pasture as the central component of Irish ruminant-based agricultural systems. The efficient production and utilisation of pasture through an extended grazing season remains Ireland's primary competitive advantage in ruminant agriculture.

Irish ruminant agriculture continues to face increasing challenges, including the impacts of climate change, evolving policy frameworks, heightened environmental expectations, geopolitical uncertainty, generation renewal, and greater market volatility. These pressures demand a sustained and determined focus on growing and utilising pasture efficiently, while operating with fewer inputs. Farmers who embrace this enhanced focus on pasture, through improved measurement and management, sward renewal, optimised soil fertility, the adoption of low emissions slurry spreading (LESS) technologies, and the incorporation of clover, are well positioned to reduce costs, increase output, enhance environmental and economic performance and improve resilience at farm level.

The Grass10 programme works with both dairy and drystock farmers to strengthen pasture management at farm level. It continues to support farmers on this journey through targeted communication and knowledge transfer including the Grass10 newsletter, social media, traditional media, open days, training courses, and seasonal campaigns aligned with grazing and silage calendars across the year. Grass10 collaborates closely with its sponsors and the advisory service to develop and deliver clear, practical messages that can be easily understood and implemented by farmers on the ground.

Finally, I would like to thank AIB for its continued support for the Grass10 programme in conjunction with the other sponsors (FBD, Grassland Agro, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Irish Farmers Journal). The Grass10 programme is delivering tangible benefits for farmers, enhancing their ability to respond to business challenges, improving resilience and reducing the environmental footprint of their business. It plays a vital role in translating research into clear, actionable solutions, ensuring that proven technologies are effectively adopted at farm level.

Information quoted in this report was provided by Teagasc to AIB - July 2026

Turning Information into Action



John MacNamara,
Chair of the Grass10 Programme

Since its establishment in 2017, Grass10 has played a pivotal role in shaping how Irish farmers grow and utilise grass, firmly positioning grassland management at the centre of profitable and sustainable livestock systems. Now in its third phase, the programme continues to evolve, with a clear and increasing focus on driving adoption, improving system resilience and delivering measurable impact at farm level.

Turning grass into profit, not just potential

Everything comes back to what's happening on the ground. In the paddock. In the tank. In the bank account. And that's exactly what Grass10 is about. Not just growing more grass—but making better use of it, every single day. Grass remains Ireland's cheapest and most competitive feed source, yet the gap between what is grown and what is utilised on Irish farms is still too wide. Closing that gap – not chasing higher stocking rates or more inputs – is where the next gains for dairy and livestock farmers will come from. Grass10 has helped reshape how grassland is managed on Irish farms. What began as a drive to increase grass grown has now evolved into something more focused and more demanding: turning information into action at farm level. We still don't fully know what pasture can do – and that's the opportunity.

From knowledge to action

Research, data and tools are now widely available to farmers – from better grass and clover varieties to PastureBase Ireland. But the real challenge lies elsewhere, the task now is simplification: making grass management relevant to everyday decisions and ensuring consistent adoption across different farm systems. "The focus can never go off grass," John says. "But how we deliver the message is key." That means ensuring knowledge flows properly – from research to advisors, from advisors to farmers, and from one farmer to another.

The next gains

Looking ahead, MacNamara sees further opportunity in:

- Better management of out-farms not just the home farm or milking platform.
- Extending the grazing at the shoulders of the year through spring and autumn rotation planners.
- Increasing grass measurement uptake.
- Improving clover adoption and performance on commercial farms.

But more than anything, success will depend on belief. "The grass is already there," John says. "The opportunity isn't to reinvent the system – it's to make better use of what's in front of you."

The farms that will perform best into the future won't be the ones chasing maximum output – they'll be the ones making the most of what's already growing.

Programme Overview

Phase 1 (2017–2020)

Phase 1 of the Grass10 Programme was designed to lay the foundations for long term improvements in grass utilisation, farm profitability and system sustainability across Irish dairy, beef and sheep farms. The objective was clear: support farms to utilise 10 tonnes of grass dry matter (DM) per hectare (ha) through 10 grazing rotations per paddock annually.

It translated research into clear, measurable objectives, supported by practical on farm practice changes and strong advisory and training support.

This phase drove practical improvements on farms by focusing on soil fertility, grazing infrastructure, reseeding, and the rollout of PastureBase Ireland alongside training and discussion group learning.

The core objective was to increase grass utilisation to 10 tonnes of grass DM/ha/year, achieved through 10 grazing events per paddock annually. This target represents a level of grass utilisation that is technically achievable and strongly associated with lower production costs, higher output per hectare and improved resilience. Adoption of PastureBase Ireland increased substantially, rising from approximately 2,393 users (2017) to 3,664 users (2020). The average number of grass cover measurements per farm increased from 14 to 19 annually showing deeper engagement, not just sign ups.

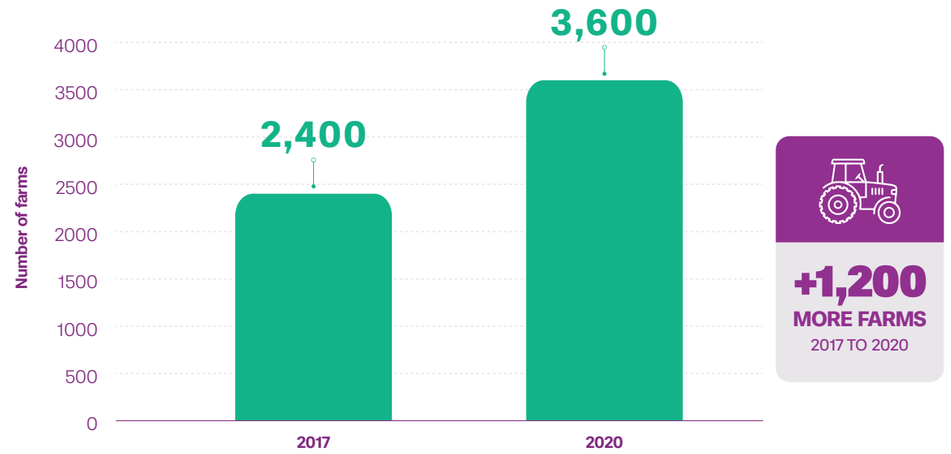


Figure 1: Growth in PastureBase Ireland Users During Phase of the Grass10 Programme



Soil Fertility Improvements

Between 2016 and 2019, soils at optimum phosphorus (Index 3 and 4) increased from 37% to 50%, potassium Index 3 and 4 rose from 44% to 58%, and soils with pH greater than 6.1 increased from 35% to 59%.

Figure 2: Improvements in Soil Fertility Indicators During Phase 1 of the Grass10 Programme

Across all three indicators, the percentage of soil samples in the optimal range **increased** from 2016 to 2019.



Programme Overview

Phase 2 (2021–2024)

Phase 2 of the Grass10 Programme focused on consolidating and scaling best practice in a tougher operating environment — more weather variability and increased environmental constraints. Grass10 broadened its sustainability focus, supporting increased adoption of clover-based swards, protected urea and low emission slurry spreading (LESS), strengthening nitrogen efficiency and reducing emissions.

During this phase, Grass10 farms continued to improve grazing performance relative to national benchmarks, while adoption of sustainability aligned technologies accelerated and engagement remained strong.

Adoption of Key Practices and Technologies

Phase 2 integrated grazing with nutrient and sustainability practices. Establishment of white clover and multi species swards expanded. These were promoted as complementary to measurement and grazing discipline, with benefits maximised on farms actively using PastureBase Ireland to guide decisions.

Grazing Performance under Challenging Conditions

Data from Grass10 groups show that while absolute performance was impacted by weather, Grass10 farms continued to close the gap with benchmark farms. Grazing season length increased and grass eaten per hectare improved relative to benchmarks.

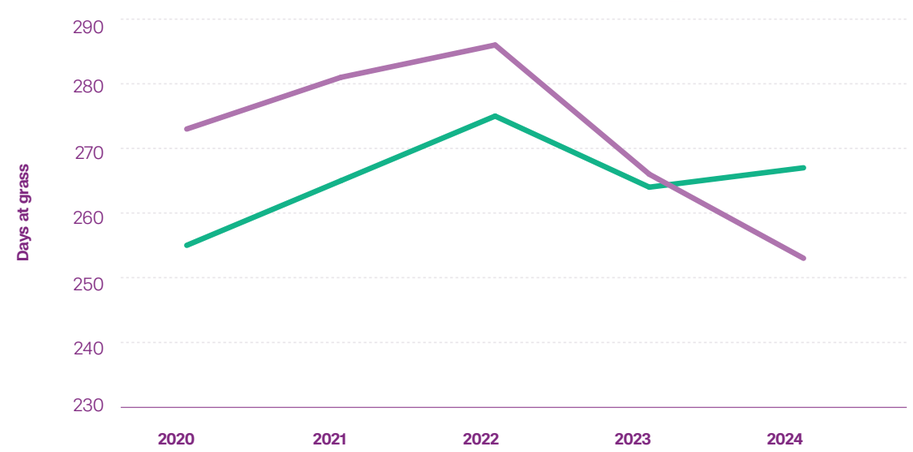


Figure 3: Days at Grass on Benchmark Farms and Grass 10 Farms

Grass10 grazing courses operated across the country and this model of improving the level of grassland management and measurement locally worked well. This was fundamental work carried out during the Grass10 campaign. The plan aimed to improve the farm level adoption of grassland measurement and management using PastureBase Ireland (PBI).

The level of grass measurement recorded on PBI improved by about 70,000 measurements per year between 2020 and 2024 (67,000 to 135,000). While the level of grass measurement improved overtime, the average pre-grazing yield remained about 150-200 kg DM/ha above target.

Programme Overview

Phase 3 (2025 – 2028)

The main objectives of Phase 3 of the Grass10 Programme 2025-28 are:

1. Improve grazing management;
2. Improve the level of nutrient management;
3. Develop sustainable systems of grass-based milk and meat production;
4. Improve the sustainability of grass-based farming.

While the environmental footprint of our grass-based systems of milk and meat production continue to improve, sustained effort is needed to reach our environmental targets for gas emissions and water quality. There are still easy-wins to be obtained. These include having a long grazing season, entering the right pasture quality, having greater clover content in the sward, making more effective use of slurry, greater use of protected urea and improving soil fertility. Each additional week at grass is linked to approximately a 1% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions intensity, alongside reduced slurry storage requirements and energy use.

Phase 3 will continue to focus on improved grassland management relying on robust grazing infrastructure, particularly in early spring and late autumn. Suitably sized and shaped paddocks with multiple access points serviced by roadways of sufficient quality and adequate drinking water are required.

In addition, improving nutrient use efficiency has become a priority due to the ambitious targets to reduce fertiliser use. PastureBase Ireland can facilitate the process of improving nutrient use efficiency, by providing farmers with up-to-date information on fertiliser use, level of fertiliser requirements and soil fertility. Improving nitrogen use efficiency, along with technologies such as protected urea and LESS will help Ireland to achieve its commitments to reduce greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions from agriculture.



The Overall Winner of the Pasture Progress Award 2025 Liam Rochford from Croase, County Wexford pictured with Sean McMahon, Grassland Agro; John Farrell, AIB; Nikki Kennedy, Grass10 Programme; Noel Grealish T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Liam Rochford; Liz Hyland, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Chair of the Grass10 Committee, John MacNamara; Professor Laurence Shalloo, Head of Teagasc Animal and Grassland, Research and Innovation Programme; Liam Herlihy, Teagasc Chairperson; Daire Cregg, Irish Farmers Journal and Michael Berkery, Chair of FBD Trust.

Case Study



Bryan Daniels,

2019 Grassland Farmer of the Year

"Grass is the main driver on this farm"

Bryan Daniels' farm in Kilmoganny, County Kilkenny sits close to 1,000 feet above sea level, so growing grass efficiently wasn't always straightforward. The big change on this farm came from treating grass as a crop and managing it that way – measuring, responding quickly, and keeping costs tight.

Since adopting the Grass10 principles, grass measurement and utilisation have become part of the weekly routine. Bryan says, "Once you know what you're growing, decisions get easier – when to graze and when to take out surplus".

Bryan outlines the impact Grass10 has had on the Daniels farm:

Before Grass10 focus	After Grass10 adoption
Grass performance understood mainly from experience and visual assessment	✓ Regular grass measurement (approximately 38 walks/ year) informs weekly grazing and fertiliser decisions
Fewer grazing rotations, with quality harder to control in parts of the season	✓ 10+ grazings per paddock per year, driving higher utilisation and leaf quality
Higher reliance on chemical nitrogen to drive growth	✓ Lower chemical nitrogen reliance – clover integrated, over 50% of nitrogen now protected urea
Surpluses harder to identify early	✓ Earlier identification of surplus paddocks, improving silage quality and sward condition
Soil fertility addressed periodically	✓ Structured soil sampling every two years with paddock by paddock nutrient planning
Feed costs more exposed to grass performance variation	✓ Consistently low feed input: ~430 kg meal/cow supporting ~460 kg MS
Sustainability actions considered separately from production	✓ Grass growth, cost control and sustainability aligned in one system
Grass growth potential underutilised, especially on higher land	✓ 17 t DM/ha grown (3 year average) across a challenging, high altitude farm

Grass10 didn't change the farm overnight – it changed how decisions were made:

- More confidence to back grass rather than meal.
- Clearer targets for closing covers, rotation length and surplus removal.
- Comfort in reducing fertiliser N while protecting output.
- Stronger focus on repeatable systems rather than one off fixes.

Case Study



Michael McGuigan,

Drystock Grassland Farmer of the Year 2022

“Grass is doing the heavy lifting”

Michael McGuigan farms part time at Blackwater Farm in Longwood, Co. Meath, alongside his wife Aisling and daughter Penny. While Michael has an off farm business, he runs the farm with a clear focus: get as much performance as possible from grass while keeping costs under tight control.

Over the past number of years, the biggest change on the farm has been a strong focus on soil fertility, drainage and paddock layout. Michael sees grass as the cheapest feed on the farm and has designed the system around growing and utilising it efficiently. Michael says, “Once the basics are right – drainage, fertility, water and paddocks – grass becomes much easier to manage.”

Michael outlines the impact Grass10 has had on the McGuigan farm:

Financial Performance

€ **Gross output** (2025): **€3,295/ha**

€ **Net margin** (excluding payments): **€1,191/ha**

Variable costs **40%** of gross output

Herd Efficiency

Output per LU: 316kg/ (Up from 297 kg/ LU in 2024)

Calves/Cow/ Year: 0.94 (Target >0.95)

Sustainability & land

Carbon Footprint Reduced from 13.8 to 9.5 kg CO_2 eq. / kg of LWG

Grass Utilisation Strong paddock system, excellent regrowths

Grass10 in Action

Michael’s farm shows how strong grassland fundamentals, good breeding decisions and clear system goals can deliver higher output per hectare, lower emissions per kg of beef and a simpler, more resilient suckler system.

Michael’s Key Takeaways:

- Grass utilisation drives both profit and carbon performance.
- Paddock infrastructure gives control in tough springs.
- Fertility improvements pay back quickly.
- Bigger output dilutes both costs and emissions.
- Progress comes from stacking small, repeatable improvements.

The Grass10 Programme - Why Grass Matters

Profitability, Sustainability and Resilience

The economic case for improving grass utilisation is clear and compelling. Grass is the lowest cost feed available to Irish livestock farmers and increasing the proportion of grazed grass in the animal diet directly reduces reliance on purchased feeds. Analysis demonstrates that for every additional tonne of grass dry matter utilised per hectare, net profit increases by approximately €215 per hectare on dairy farms and €105 per hectare on drystock farms.

Improved grass utilisation is also central to sustainability. Increasing grazed grass in the diet reduces the carbon footprint of milk and meat by lowering emissions per kilogram of product. Extending grazing seasons reduces housed feeding, slurry storage and manure handling—delivering benefits for greenhouse gas emissions, ammonia emissions and energy use.

Finally, effective grassland management strengthens resilience in the face of weather variability, input price volatility and policy change. Farms with higher grass utilisation are better positioned to cope with periods of high feed prices, reduce exposure to external inputs and maintain margins during challenging years.

Grass10 – Making a difference?

Selected national sustainability metrics indicate substantial improvements in nutrient efficiency and emissions performance between 2018 and 2024. These indicators reflect improved grazing management, better nutrient use efficiency and adoption of climate aligned technologies promoted through Grass10 and wider Teagasc Advisory work.

Policy Context: Why Grass10 Matters

- Climate Action Plan – agriculture sector ceilings require sustained reductions in greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions intensity while maintaining output.
- Food Vision 2030 – emphasises sustainable, market led growth underpinned by profitability and resilience.
- The Teagasc Marginal Abatement Cost Curve (MACC) aligned measures – grazing efficiency, nutrient use efficiency, protected urea, LESS, clover and liming are recognised as cost effective abatement options.



Table 1: Grass10 Helping to Improve Sustainability Metrics

Sustainability Metrics	2018	2020	2022	2024	% Improvement
Ag. GHG Emissions per kg fat and protein corrected milk (FPCM)	0.91	0.79	0.82	0.835	+8% ↑
Ammonia (NH3) emissions per hectare	51.4	48	46.9	43.3	+15% ↑
Nitrogen (N) use efficiency %	21.5	25.6	27.7	25.2	+17% ↑
N surplus per hectare	201	173	159	165	+18% ↑
% of slurry spread with LESS	5	51	75	85	+1600% ↑
% of slurry applied during Spring	51	47	56	53	+4% ↑
% chemical N applied as protected urea	0	5	14	40	+40% ↑
% of farms liming	30	50	53	50	+66% ↑
Fertliser N use, kg/ha	171	212	145	160	+6% ↑

Key Grass10 Targets To Aim For

- 10 tonnes grass DM/ha utilised per year.
- 10 grazing rotations per paddock annually.
- Pre grazing yield ~1,400 kg DM/ha mid season.
- Long grazing season – early turnout and late housing.
- Weekly grass measurement using PastureBase Ireland.



AIB and the Grass10 Programme

From AIB's perspective, the importance of grassland efficiency has never been more relevant. In a farming environment characterised by rising input costs, heightened environmental ambitions and ongoing market volatility, grass remains Ireland's most enduring competitive advantage — one that supports both profitability and sustainability when managed well.

Ireland's grass-based farming system of production underpins the profitability, sustainability and international reputation of our dairy, beef and sheep sectors. The Grass10 Programme helps farmers develop the skills to grow and utilise more grass, improve farm performance and make better business decisions. This not only enhances the profitability and resilience of individual farm enterprises, but also delivers wider benefits for the entire agri-food sector.

Grass10 also plays an important role in supporting environmental sustainability by helping farmers make better use of natural resources, improve nutrient management and reduce the carbon footprint of agricultural production. These outcomes are increasingly important as the sector responds to evolving consumer expectations, environmental targets and changing market demands.

Agriculture is a key part of our business in AIB, and we're committed to supporting the future success of Irish farming and the rural communities it sustains. Our partnership with Grass10 reflects this commitment, and our belief that investing in knowledge and continuous improvement delivers benefits far beyond the farm gate. By helping farmers maximise the potential of Ireland's grass-based production system, Grass10 contributes to a stronger, more competitive and more sustainable agri-food sector, and AIB is proud to support an initiative that continues to deliver such significant value to the industry.

AIB Supports: Enabling the Farm Transition

AIB's sustainability strategy is underpinned by practical financial and advisory supports that complement Grass10 delivery.

- Sustainable finance – green and sustainability linked lending for infrastructure, energy efficiency and nutrient management.
- Strategic partnerships – collaboration with Grass10, Teagasc Signpost Programme and Farm Zero C to accelerate adoption.
- Renewable energy guidance – support for on farm renewables, including alignment with schemes such as Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Scheme III (TAMS III) Solar Capital Investment Scheme and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

Grass10 Programme Updates

For weekly grass growth figures, management tips, farmer profiles and research updates, register for the Grass10 newsletter, listen to the Grass10 Podcast and follow the Grass10 programme on Instagram (@teagascgrass10) and YouTube (Grass10 TV).

Grass10 Programme Partners

AIB · An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara / Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine · Grassland AGRO · FBD INSURANCE · Irish Farmers Journal · PastureBase Ireland

Grass10 Programme
A Decade of Support



















AIB Agri Team

We have a dedicated Agri Advisor Team based around the country who support the needs of our farming customers. We are from farming backgrounds ourselves, so we have a practical understanding of the sector and bring a wealth of experience when looking at farm finance. Our team provide strong, objective farm financial and technical analysis on individual farm cases as needed.



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Notes

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