

Soil Sampling

Soil sampling is the first step to improving grass production on the farm, through soil enrichment and balancing

Fertilisers are expensive & when applied in the wrong combinations can be wasteful and cause environmental pollution. The first steps to getting value for money from fertilisers is soil sampling and nutrient management planning. Soil sample results inform farmers on the optimum amount of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium to apply to the soil, improving grass production. Slurry and soiled water can be used as fertilisers instead of artificial fertilisers. Lime can also be spread on land that is too acidic, to reduce the acidity & maximize the benefit of the uptake of fertiliser.



Image: Tractor & Fertiliser Spreader
Source: Farmers Guide.co.uk



Image: Grass and clover
Source: Ciaran Buckley

Soil samples will provide information on the areas of the farm that have low, medium or high fertility. This information allows farmers to plan fertiliser and slurry applications.

Standard tests look at soil pH, as well as the requirement for lime, phosphorous and potassium. There is no suitable soil test for nitrogen or sulphur. For example if your soil test results show areas of high P&K You can save money by reducing the fertiliser applied.

Do not take soil samples from waterlogged or very dry soils

Soil samples must be representative of each area on the farm. Divide the farm into fields or areas that can be easily managed separately.

Take separate samples from areas that have different soil types, previous cropping history, drainage and poor yields.

Samples should be taken with a corer, in W-shape as illustrated.

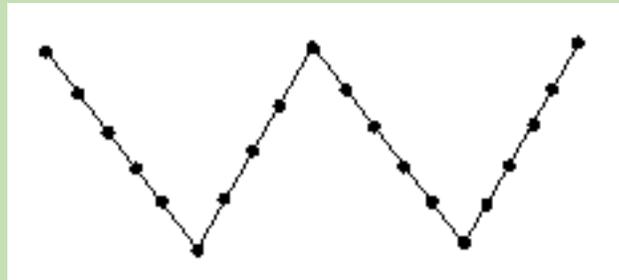


Image: Soil samples & W-shaped soil sample method Source: Teagasc

Twenty cores make up a single sample.

Take one sample per 8 hectares and ensure that the core goes 10cm into the soil.

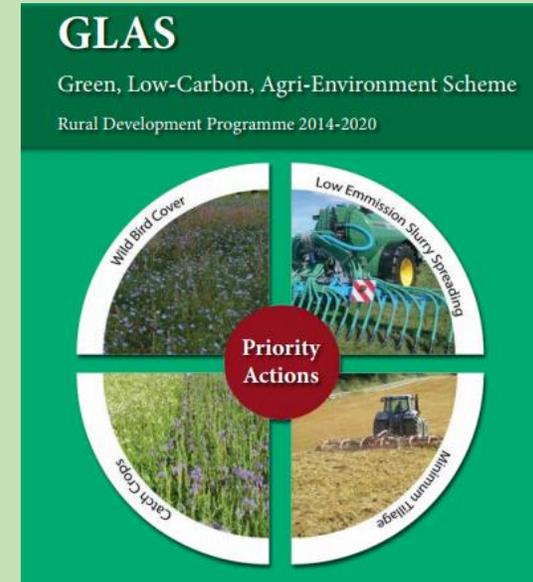


Image: GLAS Leaflet Source: Teagasc

All GLAS participants must have a GLAS Nutrient Management Plan prepared by a GLAS approved Advisor. The GLAS advisor will adjust the plan to accommodate Low Input Permanent Pasture (LIPP), Traditional Hay Meadows (THM) or hen harrier protection measures.

