

Extensive damage feared in flooded central Europe



**THOMAS HUBERT
IN PARIS**

Continuing floods from Germany to Hungary have affected tens of thousands of hectares of farmland and farming administrations and organisations in the region are scrambling to assess the damage to crops and infrastructure.

Early estimates by the authorities of the German region of Bavaria alone indicate that 30,000 hectares of arable land are under water — nearly the size of Lough Neagh.

The situation is replicated in the neighbouring regions of Thuringia and Saxony, as well as in Austria and in the Czech Republic. Midweek, floodwaters were moving north inside Germany and east towards Hungary.

“With the flood and heavy rain, many fields are under water. Houses are flooded, outbuildings and crops are destroyed,” German agriculture minister Ilse Aigner said in a statement on Wednesday.

She added: “Although the exact extent of the damage is not accurately estimated at this time, we must act as soon as possible. It is important that immediate aid is secured for distressed farmers and their families and to support reconstruction.”

The German government has announced €100m in emergency aid including cash facilities for affected

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farmers, who will also see some tax payments deferred.

The Central European region worst hit by floodwaters is an intensive tillage and mixed farming area, where swollen rivers expanded into the wheat, barley, potato and beet fields and pastures along their banks.

However, it is too early yet to measure how much of an impact the disaster will have on those countries’ production and, if any, on international markets.

Although Bavaria was one of the earliest regions hit by the disaster and water levels are now going down there, regional agriculture minister Helmut Brunner said it was too early to assess the damage.

“How quickly the water withdraws from agricultural land in the next few days will be decisive,” he told a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

RISK

He added that the crops most at risk were potatoes and turnips, which fail after just a few days under water, but corn, pastures and specialty products such as fruit and vegetables were also under threat.

The Czech authorities, too, were surveying the extent of the damage but have not yet been able to quantify it as water levels there peaked on Tuesday.

The evacuation of the agriculture ministry itself made the response even more difficult. “The effect on agriculture will be direct and indirect,” said ministry spokesman Jan Zacek.

Apart from crop failure and damage to buildings and equipment, ancillary infrastructure will also need extensive works. The Bavarian authorities estimate repairing agricultural roadways in their region alone will cost more than €10m.

The bad weather has hit Central Europe at the same time as unseasonal rain in the US, where soybean markets have shown signs of tension as a result of delayed sowing.

However, this week’s US Department of Agriculture figures show that 91% of maize and 80% of spring wheat and barley is now in the ground and weather news has not affected the price of grain futures.



Turning of the sod for the Paddy O’Keeffe Innovation Centre in Teagasc Moorepark were Professor Gerry Boyle, director Teagasc; Michael Berkery, chairman FBD; Conor Gouldson, secretary FBD Trust; and Dr Noel Cawley, Teagasc chairman.

Teagasc turns sod for ‘Paddy O’Keeffe Innovation Centre’

A sod-turning event to mark the start of building works on the new ‘Paddy O’Keeffe Innovation Centre’ took place at Teagasc’s Animal and Grassland, Research and Innovation Centre, Moorepark yesterday. FBD Trust will provide 50% of the €4m cost.

This new centre will incorporate modern teaching and study facilities which will be central to the delivery of the new Dairy Business BAgrSc

(Hons) degree (UCD), and Teagasc’s new Level 7 Diploma in Professional Dairy Farm Management.

The centre is named after the late Paddy O’Keeffe, a resolute supporter of Teagasc.

It reflects the former *Irish Farmers Journal* editor’s massive contribution to the development of Irish agriculture. All through his life, Paddy was a strong advocate of good farming practice

grounded in strong science.

The new ‘Paddy O’Keeffe Innovation Centre’ will be a reminder of his great legacy, and will ensure that the very best of applied science is available for all farmers, and the agricultural industry as a whole, into the future.

Michael Berkery, chairman of FBD, said: “FBD Trust is delighted to co-finance this fantastic facility and in so doing recognise the extraordinary contribu-

tion of Paddy O’Keeffe in his lifetime to FBD, to farming and to research. This facility will greatly assist Teagasc in its delivery of cutting-edge research combined with a strong education programme for the next generation of young farmers, two vital areas championed by Paddy in his lifetime. It will stand as a fitting tribute to him for generations to come.”

— Pat O’Keeffe

Molasses as a silage additive:

Using molasses as a silage additive provides optimum fermentation and grass preservation under a wide range of conditions. Molasses as an additive should always be used on the following:

- Grass being ensiled in May or early June.
- Second and third cut silages.
- Swards with high clover contents.
- Grass being ensiled in damp or wet conditions.
- Swards with inferior grass species.
- Lodged grass that is deteriorating or rotting.
- Swards where free Nitrogen levels are high.

Silage trials:

In 2012, E D & F MAN (formerly Hibernian Molasses) commissioned trials to evaluate molasses as a silage additive. The results showed that molasses improved silage quality significantly. Dry matter digestibility (DMD) increased by 1.9% on new ley grass ensiled, to 2.7% on old grass meadow ensiled.

The trial’s findings established that the use of molasses on typical 50 livestock unit cattle farms increases gross margin by between €1,081 and €2,045, or €1,563 on average. On typical dairy farms with average size quotas, the use of molasses increases gross margin by between €3,496 and €5,552, or €4,524 on average. Full details of the trials are available in the ED & F Man Brochure “Make Quality Silage with Molasses”.

ADVERTISER’S ANNOUNCEMENT



The Teagasc National Farm Survey Estimates for 2012 indicate that “Cattle Other” system farms (excluding mainly suckler cow systems) generated average Family Farm Income (FFI) of €17,621 or €1,468 per month last year, while “Dairy Farms” generated average FFIs of €51,648 or €4,304 per month.

To put molasses into context, the economic response to its use as a silage additive in terms of gross margin and FFI, is greater than one average month’s FFI in both calf to beef systems and dairy enterprises.

Generating the equivalent of an additional one month’s income from a modest investment in molasses and a few hours work represents a golden opportunity to enhance farm profits.

Using molasses as a silage additive is an insurance policy against getting a poor fermentation and DMD loss.