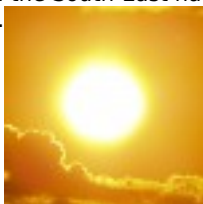


Drought Hitting Farmers Hard

WATERFORD and the South-East have been most severely impacted by the ongoing drought according to the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA).



The prolonged drought is causing huge difficulties for farmers who rely on rainfall for grass and crop growth.

Waterford IFA Chairman Kevin Kiersey says the ongoing weather conditions are causing real problems for farmers in the region.

"Other areas of the country have had at least some bit of rain – we've had nothing for weeks," he said.

Mr Kiersey said farmers have had very little respite, with the current spell of warm weather coming shortly after March's snow and Storm Emma.

He says other issues caused as a result of the current conditions will become apparent in the coming months and specifically mentioned capacity issues in the dairy industry which will impact on costs.

Farmers are now playing the "waiting game" in relation to rainfall, he says.

IFA President Joe Healy has said grass growth is one third of the normal rate for this time of year as a result of the hot weather and said the lack of growth is adding a lot of extra cost to farmers. Meanwhile, President of the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA) Pat McCormack has said that there is an onus on Irish Water to come up with feasible water supply options.

Mr McCormack confirmed that for dairy farmers the water shortage situation is most acute in the South-East.

Meanwhile, financial advisory firm IFAC has claimed that the current heat wave is costing the average dairy farmer €250 per day or €1,750 per week. Between the anticipated extra costs for feed because of poor grass growth and additional in parlour feed costs to maintain milk production, farmers are feeling the financial pinch, according to IFAC Dungarvan's Eoghan Drea.

"This current spell of hot weather will have a knock-on effect on the levels of fodder that a farmer can store for the winter so on farm planning needs to happen now to ensure that farmers can have access to and can afford to buy in additional feed stock," he said. In what has already been an expensive year this heat wave is adding significant additional on farm costs...Farmers shouldn't ignore the problem and should plan for financial pressures coming down the tracks. We're working with farmers to put cash flow budgets in place so that farmers are in a better position to meet all their financial commitments for the year. It's the sensible thing to do."