**Previous questions and answers on this topic**

2023

32. **Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú** asked the **Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine** if an alternative to diquat for desiccating potatoes is being recommended for potato farmers in the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11469/23]

My Department is the Competent Authority in Ireland with responsibility for the authorisation of plant protection products and for the implementation of official controls relating to the placing on the market and use of these products.

Pesticide active substances such as diquat, contained in plant protection products are approved or not, as the case may be, centrally at EU level based on detailed scientific assessments managed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Diquat’s status as an approved active substance for use in plant protection products was not renewed following an EU review process and authorisations of plant protection products containing diquat were revoked at Member State level in 2019.

I recognise the challenges for the potato industry in completing the transition away from the use of diquat for the desiccation of potato crops. A number of actions have been taken by my Department and others to support potato growers. In April 2021, haulm toppers were added to the list of machinery eligible for grant aid under the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS) II. Extensive advice, based on trial work carried out by Teagasc is now available to potato growers on how best to manage crops without the use of diquat.

Several plant protection products based on the active substances carfentrazone-ethyl and pyraflufen-ethyl are available to growers which when used as part of an overall Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach can provide a viable alternative for the desiccation of potato crops. Growers, as usual, should consult with their advisor on the most suitable IPM approach for their particular situation.

2023

 950. **Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú** asked the **Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine** what work is being done to find and promote alternatives to diquat for desiccating potatoes to farmers in the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37157/23]

My Department recognises the concerns of the potato industry relating to the effective desiccation of potato crops, particularly for late planted crops.

Several alternative products, containing the active substances carfentrazone-ethyl or pyraflufen-ethyl, are currently authorised in Ireland for use as potato crop desiccants. These products can provide a viable alternative to diquat in certain cases, when used as part of an integrated crop management approach.

Teagasc has carried out extensive work on desiccation strategies for potato crops in Ireland and continues to engage with growers on how best to manage crops. Teagasc stress the importance of implementing an integrated approach where feasible. This approach includes seed manipulation prior to planting, careful use of nitrogen fertiliser and mechanical topping of the crop prior to desiccation where possible.

My Department provides support for haulm toppers under the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme. Growers continue to adopt and develop their experience in managing crops and my Department will continue to support these efforts.

2020

34. **Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú** asked the **Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine** if he will consider a derogation on the ban on the use of diquat on potato crops in view of the fact that ten EU countries, including Austria and Denmark, have been given a derogation. [23980/20]

Diquat has been the most commonly used desiccant in the potato sector for many decades. As the deputy is aware, diquat is no longer approved for use as a plant protection product within the EU. However to facilitate industry transition and to support growers as they move to other methods of dessicating potato crops, I have granted a temporary, once-off and short term emergency authorisation for diquat.

This is line with the legal provisions of the EU regulations govering pesticide approvals.

The authorisation is subject to a number of strict conditions to ensure appropriate protections are in place. These conditions reduce the maximum allowed application rate and spray volume, and introduce specifications in relation to buffer zones and drift-reducing nozzles. They are the same as those provided for in an emergency use authorisation recently granted by Denmark, albeit the provision in Ireland is for a reduced period of time.

This authorisation will remain in place for a period of sixty days from September 10th facilitating the limited use of diquat to desiccate the potato crop.

To ensure that a similar situation does not arise in the future, I am requesting Teagasc to engage with stakeholders across the potato sector to address the challenges of potato crop desiccation in the absence of diquat.