Project 3.

Title: Advisory and knowledge transfer tools and processes for Lime and Nutrient Management practice adoption (FaSTEN)

1. Project background

FaSTEN (Farm Sustainability Tools for Efficient Nutrient management) is a DAFM funded programme to improve nutrient use efficiency on farms thus reducing potential N losses and emissions to the environment. FaSTEN will build new understanding of soils and key technologies for efficient nutrient management and will identify best knowledge transfer methods for these primary stakeholders. Nutrient management support tools tailored to specific soils, environments and farming systems will be developed to aid farmers and advisory personnel to make profitable and sustainable nutrient management decisions and to benchmark future success.

The overall goals of FaSTEN are to develop a decision support tool and nutrient management technologies which harness a new understanding of plant-soil-biodiversity interactions driving nutrient dynamics to deliver soil specific nutrient advice for grassland & arable farms in Ireland.

Workpackage 1 of this programme will identify barriers to lime use, and identify effective KT methods to increase adoption of best nutrient management advice and technologies on farms.

2. Project aims and objectives

The overall objective is to understand the reasons why Irish farmers are not adequately addressing low soil pH and to propose measures and options to improve the uptake of liming materials. In the context of emerging innovations to improve land use and nutrient use efficiency, it is critical to have a better understanding of how farmers perceive soils and soil fertility in order to design and target policy measures and extension messages that will be more effective in promoting the adoption of best liming practices. The specific objectives of this task are

- To build a greater understanding of the mental models that farmers have of soil PH and its influence on soil fertility and production
- To understand farmers perceptions of the drivers and barriers (including costs and benefits) of liming
- To understand the different influences on farmers beliefs, attitudes and practices in relation to soil pH and liming
- To propose how extension messages and policy measures might be strengthened to better align with farmers understanding to increase adoption of liming