

Climate Change and Agriculture... what farmers can do to help out

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Climate change is one of the major challenges we face as humans daily. For over 250 years we've burned fossil fuels, changed the landscape for materials use and of course, farmed our land. Agriculture has contributed to global warming by increasing the concentration of Green House Gases with such gases like carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. Agriculture in Ireland currently accounts for 33% of Ireland's total greenhouse gas emissions. This statistic is staggering and it is one of the highest shares of emissions in Europe.

Although these stats are alarming, Irish farmers can help reduce these G.H.G emissions. For example, they can switch to 'protected urea' fertiliser which is specially treated to help reduce the loss of nitrogen into our atmosphere. They can also plant clover, as it absorbs nitrogen from the air and returns it back into the soil, this also reduces the need of chemical fertiliser application. When spreading slurry, farmers should invest in a dribble bar or trailing shoe as these systems reduce g.h.g emissions also to spread their slurry as early as possible in the spring time as it reduces g.h.g emissions due to weather conditions and the slurry has less of a storage time in the tank.

In my own opinion and coming from a farming background, these methods should be promoted more by Teagasc and the Irish Farmers Association. This would influence farmers more to go green and look after our environment for example, the IFA website has little to no content in climate change, an association as big as them should be pushing these issues more. On my own family farm, I see my father taking on board ideas I have to offer on climate change and how we can do our bit to save the environment. For example, we are now planning to plant clover next spring. Simple changes like this can contribute to saving our environment.