

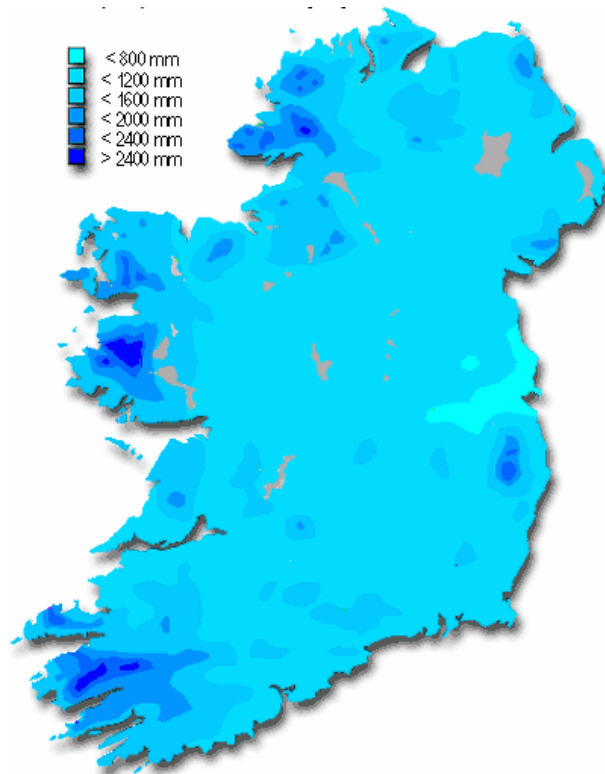
## Driving water quality improvements in Ireland

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# Ireland in context

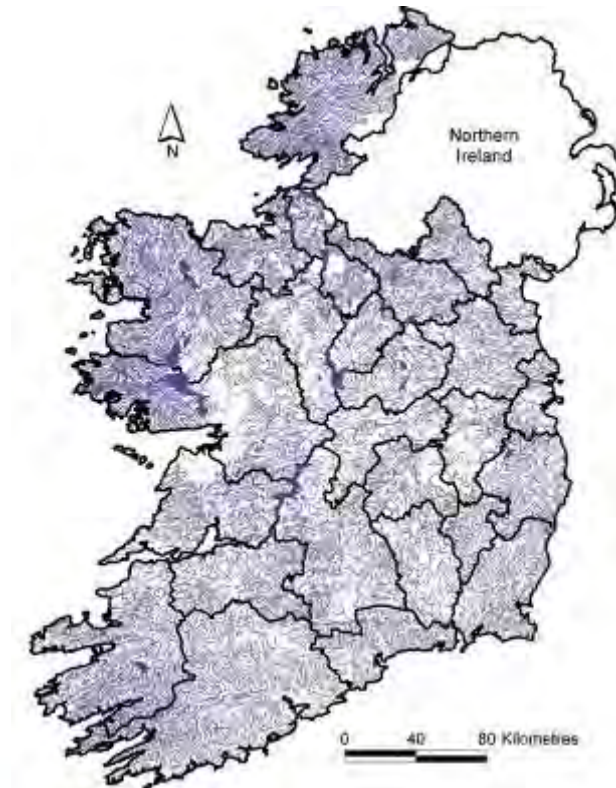
Average rainfall  
750-2000mm/a



Variability in geology,  
soils and pathways



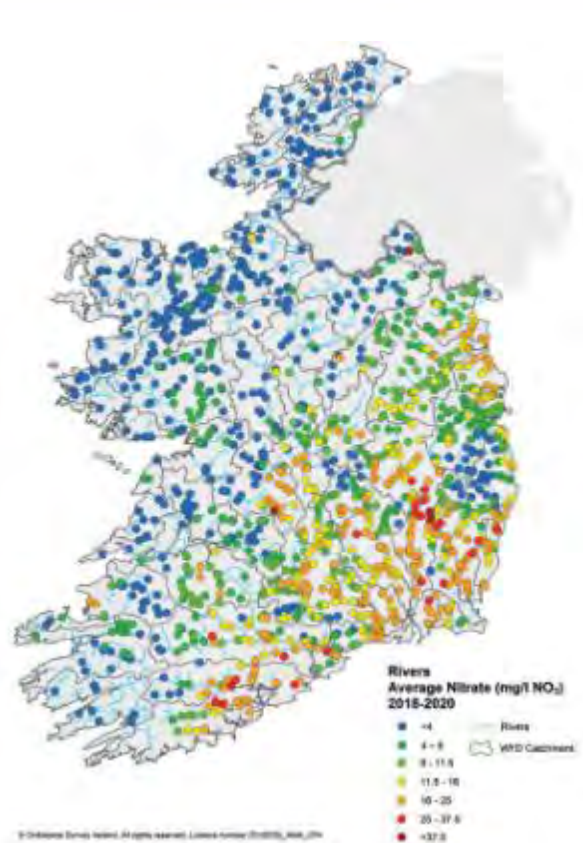
Dense network of  
small streams



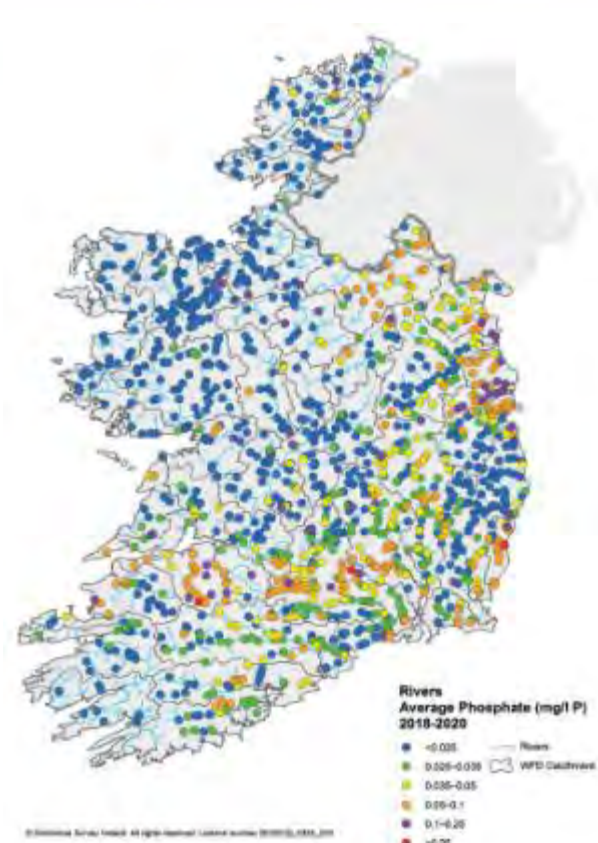
Small country of 5M people. Agriculture is the dominant land use



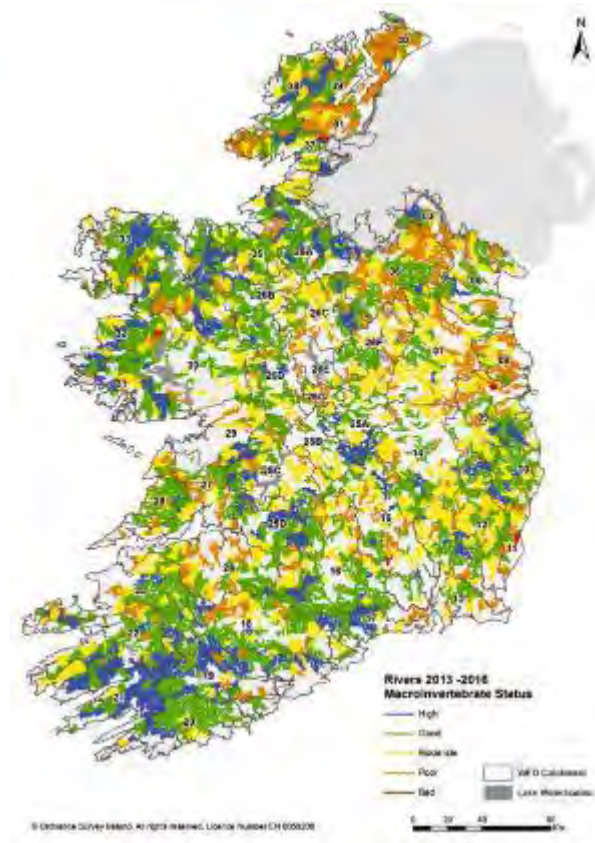
# River water quality



High nitrate in the SW



High phosphate in S and E



Widespread problems with invertebrates

Trends going in the wrong direction

Regional water quality problems driven by land use and soils.



# Impacts to waters that are At Risk



Too much phosphorus in rivers and lakes



Too much nitrogen in estuaries and coastal waters



Morphological impacts (Land drainage, channel maintenance, urban environment)

- Main pressures come from agriculture, hydromorphology (physical habitat changes), forestry and urban waste water
- Problems are often widespread and diffuse.
- Lots of investment in measures. Some improvements in some places, but not enough overall
- Improvements are being offset by declines



**New approach needed for  
river basin management planning!**



# 1<sup>st</sup> cycle

Plan developed by consultants

Very expensive (€53M)

7 river basin districts, no consistency

Plans too ambitious, weak evidence base

Plans implemented by Local Authorities

Regulatory measures only

# 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle

Plans developed by the Minister, supported by EPA

New EPA Catchments Unit, LAWPRO and ASSAP teams

1 national river basin district, 2 international districts

More realistic targets, stronger evidence base

New collaborative governance model

# 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle

Review of the governance structures: keep 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle

Collaborative governance model will evolve

New funding applications to strengthen the model

46 catchment management plans

More community engagement



# A changed philosophy

1. Strong evidence base
2. New collaborative approach
3. Local scale assessment and implementation



‘The right measure in the right place’

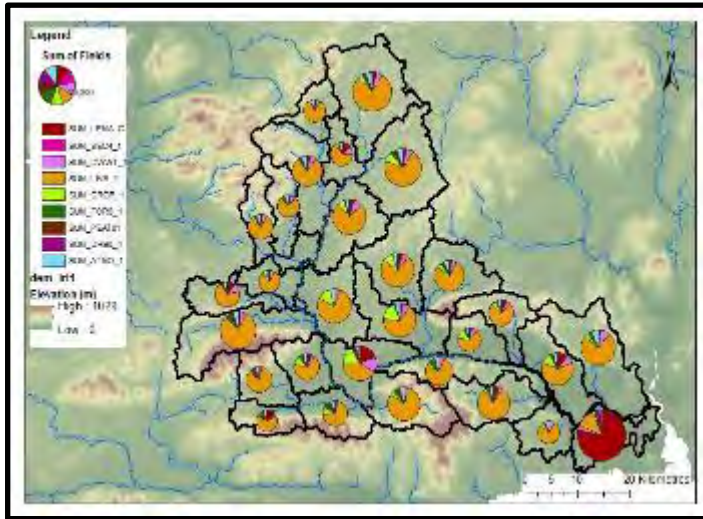


# 1. Strong evidence base

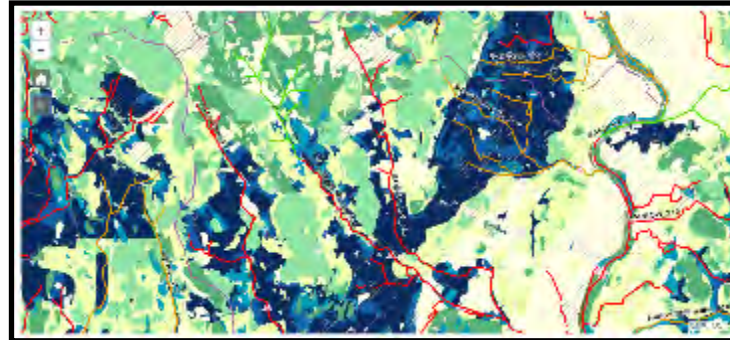




# New science models and tools – to assess impacts, and target measures



140 datasets  
>50 person years  
All recorded in a **central, shared WFD App**



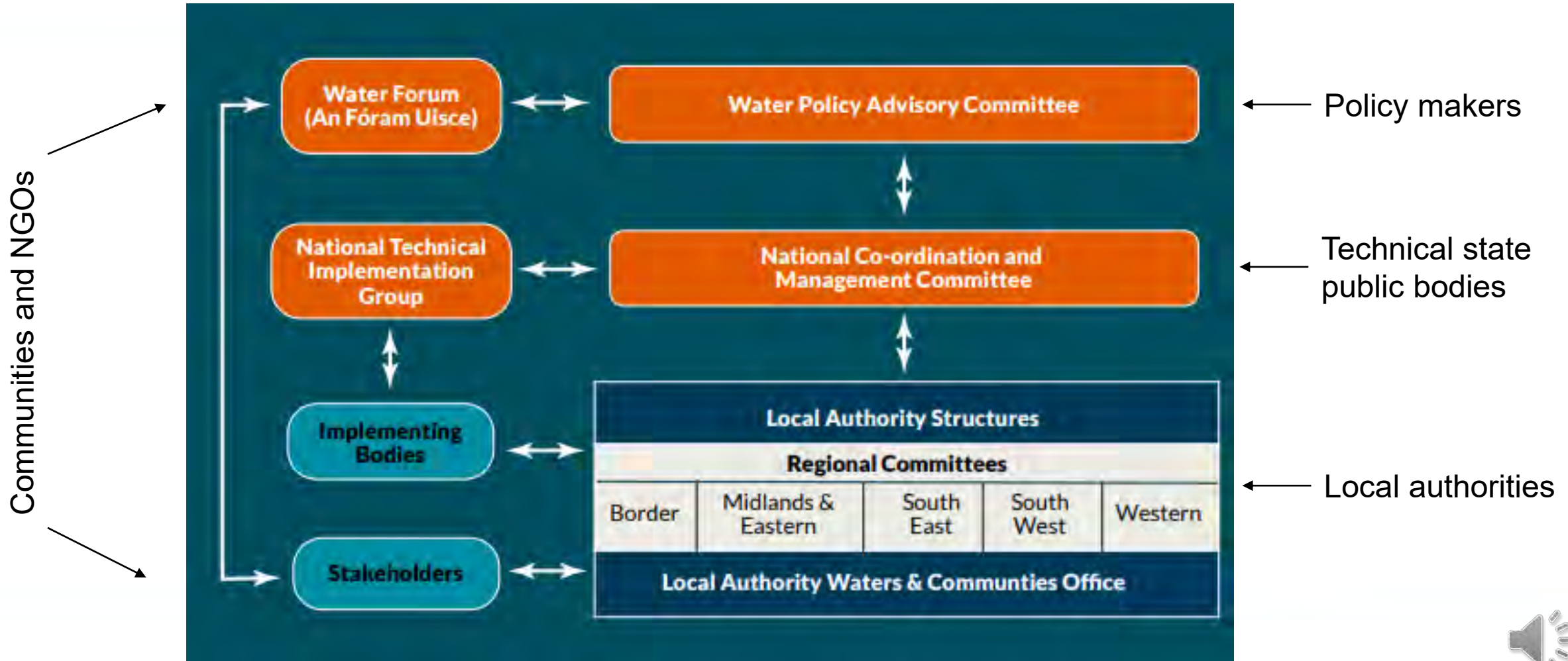
- Source apportionment
- N risks from agriculture
- P risks from agriculture
- Hydromorphological impacts
- Sediment risks
- Nature based solutions mapping
- River restoration tool

Aiming for *'The right measure in the right place'*

## 2. Collaborative approach



# Stronger collaborative governance



# Public bodies working together

- EPA-Fisheries-Local Authority local meetings to jointly identify significant pressures
- Regional stakeholder meetings (>600 attendees) to set realistic objectives and select 189 priority Areas for Action
- 5 x Regional Operational Committees made up of those stakeholders now in place, to support the implementation of the plan



# Catchments Newsletter

Integrated Catchment Management: sharing science and stories

Welcome to Catchments.ie  
Water from source to sea.

Water is a precious resource and is essential for all life on earth. Looking after our rivers, lakes and coastal waters so they can meet current and future needs, and also continue to support the ecosystems that depend on them, is vital for Ireland's future.

Doing this at community level is the best way to get people actively involved.

[Find out more](#)

Publishing the evidence base and celebrating successes is important



## Plans and pressures: how characterisation helps us act as custodians of our catchments

### Inside this issue

Waters and Communities – news from around the country

Understanding our catchments: Water Framework Directive Characterisation

Telling stories with data

The Bredagh River, Donegal - photo: John McKeown, River Trust


Groundwater characterisation

The River Basin Management Plan, 2018-2021

The Local Authority Waters Programme Catchment Assessment Team

Local Catchment Assessments: the next step in characterising our catchments

Significant Pressures: selected summaries

[More](#) 

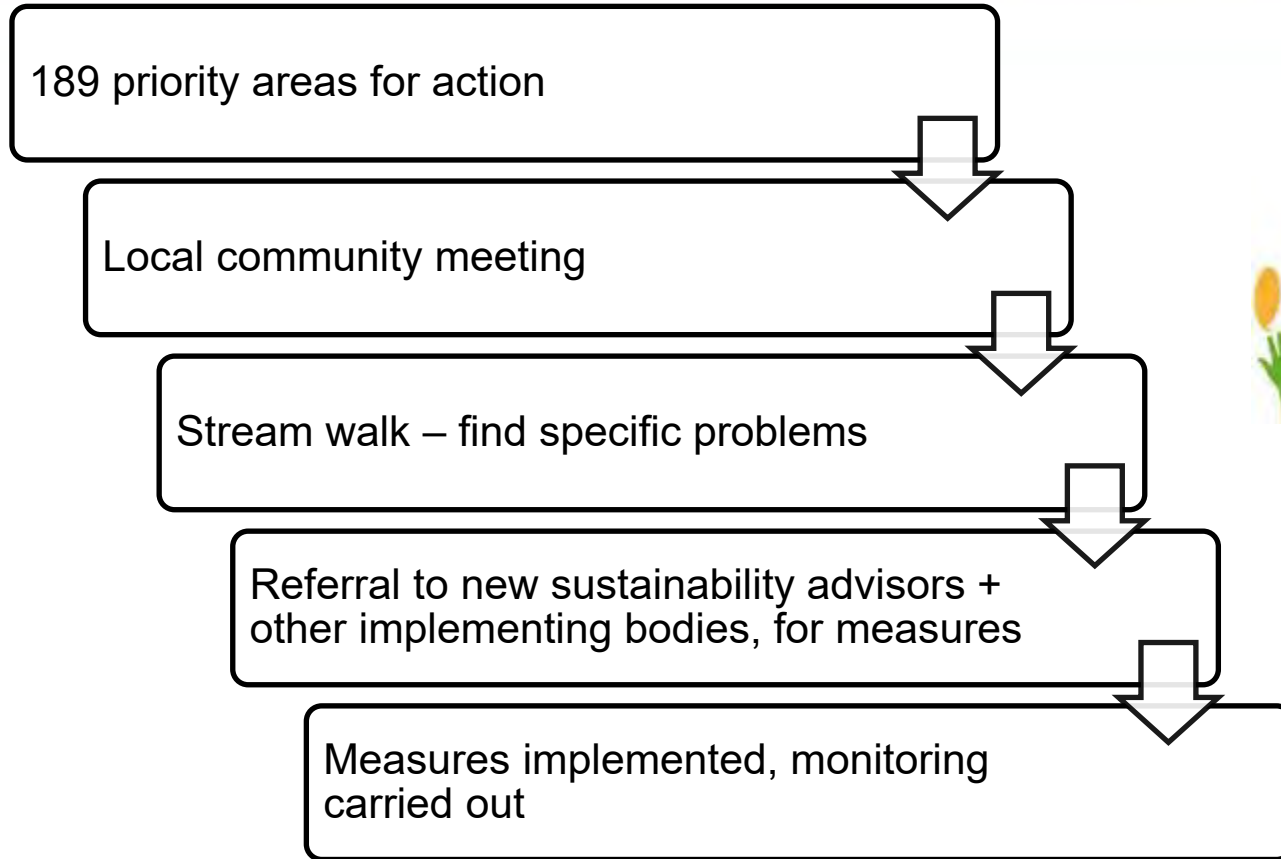


### 3. Local scale implementation

Further information from Margaret and Noel



# Local scale implementation



Community action



Helping people to implement 'the right measure in the right place'

Is this going to work?





## So far... so good!

- Good engagement and response from Public bodies, Local Authorities and communities. Everyone is working together.
- Environmental messaging is starting to align for climate, biodiversity, natural flood mitigation and water quality. We need to join up the actions.
- Water quality is getting better in the Priority Areas for Action, but still getting worse nationwide overall.
- We are continuing to evolve the approach

We have a long way to go, but so far the signs are good!

