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IRISH

APRIL 2024

# FARMERS

## MONTHLY



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APRIL 2024

# EDITORIAL

## IN TIME IS THE TIME

**We are slowly emerging from a protracted period of poor weather, stretching back intermittently to this time last year.** There is cause for concern that farmers' physical and mental strengths have been stretched to the limits and beyond. We need to have regard for ourselves, our families, and neighbours.

We also need to ensure that the prolonged winter housing period, extended at both the beginning – last September for some farms – and the end, does not leave our farms and livestock vulnerable in the longer term. Fodder reserves, in many cases, have been eliminated and the need for replenishment is now a priority. Already, we are on the back foot, with fertiliser spreading delayed. On many farms, grazing has been delayed and a build-up of grass now needs to be managed. There will be a case, when conditions allow, to harvest some of this grass early to bring rotations and quality back into equilibrium. In addition, it will allow a start to be made on restoring fodder reserves on farms, whether to be used for any unforeseen adverse weather events in the coming months or to have available for next winter.

Normal practices may not be enough to restore fodder parity. Reducing fertiliser this season will not be an advisable option for most farmers and, even then, we will be relying on good growing conditions across the entire season to safeguard from becoming semi-permanently in fodder deficit.

There is no point in wasting a crisis and this one may present an opportunity for both tillage and livestock farmers. Tillage farmers have suffered severely from poor soil conditions. Much of the planting planned for last autumn never happened so the spring planting workload has doubled on many tillage farms. The normal spring work has piled up including crop protection, fertilising and the planting of spring crops. Delayed sowing means the choice of spring crops has narrowed significantly, even as the



Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

derogation on the three-crop rule provides some small breathing space and flexibility. There may be an opportunity for some tillage farmers to substitute lower return spring barley crops for more profitable forage crops to supply to their neighbouring livestock farms. The window for maize, for instance, is still well ahead. A firm agreement between the parties involved could be reached which would provide some measure of financial salvation for hard-pressed tillage farmers as well as an opportunity for livestock farms to replenish their fodder reserves. Other crop options could be advantageous in setting up fields for higher return grain or protein crops next season. Short-term grass swards and red clover come to mind. Above all, we need to plan ahead. Hope is a poor substitute for a well-planned strategy that should be beneficial for all concerned. We cannot allow short-term cost-cutting, including reduced fertiliser use, to be an excuse to avoid necessary, if costly, decision making to safeguard farm sustainability for the longer term.

Meanwhile, we have seen impressive and much-needed prices being paid for cattle and sheep in the marts and slaughtering plants, along with an improvement in milk prices. They deliver some badly needed confidence to the drystock and dairy sectors. Whether these prices are symptomatic of long-term trends in returns remains to be seen. Right now, there are a few imponderables, including the impacts of UK-Australian and New Zealand trade agreements. We are still dependent on the UK for a major proportion of our food exports. Add in Mercosur – it still hasn't gone away and will resurrect quickly after the June European elections – and a new Commission at the end of 2024. Nevertheless, we cannot look gift horses in the mouth. Higher prices for our produce are always welcome no matter what clouds – rain or economic – may be on the horizon.

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## THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

Tractor demonstrations are a common feature of farmer protest, as we have seen across Ireland and Europe in recent times.

This year, the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) has used the 'tractorcade' as a protest tool by driving their machines onto motorway bridges and through several towns across the country creating traffic disruption. Europe has seen farmers block roads in Germany, France, Belgium and Spain, involving regular confrontations with police. Here, farmer protests have tended to be peaceful and well chaperoned by our Garda force.

Contrast this to India, where farmer protests were met with riot police and tear gas. Farmers camped outside New Delhi for nearly a year to protest over the tough government measures imposed on them. Indian farmers are looking for higher government-backed prices for their crops, and debt forgiveness. That protest was attended by 700,000 farmers over the 10 months.

Protests are important, and they don't always have to cause inconvenience to others to be effective. In the coming months, the ballot box will offer opportunities to influence the



Members of Mayo Irish Farmers' Association protesting outside Mayo County Council as part of the association's #EnoughIsEnough campaign aimed at the regulatory burden on farmers. Photo: IFAMedia Twitter.

decision makers in our political system. Farmers who traditionally supported Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil should insist on that loyalty being repaid. We need farmers to look at the bigger picture and fully utilise their soft power as well as their horsepower. The challenges facing Irish society are also facing the agricultural community. While the need for climate change mitigation measures is clear, the policies of the Green Party are making the cost of doing business more expensive on everyone and they have, rightly or wrongly, created a lot of animosity

among farmers. Ultimately, we need to work with government to achieve our economic and environmental goals. This necessitates all farm organisations pulling together to a common end.

The lead up to the upcoming elections – local, European and, sooner or later, general – can be used to highlight farmer grievances and concerns. Political lobbying can be just as effective – or maybe even more so – as driving tractors around the country at considerable cost to farmers themselves and their fellow citizens.

## BANKING ON BECOMING CARBON NEUTRAL

**Allied Irish Bank (AIB) announced last year that it had created a €10bn climate-action fund.** While this certainly is impressive, the small print has yet to be scrutinised as to how the bank's Green Lending Climate Action Fund will be rolled out.

Last November saw AIB further commit to treble that fund to €30bn, through various leveraging mechanisms, as it intends to take further actions to support the transition to a low-carbon economy by increasing its green lending portfolio. This was announced at the bank's sustainability conference titled, 'It's Time to Act'.

In February, AIB appointed Paul Travers as managing director of its new climate capital unit. Paul is responsible for expanding green lending activities, focusing on renewable-energy companies and critical infrastructure projects across Ireland, the UK, Europe and North America.

AIB is supporting Farm Zero, by collaborating with Carbery and BiOrbic, Ireland's national bioeconomy research centre, to create a climate-neutral, economically viable dairy farm that has the potential to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the agricultural sector through novel farm practices and innovative technologies. On a broader scale, we need a lot more information as to how AIB's funding for carbon reduction will operate at business level. Farm finance for environmental improvements is expensive, but is capable of delivering sustainable returns. Providing minimum-margin funding must be a central aspect of AIB's zero-carbon initiative. Otherwise, it will be accused of well-intentioned greenwashing. Agriculture is an obvious target for support from this climate action fund. AIB itself has a target to become carbon neutral in its operations by 2030, using a net-zero approach.



New Fine Gael leader,  
Simon Harris. Photo: Fine Gael.

## SIMON SAYS

Last month, Simon Harris was elected as the new leader of Fine Gael after Leo Varadkar suddenly announced that he was stepping down from that role, and from the role of taoiseach. At the time of print, Varadkar was still in the taoiseach's seat, but it was widely believed that he was just keeping it warm for his colleague, Simon. The 37-year-old new Fine Gael leader seems capable, and the country needs a decisive and effective individual at the helm of government right now. Is he the man to achieve this? Well, we will have to wait and see what Simon says, and what Simon does. If there is a glaring gap in his CV, it is in his lack of economic experience, either in his pre-politics private life or in his public roles. This is where the calibre of his team of senior civil servants and his choice of close advisors will be critical.



## MULTI-CITY US TRADE MISSION

The US is one of our largest agri-food trading partners, worth €1.6bn in exports in 2023. Senator Pippa Hackett, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine recently led a trade mission there, in collaboration with Bord Bia, and Irish food and beverage exporters. Austin, Houston and Seattle were the destinations, and the focus was on consolidating our trading relationship, and promoting Irish foods and beverages. During the four-day mission, the minister met with leading US retail, foodservice and distributors who are customers of Irish food and drink. And this involved the promotion of Irish dairy, meat, prepared consumer foods and beverages. The sustainability of Irish food exports and the continued growth of the Irish organic sector were also highlighted. She also attended a 'Spirit of Ireland' event hosted by Bord Bia in partnership with the Irish drinks industry. This event focused on building awareness of Irish spirits within the US alcohol trade industry and priority target customer accounts. It took place in Austin, and attracted around 85 alcohol buyers and representatives from 18 Irish spirit brands. Speaking on the final day of the trade mission from Seattle, the minister said that there is further potential in the US for Irish agri-food and beverages exporters. She added that from her discussions with senior leaders in the US retail, foodservice and wholesale distribution chains, there is a strong message coming through on environmental sustainability and animal welfare which now plays a key role in consumer choice.

## CASE STUDY CORK 2020: IMPROVING PREGNANCY RATES IN HEIFERS WITH INJECTABLE TRACE MINERALS

Herd fertility in pasture-based dairy farms is a key driver of farm economics<sup>1</sup>. According to Teagasc, "a cow calving in May will generate €400 less profit than a cow calving in February, due to higher feed costs and reduced yield. For every 100 cows, compact calving is worth on average €10,000 – €12,000 (€100 – €120 per cow/year)".<sup>2</sup>

Age is particularly important in farming systems with restricted calving periods. Teagasc advise that the first step towards improving calving distribution is ensure heifers conceive early in the breeding season to generate large numbers of early-calving heifers<sup>1,2</sup>.

On a pasture-based farm in Cork in 2019 a farmer reported fertility issues in a group of 22 mixed British and Holstein Friesian heifers weighing 340-390 kg. Submission rate was low as only 17/22 received AI. Only 14/17 held to first service and 5 heifers did not come bulling for the first 3 weeks of the breeding season - all heifers eventually went in calf to the bull by the end of June when he was removed. When some of the heifers calved it was at the end of April, too late in the farmer's opinion.

The farmer wanted to get as many replacement heifers from these heifers as possible. He used conventional semen and each heifer only got one straw before the bull was introduced after the first 3 weeks. Due to the poor submission rate and his late calving heifers in 2019, the farmer sought advice from his local vet and in 2020 the farmer treated his heifers with a combination injectable trace mineral containing Zinc, Copper, Manganese and Selenium, 30 days prior to AI.

In the 2020 group there were 20 heifers - a submission rate of 90% in the first 3 weeks of breeding was achieved with 18/20 in calf to first service AI, the remaining 2 heifers showed signs of oestrus later but did not receive AI. The overall result therefore was a 90% submission rate in the first 3 weeks of service with 95% in calf to first service. Of the remaining heifers, one heifer held her first service to the bull and the other held to her second service. They were all scanned on the 7/08/20 and 20/20 were in calf > 85 days with 18 > 105 days in calf.

	2019	2020
Submission rate	77%	90%
Pregnancy in first 3wks of Breeding Season	64%	95%

It is estimated that every open day outside of the compact calving window costs the system €3.08/day/head<sup>3</sup>.

Heifers born in the first 21 days of the breeding season will come off grass heavier and hit puberty earlier meaning more efficient reproduction in the herd, a key driver of profitability. Age and weight at first breeding are closely correlated<sup>1</sup>. Heifers that were heavier at the start of breeding had increased incidence of oestrus and higher pregnancy rates at the end of the season than lighter animals<sup>1</sup>. In a 2013 study, it was reported that younger calving heifers achieved more days in milk over 5 years, with >44% of their days alive spent in milk production compared with only 18% - 40% in cows calving later<sup>4</sup>. Thus, good heifer fertility results in the best subsequent performance in future lactations.

Pre-breeding supplementation helps to raise not only the trace minerals but also the essential enzyme levels rapidly and effectively which could assist farmers to get cows and heifers back in calf in a tighter calving pattern.

A study from a leading US university demonstrated that cows receiving injectable trace mineral supplementation prior to mating had improved conception rates to fixed time AI and an improved calving distribution compared to those that did not receive supplementation<sup>5</sup>.

**Further information available from: Virbac Ltd. Unit 16 Woolpit Business Park, Windmill Avenue, Woolpit, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 9UP.**

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## LINING UP FOR THE EUROS

**Voting choices for the farming community in the June European Union parliamentary elections continue to broaden with the latest names being put forward for selection as candidates.** Among the notable novel candidates is Eddie Punch, until recently the long-serving general secretary of the ICOSA. Eddie's knowledge of agriculture is unquestionable, and he would surely be a strong advocate for Irish and European agriculture if elected to the Parliament.

Several serving MEPs are running again. Billy Kelleher, of Fianna Fáil, has been prominent in defending Irish farming interests in the outgoing Parliament, as has Seán Kelly of

Fine Gael. Colm Markey, another Fine Gael representative, has made the most of the opportunity offered as an alternative MEP after Mairead McGuinness was promoted to the role of commissioner. Likewise, Chris MacManus, Matt Carty's replacement as a Sinn Féin MEP in the European Parliament has been vocal in proclaiming his commitment to his farming constituents in the North-West Euro constituency. Luke 'Ming' Flanagan has never been behind the door in his, sometimes selective, defence of rural and farming interests. Despite their extraordinary prominence in the Parliament, neither Clare Daly nor Mick Wallace would be seen as

staunch defenders of agricultural interests, though they are strong advocates on issues important to their political thinking. The Irish Green agenda was well represented in the outgoing Parliament, with both Ciarán Cuffe and Grace O'Sullivan sticking closely to their environmental agendas, sometimes at odds with mainstream Irish agricultural preferences. The full line-up of candidates for selection and election is not yet completed. We will carry full biographies of the would-be Irish MEPs for the next European Parliament, along with their track record on farming issues, or lack thereof, in the May edition. Then, it will be over to the people to decide.

## A NOTABLE RURAL ACHIEVEMENT

**As outgoing Fine Gael leader and taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, slips into the back benches, there is one rural-related achievement of his worth noting.** The ongoing roll out of high-speed broadband can truly be described, using that most overused phrase, as a gamechanger. While still far from complete, the broadband infrastructure is already proving to be revolutionary in expanding economic and social opportunities in rural areas across the country. The move towards remote working, which many thought would be temporary, is enduring and allowing people to work from remote regions, where hitherto, they would have endured long commutes or relocation to urban domiciles. We are still only at the edge of what can be achieved through being instantly in communication with family and fellow work colleagues, not only in Ireland but globally. There is every reason to believe that in the coming years we can experience an economic revolution in rural Ireland through



Leo Varadkar resigned as leader of Fine Gael and as taoiseach for 'personal and political' reasons.

access to world-leading communications networks and networking, anywhere and at any time of the day or night. Take-up in some completed network regions has been lower than anticipated. This broadband roll-out is an extremely expensive endeavour and should be utilised to maximum effect. 'Build it and they will come' must be the mantra. If there is a drawback, it is the vulnerability of the new broadband infrastructure, with wires strung along country roadsides being subjected to storms felling trees and branches onto those poles and fibre-filled cables. The fact that over the coming decade, thousands of ash trees will decay and fall, only adds to that physical vulnerability. It should not be beyond affordability or decisiveness to mitigate that risk by a planned strategy to remove all ash and, perhaps, other trees from rural roadsides, replacing them in abundance in hedgerows and spaces not contiguous to our vital transport, electrical and communications infrastructures.



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# InTouch

## FERTILITY: ACHIEVING THOSE EXTRA FEW MILLIMETRES

**CATHAL BOHANE**  
HEAD OF INTOUCH NUTRITION

The cycle begins again on most farms up and down the country: calving should be all but finished and the focus turns to getting them back in calf again. Fertility is a key factor for the success of a seasonal calving system, as it allows farms to match feed supply and demand, maximise production with cost-effective feed and concentrate a scarce labour supply. It also brings challenges as we are trying to breed the cow in a very small window of 6-9 weeks.

While there are many influencing factors involved in fertility, it can be described very simply by using the following equation:

Pregnancy rate = Submission rate x Conception rate

If we can get a submission rate (the number of cows available for breeding in the first three weeks of breeding) of 90 per cent and a conception rate of 65 per cent to first and second service, we can get >90 per cent calving in six weeks. Below are some of the steps required to achieve these figures.

**Body condition score (BCS):** A cow that loses >0.5 BCS is less likely to conceive. This is very little, only about 25 kg on a 600-kg cow. All cows will naturally lose condition, but to minimise this, we need to feed the cow properly. It's about maximising the grazed grass and supplement required for that cow and milk yield. When there is little grass available, or when weather doesn't allow grazing, don't be afraid to add silage and up the concentrate.

**Pre-breeding check:** Get cows that might have an issue or a metabolic issue post-calving back on track with some TLC through once-a-day extra feed, minerals, or veterinary intervention. Tail-paint, observe or use one of the many technologies available to make sure cows are cycling before the start of breeding, and intervene on those that are not showing heat.

**Select your cows:** We need to be head- and data-driven. A cow calving this month will very unlikely be calving in February anytime soon. If these cows are repeating, what is causing it, and are we breeding sub-fertile cows and creating sub-fertile replacement stock? On top of this, any replacement stock born in April will always struggle in this seasonal environment due to age and weight targets.

**Minerals:** These are important nutrients for dairy cow fertility, as they affect various aspects of reproductive function and health. Selenium, zinc, copper, magnesium, phosphorous and calcium, to name but a few, can all be linked to pregnancy rate and days open. It is important to feed a high-quality mineral at the required levels at least until we know the cows are in calf, with research showing that long-term feeding beyond this can promote increased fertility in offspring.

When it comes to fertility, sometimes the distance between success and failure can be very small. Five per cent — whether it be conception, pregnancy or submission rate — in a 100-cow herd is five cows. Improving fertility does not mean tearing up your current process but, rather, accessing what you are doing and tweaking it for the better to gain those extra few millimeters, which will add meters to your overall business.

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### INDUSTRY NEWS

## TRIAL SHOWS INOCULANT INCREASED FCM MILK YIELD

**A new trial undertaken at Reading University in association with Lallemand Animal Nutrition, has shown that using an inoculant on grass silage can improve clamp stability, increase feedable dry matter (DM) by 29 per cent and improve fat-corrected milk (FCM) yields by 1.9kg/day.**

Bryan Buckley, Ireland business manager at Lallemand Animal Nutrition, said that the trial shows how the use of a crop- and condition-specific inoculant on grass silage can offer massive benefits on farm.

He commented: "The trial used 28 per cent DM grass harvested in April, with half the crop treated with Magniva Platinum Grass Dry and the other half left untreated. The trial looked at how the inoculant impacted the grass fermentation, locking in nutrients, and how this translated into cow performance when feeding the silage.

"There were significantly higher DM losses in the control clamp than the treated clamp, which means there was less silage available for the cows."

He added: "Due to the DM losses, the untreated clamp shrunk considerably more than the treated clamp, equating to 29 per cent more feedable dry matter."

The fermentation results from the two clamps showed that the treated silage had superior lactic, acetic and propane diol acid profiles, and it had 10 times less butyric acid.

"The lower butyric acid in the treated silage indicates that clostridia, the bacteria that break down protein and cause foul-smelling silage, were effectively inhibited. This resulted in a more palatable silage, which was evident in the increased dry matter intake seen in the group of cows receiving treated silage in their ration," he explained.

Aerobic stability was also improved in the treated silage. This resulted in less heating in the clamp, reducing the energy lost to the environment as heat instead of being turned into milk by the cows. This energy loss is caused by aerobic spoilage that occurs when air gets into the clamp and activates spoilage microbes, including yeasts and moulds.

"The control clamp temperatures peaked at 34.6°C, whereas the treated silage reached only 26.7°C – a significant difference in energy terms.

"This extra 8°C of heating in the control group is the equivalent of losing 28MJ of energy for every tonne of silage fresh weight that is unstable. This equates to 5.4kg of milk lost," he said.

Improvements were also seen in cow performance when cows were fed the treated silage. Bryan explained: "The well-preserved and stable treated silage resulted in a significant increase in dry matter intake by 1.5kg/day, compared to the control. This correlated with an increase in fat-corrected milk of 1.9kg/day," he said.

"A 0.1 per cent improvement in protein and 0.19 per cent increase in fat was seen in the milk constituents when comparing treatment and control group cows."





Damien O'Reilly  
EU Affairs and Communications Manager, ICOS

## LETTER FROM BRUSSELS

**Amidst the wave of farmer protests spread right across Europe, 60 farm and co-operative leaders have written to the European (EU) Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, to highlight a range of concerns which EU farmers have across a variety of issues. ICOS president, Edward Carr and IFA president, Francie Gorman signed the joint letter which had a strong focus on legislation and red tape which is breaking farmers.**

The signatories are all members of the European umbrella group for farm organisations and co-operatives, Copa-Cogeca. The letter begins: 'Agriculture and forestry have traditionally served as the cornerstone of the European project due to their strategic significance. Our sectors produce a wide range of commodities essential to all and are key players in ensuring food security for 450 million EU consumers as the world's largest exporters of food and agricultural goods. Farmers are the first to feel the consequences of extreme weather events while contributing to the green transition by reducing emissions and storing carbon, being the custodians of rural areas and biodiversity.'

It goes on to say: 'In recent years, the voices of European farmers and agricultural cooperatives have grown increasingly vital, yet our concerns have largely gone unheeded. Instead, many decision makers seem to perceive our sector solely as a problem, overlooking the hundreds of thousands of virtuous sustainability initiatives and neglecting the strategic importance of agriculture and forestry within the European project. This paradigm must shift now!

'When addressing real issues, we are wasting valuable time allowing polarisation to predominate in policymaking instead of relying on science and practical feedback. European farmers and agri-cooperatives are part of the solution.'

Concerns around the EU's trade policy and the Green Deal for agriculture are also highlighted in the missive. And there is reference made to the recent spate of farm protests: 'The increasing number of legitimate farming protests in recent weeks and months highlights the pressing necessity for the European Union to shift the focus back to rural areas, agriculture, and forestry within its policies. Our members support peaceful demonstrations. This cannot be emphasised enough. We will not encourage any action which runs counter to the rules set up by our democratic society.'

The farm leaders also called for simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the halting of the EU Mercosur agreement in its current state, fair income for farmers, and a strong budget in the next Multiannual Financial Framework to support farmers in their implementation of EU environmental legislation.

The letter was sent as stakeholders from across the agricultural and environmental representative organisations sat down for the first meeting of the Strategic Dialogue, which was set up by President von der Leyen. They will continue with their meetings before a report is prepared later in the summer just in time for the beginning of the next EU Parliament and EU Commission. And it looks likely that President von der Leyen will, once again, be at the helm. Will she take heed of farmer concerns? We will wait and see.



## 2024's wet start has refocused the mind...

Maeve Regan,  
Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

**After an incredibly wet spring, with grazing being more off than on during March, the significance of having a reserve of available, high quality silage in yards has fallen sharply into focus.**

For many this spring, milk protein percentages have proven a struggle, with average quality silage has made up a large proportion of the diet. Youngstock turnout was delayed and we are now trying to make up ground to ensure breeding target weights are met. Unfortunately these issues has led to an increased meal bill where silage quality was poor.

Remember, grass silage makes up approximately one quarter of the annual feed budget on the average Irish dairy farm and is even greater in beef situations.

### Quality > Quantity

At one point, every farm will have 80% DMD grass available to them in the field. However, the decision is often made too late regarding the cutting date.

Where silage stocks are depleted, the temptation to chase bulk may creep in. However, it is well proven that high quality silage allows for flexibility in feed plans. Earlier cutting also allows for quicker and earlier regrowths for subsequent cuts, leading to increased annual yield per hectare.

Once seed heads appear typically by late May, DMD will be around 70% at most, and will drop by 1% DMD every two to three days after that.

With the renewed value now placed on our main home grown forage, achieving a good fermentation to preserve it is critical. The use of a silage additive has long been proven to improve fermentation, lending to less waste/losses.

Agritech's GrasZyme Sugarboost is proven to: Increase ADG by 110g/head/day in beef situations, Increase Dry Matter intakes by 0.4 kg/head/day and milk protein percentages by 0.09% - while also reducing fermentation losses by 6.1% (equating to 30t on a 500t pit).

**For more information, contact your local Agritech Sales Advisor**



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## IMPRESSIVE SPEAKERS ANNOUNCED FOR PIG SYMPOSIUM

**An impressive speaker line-up has been announced for the 2024 Irish Pig Health Society (IPHS) Symposium, which takes place at the Curragh Racecourse Exhibition Hall on Tuesday, April 16.**

Bernard Jackman, the former Ireland and Leinster rugby player and recently appointed head of high performance with Horse Sport Ireland, will deliver the keynote address at the symposium, which is themed 'Futureproofing the health of your business.'

Delegates will also hear from international climate-control expert Peter van der Voorst who will speak about the significance of climate control and its impact on animal welfare.

John O'Doherty, a renowned full professor of monogastric nutrition with extensive experience, will draw from his 25-plus years as a researcher, advisor and thought

leader.

IPHS president, Peter Duggan commented: "This year's symposium will feature a high-calibre line-up of monogastric experts, along with an interactive producer discussion panel featuring Joe Healy, Jason McGrath and Sarah Hanley from the IFA's Pig Policy Division, with Michael McKeon of Teagasc's Pig Development Department moderating the discussion. We're really looking forward to this year's event which features a new format and a new venue in the form of the Curragh."

The event's industry trade session is scheduled to get underway at the exhibition hall at 3pm on April 16. There, a range of speakers will discuss practical solutions to the ongoing challenges presented by health, welfare and productivity in the pig farming sector. And the traditional hog roast dinner will be served at 7pm (approximately).

## INDUSTRY NEWS

### A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION FOR FARMERS

**Winner of the 2023 FBD Better Farming Award (AgTech Ireland Best Agritech Science Product) and the 2021 Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena Award, the Terra Range of fertilisers has been developed as an alternative to untreated, inorganic nitrogen fertiliser.**

Target Fertilisers, working with Brandon Bioscience, has created the Terra Range, providing a practical solution when it comes to reducing nitrate levels and preserving water quality.

Based in Co. Kerry, Brandon Bioscience has produced PSI362 Precision Technology, a seaweed-based biostimulant which optimises nitrogen uptake and utilisation within the plant.

With proven multi-level activity in the plant through absorption, transportation and utilisation, PSI362 is coated onto fertiliser granules and provides farmers with the solution to apply up to 25 per cent less nitrogen on farm while maintaining yields.

This biostimulant is derived from the brown seaweed, *Ascophyllum nodosum*, and its effects have been described in four peer-reviewed papers including the *Journal of Agronomy* and *Frontiers in Plant Science*. It is approved under the EU Fertilising Products Regulation (FPR) 2019/1009 and carries the CE mark.

PSI362 Precision Technology stimulates both nitrogen uptake and assimilation mechanisms in the plant when applied at the same time as your nitrogen fertiliser, and so it takes up more of the available nitrogen in the soil. This means similar biomass levels are produced with up to 25 per cent less nitrogen, and higher dry matter levels are achieved in the crop.



Cultivate chair, Joe Healy.

## NATIONAL CULTIVATE WEEK RETURNS

**National Cultivate Week returns this year from April 8-14, bringing together credit unions and their members to celebrate farmers and the contribution they make to local communities, according to organisers.**

On Thursday, April 11, Cultivate will host a live virtual event featuring a panel of experts to give viewers insights on what lies ahead for farming in 2024. The webinar 'Cultivate Conversations: Farming in 2024' will be livestreamed on [www.cultivate-cu.ie](http://www.cultivate-cu.ie) and across Cultivate's social media channels. Speakers include: Karina Pierce, professor of dairy production UCD; Philip O'Connor, head of farm support, ifac; Adam Woods, deputy editor *Irish Farmers Journal*; and Joe Healy, Cultivate chair and former Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) president.

Speaking on behalf of Cultivate Credit Unions, Joe said: "With 168 branches, participating credit unions are really excited for National Cultivate Week with loads of local events taking place across the country.

"Cultivate loan applications have doubled in just two years to over €50m last year. We believe that this growth is down to the farmer-friendly finance options we have to offer which are tailored to the needs of our farming members."



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IT IS CRUCIAL TO KEEP CHILDREN AWAY FROM WORKING VEHICLES AND ENSURE THEY ARE UNDER ADEQUATE SUPERVISION



## PREVENT THE UNTHINKABLE

CIARAN ROCHE, FBD RISK MANAGER, URGES FARMING FAMILIES TO PRIORITISE CHILD SAFETY ON FARMS

Over the past decade, the farming community has tragically witnessed the loss of 17 children in farming accidents, representing a significant portion of all farm fatalities in Ireland. The devastating impact of such incidents cannot be overstated, and my heartfelt sympathy goes out to all those who have experienced such life-changing events. For those affected by serious or fatal accidents, I encourage reaching out to Embrace FARM for support during these difficult times.

Statistics from the Health and Safety Authority reveal that 82 per cent of child fatalities on Irish farms are a result of accidents involving tractors, quads, or other farm vehicles. Additional causes include machinery and heavy loads falling on children. It is crucial to keep children away from working vehicles and ensure they are under adequate supervision while on the farm. Furthermore, it is imperative to educate children on farm safety practices and break dangerous working habits that may have been passed down through generations.

During school holidays, when children are more likely to be present on farms, it is especially important for farm families to focus on five key child-safety guidelines:

**1. Provide a safe play area:** A farm is a great place to grow up. There are lots of ways children can get involved, but always remember it is not a playground. There are many hazards on the farm and

children are particularly vulnerable to risks due to their inquisitive nature, poor perception of risk and lack of farm safety knowledge. Establishing a designated, supervised play area away from the dangers of a working farm is essential to safeguarding children.

- 2. Supervision:** Children should only be allowed on the farm under adult supervision. These instances present valuable teaching opportunities to educate children about farm risks and safety practices. To assist in this education, resources like the farm-safety film 'Once upon a Farm' supported by Agri Aware, FBD, the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), and ESB Networks, are invaluable tools for primary-level students and their families – scan the QR code below to view.
- 3. Vehicle safety:** With the majority of child fatalities involving farm vehicles, it is paramount to keep children away from moving vehicles. Tractors and quad bikes are not toys and should never be used as such. Pedestrian and child exclusion zones should be created around areas where vehicles are operating. Adhering to age-appropriate guidelines outlined in the *Code of Practice on Preventing Accidents to Children and Young Persons in Agriculture* is essential to ensuring vehicle safety on farms.
- 4. Avoiding dangerous activities/areas:** Children's innate curiosity may lead

them to explore hazardous areas on the farm. Implementing child-proof fencing and supervision around areas such as machine operating zones, slurry pits, chemical stores, bales and livestock enclosures is vital in preventing accidents.

- 5. Livestock safety:** Children should not come into close contact with potentially dangerous animals such as bulls, stallions, rams, or female livestock with newborn young. Maintaining a safe distance from livestock reduces the risk of injury or harm.

In conclusion, safeguarding children on farms requires proactive measures and constant vigilance. By prioritising child safety and implementing preventive strategies, we can mitigate the risk of tragic accidents. Let us not leave the safety of children to chance, but instead, make child safety a top priority on every farm.

**Data source: Health and Safety Authority Fatalities in Agriculture Data 2014-2023.**

For more farm safety information, scan the code





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# DRIVING DEMAND

**DAVID KENNEDY, HEAD OF DAIRY WITH BORD BIA, SPOKE TO MATT O' KEEFFE RECENTLY ABOUT MARKET PROSPECTS IN THE COMING MONTHS AS WELL AS THE CHALLENGES FACING THE SECTOR, AND BORD BIA'S WORK IN PROMOTING IRISH DAIRY PRODUCE ACROSS THE WORLD**

**Appraising recent milk price increases, David explained that some of the impetus is driven by scarcity, with a big reduction, for instance, in Irish supplies in the early months of 2024.** He continued: "International dairy market prices have also improved off a low base. It's encouraging to see the co-ops making price-increase announcements early in the production season. It's important to have prices up before peak production. What's driving it is that global supply is back. There was a very weak end to 2023 and this year hasn't started strongly in terms of global milk production either. Essentially, there's not as much milk or stockpiles around and buyers

are replenishing stocks. That drives prices a little bit up, so it's certainly encouraging."

## **PRICE VOLATILITY**

But the huge milk-price volatility since 2021 is certainly not a good way to run a business, he said: "It doesn't suit anyone. Even the high prices of 2022 don't work long term, because when you've got very high prices, you pay for it eventually and we did because the resultant high prices on shelves across the world meant that consumers left the dairy categories. You saw people trading out of butter into margarines or trading out of branded cheese into private label cheese or

people not eating out because they couldn't afford to buy the pizza. What we really want to see in global markets is solid, robust demand, that delivers prices with a margin for everyone including producers and processors, and a price that consumers can afford. We're getting back to a more solid position in terms of that affordability piece, which is critical for the industry.

"Globally, there are five big dairy exporters, with specific dynamics working in each of them. When prices are particularly high in New Zealand or Europe, it takes time to increase output because of our production systems. The US is a bit of an outlier. When



there's a margin for milk producers, they can turn on the milk supply very quickly by feeding plenty of low-priced grain. Right now, however, the US herd is back significantly in numbers. Compared to January 2023, the American cow herd was back by 79,000 head this January. What we're going to start seeing in the States is a slow ramp up of supply, but it'll take a little bit longer than usual because the cows aren't there. The latest market reports suggest flat supply globally in the first half of the year, with a ramp-up in the second half coming off the back of rising US production and a little bit of an upside in Australia and New Zealand as their season starts."

#### WEATHER WOES

Adverse weather conditions have reduced Irish milk output this spring. The Bord Bia head of dairy looks at the implications: "The majority of our processors will have a certain amount of their output locked into contracts and a certain amount available for spot trading. What will probably be the impact is that contracts will get prioritised leaving less wriggle room to take advantage of higher priced spot-trading opportunities. We have had poor weather from last summer and autumn. Hopefully, better weather through the spring and summer months will drive grass growth which would help us catch up in output," he said.

#### DIFFERENTIATING MILK PRODUCTS

"The beauty of a brand like Kerrygold, for instance, is the taste, texture and colour that differentiates it. It is a premium product and a great ambassador for Irish dairy. We know that only 10 per cent of global milk supply comes from grass. Bord Bia has been highlighting Irish grass-fed dairy in general and providing solid proof points around what grass-fed dairy means. These are facts backed up by our Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme. That provides a bulletproof vest to protect and validate our dairy provenance."

#### ENVIRONMENTAL DRIVERS

The strongest driver of environmental standards demands is the global customer buying product from all over the world. Bord Bia tracks this demand, explained David: "There are three aspects to this. There's the consumer and the business customer and there is the government commitment to achieving EU standards.



### WHAT WE REALLY WANT TO SEE IN GLOBAL MARKETS IS SOLID, ROBUST DEMAND, THAT DELIVERS PRICES WITH A MARGIN FOR EVERYONE

"From speaking to international buyers, 72 per cent said that sustainability is a critical part of their buying decision. A recent Rabobank survey showed that the top 20 dairy companies globally have made commitments that exceed national targets. The French company Lactalis, the biggest dairy company in the world, has committed to carbon reduction of 25 per cent by 2025 and 50 per cent by 2030. Dairy Farmers of America has a 30 per cent reduction target to be achieved by 2030, with Nestlé targeting a 50 per cent reduction by then. Danone wants a 47 per cent decrease by the end of the decade. These companies buy dairy from the four corners of the world, and they can't meet their reduction targets unless they deal with the most sustainable producers. David added: "We believe Ireland is at the top of the queue. Our infrastructure, in terms of farm audits, the sustainability work being done by our producers and processors, by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc, the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) and ourselves, provides the proof the dairy buyers require.

It's unparalleled. It's not matched anywhere else. We can give them proof points that nobody else can provide. Our Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme is in place for the last 10 years. It's challenging for producers and processors, and nobody likes seeing the auditor at the gate. But we're hoping to see the tide turning so that Ireland starts to command a premium from the market for our ingredients, because we're helping those global companies meet the commitments that they have made publicly."

#### NITRATES IMPACT

Reflecting on the nitrates reductions, David said he fully empathises with impacted farmers. "There has been serious financial investment on farms to drive output and people have long-term loans based on expectations of having a certain herd size," he says. "I must emphasise that we do, as a country, need to work on improving our water systems. It's not Bord Bia's position to dictate stocking rates or herd sizes or what Europe will do. It's our job to find the best markets for whatever we produce. The work that Teagasc, the co-ops and ourselves have been doing to try and improve water management and fertiliser management should deliver positive outcomes."

#### SUMMARY

"We recognise that 2023 was a very tough year for margins on Irish dairy farms and we're working hard to drive demand for Irish dairy across the world. We do that by promoting our sustainability credentials and by highlighting our grass-fed production model. We have buyers coming in from Japan, China, Southeast Asia, the US and Germany this year. We will promote Irish dairy at international trade shows across the globe. We're doing our best to drive things on, and I hope that 2024 turns out to be a more positive year for our Irish dairy farmers because they're doing a brilliant job and deserve to be rewarded for it."





Ciaran Fitzgerald  
Agri-food economist

# AGRICULTURE IS STILL RELEVANT

## IRISH AGRICULTURE MUST NOT BE EXCLUDED FROM DISCUSSIONS ABOUT BALANCE AND TRADE-OFFS, WRITES AGRI-FOOD ECONOMIST, CIARAN FITZGERALD

**A high-performing Irish economy is fundamental not just to current national wellbeing but also to the affordability of decarbonisation/transition supports.** Political consensus requires balance when implementing climate measures so as not to incur unforeseen negative impacts on the Irish economy. Pragmatic assessment of all balancing factors is a fundamental requirement, both in terms of funding economic transitions and getting buy-in on emissions-reduction measures which go against recent consumer trends such as airline travel.

### A DIFFICULT TRANSITION

Ultimately, contraction of the economy, or even recession, will only make acceptance of decarbonisation requirements more difficult if not impossible to implement, as was experienced with the global postponement of emissions-reduction targets and measures in the great recession 2008 to 2016. Given that economic contraction is not desirable for either climate or basic economic welfare reasons, the exclusion of Irish agriculture from balanced debates is clearly unwise, representing, as it does, equal measures of economic ignorance and environmental zealotry.

Complex trade-offs around increasing passenger throughput (and increasing emissions) at Dublin Airport or continuing to support inward investment in data centres (and again increased emissions) are examples of a debate based on addressing balanced considerations.

The core of the data centre debate seems to be a disagreement over whether Ireland should accept inward investment projects involving data centres – which are heavy energy users – conditional, as per Minister Eamon Ryan, on the data centres showing that they have firstly secured a supply of green/renewable energy. The view from the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Simon Coveney, is that there should be no pre-conditions but that, naturally, a commitment to decarbonised energy sourcing in the short-to-medium future should be expected from new entrants.

The view from Minister Coveney is grounded in the real world where inward investment is recognised as a highly competitive marketplace where opportunities/pipelines are not endless or to be taken for granted. Moreover, foreign direct investment (FDI) of any shade is, was, and always will be, the sacred cow of Irish industrial policy.

### NO PRAGMATISM FOR AGRICULTURE

This pragmatism is all but denied to the world of the Irish agri-food sector where not only is current output and performance dismissed or ignored but the route to decarbonisation is characterised by a shrill demand for targets to be achieved with undue haste, along with the constant threat of legal action from An Taisce and others if targets or even routes to decarbonisation are not seen as draconian enough by the environmental lobby.

General ignorance around the true economic impact of the Irish agriculture sector, combined with a broad weaponisation of International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) accounts, continue to 'inform' the national conversation.

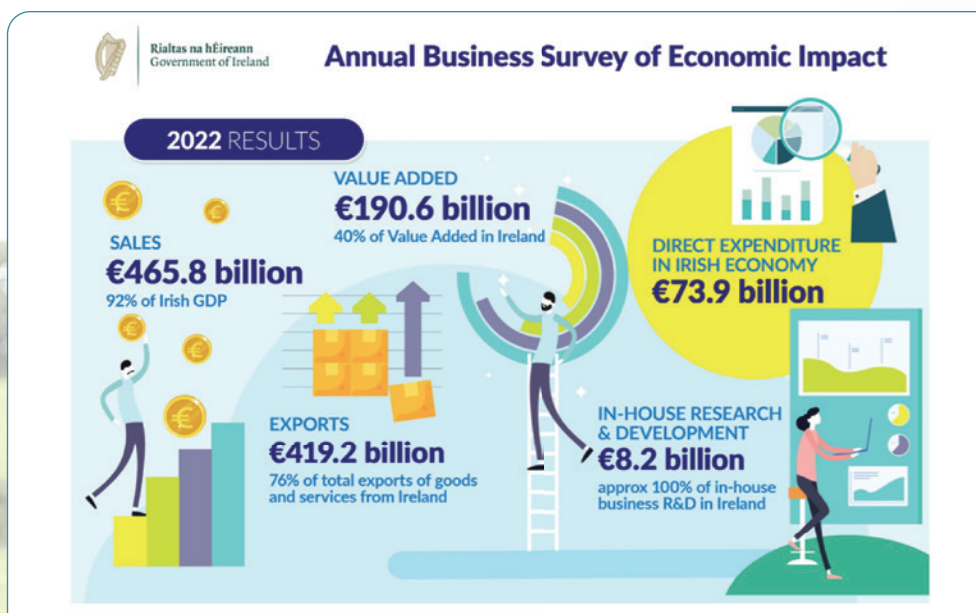
Farmers and agri-representatives rightly call out the hypocrisy and accounting nonsense that allocates all of our food production emissions to Ireland's national carbon accounts, even though more than 90 per cent of our dairy and meat is exported. In a completely contrary equation, coal or oil emissions don't accrue to the countries where production occurs, but instead to the end user. Calling out this contradiction is dismissed as green washing or climate denial.

This weaponisation of the IPCC accounts has been a core part of the rant against Irish agriculture over the last number of years whereby the infamous 35 per cent of total emissions coming from Irish agriculture is constantly and stridently quoted in the small island conversation, while, globally, the broader debate recognises the need to feed a growing population as well as meeting climate challenges. This fact is suppressed or ignored in the Irish context.

### ECONOMIC IMPACT ON IRISH ECONOMY

Equally challenging is the absence of any recognition in the public narrative that suppressing Irish agriculture will have a significant negative impact on the Irish economy, which is why the latest version of the annual survey of Irish economy expenditure,





published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is informative.

This survey presents a detailed summary of economic impact in the Irish economy versus the traditional, official accounting-based GDP/GNP figures which, as is well documented, are distorted by the inclusion of multinational profits and transfer pricing revenues from the multinational sector.

As the graphic above shows, in 2022, industry sales were €465bn, with exports of €419bn, whereas Irish economic expenditure was €73.9bn. This €73.9bn is the true/real measure of Irish economic impact.

The table below from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's survey shows that this €73.9bn Irish economy expenditure in 2022 breaks down into €35.9bn spent by indigenous Irish business versus €38bn in spending from the

multinational companies.

A more detailed examination of the major contributors to the €73.9bn expenditure total shows that the single biggest spending sector is the agri-food one, which spends €21bn or almost one-third of all Irish industry.

Moreover, analysis of multiplier impacts by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) shows that spending by the food and drink sector on agricultural raw materials and services has a multiplier impact of 2.06 in the rural/regional Irish economy.

Clearly the agri-food sector is a significant source of Irish economic activity and suppressing this activity by regulatory strangulation or legal action, without any consideration of balancing factors or Irish economic impacts will shrink the Irish economy and, perversely, make the delivery of decarbonisation measures even harder to achieve.

**E.2 Summary Table of Key Business Indicators (current prices), 2022**

	2022 (€bn)			Share of Total 2022		
	Foreign-owned	Irish-Owned	All	Foreign-owned	Irish-Owned	All
Sales	403.5	62.3	465.8	86.6%	13.4%	100%
Exports	386.3	33.0	419.2	92.1%	7.9%	100%
Value Added	169.3	21.2	190.6	88.9%	11.1%	100%
Direct Expenditure	38.1	35.9	73.9	51.5%	48.5%	100%

Note: Rounding may affect totals

This table shows sales, exports, value added and direct expenditure for 2022 by ownership.



THE ROLE OF MACRA PRESIDENT IS A BUSY AND VARIED ONE AND CURRENT PRESIDENT, ELAINE HOULIHAN HAD JUST PARTICIPATED IN A TWO-DAY INTERVIEW PANEL ADJUDICATING TEAGASC'S STUDENT OF THE YEAR FINALISTS, WHEN SHE CHATTED TO MATT O'KEEFE ABOUT WORK, LIFE, AND THE CHALLENGES FACING YOUNG FARMERS AND RURAL IRELAND

# A LIMERICK LEADER

**"We interviewed for three categories and every one of the participants should be extremely proud to be on the final list," comments Elaine.** "What really stood out was their commitment. They outlined exactly what they are doing on their farms, they highlighted the impact their families have had on their lives, and the support they are receiving in developing their careers in agriculture. Many of them are already Macra members and we will encourage all of them to join and participate in the organisation."

## ON THE SIDELINES

Though currently living in Kilkenny, Elaine is a Kilmallock woman and, naturally, is very proud of the recent achievements of Limerick hurling: "The senior team has elevated GAA in Limerick. You can see it at underage levels where participation and interest have soared on the success of the seniors," said Elaine. Sport is a key aspect of her life outside of Macra. As a physiotherapist, she can be found on the sidelines most weekends: "Mostly with Kilkenny camogie at the moment, so it's great to be with them. Some of the hurling clubs around the county of Kilkenny use my services so you can find me on any sideline. I really love working with rural clubs. They understand the essence of Macra and the workload I have."

## A BROAD PERSPECTIVE

Elaine has a strong farming and agri-sector background but it is the sum of several parts that gives her a broad skillset, and perspective, to be able to perform effectively in the Macra role: "I come from a farm with a suckler herd as well as a calf-to-beef enterprise. In addition, we have an agricultural-engineering company which gives me a very broad perspective on Irish agriculture, far broader, I think than if I were only involved in frontline farming. It really does stand to me. For a short period, I did work for a TD and that has given me an understanding of how politics works and has helped in our efforts lobbying on behalf of young farmers and rural young people generally."

## RESILIENCE THEME

In early March, Macra coordinated with the Agricultural Science Association (ASA) to highlight the importance of resilience. They organised a charity event, titled Resilient Industry: Adapting to Change: "It was



something I wanted to do when I took over as national president of Macra. We organised panel discussions around a lunch event to raise funds for Breast Cancer Awareness. The overall theme was resilience in the agri-industry and adapting to change. One panel featured women with very different backgrounds and careers, each providing personal experience of resilience in their lives from a cancer survivor to a nun working in South Sudan, one of the newest independent countries on the planet and with many social, structural and economic challenges, especially for women."

### EIGHTY AND COUNTING

Macra appears to be in good health as it reaches 80, according to Elaine, and there are plans to mark that milestone in the coming months: "We have had a lot of people signing up in the past year and that is very reassuring. It just shows that after 80 years, Macra still has so much to offer young people today. We still place huge emphasis on our club structures, and this will be seen in our various events to mark our 80th birthday this year.

"We're doing a series of patron events, for instance, to allow past members to meet and reconnect. There's going to be one of them in each region. We have a strategy to revive the field evenings that many former members would remember with fondness. Importantly, we need to give the clubs the opportunity to celebrate. Many of them, including my own, have been active for decades right back to the foundation of Macra."

### SKILLNET

Macra continues to have strong developmental and training programmes and it has a close alliance with Skillnet, which may not be so well known, Elaine says: "Many people aren't aware of our close association with Skillnet. It provides subsidised training to our members and we allow access to non-members as well. It provides upskilling for participants with everything from hoof care and DIY AI, to welding and first aid catered for. We also organise succession workshops under Skillnet and the system is flexible



Macra president, Elaine Houlihan, says they are excited to celebrate 80 years of the organisation.



## THE MINISTER HAS COME UP SHORT OF OUR EXPECTATIONS AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO PUT PRESSURE ON HIM AND HIS POLITICAL COLLEAGUES

enough that if there is demand for a particular course, we can develop a programme and provide it. Essentially, if the members come to us with an idea of a course and if it's possible for us to run, we will make it happen at a subsidised cost. It provides opportunities that I would encourage people to utilise a lot more."

### YOUNG FARMER FOCUS

Macra retains a firm focus on pursuing improvements for young farmers and when asked about commitments made by agriculture minister, Charlie McConalogue to the organisation in recent years, she comments: "We did come out heavy around greater supports for farm succession. The minister has come up short of our expectations and we will continue to put pressure on him and his political colleagues to live up to commitments around

our proposals for farm succession. The demographics in farming are not healthy. Farmers are an ageing population. Only seven per cent of farmers in Ireland are under the age of 35, which is very worrying. "It's young farmers that are going to be keep farming vibrant and rural Ireland alive. If we don't have farmers, we don't have rural communities, we don't have people working the land, we don't have people going to the local shop, we don't have people utilising the local post office. We need more young people involved in farming, and our lobbying makes Macra appealing to young people who appreciate what we are doing. There are too many restrictions on young people hoping to make a career in farming. Apart from the increasingly restrictive regulatory system around farming, there are serial objections to farm developments, often from people not within 100 miles of the development. It's something we have highlighted at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine. While there are concessions on grant aids for young farmers, much more needs to be done. "Previously we had a new entrant and retirement package to support succession. We want to see a comprehensive package put in place that will deliver results and we will continue to work to that end."

### ELAINE'S WISH LIST

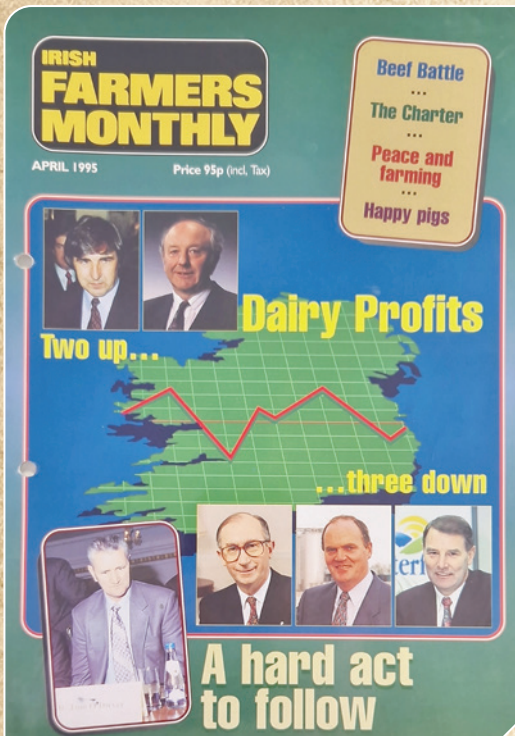
Macra's Land Mobility Service continues to operate, and Elaine emphasises the need for additional funding to allow it to encourage generational land transition: "We hope that Minister McConalogue commits to keeping the service funded because it is an essential part of the whole succession theme. The minister said he couldn't imagine any other organisation running the Land Mobility Service, so it baffles me that the funding isn't there, secured for several years, so that the service can plan for the long term." Elaine comments on the final year of her presidency: "I'm really looking forward to the next 12 months. Whoever thought we'd have an organisation in its 80th year with a president from one of its founding clubs? I look forward to celebrating it, and I truly hope we finally have success with succession."





# FIVE DECADES OF MEMORIES

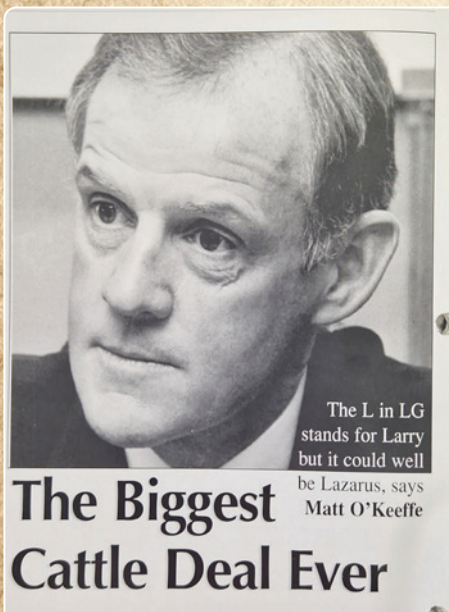
WELCOME TO OUR FOURTH TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE, AS WE CELEBRATE A MILESTONE 50<sup>TH</sup> YEAR FOR *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY*. 'THE MONTHLY' AS IT IS COMMONLY AND FONDLY KNOWN, WAS FOUNDED IN 1975 AND HAS BEEN A FAMILIAR AND DEPENDABLE SOURCE OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL-LIFE NEWS EVER SINCE. THIS MONTH, WE TAKE A LOOK AT WHO AND WHAT MADE THE HEADLINES IN APRIL 1995 AND 1997



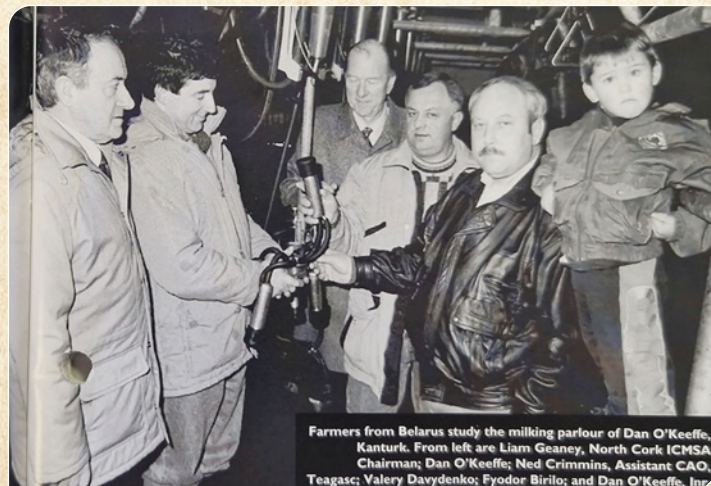
It was raining men on the cover of *Irish Farmers Monthly* in April 1995.



In this article from April 1995, Matt O'Keefe wrote: "After a wet autumn, January, February and March saw day after day of wind, rain and even snow." Sound familiar (almost 30 years later)? He continued: "We have had to adapt constantly on our farm to what seems to be a general dampening of climatic conditions. [...] Since the dairy cows went out by day on March 5 in 1994, and were out by day and night from March 19, our intention this year was to improve on this. It was not to be." Don't mention the weather, indeed!



A great commentary from Matt O'Keefe on the 'biggest cattle deal ever' involving Larry Goodman. Matt wrote in April 1995: "It surely must rank with the all-time great deals to be able to wipe out £300 million of debt and regain control of a company for £40 million. It seems that when the figures get that big, there is no problem or at any rate there is no point in anyone worrying about it. I would hazard a guess, however, that LG is a little more bald and grey after it all."



Farmers from Belarus visited Ireland in March 1995 for a two-week agricultural study trip, on the invitation of the ICMSA, in association with Friends of the Children of Chernobyl. We reported in the April 1995 issue that the economic and educational problems in Belarus were compounded by the presence of radioactive contaminants on 25 per cent of the land as a result of the explosion in Chernobyl in April 1986.





In April 1997, we ran a double-page spread to mark Abbey Machinery's 50-year milestone. At a very special Abbey Machinery open day, Charles Cavanagh paid tribute to his parents, Joe and Mary, who founded the modern Abbey company 50 years before. Joe, its then chair, started the company originally as Abbey Iron Works, continuing a family tradition that spanned more than 100 years. Today, Abbey Machinery is headed up by Clodagh Cavanagh, daughter of Charles, and she is the fifth generation to continue the family business. Pictured above are two generations of Cavanaghs, former managing director, Charles and his father, Joe.

# Glenroe Heifer for Africa



What a blast from the past this is. Stars of the popular farming drama, Glenroe, pictured sending an in-calf heifer off to Africa as part of the Bóthar scheme. The shipping of the heifer featured in the show was intended to encourage farmers to take part in the scheme. Pictured are: Eunie McMenamin who played Fidelma; Robert Carrickford who played Stephen; Mick Lally who played Miley; Mario Rosenstock who played Dr David Hanlon; Isobel Mahon who played Michelle; and Maureen Toal who played Teasy.

## ECONOMICS

# Farm Households Have Highest Disposable Incomes

Every seven years, the Central Statistics Office compares the incomes and expenditure in different types of household. Teagasc economist Tony Leavy summarises findings in the most recent survey.

**P**reliminary results of the Household Budget Survey, published recently by the CSO, provide information on the incomes and expenditure of a random sample of nearly 8000 households. The period covered was May 1994 to July 1995. In the report, households in rural areas are distinguished from households in urban areas. Households in rural areas are further subdivided into farm households and rural non-farm households. Table 1 shows both gross and disposable weekly household income for urban, farm, rural non-farm, and for the State as a whole. Household income includes earned income, property, investment income plus the value of State transfers.

While gross income is highest in urban households, disposable income is highest in farm households, because direct taxation is lower in the latter. There are also more persons at work in farm households than in other households - 1,444 compared with 0,968 in urban households, 0,858 in rural non-farm, and 0,982 in the State as a whole.

Earned income per person at work, as distinct from non-earned income such as State transfers, pension, property and investment income, was highest in urban households (€279) and lowest in rural non-farm households (€205). The composition of income in non-farm households is different from that in farm households.

(Table 2) Earned income comprises 82% of total household income in the case of the farm household. In other households, it comprises 70 to 74% of income. There is a big difference between farm and other households in the proportion of adults (those over 20 years of age) in paid work. In urban households this was 50%, in farm households 65%, in rural non-farm 44% and in the State 50%. Fifty per cent of adults are either retired, in unpaid work in the home, or unemployed. However, 65% of adults in farm households are in paid work. There is also a contrast between farm and non-farm households in which all adults are either unemployed or retired. Thirty five per cent of those surveyed had no adult in paid work, the figure was 37% in urban households, and 43% in rural non-farm households. By contrast, all farm households had at least one person in paid work.

**Table 1: Household weekly income, €**

	Urban	Farm	Rural Non-Farm	State
Gross	344.44	357.35	289.52	343.12
Disposable	292.73	336.07	244.21	281.91

**Table 2: Earned Income Compared With Non-earned Income Per Household**

	Urban %	Farm %	Rural Non-Farm %	State %				
Earned	279.23	74	193.81	82	264.68	76	254.35	74
Non-earned	94.12	26	63.54	18	65.44	30	88.87	26

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Preliminary results of a household budget survey by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in April 1997 revealed that farm households had the highest disposable incomes when compared to urban and rural non-farm families, and the State as a whole. The survey also found that 35 per cent of respondents had no adult in paid work. The figure was 37 per cent in urban households, and 43 per cent in rural non-farm households. By contrast, all farm households had at least one person in paid work.

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A Volac advert from April 1997.



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DAIRY



**AISLÍN CAMPBELL, INTOUCH NUTRITIONIST (NORTHERN IRELAND) AT ALLTECH, ADVISES ON BEST PRACTICE WHEN IT COMES TO IMPROVING SILAGE QUALITY AND, IN TURN, ANIMAL PERFORMANCE**

# NUTRITION FIRST



**Aislinn Campbell,**  
InTouch nutritionist at Alltech.

**Paying good attention and allowing the correct time and preparation of all stages of silage-making should help improve silage quality and positively impact feed costs and animal performance.**

Grass silage remains the most common forage in cow diets across Ireland. However, it is the one element of the diet that has huge variation from farm to farm. Whether your farming system is high or low input, quality grass silage is non-negotiable. The objective on every farm should be to produce high-quality silage and improve efficiency by reducing field and clamp losses where possible. Preparations before silage is cut

are crucial; pits should be clean and all necessary plastic and covers ready. Adequate fermentation time is needed between ensiling and opening the pit for good palatability, so feeding out must be managed to allow enough time to elapse before the pit will be re-opened. Finally, it is important to implement feed budgets to analyse how much silage needs to be made; poor weather conditions over the last number of months have shown how crucial it is to have good reserves.

## FORAGE

Cows are designed to eat forage, so making and feeding high-quality digestible silage is a must. Maximising forage intakes is key to improving farm profitability. Poorer-quality silage requires additional supplementation to achieve the same performance, bringing in additional feed costs.

For example, if a cow eats 10kg (approximately 43kg fresh weight) of dry matter (DM) of a 75-DMD silage with a UFL (forage unit for lactation) content of 0.85, the energy intake of the cow is 8.5 UFL. Whereas if the cow eats the same amount of a poorer silage (65 DMD), with a 0.72 UFL, she will only get 7.2 UFL of energy. While this difference of 1.3 UFL seems small, it is enough energy to produce three litres of milk. For this cow to achieve the same performance as the first, an extra 1.5 kg of concentrate will be required, resulting in additional costs. Good-quality grass silage should have a UFL >0.8 or a metabolisable energy (ME) of 11.5-12 MJ/kg DM, a crude protein of at least 14 per cent and

a DM content of 27-30 per cent.

While fertiliser and slurry have been difficult to manage this year, they should have been applied at levels tailored to your own farm's needs. Representative soil testing should be done regularly to ensure good optimum soil fertility levels. Optimum soil pH is also vital and should be between 6-6.5. Without this basic feature, you will struggle to manage the other parameters.

## HARVEST

At harvest, we need to be careful if there is still nitrogen in the grass. Excess nitrogen impacts grass ensilability, which may result in poorer fermentation. Too much nitrogen can produce grass with low sugar levels, meaning the silage could have high ammonia and butyric acid, causing palatability issues. On the other side of that, too little nitrogen can cause low protein silages and reduced yields, as we saw last year. We sampled over 1,100 silages in 2023, and our results averaged 29 per cent DM, 12.9 per cent crude protein, 10.4 metabolisable energy (ME) and a DMD of 68.8. The biggest factor that contributes to nutritional value is cutting date. For the best silage, an early cutting date, before the plant has headed and a seed head is visible, is vital. Each day that passes beyond this point, the DMD value will decline by 0.5 units. So, aim to cut just before the seed head emerges. Do not sacrifice quality for quantity, as it is possible to achieve both. Aim for an early-May cutting date, as later will impact on second and third cuts and cause forage quality issues for the remainder of the year.





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While it's not always possible, cutting on a dry, sunny day is ideal. Grass sugars are at their peak in the afternoon, but you also need to consider a fast wilt. An overnight wilt might not be adequate. Also, consider that wet ensiled grass will be too acidic, producing an unpalatable feed. Effluent is also likely to be at a DM of less than 25 per cent. A target dry matter of 27-30 per cent is ideal. Grass can also be too dry, resulting in consolidation issues, poor ensiling or secondary fermentation in the pit and aerobic spoilage or heating once opened. The mower should not be dropped below 6-7cm to help avoid soil contamination and encourage good regrowth. Once cut, the

grass needs to be ensiled as quickly and cleanly as possible to prevent losses (<24 hours). A longer wilt time leads to bigger losses. Chop length should be 2.5-5cm for 25 per cent DM crops.

#### WEATHER

Irish weather can be unpredictable, and we need to bear that in mind here. If weather conditions are difficult, mowing should be held off until the weather settles. However, do not delay too long, as soil contamination will become an issue. If possible, use different access points in fields and make sure the area in front of the clamp remains free from soil. Work downhill and make sure tyre

pressures are correct for the conditions. Part-filling trailers should also be considered. Be prepared and remember that wet grass will also produce a lot of effluent.

#### ADDITIVE

Silage additive can help make good silage great, but it will not compensate for poor silage management. No one additive is ideal in all farm circumstances. A homofermentative additive (such as Alltech's Egalis) which supplies one million bacteria, can help improve silage quality. The aim of this additive is to speed up the fermentation process using lactic acid bacteria, reducing the pH to the required level and preserving

more of the nutrients in the crop. The result is less waste and increased performance, which fits in well with the focus on improved efficiency and sustainability. You will have to make an informed decision based on the conditions and allow adequate time to get the product and the correct equipment for application.

Put aside time to prepare the clamp before harvesting begins. This can help speed up the operation. Old, mouldy, rotten silage should already be removed from the clamp. To ensure quality, the clamp needs to be filled as quickly as possible, paying good attention to detail. Good compaction from the very start is vital for clamp stability and to reduce losses. Even filling and regular rolling is a must; however, avoid rolling the next morning before filling if a pit has been left overnight, as this will draw in air. Clamps should be filled in a wedge shape. Do not overfill the clamp as consolidation above the walls will drop significantly, creating losses. Finally, the pit needs to be sealed as soon as all compaction is complete.

Paying good attention and allowing the correct time for adequate preparation of all stages of silage-making should help improve silage quality and positively impact feed costs and animal performance.



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# CONSUMER TRUST

RECENT RESEARCH UNVEILED BY THE NATIONAL DAIRY COUNCIL (NDC) SHOWS THAT TRUST IN IRISH DAIRY FARMERS REMAINS STRONG

A new survey released by the NDC has presented a positive trajectory in attitudes towards dairy in Ireland. One thousand people were interviewed as part of the research from a broad demographic using the standard Association of Irish Market Research Organisations (AIMRO) guidelines ensuring a representative sample. This is the fifth piece of research conducted by the NDC on this subject since May 2023.

## POSITIVE STRIDES

Dairy in Ireland saw momentum in attitudes around 'health', with an increase of 7 per cent saying that dairy is part of a healthy, balanced diet, while under 'sustainability' there was growth of 5 per cent in those who trust Irish dairy farmers to care for the environment. Adults under 35 remain the key force in driving this positive trend in attitudes towards the sector.

In addition, while the start of 2024 coincided with less communications activity, NDC advertising was recalled by three in 10 adults while almost seven in 10 adults (68 per cent) are aware of the NDC brand (a growth of 5 per cent when compared to May 2023).



Mark Keller, interim chief executive at the NDC.

Mark Keller, interim chief executive at the NDC, explains: "We have three core metrics to assess consumers' attitudes towards dairy from both a production and consumption perspective. From February's report, 70 per cent of those surveyed say they trust Irish dairy farmers to take care of the land through their milk production process. On an aggregate basis across the five surveys, this represents 67 per cent of the population and is up from 47 per cent in 2022. Meanwhile,

83 per cent of consumers in February see dairy as part of a healthy, balanced diet and 81 per cent see consuming dairy as part of a sustainable diet. Also, on brand affiliation, 87 per cent of those surveyed see the NDC as a source of trust when it comes to dairy, the production system, and its nutritional benefits."

## AGE DEMOGRAPHIC

Continuing, Mark points to the issue of age demographic when it comes to attitudes towards dairy. "An area of concern for dairy farmers has been the growing disconnection of younger consumers from dairy – and this was evident in our first survey from May of last year with only 42 per cent of consumers under 35 believing that dairy farmers are actively working to protect the environment. This finding reflects the negative perception younger consumers are subjected to by a continuous anti-dairy-farmer narrative in mainstream media, coupled with the aggressive campaigns of NGO groups and non-ruminant movements.

"However, our campaign execution through 2023 and early 2024 has shifted that decline

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Shane Fitzgerald, Co. Waterford





Some of the results of the research undertaken by the NDC.

in support with 67 per cent of under 35s now declaring trust for Irish dairy farmers and the value of dairy as part of a balanced and sustainable diet."

#### CORE ATTITUDES

Dairy products have a strong reputation as a source of calcium. And the survey respondents maintained that view, with 87 per cent agreeing that 'dairy products are rich in calcium'. Staying on the subject of nutrition, 83 per cent of respondents agreed that dairy products were also a 'good source of protein'. Irish consumers value locally sourced food, and 81 per cent agree that 'Irish dairy products are superior because they are locally produced' with 70 per cent saying that they trust Irish dairy farmers to care for the environment.

#### IRISH DAIRY AS A BRAND

Commenting on Irish dairy's reputation and Irish dairy as a brand, Mark says: "Irish

dairy has an extremely positive reputation, here in Ireland and across the world, for its quality milk and dairy products. It is no surprise that several of the world's largest food companies who produce infant formula have manufacturing facilities in Ireland. Our grass-based production system provides high quality nutritious milk, a rich source in calcium, protein, iodine, and essential nutrients for all life stages.

"There are many studies supporting the need to have dairy as part of a balanced diet. In Ireland, the Department of Health's guidelines recommend a minimum of three portions a day. Ireland's dairy reputation internationally has been growing in significance driven by the growth in milk production over the past decade with customers across 150 markets – many of which are dairy deficit regions – who demand high standards in quality and nutritional credentials.

"Our milk powders provide essential nutrition

for millions of children across Sub Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Irish butter and cheese are also in demand for their nutritional benefits and of course taste. Irish dairy is, and will continue to be, a leader in the transition towards a sustainable production system while offering essential nutritional benefits for millions of consumers locally and globally – a great source of pride for the 17,500 dairy farmers across the country."

#### ONLINE VISIBILITY

To tackle the concerns of the younger demographic in relation to dairy and dairy production, and to mitigate the potential for apathy around dairy within this age group, Mark says that the NDC will address this through its digital strategy in 2024 by educating this cohort with engaging and entertaining content relevant to them in the channels, where they are most likely to be influenced.







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# EBI DELIVERING PRODUCTIVITY, PROFITABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

WITH THE DAIRY BREEDING SEASON JUST AROUND THE CORNER, TEAGASC RECENTLY RAN A SERIES OF WEBINARS AND FARM WALKS TO SUPPORT BREEDING DECISION-MAKING ON FARMS. **MATT O'KEEFFE** DISCUSSES SOME OF THE KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR FARMERS AT THIS TIME OF YEAR

**The breeding objectives on farms vary but all of them include key priorities including improving milk production, fertility, health and disease resistance, and profitability.**

Each of these issues is influenced by different factors. Milk production, for instance, in terms of yield as well as milk solids, is greatly determined by the genetics in place in the herd, as well as the overall nutrition including grass, silage and concentrate usage. There are balances to be struck. There is high heritability for increased milk volumes, for instance, that automatically delivers higher milk solids volumes. Higher profitability, however, is delivered by milk

solids percentages, not volumes. We learned to our cost before the introduction of the Economic Breeding Index (EBI) that high milk volumes can have a negative impact on fertility. Isolated breeding decisions can lead to counterproductive outcomes and a balanced approach using all available herd performance information is the key to successful breeding programmes over many years.

#### A FERTILE APPROACH

On the fertility side, the logic for seeking improvements in the herd fertility status is to breed cows that have multiple lactations and

that will cycle every year to deliver optimum production in a seasonal production system. Other important aspects of the make-up of an efficient cow are more challenging objectives in the breeding process. Somatic cell counts, lameness and vulnerability to diseases such as TB can be positively influenced by breeding policy, but to a lesser extent and by lower margins than the headline production and fertility figures.

#### LOWER CARBON - HIGHER PROFITS

There are now additional requirements being brought into play that will be given increasing priority in the coming years. The

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## THE SCIENCE IS ADVANCING AT SPEED WITH FULL RECOGNITION THAT COWS CAN BE BRED TO PRODUCE HIGHER MILK SOLIDS

somewhat nebulous concept of sustainability will be manifested by lower environmental impact, particularly the ability to use the breeding tools and EBI to breed cows with a lower carbon footprint. The science is advancing at speed with full recognition that cows can be bred to produce higher milk solids per kilogramme of input. Add in another priority to deliver higher beef merit offspring from the Irish dairy herd and it is easier to understand the complexities of breeding management and the multiplicity of sometimes competing aspirations and preferred outcomes envisioned based on decisions being made in the weeks ahead.

### COMPARING AVERAGE AND TOP-END

The key to success is planning and using the array of tools available to make decisions that will have positive or negative repercussions on individual herds for generations of cows in the coming years. The informed use of the EBI in breeding decision-making is the key to success. Figures produced last year by the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) show the difference between average and top-end herd EBI figures. The dependability and deliverability of the index is improving incrementally, year on year. Figures produced last year showed the performance differences between the top EBI and the average herd. The key performance indicators included the average milk (litres) per cow. The top 20 per cent of herds averaged 5,663L per cow while the average herd yield was 342L behind at 5,321L per cow. Average milk solids further highlighted the EBI differences with the top herds averaging 47kg greater milk solids production per cow. In the background, other important breeding traits were contributing to these physical performance figures. The top 20 percentile EBI herds had an average calving interval of 367 days compared to the average 385-day performance of the average EBI herd. Likewise, there was a significant discrepancy in the average six-week calving rate with the top herds having 79 per cent of their cows calved in the first six weeks compared to only 67 per cent of the average EBI herds calved at that critical period. The higher performances of the top herds were also seen as delivering a bonus in environmental terms. Kilogrammes of CO<sub>2</sub> per kilogramme of fat and protein corrected milk (FPCM) was measured at 0.86 for the high

EBI herds compared to 0.91 for the average herd. This is not only a win for environmental sustainability. It has a significant economic value with more efficient cows delivering greater output from similar inputs.

### ON-FARM EXPERIENCE

Moving to a practical herd strategy, much depends on current genetics and long-term breeding targets. Last year, Teagasc used the example of the Goresbridge-based Donohoe herd to show how long-term breeding policies can deliver impressive results over time. Philip Donohoe has been a keen advocate of the EBI since its inception 20 years ago. Calving interval, fertility and milk production have all improved significantly over the two decades. The Donohoe herd produced over 500kg of milk solids per cow in 2022. It had a calving interval of 365 days and a six-week calving rate of 85 per cent. Every year pre-breeding, Philip puts considerable time into choosing his dairy bulls. The ICBF Sire Advice Programme is used to provide direction and strategy in making those bull choices. In essence, Philip can reasonably predict the EBI figures for his heifer replacement calves before conception. The sire-advice tool enables him to match the right cow to the right bull with the aim of maximising genetic gain.

While keeping an eye on fertility, a major focus of Philip's breeding strategy is to improve fat and protein percentages. The longer-term goal is to ultimately breed a herd with an average 5 per cent fat and 4 per cent protein. He also chooses bulls which are positive for health and disease resistance, as well as carbon footprint reduction.

### SPREADING THE BULL RISK

One important aspect of choosing a range of bulls to use in a breeding season is to have a sufficiently large group that any variabilities in reliability are diluted through the average performance of the bulls on a herd. A rule of thumb is to allocate up to seven bulls used equally across a herd of 100 cows. This selection takes time and planning, well before the breeding commencement date. Booking semen well in advance is also an absolute necessity. The short breather between calving and breeding must be used to re-energise ahead of breeding, even after a spring that has tested farmers to the limit.

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Caroline Hanrahan, Co. Cork



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Jack Pilkington, co-founder and CEO of Agri Data Analytics and Alan O'Donovan, co-founder and chief technical officer of Agri Data Analytics.

THE RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF A DEVICE THAT CAN MEASURE METHANE EMISSIONS FROM CATTLE, WHILE NOT A PANACEA, WILL PLAY A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN HELPING THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR TO MEET ITS EMISSIONS TARGETS. BERNIE COMMINS CONTINUES TO PROFILE SOME OF IRELAND'S UP-AND-COMING AGRI-INNOVATORS AND, THIS MONTH, LEARNS ABOUT THE BOVINE BREATHALYSER AND THE COMPANY BEHIND IT, THE AWARD-WINNING AGRI DATA ANALYTICS

# DISRUPTIVE DATA

**Last year was a big year for Agri Data Analytics.** In September, just eight months after its establishment, the company won the AgTechUCD Start-Up Award at Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Arena at the 2023 National Ploughing Championships. The win secured a place for the company on the 12-week AgTechUCD Agccelerator Programme held at UCD Lyons Farm, which it completed earlier this year.

Alan O'Donovan, co-founder – alongside Jack

Pilkington, CEO – and chief technical officer explained the impact of that win: "Not only was it pivotal in the progress of our company, but the subsequent exposure and company validation was immense, opening several new doors for us within the agri-tech sector and acting as a catalyst for brand growth and product awareness among the wider agri-industry and in our local and regional community." This has led to the completion of phases two and three of Enterprise Ireland's

New Frontiers programme; winning the Best Agritech Hardware Product 2023 Award at the FBD Better Farming Awards; winning a Bronze Award in the Emerge-Tech Category of the National Start-up Awards; being named in Spark Crowdfunding's Top 100 Most Ambitious Companies in Ireland 2024; and currently participating in this year's Prep4Seed Investor Readiness programme, delivered by the Irish Business Innovation Centres in collaboration with Enterprise Ireland.



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Brendan and John Walsh, Co. Tipperary





## OUR DEVICE MEASURES HOW MUCH METHANE AND CO<sub>2</sub> CATTLE EXCRETE FROM THEIR MOUTHS THROUGH BELCHES AND EXHALED BREATH

### TURNING HEADS

OK, deep breath after that. So, the company is clearly turning heads, but why? Well, it has developed the Bovine Breathalyser, a non-invasive device that measures enteric greenhouse gas emissions from ruminant animals. "Or in simpler terms, our device measures how much methane and CO<sub>2</sub> cattle excrete from their mouths through belches and exhaled breath," says Alan. He continues: "We do this by enticing the animal into a feeding tray area with bait feed, which is dispensed for them when in proximity to the device. As the animal starts eating, we begin to draw the air from the feeding tray area into our system where samples of the cow's exhaled breath are captured and processed using specialised gas sensors that can accurately determine

the concentration of methane and CO<sub>2</sub> present. After an adequate amount of testing on a herd has taken place, we can analyse all the emissions data along with many performance and health parameters to determine the grammes per day of methane and CO<sub>2</sub> that any one particular animal has emitted."

We already know, however, that livestock emit enteric methane and CO<sub>2</sub> in much greater quantities than is ideal, so what does having this precise data achieve? Alan explains that he and Jack discovered that there was a lack of adequate equipment on the market to allow for sufficient testing at scale to take place, which would enable researchers to effect change and start meaningfully reducing said quantities. Alan explains in more detail: "With enteric fermentation

Alan and Jack explain that the company's overarching aim is to provide agri-focused researchers with data that they can use to identify high- and low-emitting ruminants, test methane-reducing supplementation, and determine ways of reducing cattle methane and CO<sub>2</sub> output through genetic, dietary and supplementary means.

accounting for about 23 per cent of Ireland's total greenhouse gas emissions and methane having a 28 times greater global-warming potential than carbon dioxide, even the slightest reductions to ruminant methane emissions will have a significant impact on Ireland's total greenhouse gas emissions output.

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**Agri Data Analytics winning the AgTechUCD Start-Up Award at Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Arena at the 2023 National Ploughing Championships. Pictured are: Anne Fitzpatrick, Enterprise Ireland; Niamh Collins, director, AgTechUCD; Minister Simon Coveney; Anna May McHugh, National Ploughing Association; Jack Pilkington and Alan O'Donovan, Agri Data Analytics; Leo Clancy, CEO, Enterprise Ireland; and Leo McGrane, manager, AgTechUCD.**

"To put this into perspective, your average car produces 4.6 tonnes (t) of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent gas per year while a typical cow is estimated to produce 5.3t of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent gas per year and researchers predict through genetic optimisation alone, ruminant methane emissions can be reduced by as much as 20 per cent."

Alan continues: "The issue agri-research bodies currently face that prevents them from following through on these targets is the lack of adequate equipment on the market to allow for sufficient testing at scale to take place. We aim to satisfy both the hardware and software aspects of this market with the Bovine Breathalyser, which will measure enteric emissions while an animal is eating, and our accompanying data platform, where researchers will have access to the information they require in order to conduct studies at scale and find analytical, data-focused solutions to the climate crisis."

#### EARLY DAYS

Alan says that the scale and frequency of testing that Agri Data Analytics intends to undertake has yet to be achieved in this space, and with enteric emissions accounting for around 95 per cent of a bovine animal's yearly methane and CO<sub>2</sub> output, it's no surprise that there is a certain degree of anticipation surrounding the development and rollout of the Bovine Breathalyser among the agri-research community. The device, he clarifies, is not aimed at the average farmer. Instead, it is aimed at agri-research

and advisory authorities like the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF), Teagasc, AgTech UCD and so on, all of whom are focused on the singular goal of reducing bovine methane emissions through genetic, dietary and supplementary means. He says that Ireland is leading the way in terms of ruminant methane testing, making this market an obvious point of particular focus for the company and a good launchpad for other European countries. "On a global scale, the other key markets we have set out to grow into are New Zealand, Australia and the UK, before moving across the EU, and, eventually, on to Argentina and the US," says Alan.

#### FROM CRITICISM TO CONFIDENCE

Developing a device for measuring methane emissions from cattle does not come without criticism from the farming community, for obvious reasons, Alan says. But he quickly adds that these criticisms are often quickly replaced with votes of confidence and encouragement when it is understood what exactly he and Jack are trying to achieve. "The farming community is being demonised now more than ever for the supposed grave impact agriculture is reaping on our environment and it is inevitably affecting the average farmer's bottom line. "With the Bovine Breathalyser, we intend to establish to what degree do bovine animals contribute to Ireland's total greenhouse gas emissions output and if livestock are being disproportionately blamed for the global climate crisis," he explains.

From there, researchers will use the device to progressively optimise animals. Alan explains that they will do this primarily through breeding and supplementation, improving yield while reducing greenhouse gas output. "This can help create future generations of high-yielding, low-emitting animals with optimised dietary guidelines that help farmers save on feed costs and a reduced age of slaughter for cattle across the board," adds Alan.

#### PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

After a whirlwind year one, year two for Agri Data Analytics brings with it the primary objective of having a completed minimum viable product (MVP) ready for on-farm testing in June, and a market-ready device for late 2024, or early 2025. The June deadline is critical as the company plans to showcase the product at the largest agricultural event in the southern hemisphere, Fieldays. New Zealand is a key market for Agri Data Analytics with New Zealand being a leader in the bovine-emissions testing space, explains Alan.

"Our MVP development plan will fall in line with Fieldays in New Zealand where we plan to display in the Innovation Hub and participate in the Innovation Awards there. This market research and networking trip will provide us with good guidance on our approach towards the New Zealand market and will give us an opportunity to foster connections within agriculture in the southern hemisphere."



**ROOTED IN AGRI-TECH**

Agri Data Analytics is one of a growing number of Irish companies addressing problems in the agri-sector with innovative solutions and Alan believes that agri-tech is the solution to the emissions dilemma. "Agriculture is rapidly entering a period of turbulence fueled by the ongoing macroeconomic dilemma of trying to provide food for a growing world population while also trying to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. How

can one be achieved without adversely affecting the other? We believe the solution to this dilemma is rooted in agri-tech. "Now, more than ever, farmers are facing enormous governmental pressures to meet emissions targets, however they have yet to be offered any substantial financial aid or guidance to supplement this transition. We, as innovators in this space and servants of the farmer, must take it upon ourselves to make this transition as seamless as possible and acknowledge

that we have a duty to help farmers meet demand, meet regulations, reduce labour, foster a better work-life balance and above all else earn a living, just as they have a duty to provide high quality food for a growing population." Alan adds that, if we want to reduce emissions and increase yield output then we must optimise our land, our cattle, our time and ourselves. "The solution is simple," he says. "Less demonisation of farmers, more innovation in agriculture."

**COMPANY ORIGINS**

The path to the creation of Agri Data Analytics is paved in steel, Alan explains: "Unlike many modern day agri-tech companies that usually spin out from third-level education, Agri Data Analytics' roots are based in steel fabrication with its CEO, Jack Pilkington being the owner and managing director of Clonearl Engineering, a steel fabrication firm based in Daingean, Co. Offaly.

"Specialising in steel structures, shed construction and trailer manufacturing, Clonearl Engineering has gained a reputation for quality and reliability which has built a loyal

customer base with some notable clients in the agri-sector such as the ICBF and Teagasc.

"With this came many new connections in the agri-tech space where it was highlighted that there was a lack of adequate methane-testing equipment for ruminant animals currently available on the market."

From there, Jack and Alan began their investigation into devices for measuring enteric methane emissions from livestock, which eventually culminated in the establishment of Agri Data Analytics. And the rest...

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# REDUCING THE RISK OF PNEUMONIA IN CALVES AT TURNOUT

**SARAH HIGGINS MVB MRCVS CERTAVP, RUMINANT AND EQUINE VETERINARY MANAGER, MSD ANIMAL HEALTH, OUTLINES THE CAUSES AND TREATMENT OF PNEUMONIA IN CALVES AT TURNOUT, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON VACCINATING**



Sarah Higgins, MSD Animal Health.

**Respiratory disease is commonly seen in both dairy and suckler calves.** It is the most significant cause of death in cattle greater than one month of age in Ireland. There are substantial long-term implications of respiratory disease on productivity for both dairy heifer and beef calves, with reduced milk yield and reduced average daily gain respectively. Therefore, it is imperative

that farmers implement a strategic plan pre-turnout to maximise calves' immunity in conjunction with minimising infectious pressure.

## WHAT CAUSES PNEUMONIA IN CALVES?

It's a complex interaction between the animal, pathogens (bacteria, viruses and lungworm) and the environment. A primary viral infection can compromise lung defence mechanism. Subsequently, calves are predisposed to bacterial infection of the lower respiratory tract. It is therefore fundamental to monitor calves frequently post-turnout to observe for clinical signs of disease. Clinical cases of pneumonia may present with all or some



**PARTNER PROMOTION**

of the following signs: nasal or ocular discharge, increased rate and effort of respiration (pant), fever (greater than 39.5°C), off-form, poor appetite and coughing. Contact your veterinary practitioner to promptly diagnose and treat cases accordingly when these clinical signs are observed. There is a seasonal peak in cases of pneumonia from September to October. However, it is worth noting that the threat of pneumonia is omnipresent. Pneumonia can occur at any stage of the year whether calves are indoors or outdoors.

**WHY DOES TURNOUT PRESENT A RISK?**

There are multiple stressors associated with turnout which include change of diet, change

of environment, unfavourable weather conditions and commingling. These stressors negatively impact the calves' immune system resulting in increased susceptibility to developing disease, notably bovine respiratory disease, of which pneumonia is the main syndrome. Turn out healthy calves only, if possible, on a mild day and maintain concentrate feeding for at least one month, typically 1kg per animal per day, to mitigate stress.

Weather conditions in April and May can be unpredictable and unfavourable. The changeable nature of the weather is a major predisposing factor for calves to present with pneumonia, in particular pneumonic pasteurellosis, which can be caused by a bacterium, *Mannheimia haemolytica*. A well-sheltered paddock is recommended for youngstock at turnout in tandem with a vaccination programme, preferably incorporating cover against *M. haemolytica*. Vaccination is a vital component of the control measures to reduce the risk of pneumonia, as it enhances immunity by stimulating production of antibodies. Vaccination will reduce infection and clinical signs of pneumonia. Bovilis Bovipast RSP protects against both viral and bacterial agents namely PI3, RSV and provides the broadest protection against *M. haemolytica*, which is frequently the principal bacterial agent implicated in pneumonia. The use of IRP technology enables cross protection against two serotypes of *M. haemolytica*, A1 and A6, ensuring the broadest protection available against *M. haemolytica*. Recently, many farmers vaccinate new-born calves to provide protection against two viruses, RSV and PI3. For example, Bovilis INtranasal RSP is licensed for administration from the day of birth.

**FURTHER VACCINATION?**

Do these new-born calves vaccinated against RSV and PI3 require further vaccination against pneumonia? Bovilis INtranasal RSP has a duration of immunity of 12 weeks, thereby providing protection in the early critical high risk first few months of life. However, prior to, or at,

turnout this protection may have lapsed. To provide protection against RSV, PI3 and *M. haemolytica*, Bovilis Bovipast RSP can be administered. A primary course comprises of two subcutaneous (under the skin) doses four weeks apart, with an onset of immunity of two weeks. Ideally, calves should receive the second dose two weeks pre-turnout as the second dose results in an increased antibody titre and thus improved protection. Nevertheless, due to potential time constraints and the timing of turnout, the second dose can be administered post-turnout. Ensure to use sterile clean needles and syringe for administration. It is also vital that vaccines are stored correctly. For instance, for Bovilis Bovipast RSP, it must be stored at 2-8°C and used within 10 hours of first opening.

**CLOSTRIDIAL DISEASES**

Also, it is worth noting the importance of providing protection against clostridial diseases pre-turnout. There are many syndromes associated with clostridial disease in calves. Blackleg is the most commonly known syndrome. Clostridial diseases are not contagious. However, they are highly infectious and ubiquitous. The clinical presentation of the disease will be dependent on the causal bacteria involved, but they are often associated with acute/sudden deaths. When vaccinating against clostridial diseases it is important to follow the treatment protocol, typically involving two doses, four to six weeks apart. It is also important to ensure there is a strategic worming protocol implemented to reduce parasitic respiratory disease as first season grazers have no acquired immunity to lungworm, unless they are vaccinated in advance of turnout.

Implementing the recommendations outlined above will aid in reducing the risk of pneumonia and ultimately positively impact health and welfare of the calves at turnout. Act now to reduce potential losses and contact your veterinary practitioner for further information and to discuss vaccination programmes suitable to your herd.





# FACING FINANCIAL CHALLENGES HEAD ON

**MATT O'KEEFE** RECENTLY SPOKE TO **EINO LOWRY**, HEAD OF AGRICULTURE AT BANK OF IRELAND, WHO OUTLINED SOME OF THE KEY CHALLENGES FACING THE DAIRY SECTOR

Bank of Ireland's most recent agriculture outlook report reviewed the past year and looked forward to how 2024 might shape up.

Eoin gives a recap of 2023: "Last year was a very difficult period with poor weather conditions affecting agricultural production across all commodities. We know from a milk-producer perspective, milk prices fell severely, as did grain prices. It was a challenging year for farmers overall. Bank of Ireland reflected on the financial implications and what we particularly saw was that after strong years in 2021 and 2022, farmers came into 2023 in a good cash position, with a cash buffer built up, and luckily so. Those buffers were well eaten into during 2023 as commodity prices went down right through the year. One of the main

issues that pertained across the year was that input costs, especially fertiliser and feed prices, stayed high. It was only in the second half of 2023 that fertiliser prices began to fall from historic highs. Farm debt levels did reduce in 2023 but so did farm cash reserves in farm accounts."



**THERE IS CASH TIGHTNESS ON FARMS. THAT NEEDS TO BE MANAGED**

## CASH TIGHTNESS ON FARMS

It has been a long and wet winter, and pressure in various forms has been felt: "A lot of animals were housed early in autumn 2023 and fodder supplies have been under pressure on many farms," says Eoin. "From a financial perspective, while we anticipate a better year in terms of profitability and income on farms, versus last year, there is cash tightness on farms. That needs to be managed. What that essentially means is that farmers may be looking for some extra working capital. We will be happy to support that need because we know that, in the longer term, farms are sustainable and financially viable. There is an ability to put more cash into farm businesses where it is required. "Cash reserves may have been used up because of being drawn on to finance infrastructure such as additional slurry storage or the purchase of new machinery. We can retrospectively finance those investments with longer term loans and we are doing that at the moment for many farms. That will free up some cash to pay immediate running costs including feed, fertiliser and, in some cases, fodder purchases."

## INTEREST-RATE TRENDS

It is anticipated that interest rates will continue to stabilise, but Eoin says that the days of low interest rates are over for now. "What the markets are telling us is that European Central Bank interest rates, which have increased 10 times since inflation began to rise, are stabilising. That's a total rise of around four per cent. Markets are indicating that we are now at that peak level and, over the next six to 12 months, interest rates should start to come back. I do think that the era of low interest rates is over for the foreseeable future. "From a Bank of Ireland viewpoint, we use our cash deposits, and we have a unique funding model, to ensure that we haven't had to increase our interest rates to the highest level in the market. Generally, farmers



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are paying about one per cent higher than they were before interest rates went up. We are in very uncertain times and a lot will depend on when those inflation figures start to come back. At the economy level, all the indications are that inflation has peaked and is retreating at this stage."

### NEW-PROJECT BARRIERS

Eoin speaks about some of the frustrations facing farmers seeking to develop new and existing enterprises: "The dairy sector is very topical especially around the nitrates issue. There is a lot of concern among farmers regarding the future status of nitrates



Head of agriculture at Bank of Ireland, Eoin Lowry.

thresholds. And there are questions around how many cows can be stocked, and to what extent it will all impact on farm productivity and profitability? There is a very real lack of defined policy and certainty and that is frustrating farmers and impacting investment confidence on farms. We are seeing our best customers preparing for an era where, potentially, there will be further changes to that Nitrates Derogation. That means it may be lower in future than the current 220kg per hectare. We are still confident about the dairy sector. We are very adamant that farmers need to continually invest in their enterprises and to do so they need banks

that are supportive. That means making finance available. What we would like to see is greater clarity around the future policy direction coming from Europe."

### AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Eoin agrees that financial planning and investment are very difficult when future regulation change may impact the ability to recover that investment: "It absolutely is difficult. Every individual farm is different and, ultimately, it is up to farmers to decide for themselves, for instance, the true value of slurry and whether there really is good value and return from building additional storage facilities. Will further investment allow more discretion in management practices, and will that deliver a viable return on investment? The reality is that there is inadequate slurry storage on the majority of farms right now for the livestock currently on those farms. "The difficulty is that farmers cannot be certain how many livestock their farms will be allowed to carry in the future. And there is no point in investing in assets that may not be required in the future. We are very conscious of that, and we are having discussions with our customers on a case-by-case basis to try and understand and support the future of that farm over the longer term."

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<i>Streptococcus uberis</i>	23%
<i>Streptococcus dysgalactiae</i>	5.7%
<i>Bacillus spp.</i>	2.5%
<i>Trueperella pyogenes</i>	1.8%
Others	14.8%

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Froehlich Kelly, R. 2020. Bovine mastitis. All-Island Animal Disease Surveillance, p.31.

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Wexford-based vet, Don Goggin.

# SUPPORTING TRANSITION COWS: A VET'S APPROACH

**LARGE-ANIMAL VET, DON GOGGIN, DISCUSSES THE IMPACT OF KETOSIS AND WHY THE USE OF A BOLUS IS EFFECTIVE IN COMBATTING ITS IMPACT**

Moyne Veterinary Hospital in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, is an independently owned mixed practice with a thriving large-animal clinic, operating alongside its small-animal hospital and equine unit.

Don is one of the large-animal vets working mostly with dairy, beef and sheep clients in and around the Enniscorthy area.

"It's a very busy time of the year and no two days are the same," says Don. "The last 10 years have seen many dairy herds increase in size, which brings its own challenges. A lot of our time is spent trying to prevent disease at the herd level and where it does occur, we work to treat the issue, prevent disease spread, and promote a quick recovery."

## KETOSIS

Don explains that one example of this preventative approach is with ketosis, a condition that occurs when the animal's total dietary intake fails to meet its energy requirements. The cow begins to draw reserves from her body, creating a continuous state of negative energy balance (NEB). Unfortunately, the ketones released as part of this process suppress the cow's appetite, creating a vicious circle that results in weight loss and a significant drop in milk yield. "There is a range of contributing factors that predispose some cows and herds to ketosis," says Don. "Body condition score of cows at calving, particularly fat cows, can increase



**THERE IS A RANGE OF CONTRIBUTING FACTORS THAT PREDISPOSE SOME COWS AND HERDS TO KETOSIS**



## PARTNER PROMOTION



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risk of developing ketosis. Cows carrying twins or that are stressed following a caesarean or difficult calving can also be at risk. I recommend that farmers use a Ketonor+ bolus on these cows."

Two Ketonor+ boluses given to 'at risk' cows (typically two to seven days after calving) provide a readily available energy source, Don says. This breaks the cycle of ketone production, helping the cow to start eating, regain her energy levels, and increase milk production.

"We would have used propylene glycol in the past, but it isn't always easy to find the time for the required twice-daily follow-up treatments during the busy calving period. The bolus is much easier, and you know that's the full treatment given," adds Don.

### ENERGY TO AID RECOVERY

Although energy imbalances are usually seen during early lactation, they can occur any time that the cow is off her food. Don says he also uses Ketonor+ as a supportive therapy in sick or convalescent cows, alongside non-steroidal pain relief and antibiotics.

"I use the boluses a bit more generally on cows that are sick and might be off their food as a result. At this time of the year, I'm often treating cases of metritis or mastitis and as part of their treatment I'll give a bolus as well as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and antibiotics. Also, following left displaced abomasum (LDA) surgery, I routinely use Ketonor boluses. It helps recovery by giving cows an energy boost until their appetite comes back."

### EARLY INTERVENTION

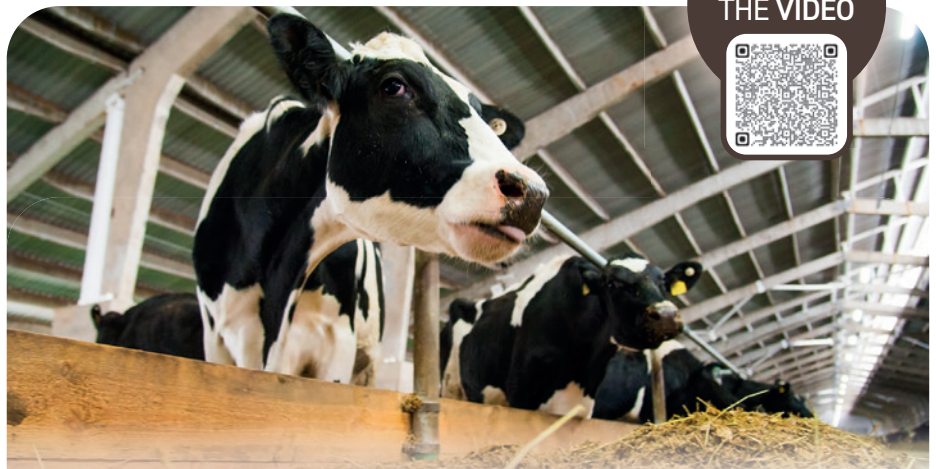
"Vets and farmers are aware that early lactation is a risk period for sickness and disease in all dairy herds. As an industry, we're increasingly adopting technology like collars, tags and boluses that allow us to monitor subtle physiological changes," according to Maura Langan, Norbrook commercial and technical manager (farm animal).

"Technology can indicate very early changes to rumination, activity and body temperature and is able to alert the farmer before the cow displays any visible signs of disease. Although it can't offer a definitive diagnosis, feed intake and energy requirements are so finely balanced in those first weeks that these cows are also at risk of ketosis. In cases like these, early intervention with a bolus is appropriate.

"Of course, this technology is no replacement for good stockmanship and veterinary care, but it can allow for early intervention with supportive therapies and support better clinical outcomes."

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Date	Location	Time
3 Aibreán	Teagasc, Mainistir Fhear Maí, Co. Chorcaí. P61 P302.	11am
4 Aibreán	Conor Creedon, An Ráth Mhór, Co. Chiarraí. P51 V832.	11am
5 Aibreán	Kevin Murphy, Guaire, Co. Loch Garman. Y25 EY98.	11am
5 Aibreán	David Dolan, Clár Chlainne Mhuiris, Co. Mhaigh Eo. F12 R992.	11am
8 Aibreán	Brian Meade, Ráth Cheannaigh, An Uaimh, Co. na Mí. C15 D519.	11am
9 Aibreán	Paul Bowden, Áth na nUrlainn, Co. Chill Chainnigh. E41 XD43.	11am
10 Aibreán	Jim Garry, Bailen a Caillí, Inis, Co. an Chláir. V95 E73P.	11am
10 Aibreán	Stephen Fitzpatrick, Baile Suingean, Co. Dhún na nGall. F93 A0Y1.	11am
11 Aibreán	Stephen Buttimer, Droichead na Bandan, Co. Chorcaí P47 FT53.	11am
12 Aibreán	Danny & Patrick Cremin, Cill Mocheallóg, Co. Luimnigh. V35 VF89.	11am
12 Aibreán	Shane Seymour, An tAonach, Co. Thiobraid Árann. E45 E227.	11am
17 Aibreán	Robert Lyons, Ceann Toirc, Co. Chorcaí. P51 DK64.	6pm

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## MESSAGES

- Be proactive in dealing with April grassland issues.
- You must make a grassland plan for 2024.
- Reduce meal requirements by grazing silage ground twice before closing.
- Reseed 10 per cent this April and sow red clover – it will pay for itself.
- Sexed semen is a must-do task – plan it carefully.
- Use an eight-day, eight-hour, fixed-time AI programme on heifers.
- If your six-weeks' calving is poor, consider the 'why wait' programme.
- Don't let anyone with a vested interest choose your AI bulls!



By Matt Ryan

### DEALING WITH APRIL GRASSLAND CHALLENGES

» This is a seriously difficult spring to graze grass – apply fertiliser and slurry! It has left us with a number of grassland issues:

1. Some farmers are far short of the target milking platform (MP) area to be grazed.
  2. On other farms the cover on the first few paddocks on March 15 is far short of the target 700-750kg DM required for an early April start to the second rotation.
  3. Some paddocks are badly poached.
  4. A lot of paddocks were poorly grazed in the wet weather.
  5. A lot of farms have received very low levels of nitrogen and slurry.
- » The consequences:
- We will be short of expensive winterfeed next winter and more, really expensive meal, will have to be purchased.
- » Issue number one:
- This is likely to lead to farmers not being able to complete the first rotation until April 15-22, if no action is taken.
  - A diet change of going from high levels of meal in April to moderate levels could have an adverse effect on cow fertility.
  - Solution: farmers will have to graze first rotation paddocks when the cover is 1,300-1,400kg. It would be best to overlap grazing some of these covers while also grazing some of the high covers from the end of the first rotation.
  - In many situations farmers will have to cut some of the ungrazed paddocks for silage, possibly bale, between April 16-25.
- » Issue number two:
- The likely solution here is to postpone the start of the second rotation until April 6-12 when 1,200-1,300kg DM are on the first three to four paddocks.
  - However, growth rates will determine the date.
    - While no two years are the same, one can predict this expected growth based on the average for the last two years for your farm on PastureBase.
    - For instance, if on April 1 your best paddock on the first rotation has a cover of 1,000, and the average growth rate on your farm for early April was 30kg DM/day, then you will have to delay the start of the second rotation by 10 days.
    - No matter how tight grass is, cows must be allowed out for at least three hours per day with the remainder of the diet made up of 4-5kg meal and good quality silage.
- » Issue number three:
- It is best sorted by the cows' feet grazing these paddocks on the

second rotation on a very dry day, even if you have to graze at lower covers to match the weather.

- If severely damaged, maybe reseeding should be considered.
  - But, under no circumstances is rolling part of the solution.
- » Issue number four:
- Poorly grazed out paddocks must, on the second rotation, at a cover of 1,000-1,200, be grazed out very well; otherwise, they will be poor for the year due to lack of tillering.
- » Issue number five:
- By April 1, all areas of the farm should have 65 units N/acre. If short, apply N.

### A GRASSLAND PLAN

- » This grassland plan is an essential exercise.
- It helps not to be overstocked for the year – too many farmers are overstocked on milking platform.
  - It helps to have enough winter feed for the stock you intend to feed next winter and have enough grazing ground for your present stock in April and May.
  - It will also cajole you into having a large first cut of silage – this is a major way of reducing N input because you may not need a second cut or at worst very little.
- » This is one major way to save on contractor and silage feed costs per cow.
- First cuts yield 10-12 tonnes (t) per acre compared with 5-7t for second cuts.
  - Quality is 6-8% units better.
  - If little or no second cut is taken, more land is available for summer grazing, a saving on N.
  - Pit second-cut silage is 25-40% more expensive than first cut.
- » The way to maximise first cut is to graze cows, cattle and calves at high stocking rates, as follows on the grazing area during April/May:

	100 cows on	30 (330kg) yearlings on
High stocking	22ha (4.5 cows/ha)	4.5ha (2,200kg/ha)
Medium stocking	25ha (4 cows/ha)	5.5ha (1,800kg/ha)

- » Calves can be stocked at 22 per hectare during April/May.
- » With this information you should subtract the grazing area required (for cows, calves and replacements), as calculated above, from the total farm hectares to give you the area that can comfortably close up for first cut.
- This exercise will alert you to the fact that you may be



overstocked to provide enough winter feed and may need to rent silage ground, buy pit silage, or sell off stock.

- » To achieve these stocking rates, use the N levels recommended.
  - To carry these stocking rates, farmers, because they have applied little or no N to date, should apply 46-60 units/acre of N on the whole grazing area NOW.
  - If no P or K has been applied, spread three bags of 18:6:12 per acre.
  - If you do not get very high growth rates to sustain the very high stocking rates projected, you will need to feed some meal (2kg).

**Table 1: Surplus bales generated per hectare (ha) for different growth and grazing stocking rates (cows/ha). Source: Teagasc.**

	Summer	Stocking	Rate on the grazing		Area
Annual growth DM/ha	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	*4.5 for 1st cut then 3.5 for 2nd
10.0	3.3	-1.3	-5.8	-10.3	-3.8
12.0	7.2	2.6	-1.9	-6.4	0.1
13.5	12.1	7.6	3.0	-1.5	5.0
15.5	17.3	12.7	8.2	3.6	9.0

\*In this scenario, the farm is closed to 4.5 grazing stocking rate from April until early June for first cut, with a grazing stocking rate of 3.5 on grazing platform for second cut. Stocking rate period runs from confirmed silage closing (April 15 approx.) until mid-August start of building average farm covers.

- » Amazingly, the above planning exercise is done by very few farmers – a fundamental mistake!
  - To make 70-75% of your silage requirements from first cut, close 40-45% of your farm for first cut silage in April.
- » Table 1 highlights the need to be appropriately stocked on the grazing area for the yield of grass your farm is capable of growing:
  - If you have been growing 12t DM/ha and stocked at four cows/ha on the grazing area, you would produce four bales of silage surplus.
- » Silage fields should get 80-90 units of N plus three bags 0:7:30 per acre. This can be reduced by 7-10 units N and one bag 0:7:30 for every 1,000 gallons of slurry used. Discount N used earlier for grazing by 30%.
- » The grazing area should get 32 units N/acre in April in the form of protected urea.
- » Sulphur is absolutely essential for N efficiency – result more grass grows.

#### REDUCE MEAL COSTS IN APRIL

- » Feed no meals in April, because, if grass is plentiful, it will produce 27 litres/day:
  - For every 4.5L a herd is yielding above that, feed 2kg meal.
- » A few facts about meal:
  - Every €1 spent on meal equals an actual cost to the farmer of €1.60.
  - Every 1kg extra meal fed reduces grazing time by 15 minutes.
  - The return on money invested in meal feeding is only 3%.
- » You must get yourself feeding the meal level by mid-April that you intend feeding cows in May:
  - This enables you to achieve better cow conception rates/less embryo loss because they will not be exposed to diet energy change during breeding.
- » There are many ways to feed magnesium (Mg), which is a must, but one kilogramme of meal with adequate Mg would be easiest.
- » The new regulation whereby the kg N/cow produced calculation can be reduced from 92 to 87 if farmers use meal with less than 13% P (for farmers in the middle band milk yield).
  - The average % P required in a cow's total diet is 15-16.5%.
  - Spring grass will have 20-30% P, therefore, we should feed meal 6-11% P now. The following ingredients might be considered:
    - Barley (10-12% P), maize grain (8% P), oats (13% P), citrus pulp (6-9% P), sugar beet pulp (8-10% P), molasses (4-6% P), soya hulls (9% P).
    - Consult your nutritionist or feed merchant before feeding them on their own.
  - If you are having to feed 3-4kg meal in April you will end up feeding approximately 1t/cow/year.

#### ALWAYS GRAZE SILAGE GROUND A SECOND TIME

- This option must be very seriously considered this year because it will save on:
  - Meal feeding during April.
  - Feeding pit silage or maize silage during April.
- » With this advice, closing-up date will start on April 15 and finish on April 25 (April 22 closing, on average).
  - Fields/paddocks earmarked for silage, regardless of how much grass is on them, must be grazed from April 1-15 or later on some farms.
- » With good growth rates, the cutting date will be somewhere near June 10-14. Early enough for a good cut of quality silage.
  - One should strive for a split cutting date – this would be advantageous to facilitate the early availability of after-grass.
  - Quality will be very good because of the short growing period



**ICMSA**

**THE FAMILY FARM ORGANISATION**

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IRISH PREMIER MILK SUPPLIERS ASSOCIATION



and no 'rotten butt'.

- » Some farmers, for the second time, will start grazing the silage ground on April 5 and finish on April 15; this will facilitate cutting in late May/early-June.
  - When the silage area has been grazed apply:
  - 3,000 gallons of slurry (= 20-30 units of N) per acre onto bare ground, otherwise that slurry will contaminate the silage.
  - Most fields will have received 50-60 units of N per acre and about 20 units (25-30% of applied N) of this will be available for the silage crop.
  - Therefore, with the slurry you only need 30-50 units per acre of protected urea plus sulphur.

### BEST RESEED IN APRIL

- » There should be no doubt about reseeding. It's a must as the return on investment is 58% on the money spent. New grass varieties will grow more t/ha in the year.
- » The best time to reseed is April-May because:
  - Weather is usually better.
  - More importantly, perennial ryegrasses can compete better with weed grasses compared with autumn sown.
  - They can be grazed several times during the year to 'thicken' the pasture.
  - There will be no loss in yield from that field in the year of sowing because it will be available for grazing 42 days after sowing with better yields for the remainder of the year.
  - Teagasc Moorepark has shown that pastures with less than 60% perennial ryegrass should be reseeded.
- » Identify fields with low perennial content or that have been poached:
  - Either plough up or use the one/two pass system to prepare the seedbed.
  - Spray with Roundup fields that are to be cut for baled silage (7-10 days before cutting or grazing).
  - They must be limed (1-2t/acre), generally whether they need it or not (to break down the sod).
  - The target pH is 6.5+.
  - Make sure to roll before seeding, harrow in, and roll again.
  - Use three bags of 18:6:12 or 10:10:20 per acre.
- » Choose your grass varieties based on the PPI index.
  - All new reseeds should have white clover included (2kg/ha).
- » White clover reseeding/stitching-in on milking platform is an absolute must this year. Why?
  - N use is restricted for environmental reasons.
  - N is going to be expensive from here on.
  - It is best to sow it in April by stitching-in into pasture (not old grasses) free of perennial weeds.
- » Red clover should be seriously considered for sowing on outside silage blocks:
  - Teagasc research over six years has shown that, with no N, it grew slightly more silage than swards getting 480 units of bag N/acre.
  - Silage will be high quality, lowish in percentage protein, but is hard to preserve (needs 48-hour wilting).
  - Because of its growth habit it should not be grazed – shortens its life.
  - It has a life span of four to five years with the need for a four-

year break before next reseeding of a 10-year reseeding cycle.

- James Humphreys, Teagasc, suggests a mix of 9kg perennial ryegrass plus 4kg red clover plus 1kg white clover. Buy from a reputable source.
- Potash is essential (300 units/year) and K (40 units/year) and soil pH must be 6.5+.
- It is best to sow red clover in April by ploughing or preferably min-till.
- There is a grant of €300/ha for sowing red clover,

### SEXED SEMEN - PLAN & USE

- » Sexed semen, as Stephen Butler from Teagasc Moorepark pointed out, is now a key technology for the dairy industry. It results in:
  - Fewer male dairy calves.
  - Better EBI replacement heifers.
  - Better DBI non-replacement calves.
  - Improved sustainability metrics.
    - But order straws early, and remember these straws are a fragile product and require careful handling.
- » Over 200,000 sexed-semen straws will be used this year, but we need, from a society point of view, to be using 800,000.
  - You need to use two straws for every replacement calf required.
- » Choose your sexed semen bulls carefully – their EBI is as good as conventional semen. You will need seven AI bulls per 100 cows and one extra for every 50 cows thereafter.
- » Table 2 gives you some choices for sexed semen and beef bulls, as suggested by discussion group members.

**Table 2: My suggested 2024 B&W AI bull list (incomplete). Source: various catalogues, active bull list, discussion group suggestions\*.**

Bull code	Bull code	Bull code	Bull code	Bull code
Sexed/easy calving for heifers	Sexed/for cows only	Beef: satisfactory calving OK	Beef: satisfactory calving OK	Beef: satisfactory calving OK
FR8908	FR8637	BB7221	AA6682	HE8511
FR6484	FR9256	BB7278	AA4089	HE4344
FR9016	FR8244	BB9214	AA8172	HE4105
FR7890	FR7791	BB4438	AA4089	HE4297
FR9899	FR6469	BB7272	AA8439	
FR9151	FR6547	BB4494	AA7506	
FR7926	FR7875	BB8283	AA5280	
FR6469	FR8872	CH4321	AA8472	
FR9256	FR9259	CH4321	Lm2014	
FR9030	FR6547	CH6292	Lm6856	
	FR8106	CH2014		
	FR6625	AA6682		
	FR7311	AA4743		

\*This list may have inadvertent inaccuracies – double check beef bulls for ease of calving.

- » Choose your sexed semen cows carefully.
  - Heifers must:
    - Be on target weight – confirm by weighing.
    - Be in BCS over 3.25.
    - Be cycling regularly, preferably on third.
  - Cows must be:
    - On lactation 1-4.
    - Greater than 50 days calved.
    - In BCS of 3 or greater.



Table 2: 'Why wait' programme for May 1 MSD\* or any MSD\*

Group	Heat in the period pre-MSD (*)	Colour paint on cows back	Expected period post MSD* (days)	PG date to achieve 2 to 1 and 3 to 2	Colour paint	Scan period post MSD	Colour paint	The recommended weekly scan day will be this day post MSD*	Actual scan date for a May 1 MSD*
1.	-21 to -14 days	Yellow	0 to 7 days	None	Pink	32 to 39 days	Pink	+39 days	June 8
2.	-14 to -7 days	Blue	7 to 14 days	May or MSD	Pink	32 to 39 days	Pink	+39 days (week 2 to week 1 cows)	June 8
3.	-7 to 0 days	Green	14 to 21 days	May or MSD +7 days	Orange	39 to 46 days	Orange	+46 days (week 3 to week 2 cows)	June 8

\* MSD = Mating Start Date

- Cycling regularly, and
  - Have had no postpartum disorders or uterine infections since calving.
- » **Fixed-time AI (FTAI) is now very common when using sexed semen on heifers:**
- Stephen Butler found a 9% better conception rates to an eight-day, eight-hour protocol compared with the usual 10-day protocol (recommended for cows) as follows:
    - Day 0: Insert PRID/CIDR + GnRH (1).
    - Day 5: Inject PG (1).
    - Day 6: Inject PG (2) and remove the PRID/CIDR.
    - Day 8: GnRH (2) [=MSD].
    - Day 8: Eight hours after GnRh (2) AI all heifers.
  - You must have your vet on side from the beginning – so give them plenty of notice.
  - If you are going to FTAI cows it is a 10-day protocol.
- » **If farmers, for whatever reason are not ready to adopt sexed semen, they should consider a 'contract mating' agreement with a very high EBI herd.**

### THE 'WHY WAIT PROGRAMME' HAS MERIT

- » **If your six-week calving rate is poor, consider the 'why wait' programme.**
- It has worked successfully on many farms.
  - This involves moving cows being served in week two to week one and from week three to week two, but you need very good pre-mating records.
  - See Table 3 for the date/procedures which must be followed to the letter of the law.
  - You must accurately identify and record cows coming on heat during the last 21 days before mating start date (MSD) – mark them with a special colour or marking, as per Table 3 suggestions. Collars overcome this requirement:
    - That means for an MSD of May 1, pre-mating heat recording must start on April 5-7 with all calved cows painted red.
    - Cows identified as being on heat in weeks one, two and three are painted yellow, blue and green respectively, leaving the red ones to be seen by the vet.
  - To move week two expected heats to week one, all cows with blue paint should get 2cc PG on the MSD.
  - On May 7 (or seven days after MSD), cows with green paint should get 2cc PG.
    - They will come bulling 2-4 days later (cows rarely come on heat the day after PG).

- With this programme you will have AI'd 60% of your cows within 7 days and 90% within 14 days of MSD.
- As you will see from Table 3, I am recommending an early scan, 32-39 days post service. It is done only once per week as outlined, scanning cows that have being served a second time and supposed to be pregnant.
- Whether you do 'why wait' or not, this early scanning option is very worthwhile, instead of waiting until 30 days after the end of breeding season, which only confirms pregnancy.
- So, at 30+ days, a good scanner can confirm pregnancies, early identify cows with 'phantom' pregnancies, and 'weak' pregnancies.
- From this you could PG non-pregnant cows and reserve again in a few days.

### USE ICBF SIRE ADVICE TO SELECT YOUR AI BULLS

- » **Use ICBF sire advice to choose your AI bulls from the active bull list.**
- Very simple-to-use programme that enables you to mate the best cows with the best AI bulls.
  - I am amazed how few farmers use it.
- » **I recommended the following when choosing (average) a team of black and white AI bulls:**
- EBI €300, fertility €140, calving €45, maintenance €20+, health €10+, MS 26kg, % F 0.33 and % P 0.20.
- » **Jersey crossing can still be recommended if your herds' genetics and % F and P are low, but use sexed semen.**
- » **Use a stock dairy bull if you wish to lose €80-€100 per year for every cow in your herd.**
- » **This is the most valuable/vital two hours you will spend this April.**

### THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

#### 'Victimhood is optional'

This statement will be true in late autumn if you don't do some of what is recommended now!





# Sustainability starts with a plan

Becoming more sustainable is the right thing to do for your business, your customers, and your planet. It also means that you can attract talent and investment, reduce your costs, and meet the standards of international customers. Irish companies like Danann Air are already seeing the benefits.

Sustainability starts with making a plan. Enterprise Ireland is here to help, with the support, advice and funding you need to reduce your carbon footprint.

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PRODUCTION OF THE NEW FENDT 600 VARIO SERIES, LAUNCHED AT AGRITECHNICA, STARTS THIS SUMMER. HERE, WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE COMPACT FOUR-CYLINDER-POWERED FOUR-MODEL RANGE

# FENDT 600

## A FOUR-MODEL ALL-ROUNDER

The 150-200hp performance class is one of the biggest in Europe, with machines used in arable farming, grassland, transport, and with front loaders. With the completely newly developed Fendt 600 Vario series, Fendt, for the first time in this performance class, says it is presenting a 'compact and manoeuvrable four-cylinder tractor with high performance and payload at a low power-to-weight ratio.'

With four models – the Fendt 614 Vario, 616 Vario, 618 Vario and 620 Vario – this new series occupies the 149-209hp (110-154 kW) power range according to ECE R120. For the first time, Fendt DynamicPerformance (DP) added-performance concept is available for all models in the 600 series. DP releases up to 15hp of additional performance on each model via demand-based control exactly when it is needed. For example, the top model Fendt 620 Vario achieves a maximum output of up to 224hp thanks to DP. The extra power concept is not tied to driving speed or special operating tasks. It functions purely dynamically – even when carrying out stationary PTO work or, depending on the operating conditions, during tillage.

### ALL ROUNDER

Designed for global requirements, the development of the Fendt 600 Vario focused

on a flexible, manoeuvrable and powerful overall package. It is characterised by a low power-to-weight ratio with a high power range, pioneering manoeuvrability as well as a high payload and a drive concept that seamlessly combines permanent traction, soil protection and low wear for the first time. In addition, there is the optional 60-inch track width for row-crop use and optimum conditions for front loader use.

Exclusively for Fendt, the completely newly developed four-cylinder 5L AGCO Power CORE50 engine enters the market with the Fendt 600 Vario series. Exhaust gas after-treatment takes place via a diesel oxidation catalytic converter (DOC) and diesel particulate filter (DPF) and with selective catalytic reduction (SCR) without exhaust gas recirculation. It meets all required emission standards worldwide. In Europe, this is the Stage V emissions standard. The CORE50 engine is also prepared for alternative fuels, such as HVO, to operate with lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in future. There are also maintenance-free hydraulic tappets built into the engine. The first engine oil service occurs at 500 hours, so the initial 50-hour interval has been omitted. The newly developed, single-stage Fendt VarioDrive transmission is made up of the engine and the matching VarioDrive drive train.







**NOEL DUNNE**  
Machinery editor

## PLAYING CATCH UP

Well, my friends, spring may have reared its head last month, but it wasn't long about retreating. As we lumbered our way through March, the normally busy country roads had plenty of feed mill trucks but few fertiliser loads moving deliveries onto farms. Livestock that should have been in fields were still in sheds. Fertiliser spreaders and slurry tankers, ploughs and drills were notable only by their absence. We had snow, sleet and rain with the odd 'pet' day of sunshine, not nearly enough to dry the land and allow normal agricultural practice to resume. It has become one of the latest springs in my memory and work has piled up even as the daylight hours lengthen. Farmer morale has been hammered.

A week of dry weather would transform the landscape. Even heavier soils dry out quickly when longer days, sunshine and higher temperatures do their work on nature. When that happens, the tractors will operate around the clock to catch up on ploughing, sowing, spraying, fertilising, slurry spreading and moving livestock to far-away fields. While the tribulations of spring 2024 will not be easily forgotten, farmer confidence will improve quickly.

Now down to the business in hand, and here is a roundup of all the recent developments that caught my attention. John Deere has been busy with the launch of its most powerful tractor yet, the flagship 9RX range with horsepower ranging from 781hp up to 913hp. We will have more on this in a later issue.

In addition, John Deere has just launched the new S7combine range, which will come in four new models, replacing the current S7 range.

Argo Tractors Ireland has appointed a new Landini dealer in Co. Laois - W&E Shirley Ltd., based in Ballacolla.

Kverneland Ireland has just announced a new finance offer on new machinery - well worth checking out in your local dealer. Finance offers are also available from Pöttinger, Krone, Amazone and Kuhn.

A new museum dedicated to the life of Harry Ferguson opened last month in Kilrush, Co. Clare beside the Museum of Irish Rural Life. This Massey Ferguson museum was developed by Joe Whelan Snr, of Whelans Garage Kilrush and features 12 restored vintage Masseys! Well worth checking out.

Staying with Massey, the company has just updated for this season the Xtra and Protec round baler ranges. Further details are available from dealers nationwide. M&S Machinery, located in Cashel, Co. Tipperary, and headed up by father and son duo of Pat and Paudie Slattery, has been awarded Irish New Holland Dealer of the Year Award and was also successful in the Construction Equipment Dealer of the Year award. Congratulations to the Slatterys!

Claas has just launched a new generation of front loaders for its Elios, Axos and Arion tractor ranges up to 180hp, with six new models in the range.

Amazone Pantera self-propelled sprayers have hit the ground in Ireland with one going to north Co. Dublin and the other to Co. Kildare, both sold by Leinster Hydraulics and Farm Machinery, based in Dublin.

Meanwhile, the Irish farming sector is facing a serious shortage of agricultural contractors as many have been getting out of the business for various reasons over the last few years. The Association of Farm and Forestry Contractors in Ireland (FCI) has just released the contractors' charges for all areas of work. They show a four per cent increase year on year. Contractors are a valuable part of your business. If they go, your costs rise. We must ensure that we pay them on time every time.

On a lighter note, the highly popular 'Contractors Show' returned recently to TG4. It runs from 9.30pm to 10.30pm every Thursday and covers the daily workings of eight contractors over the series.

And finally, a reminder that the 2024 edition of the *Irish Farm Machinery & Equipment Yearbook*, which the team here has been busy working on, will be out later in the month. It is packed with great stories and features and full listings of all available machinery!

Until next month, farm wisely, farm safely.

### TRANSMISSION TECH

Fendt VarioDrive refers to a completely new generation of continuously variable transmission technology. The foundation is the single-stage drive train with independent control of the front and rear axles. The transmission continuously measures the slip on all four wheels and sensitively regulates the power output. For the first time, Fendt VarioDrive combines the four key functions of maximum tractive force and simultaneous ground protection with minimum wear and ground-breaking manoeuvrability.

### TRACTION IN ACTION

Dynamic control prevents wheel slip, with maximum traction regardless of the surface. The drive train eliminates the need for manual switching when changing between field and road operations. In this way, VarioDrive automatically combines maximum tractive force and high ground protection on any surface without distortion, loss of performance or tyre wear.

The so-called pull-in-turn effect pulls the machine into the curve during turns due to the axle-independent control. The result: a particularly small turning circle of just 10.2 meters with 540/65 R30 tyres.

The innovative low-speed Fendt iD concept is available for the first time in this compact performance class. All components, such as the engine, transmission, hydraulics and cooling system, were designed according to the so-called "high torque - low engine speed" principle. In this way, the Fendt 600 Vario achieves high torque even at low engine speeds and saves fuel. The rated engine speed is only 1,900rpm. In the main working range, the speed is a quiet 1,350-1,800rpm. The top model Fendt 620 Vario can reach a top speed of up to 50km/h at just 1,250rpm. The maximum torque of 950Nm is available on the top model Fendt 620 Vario from just 1,200-1,600rpm and ensures high tractive power and acceleration strength with minimal specific fuel consumption.





**Tom Murphy**  
Professional Agricultural  
Contractors of Ireland



## BETTER DEAL FOR CONTRACTORS

**I regularly meet with groups of agricultural contractors to discuss their worries and what is happening with their businesses.** Recently, the future of the agricultural-contracting sector was top of the agenda, and this is particularly worrying. The enormous financial investment that agricultural contractors must make to service their farmer clients is causing huge concern especially as there is no guaranteed return on their investment. In addition, like the children of farmers, agricultural contractors' families are not rushing to take over the family business, thus leaving an uncertain future and an even bigger labour gap to be filled. Concerns over investment and labour, which are fundamental to the existence of the business, along with the increasing costs of overheads and onerous legislative requirements, do not make agricultural contracting an attractive prospect for future generations.

### DANGEROUS ASSUMPTIONS

But there is an assumption with our policy makers at both national and European level, that agricultural contractors will always be ready, available and tooled up no matter what the circumstances. This is a somewhat arrogant attitude and very risky, considering the vital role contractors play in viable and sustainable production. At the same time, agricultural contractors fall outside the umbrella of the agricultural sector and policymakers give them no consideration, and at a national level they are excluded from benefitting from farm machinery grants.

I also think it is fair to say neither the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine or Brussels have any idea about the wellbeing or sustainability of the agricultural-contracting sector. A few years ago, at a meeting in Brussels, I asked a Commission official if agricultural contractors were taken into consideration when setting the Common Agricultural Policy. He simply said 'no' and admitted the Commission knew nothing about contractors. I feel that is also pretty much the case in Kildare Street.

### CRITICAL TIMES

The future of contracting in Ireland is at a critical juncture. The challenges created by the need for technological advancement and environmental sustainability along with policy changes, will affect both farmers and contractors alike.

The EU's Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategies, with targets for a reduction in pesticide use, improving biodiversity, and a target of 25 per cent of agricultural land under organic farming by 2030, will have a direct impact on the future direction of agricultural contracting.

Contractors will need to adapt their practices to meet the standards required and invest in new eco-friendly high-tech machinery.

It cannot be overstated how much post-2020 CAP reforms, with a plethora of regulations and support mechanisms for farmers, will influence how farmers engage with agricultural contractors.

As I've said before, there is no goodwill in an agricultural contracting business. After a lifetime of hard work, or if the owner should fall ill, their customers move on to another contractor and it is the luck of the draw if they can sell on their machinery without making a loss. If a farmer decides to retire and does not have a successor, his assets can be sold on or leased as a going concern. Without doubt, we need a better deal for agricultural contractors, one that will give them a secure future and clarity for the role they are expected to play in the farming sector.



## POWERFUL AND GENTLE HARVESTING

**Claas claims to have 'redefined the new large-scale mower class' with its Disco 9700 RC Auto Swather. Why, you ask?** Well, this is what the company says: "Featuring a working width of up to 9.5m, Active Float ground-pressure control, non-stop collision protection, roller conditioner and flexible, high-performance auto swather swath grouping with optimised crop flow, the mower is the professional machine of choice for powerful yet gentle forage and biomass harvesting."

Cutting lucerne, winter forage and whole-crop silage is a special challenge for mowers. While lucerne is a fragile crop that calls for particularly gentle conditioning, like whole-crop silage and winter forage, it also produces high yields so the mower has to handle high volumes of material as well. Efficient crop flow is therefore just as important as robust, sturdy drives and high-performance swath grouping with optimised swath formation.

The innovative crop flow is a particular feature of the Disco 9700 RC Auto Swather. As standard, the roller conditioners are driven by a double drive roller with a specially designed scissor gearbox for maximum throughput and durability - even under sustained heavy use, according to the company. The transmission and drive trains are designed for use with tractors up to 500hp and incorporate new, P-Line triple telescopic driveshafts developed jointly with Walterscheid featuring specially toughened, large-diameter steel profiles and a new K-90 friction clutch. This combination makes the Disco 9700 RC Auto Swather the most powerful belt mower with conditioner currently on the market.

Two counter-rotating polyurethane rollers crush the crop gently yet effectively without loss. The conditioner spans the entire width of the mower bed to ensure continuous linear flow without forage blockages. Optimised crop transfer to the 1,100mm wide, extremely robust Kevlar-reinforced cross conveyor belts ensures uniform filling of the auto swather belt units. This produces an even, loose and perfectly shaped swath which the harvester following behind can easily pick up and process.

When working without swath grouping, with less regrowth or when less wilting is required, one or both of the belt units can be folded up hydraulically to consolidate a working width of 19m to 12m (the "19 to 12" method) for the next pass with a 12.7m wide standard four-rotor swather. When combined with Claas tractors with the new Cemic 1200 with GPS Pilot, fields can easily be divided into plots.

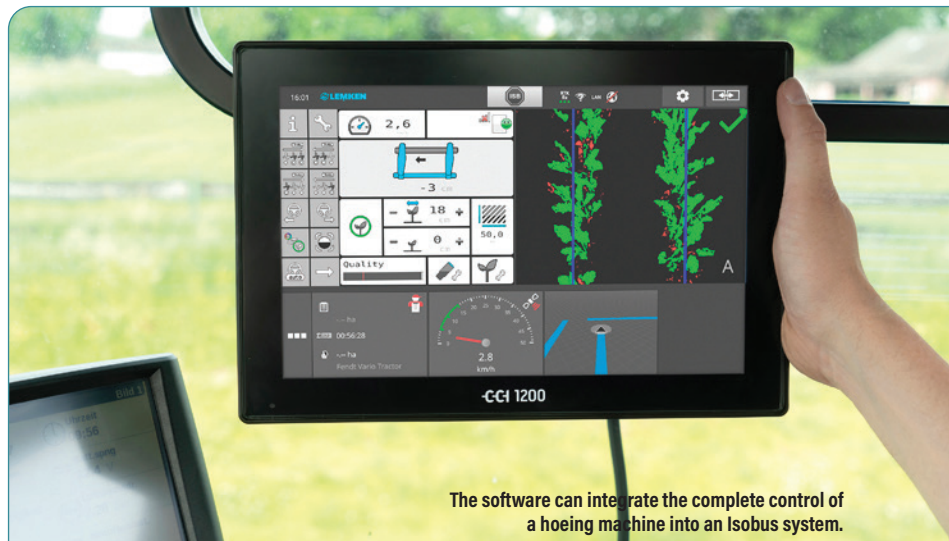


## NEW CAMERA CONTROL FROM LEMKEN

Lemken has developed software that can integrate the complete control of a hoeing machine, including the camera image and width sections, into an Isobus system.

Previously, farmers needed two terminals if they wanted to use a hoeing machine with camera and section control: the Isobus terminal for width section control and a second terminal for displaying the camera image and adjusting the hoeing machine. Lemken's iQblue Weeder software has, for the first time, integrated the complete control of a hoeing machine into an Isobus system so that all controls are displayed on one CCI 800 or 1,200 terminal, providing an inexpensive, convenient and clear solution for users, according to the company.

The Isobus system records the implement position and tractor speed. Operation is also possible via either the tractor's own joystick or the CCI joystick. The system is also ready for high-speed Isobus and uses a standard ISO 17215 interface via ethernet for transmitting the video image enriched with camera



The software can integrate the complete control of a hoeing machine into an Isobus system.

information.

Users also benefit from automatic over-the-air machine updates so that their machines are always up to date. For maintenance and troubleshooting, service technicians can access the software remotely and optimise

settings. Settings are then immediately displayed in the camera image for review and can be readjusted autonomously if necessary. The general menu structure of the system is in line with the Lemken standard and facilitates intuitive operation, the company states.



The **Solitair 9+ Duo** high speed pneumatic seed drill combines precise depth and separation control with the exibility needed to simultaneously apply any sized seed(s) and up to 250 kg/ha of fertilizer.

- Divided seed hopper for a exible 50/50 or 60/40 split
- Single-shot version for placing seeds or fertiliser in a single seed furrow
- Double-shot system via doubled distributors for placement in a single row (single shot) or separate and alternate placement in two rows
- Flexible seed depth settings for optimally applying two different seeds or simultaneously applying inter-row fertilisation
- Automatic tramline control

Contact:  
Derek Delahunty, LEMKEN Area Sales Manager  
00353 86 0203886, d.delahunty@lemken.com

THE AGROVISION COMPANY

## THE PERFECT HIGH SPEED SEED DRILL FOR ANY CROP IN YOUR ROTATION SOLITAIR 9+ DUO







## M&S MACHINERY IS NEW HOLLAND IRISH DEALER OF THE YEAR

**M&S Machinery, based in Cashel, Co. Tipperary, recently received the 2023 New Holland Irish Dealer of the Year award at the manufacturer's annual UK and Rol Dealer of The Year Awards.**

These awards, the company says, celebrate excellence in performance and service quality across its extensive UK and Ireland dealer network. M&S was also successful in the Construction Equipment Dealer of the Year award.

The Republic of Ireland awards meeting and dinner were held at the Moyvalley Hotel & Golf Resort, Co. Kildare where David Rapkins, New Holland business director UK & Rol presented the awards. Commenting, he said: "I would like to express my congratulations to all the 2023 New Holland Dealer of the Year winners. These awards acknowledge and reward the performance and effort that our dealers put into the service they provide to our customers. A big thank you to all our UK and Rol dealers who have contributed to make 2023 a great year. We truly appreciate your hard work and excellent teamwork across the dealer network."

**David Rapkins, New Holland business director UK and Rol, pictured with Pat Slattery and his son Paudie from M&S Machinery.**



## MOWER FLEXIBILITY AND LONGEVITY

One of SIP's latest products is a mounted combination mower known as the Disc HD 1000 D, which offers a 10m cutting width and a 515mm side-shift on each side to reduce overlap on turns and slopes. To aid smooth operation on all terrains, the Disc HD 1000 D is equipped with a hydro-pneumatic suspension system (HPS), which, claims SIP, ensures soil preservation, premium forage

quality, and a significant reduction in cutter bar wear and fuel costs. The new mower can also be equipped with cross conveyor belts for swath merging. By using these conveyor belts, mowing, conditioning, and swath preparation can be undertaken in one pass. Having the latest design of cutter bar, which features a more aerodynamic shape of the skids and cutting-discs, turbulence

is reduced, as is the accumulation of cut material in the cutter bar area, contributing to improved cutting efficiency. SIP notes that the 409mm diameter cutting discs maintain inertia, ensuring a uniform material flow and reducing energy consumption in doing so. Each cutting disc is equipped with a disc drive safety system (DDSS). This disc protection design is based on the established concept of protection via shear pins integrated into a double flange. To increase the durability of the mower the cutter bar linkage to the support frame is fitted with a combination of double dampers on both the inner and outer sides.

These dampers effectively absorb vibration and peak dynamic loads, preventing material cracks and extending the overall lifespan of the machine. An overload monitoring system is fitted to the driveline of the machine. This is said to cover the entire driveline, ensuring every component operates at its peak performance. It is described as an early warning system which acts immediately it senses small drops in rotational speed anywhere along the driveline.





## KRONE LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN ON MOWERS, TEDDERS AND RAKES

Krone has launched a double campaign offering zero per cent finance and two-year warranty on mowers, tedders and rakes. Commenting on the campaign, sales and marketing director for the distributors, Farmhand, Stephen Scrivener said: "With interest rates at an all-time high, it's encouraging that Krone has launched this finance campaign. The fact that it has included a second-year warranty demonstrates its confidence in its machines." This second-year warranty is valid on 2023/24 mowers, tedders and rakes when registered on [mykrone.green](https://mykrone.green) before May 31, 2024. The offer excludes rear butterfly mowers, and four- and six-rotor rakes. For all the details, contact your local Krone dealer.

## A LONG WAY TOGETHER



## AGRIMAX FACTOR

### THE ONLY FACTOR THAT MATTERS

Whatever your job in the fields, BKT's brand-new AGRIMAXFACTOR 70 series for tractors is perfect for both haulage and soil tillage operations. An innovative tread design and a strong polyester casing provide extraordinary lateral stability and a faster steering response even for high-speed operations or heavy-duty service. The by 5% increased contact area on the land significantly reduced the noise perception in the cabin - which stand for more comfort. Also, the exclusive "E-READY" logo on the sidewall highlights BKT's commitment to electric mobility and makes this product suitable for electric vehicles.

Excellent handling and stability along with increased durability are key features that makes AGRIMAXFACTOR the right tyre for your safety and comfort - even under heavy duty conditions.



Discover the BKT Radial Range



GROWING TOGETHER

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## INNOVATION THAT CAN DELIVER 'HIGHEST POSSIBLE OUTPUT'

New Pöttinger mower combinations, Novocat V 8400 and Novocat V 9200 are capable of delivering the highest possible output, the company claims. Here, we take a look at how that is achieved.

A powerful performance with maximum working widths of 8.4m and 9.2m, combined with a compact design, are what makes these mowers stand out, says Pöttinger. Angled booms allow for an extremely short headstock. This creates a lighter-weight configuration with the centre of gravity closer to the tractor. Depending on the terrain, both the mower combinations can easily be operated with four-cylinder tractors. The heart of these mower combinations is the cutter bar, proven over thousands of cuts in the field. Just 4cm high, the cutter bar guarantees optimum crop flow. And because it is only 28cm deep, it delivers the best ground tracking. The centre pivot mounting on the mower units provides a floating travel of + 20° / -16° to ensure perfect ground tracking. Hydraulic weight alleviation provides uniform ground pressure over the



whole cutter bar width. The Nonstop Lift hydraulic collision safety device provides optimum protection of the cutter bar. In addition, the mower efficiently avoids obstacles by folding backwards and at the same time raising the boom. This prevents damage to the mower unit even at higher speeds.

### FLEXIBLE OPERATION

The mower combinations are easy to operate because they are equipped with the Basicline preselect system as standard. As an option, the Isobus-compatible Selectline preselect control system is also available. On both systems, both mower units can be lifted separately using just one spool valve, which

also actuates the transport safety interlock. With the Selectline preselect control system, the automatic individual lift system makes it easy to mow wedge-shaped fields. If the tractors offers headland management, then individual lifting using two separate spool valves is also possible. For road transport, the mower is hydraulically folded vertically through 92° and then locked hydraulically in the transport position. When attaching and detaching the mower combination, the retractable front guard provides plenty of space between the tractor tyres and the mower. Both mower combinations are available with swath formers, ED tine-type conditioners or RC roller conditioners.

## PÖTTINGER'S HARVEST ASSIST APP

Pöttinger's Harvest Assist is a new, innovative app that helps to simplify and optimise logistics while harvesting forage, the company says. It does this by taking into account harvesting volumes, the distance between the field and the clamp, and optimising compaction performance in the clamp, to achieve the best quality forage. In addition, the app enables real-time communication using existing hardware. Available for iOS and Android, every member of the harvest convoy can install the app on their smartphone for free. This provides an intuitive overview for straightforward control of all the grassland harvesting machines.

The app makes it easy to add fields and assign them to each of the machines. There is a very clear overview of the fields to be harvested and also their status, e.g. whether they have already been raked and the crop collected.

The algorithm that calculates the optimum harvest sequence is especially innovative. The harvest volumes, the distance between each field and the clamp and the compaction performance in the clamp are superimposed on the display. This provides the tractor drivers with information on the optimised harvesting sequence so that they deliver crop to the clamp at regular intervals and avoid delivery peaks. Thanks to the intuitive display of the individual fields in the app, it is also easy for people who are not familiar with the farm to find each field and drive back to the clamp quickly using the integrated navigation system.



### AT A GLANCE

In the app, the machinery portfolio consists of loader wagons, rakes, mowers, tedders, mergers and round balers. Everyone involved in each stage of the process gets an overview of the work progress in the field. The current status can be displayed for each field, showing whether it is being mowed, tilled, raked or collected. As soon as each stage is finished, the tractor driver can change the field status. This provides a structured view of which fields are ready for the next stage. These are then indicated to the driver with the next machine as soon as the field status has been changed.

In the live location view, each member of the harvest convoy is shown on an intuitive map along with the relevant machine and process. All locations are transmitted in real time, which greatly simplifies communication.





Denis Drennan  
President ICMSA

## THE NATURE RESTORATION LAW GETS STUCK AGAIN

**The decision of the EU Environment Council not to proceed with a vote on the proposed EU Nature Restoration Act was absolutely correct.** And the continuing reservations about the excesses of the law must lead to a complete re-assessment of both the Nature Restoration Law (NRL) and the heavy-handed and one-sided EU agri-environment policy that was the basis for this demonstrably flawed and unpopular proposal. It is not too late to replace this unpopular and unworkable intrusive model with something that is collaborative, which would position farmers not as the obstacle to the environment – but as partners with both rights as well as obligations. It seems self-evident to many of us that such a collaborative approach would have to be more successful than this ‘top-down’ regulatory model. But that would involve the EU accepting that their policy is fundamentally wrong in both approach and implementation. And the NRL is the perfect example of the kind of cul-de-sac that this kind of administrative arrogance ends up in. I don’t know how many times the Nature Restoration Law has to get stuck before its sponsors recognise that it’s just not going to work because there are too many reservations about it – all of which are fully justified. ICMSA’s position is not an anti-environment one; in fact it’s the direct opposite. We accept that we must protect the environment, but we genuinely believe that a collaborative approach between the EU, national governments and farmers – which respects the position and rights of farmers and utilises their unique skills – has a much better chance of succeeding. It certainly has a much better chance of succeeding than this present and discredited policy of regulation after regulation and an unwillingness to face up to the need to end the ‘cheap food’ policy, or demand from foreign imports the same environmental standards you impose on your own EU farmers.



### FOR TOO LONG, THE EU AND THE GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN TRYING TO IMPLEMENT ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ‘ON THE CHEAP’

#### ACHIEVING SUCCESS

EU agri-environment policy needs to be reset, it needs to acknowledge that environment policy cannot succeed without proper engagement and a budget, and it needs to recognise that farmers must be at its centre – as partners – for success to be achieved. For too long, the EU and the Government have been trying to implement environmental policy ‘on the cheap’, have failed to recognise the genuine concerns of farmers and the reality that has the EU’s Nature Restoration Act stuck again is a perfect demonstration of this failed policy. It’s failing at the same time as wasting billions across the EU on assessments and consultants.

We need to move away from this model and start investing these billions in the environment, in the farmers and communities who steward it, and reset EU agri-environment policy away from this failing antagonistic attitude to farmers where they are treated instead as partners in the drive to protect the environment in which we all have an interest.

There are so many areas in which we could work together to protect the environment, and so many are right there in plain sight and in front of us. The Dairy Beef Scheme is a perfect example. Any reasonable analysis of the funding allocated could only conclude that the €6.5m per year allocated is derisory set against data showing that the sector that is delivering over €1.7 billion in exports and now represents nearly 65 per cent of total beef production in Ireland. We look a little harder at the figures and see that dairy beef production representing nearly 65 per cent of total beef production has been allocated

€6.5m per annum, while organic farming has been allocated €57m and forestry has been allocated €110m. So, organics is getting eight times more and forestry 16 times more than a sector that is probably operating in every parish in Ireland.

#### UNWORKABLE

While the Government was constantly urging farmers to become more climate efficient, it was happy to allocate a derisory level of funding to a beef system that has been shown to be very climate efficient as well as reducing the age of slaughter. Why didn’t we protest at the time the scheme was being so disastrously drawn-up? Well, we did and have done so repeatedly since the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) first took our advice and launched a Dairy Beef Scheme. But the Department developed a plan, had a token consultation with the farm organisations, and then published a plan that simply will not work. Ireland had – and has – an opportunity to develop a global leading dairy beef production system that will deliver considerable net foreign earnings for the exchequer and the national economy, while lowering emissions towards our targets. If the Government thinks those worthwhile – and they should – then they should fund accordingly. That means initially supporting the person rearing the calf and, subsequently, the person finishing the climate efficient animal with a payment of €100 at each stage. It was disappointing and retrograde that the weighing scheme in place in 2023 was not built on and has now been abolished.

In relation to the announced scheme, ICMSA believes that where a farmer has purchased a qualifying bull in 2024, that bull should meet the conditions of the scheme, as long as it remains in the herd irrespective of changes to his star ratings. In addition, ICMSA is concerned that farmers may have purchased a bull that meets the three-star requirement, but now find that it does not meet the sub-index requirement. This would be very unfair and ICMSA believes that the DAFM must acknowledge this and put in place a remedy.





# THE 'MOTHER OF ALL DUCK'

DEEMED THE PERFECT PEKING DUCK BY CHEF HESTON BLUMENTHAL, SILVER HILL DUCK IS A CLEAR LEADER IN ITS CATEGORY. IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY CAUGHT UP WITH SALES AND MARKETING MANAGER, GREG DEVLIN, ABOUT THE BRAND'S STELLAR TRAJECTORY

Founded in Monaghan in 1962, Silver Hill Duck began operations with just six ducks. Fast forward to the present day, and the company has six breeding sites and one production base, generating 82,500 ducks per week. On top of that, it employs 240 people and is present in 30 international markets. Silver Hill Duck prides itself on being a fully integrated premium duck producer, which means that all aspects of duck production are owned and controlled by the company, from breeding, egg production, hatching and selection, to processing, cooking and packaging.

A hybrid duck, exclusive to Silver Hill Duck, is the secret to the company's success. Fed on a natural diet of wheat, maize and soya, it has been continually developed over the years to produce a succulent, tender and flavoursome duck, with a crispy skin.

## THE 'MOTHER OF ALL DUCK'

At 70 per cent export-led, the company has achieved tremendous growth in recent years, supplying to 30 countries worldwide, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), UK, Holland, Germany, France, Singapore and Hong Kong. Silver Hill Duck supplies leading Chinese and Asian restaurants in major cities around the world, with chefs calling it the 'mother of all duck' or the 'Wagyu of duck'. This led to an appearance in Heston Blumenthal's

television programme, *In Search of Perfection*, when the celebrity chef travelled the world for the perfect Peking duck, eventually deciding on the Silver Hill duck.

This success has generated additional sales enquiries from Malaysia, Thailand, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia and to keep up with growing demand, the company is currently seeking to increase its capacity to 120,000 ducks a week in the form of a new production plant at their current base in Emyvale, Co. Monaghan. It has also recently purchased three additional breeding farms to keep pace with demand from existing and new markets. Silver Hill Duck launched in the Middle East about two years ago, securing a partnership with a distributor for the UAE, Fresh Express. "As a premium niche product, we are very careful when choosing a distributor that also operates in the premium space," explains Greg. "We target only the top 10 per cent of every foodservice markets and are not interested in mass volume and saturating the market to keep with the brand image."

The potential of the Middle East is significant, he says, and where the company is focussing future growth efforts. "The market attracts affluent diners and chefs experienced working with high quality, premium ingredients. As we already supply many five-star hotels and restaurant chains across Europe, when these groups began setting outlets up in the Middle

East, enquiries from Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Riyadh soon followed."

## A PREMIUM PRODUCT

One such example is the world-renowned Mr Chow Chinese restaurant, which serves authentic Beijing cuisine and the iconic Peking duck. "Silver Hill Duck supplies Mr Chow in London and when setting up their outlet in Riyadh's prestigious King Abdullah Financial District, they insisted on Silver Hill Duck only, even delaying the opening until supply arrived. As well as that, a large number of skilled chefs who had recently moved to the region previously worked and trained in the UK and were very familiar with the product and the unique roasting qualities of the Silver Hill Duck that competitors could not replicate." Exporting to the region presented unique challenges. "As an export-led company, Silver Hill Duck is accustomed to adjusting to cultural and religious norms. To export to the UAE, it was necessary to get the recognised halal certification in place. This involved significant investment in altering our plant and processes to cater for this and a successful audit paved the way for exports to commence. Another significant challenge was the outbreak of bird flu in Ireland in 2022. We had made great inroads since our launch in the market but an outbreak of avian influenza in a nearby turkey farm had a significant impact





At the Silver Hill Duck market activation event in Abu Dhabi in collaboration with Bord Bia: Matthew Clarke, agriculture attaché at Embassy of Ireland, Abu Dhabi; Kieran Fitzgerald, Bord Bia regional director Middle East; Declan Ennis, export manager, Silver Hill Duck; executive chef Kushan Perera, The St Regis Abu Dhabi; Lorna Allen, Bord Bia market specialist, Middle East; Jack Burke, brand ambassador, Silver Hill Duck; Kivanc Eralp, procurement manager, Fresh Express.

in the progress being made. Due to the strict conditions of the agreed veterinary health certificate between Ireland and the UAE, any outbreak of avian influenza within a particular radius means a restriction in exporting is put in place for three months. This caused a disruption to supply and subsequently customers ran out of stock for a period of time until the ban was lifted. To counteract the risk of avian influenza outbreaks and market restrictions, Silver Hill Duck now works closely with our partners in the market to ensure there is enough contingency stock to allow for such potential disruptions."

The company supplies whole duck, duck breast fillets, confit duck legs and duck fat into high-end foodservice and has secured a number of high-profile customers in a relatively short period, including the Atmosphere Restaurant, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai; Mr Chow in Saudi Arabia, and the Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi. "Being on the menu in renowned restaurant Shanghai Me in the heart of Doha, just in time for the World Cup in Qatar was a highlight," says Greg. "We are also talking to retailers about our award-winning retail range with a view to listing in the near future."

### CONSISTENT QUALITY

What company and product attributes appeal

most to the middle eastern customer? "As an affluent market, quality of product is of the utmost importance and, in particular, consistent quality. Quality is the cornerstone of our business and is something we don't compromise on at any stage of the supply chain, be it at farm or production.

"Bringing the product to customers and diners in the most sustainable way possible is becoming of increasing importance. Silver Hill Duck is a founding member and a Gold member of Bord Bia's Origin Green Scheme. Our customers want Peking duck that is produced sustainably, and the Origin Green stamp authenticates the great efforts at Silver Hill to consistently do just that. Our sustainability agenda is a cross-functional effort and we have successfully surpassed all sustainability target set."

In-market activations are keeping the brand front and centre and this is the company's third year attending the Gulfood exhibition. "We also attended Saudi Horeca in Riyadh to sample the Silver Hill Duck with Saudi Arabia customers for the first time which was met with an excellent reception." The company will continue to work with recognised chefs, and host events in key customer restaurants to provide the 'Silver Hill Experience', a tasting menu and education on the product.

### WHAT SUPPORTS HAVE PROVED HELPFUL IN EXPORTING?

Greg says: "We availed of the Bord Bia Marketing Fellowship Programme. This has been instrumental in Silver Hill Duck's sales and brand awareness in the region. The fellowship allows businesses to connect with future sales talent of the food and drink industry who deliver a wide range of strategic business development and marketing tasks for Silver Hill across an 18-month programme. This is invaluable 'feet on the ground' in the market, representing Silver Hill Duck, developing a market overview, competitor analysis, distributor profiling, sales lead generation, trade show attendance and working with existing distributors. The fellows are highly skilled and participation in this programme has been very beneficial for the company. "Another key support was the Post-Brexit Market Growth and Diversification Grant in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia. This was designed to help Irish companies impacted by Brexit to explore international growth opportunities in new markets outside the UK. This grant fast-tracked our strategic market development programme for the Middle East region and helped Silver Hill Duck develop a strategy to enter and grow new markets at launch phase."





MATT O'KEEFFE  
EDITOR

# THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE

**Natural justice would suggest that farm investments based on current regulations should be honoured by all concerned.**

Take an example of investing in additional slurry-storage facilities. The investment is made based on current stocking rates, storage requirements and regulatory demands. In two years' time it is perfectly possible that stocking-rate thresholds could be reduced. Business decisions are often hazardous, and it is reasonable to assume that market conditions could change adversely. However, if regulations demand increased slurry-storage capacity and then another aspect of regulation changes, resulting in lower stocking rates and consequently lower storage-capacity requirements, it is impossible to make sound investment decisions. It is unreasonable to have to operate under these fluid regulatory conditions. Farmers need some degree of certainty. Weather and output price certainties are not possible. Regulatory certainty should be possible.

## FURTHER REDUCTIONS

There is an unwillingness among farm organisations to contemplate a further reduction in nitrates levels. This is an understandable attitude, given that such a reduction would impair our production model. It could also be suggested that this attitude is delusional. Facing reality, there is significant reason to believe that further nitrates reductions will be considered in the coming years. Postponing any planning process to deal with this potential outcome



**IN TWO YEARS' TIME IT IS PERFECTLY POSSIBLE THAT STOCKING RATE THRESHOLDS COULD BE REDUCED**

would seem to be an inadequate reaction, at the very least. Not considering or planning for such an eventuality did not serve farmers particularly well when the Nitrates Derogation was being reduced from 250kg to 220kg. Fighting the good fight didn't deliver salvation to those affected. What is the difference between the water quality standards considered in forcing through the recent 30kg reduction and another reduction to 170kg. The same stipulation is still there. If water quality does not improve, further reductions will be considered and, most likely, implemented. There has been some placatory language used by politicians and regulatory authorities to the effect that a stabilisation of water quality would suffice to hold the current nitrates threshold. At best, this is just soft talk from people who are unlikely to worry about the consequences for producers, because they will have moved on. Ultimately, it would be merely another postponement of what may be considered inevitable. With virtually no support across the EU for our unique position, and with some countries believing the derogation offers Irish producers a competitive advantage, the inevitability increases even further.

## CAUSE AND EFFECT

If our chemical fertiliser inputs reduce further, our adoption of low emission slurry spreading (LESS) technologies increases, our swards have a greater clover content, and water quality still does not significantly improve, then we have an even bigger problem. Cause and effect will no longer be on our side. The production model based on long growing seasons and high rainfall levels will be seen as environmentally unstable. The very rationale for securing a derogation will be seen as having been counterproductive in terms of its effect on nitrates losses to waterways.

Ultimately, we must consider the economic implications of the potential loss of our Nitrates Derogation. Productivity and income reductions can be determined. In addition to a steadfast opposition to further nitrates reductions, a plan B might be deemed advisable. Producers should reasonably expect to be financially buffered for financial losses incurred because of regulatory change imposed on them. An actuarial assessment of losses over a ten-year period is one approach that should be considered. A loss of financial return on long term investments in environmental protection measures and production capacity made in good faith by producers cannot reasonably be expected to be borne alone by those producers. Whether calculations on financial losses are estimated on reduced cow numbers or overall productivity losses would be matters for negotiation.





**Advantage**  
BEEF PROGRAMME

# PARTNER FOR BETTER

The Advantage Beef Programme is the first integrated beef scheme in Ireland to pay a sustainability bonus to farmers. Our expert team of farm liaisons support farmers to build a secure, sustainable beef farming business for their families and for future generations.



For more information visit  
[abpireland.com/advantage-beef-programme](https://abpireland.com/advantage-beef-programme)





# Total Calf Health Solutions



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**Halocur®**  
Licensed product for the prevention<sup>1</sup> and treatment of cryptosporidiosis



**Bovilis®  
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**Bovilis®  
Bovipast RSP**



MSD Animal Health has a wide range of calf health products for farmers this spring

## FLEXIBLE 12 WEEK HEALTH PROTOCOL FOR CALVES THIS SPRING

PRODUCT	BIRTH	1 WEEK	2 WEEKS	3 WEEKS	4 WEEKS	5 WEEKS	6 WEEKS	7 WEEKS	8 WEEKS	9 WEEKS	10 WEEKS	11 WEEKS	12 WEEKS
<b>Halocur®</b>		 Administration <sup>1</sup>											
<b>Bovilis® INtranasal RSP™ Live</b>													
<b>Bovilis® Nasalgen®-C</b>													
<b>Bovilis® Bovipast RSP</b>			 1st dose subcutaneous	4 WEEKS APART			 1st dose subcutaneous						
<b>Bovilis® IBR Marker Live</b>													 1st dose intranasal
<b>Bovilis® IBR Marker Live</b>					4 WEEKS APART			 Booster dose Bovipast RSP					 1st dose intranasal
<b>Bovilis® Bovipast RSP</b>				 Same day administration <sup>2</sup>	4 WEEKS APART			 Booster dose Bovipast RSP					 1st dose intranasal
<b>Vecoxan®</b>		 Administer to calves greater than 3 weeks of age <sup>3</sup>											

Optional Protocol<sup>4</sup>

Ask your Territory Manager how you can use MSD Animal Health calf health products this Spring

Bovilis® Rotavec Corona Emulsion for injection for cattle contains (per 2ml dose): Bovine rotavirus, strain UK-Compton, serotype G6 P5 (inactivated) - a 1/4 dose of vaccine stimulates a virus neutralising antibody titre:  $\geq 7.7 \log_2/\text{ml}$  (guinea pigs). Bovine coronavirus, strain Mebus (inactivated) - a 1/20 dose of vaccine stimulates an ELISA antibody titre:  $\geq 3.41 \log_{10}/\text{ml}$  (guinea pigs), *E. coli* adhesins F5 (K99) and F41 - 1/20 dose of vaccine stimulates an ELISA antibody (OD492):  $>0.64$  (guinea pigs). Light Mineral Oil/emulsifier and Aluminium hydroxide are added as adjuvants and Thiomersal and Formaldehyde are included as excipients. Withdrawal period: zero days. Withdrawal period: zero days. Legal Category: RO [POM] NI [POM-VPS]

Halocur® contains 0.5mg/ml halofuginone lactate in an aqueous excipient. Withdrawal period: Meat and offal: 13 days. Legal categories: RO [POM] NI [POM-V]

Bovilis® INtranasal RSP™ Live: contains live, bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV), strain Jencine-2013, live bovine parainfluenza virus type 3 (PI3), strain INT2-2013. Withdrawal periods: Zero days. Legal Categories: RO [POM/E] NI [POM-V]

Bovilis® Nasalgen®-C contains live attenuated bovine coronavirus, strain CA25. For the active immunisation of cattle from the day of birth onwards to reduce clinical signs of upper respiratory tract disease and nasal viral shedding from infection with bovine coronavirus. Withdrawal periods: Zero days. Legal Categories: RO [POM] NI [POM-V]

Bovilis® IBR Marker Live contains live BHV-1 strain GK/D (gE<sub>+</sub>). For the active immunisation of cattle against infectious bovine rhinotracheitis virus. Withdrawal periods: zero days. Legal Categories: RO [POM/E] NI [POM-V]

Vecoxan® 2.5mg/ml Oral Suspension for lambs and calves. It is indicated for the prevention of coccidiosis caused by *Eimeria crandallis* and *Eimeria ovinoidalis* in lambs and *Eimeria bovis* and *Eimeria zuernii* in calves. Legal categories: RO [POM] NI [POM-VPS]

Bovilis Bovipast® RSP contains inact. BRS Virus strain EV908, Pi-3 Virus strain SF-4 Reisinger and *Mannheimia haemolytica* A1 strain M4/1. Withdrawal periods: zero days. Legal Categories: RO [POM/E] NI [POM-V]

### Use medicines responsibly

For further information see SPC, contact prescriber or MSD Animal Health, Red Oak North, South County Business Park, Leopardstown, Dublin 18, Ireland. Tel: +353(0)1 2970220. E-Mail: vet-support.ie@msd.com Web: www.msd-animal-health.ie

1. Due to diagnosed *Cryptosporidium parvum*, in farms with a history of cryptosporidiosis.
2. Commence oral treatment in the first 24-48hr after birth for 7 consecutive days.
3. Bovilis Bovipast® RSP and Bovilis® IBR Marker Live can be administered the same day but not mixed. Can be given from three weeks of age.
4. Vaccination protocol for farmers who intend to vaccinate calves with Bovipast® RSP and with Bovilis® IBR Marker Live.
5. Vecoxan can be used in calves at any age, but usually disease occurs from 3 weeks of age.

MSD Animal Health Ireland - Cattle & Sheep  
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