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NOVEMBER 2026

IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY



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NOVEMBER 2026

EDITORIAL



Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

TRADING TO OUR STRENGTHS

Was Mercosur opposition ever about lower standards, potential antibiotic or hormone contamination, or even the loss of rainforest? Or was it about price and competition?

Our Government voted against ratification ostensibly because of those issues. It was an immaterial act, as there was a substantial majority of EU Member States votes to ensure the trade agreement with the South Americans was ratified. The food safety standards built into the Mercosur agreement are being implemented, with no beef imports from Brazil currently allowed into the EU because of serious shortcomings in the standards required. If the totality of opposition to Mercosur beef imports was based on quality deficits, there is a legitimate argument that the built-in safeguards made that opposition to ratification unnecessary.

Then, we come back to the reality that our farm organisations must protect their members' interests. That legitimate goal, presumably, includes doing everything possible to reduce competition in vital EU markets for our beef. While the agreed beef import tonnages are relatively small in the context of the EU's overall beef production and consumption, a small percentage can ultimately depress producer prices.

What should be considered is the always necessary trade off between gains and losses from any trade agreement. In general, trade agreements are good for Irish food and drink producers. We produce surpluses far beyond indigenous consumption needs across several vital production lines including dairy, meat and whiskey. Without viable trade agreements our production base would be decimated. Not all our production can be traded within Europe, so we are also reliant on global export markets to buy our produce. We have seen all too clearly how trade interruptions in the form of higher tariffs can impact prices and volumes. What those Trump-initiated trade stand offs also show is the need to continuously expand our export options. That should, logically, include trade expansion with the huge and increasing middle-class consumer base across the Mercosur countries. It should also include ratification of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union. This is long anticipated but not yet completed.

The only way to protect our food and drink producers from the quid pro quo of increased two-way trade is to oppose expansionist trade agreements entirely, because no trade agreement will come without a potential downside for some sector. That is neither realistic nor sensible. Neither is it viable for a country of five million people which produces multiple times what we consume in beef and dairy. What we can and do offer is a superior product, and one that must aim at the premium end of the market.

Easier said than done, but we do have advantages which we must promote at every opportunity. The Kerrygold brand delivers a premium for butter. Our meat-processing sector regularly wins awards for individual steak cuts. Our whiskies are sold as Irish, an instantly recognisable provenance in that drinks category, with differentiations across the taste spectrum being promoted by our whiskey distillers. Instead of attempting the futile exercise of holding back the trade winds, we need to compete on our strengths. 'Grass fed' is so commonplace in our meat and dairy production system, we accept it as a given, not a bonus. It is quite a unique attribute with, at most, 10 per cent of global dairy produced outdoors on a pasture-based diet. We need to continue, through Bord Bia and other promoters, to drive this unique selling point (USP) towards the millions of global consumers who can afford to pay above the odds for their food, whether that is for environmental reasons or simply because they have the discretionary income to spend on premium produce and doing so gives them satisfaction.

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Editor: Matt O'Keeffe **Deputy Editor:** Bernie Commins **Machinery Editor:** Noel Dunne **Production:** Martin Whelan
Advertising Manager: Brian Murphy **Commercial and Advertising Manager:** Anna Douglas **Accounts:** Tricia Murtagh
Administration & Subscriptions: Eleanor Connolly
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TRACTOR OF THE YEAR 2027
JURY MEMBER FOR IRELAND



SEVENTY YEARS OF AGRICULTURAL REPORTING

Irish agricultural journalists have a long history of association with European and global farming-related publications. Our Irish Guild of Agricultural Journalists was a founder member of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ). The 70-year-old organisation has a global membership spanning countries and continents across the planet. As part of the anniversary celebrations of the seven decades of agricultural reportage, the IFAJ published a special book, *The Land We Share,* sponsored by Alltech, which provides insights into farming practices in 45 countries across the world. The Irish Guild's contribution was provided by Teagasc's Anne Kinsella, with a description of society, the environment and farming practices in the Burren over the generations. Her words sum up the reason why that unique farming landscape is included in the UNESCO inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Rather than being a history of the IFAJ, the publication instead provides examples of the high quality of writing and reporting available to consumers of agricultural journalism across the farming world. We should be thankful that agriculture is so well served. We should also acknowledge the many Irish journalists who represented the Irish Guild of Agricultural Journalists on the international body. Among them were Larry Sheedy and David Markey, who both served as presidents of IFAJ. Rachel Martin currently represents the Irish Guild on the International Federation Committee and was responsible for editing this excellent publication.

BUTTER BATTLE CONTINUES

The butter battlefront between Ornua and Tirlán has moved to the dairy section of US Costco stores in spectacular fashion. Our American consumer friends tell us that both Ornua's Kerrygold and Tirlán's Truly Grass Fed butter packs are going head-to-head in a battle for sales. While Kerrygold is retaining its premium pricing model, for now anyway, Truly Grass Fed is reported to be at a far lower price point. At the moment, that price is described as a discount sale offer, presumably to gain sales momentum in the market. Hiking the TGF price over time may be difficult but that must surely be the long-term objective, if any worthwhile benefit is to be returned to Irish milk producers. Will US consumers stick with their favourite imported butter or deduce that the same product, essentially, in quality, flavour, and colour, is available on the same shelf in the same supermarket at a far lower price? Time will tell.

CALF MARKET DIVERSIFICATION

Now that we're down to one ferry option to transport our surplus calves to continental markets, it's positive to note the tentative efforts to diversify into novel market product opportunities. While 'rosé beef' has been produced previously on Irish farms, the latest initiative seeks to build scale and momentum. Supported by Volac, the intention is to develop a string of rosé beef-producing enterprises across the country. Last month, an opportunity arose to see how it is produced at scale. The Callanan farm near Athenry hosted an open day at which production costs, potential returns, and market opportunities were illustrated. The eight-month-old cattle should at least present an opportunity to exploit the demand for veal in several European markets.

While veal consumption is not a mainstream consumer preference at the Irish butcher's counter or on Irish supermarket shelves, it is quite a popular choice in many restaurants, especially those with a French or Italian oriented cuisine. There is also a belief that, with many Dutch farms being severely restricted and even closed entirely, a veal production deficit may emerge over time that could potentially be filled with an Irish rosé veal alternative. Scale is recognised as a necessary aspect of rosé veal production, and the promoters of the scheme are looking for commitment from rearers who can accommodate upwards of 150 calves in their production units. While a majority of Irish calves are produced in a tight calving period there is anticipation that there will be sufficient 'out-of-season' calves born to supply rearers. ICBF figures back up this contention, with Friesian-type calves being the long-term preference for the system. Market development will be key to success.

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NO SIMPLE ANSWER TO VEGETABLE QUESTION

A press statement from Carol Nolan TD last month questioned why the vast amount of fruit and vegetables consumed in Ireland are imported. There is no simple answer. Some fruits do not grow well, if at all, in this country. Bananas, lemons, and oranges are obvious examples.

The same cannot be said for apples, which grow quite well in the Irish climate, and Irish-grown apples are both high quality and competitive with imported product. Our apple tastes have been seduced, somewhat, by the Granny Smith and Pink Lady imports we have become accustomed to. Teagasc research is delivering positive results around the best apples to grow in the Irish climate, and the market opportunities for increased production.

Irish vegetable growing, or rather its ongoing decline, is a different matter entirely. We saw another producer exit the business this year, with Irish growers, specifically of carrots, taking up the slack. While we import €2 billion volume worth of fruits, nuts and vegetables every year, we also export almost one quarter of that value of Irish fruit and vegetables annually, with mushroom exports a major contributor. Tight margins, and the need for large-scale production to justify high capital costs, all feed into the challenge of producing anything like enough vegetables to meet consumer demand. Seasonal production, together with climatic uncertainty from one year to another is an additional obstruction. Many of our Irish produced vegetables and soft fruits are grown under glass or plastic to deliver high yields and extend the production season. That is a costly investment and we don't have guaranteed warm weather to mitigate heating costs for these production units.

What we did witness last September was a young Irish specialist cucumber producer, Shane Halpin, winning the FBD Young Farmer of the Year Award for 2026. From a standing start five years ago, the Dubliner's Welgro company has grown production from an initial lease on a three-acre nursery to a seven-acre production model today. He now employs 10 full-time staff, with 35 employees during peak planting and harvesting periods. His cucumber production season extends from March to November supplying retail, wholesale, and foodservice customers across the country. So, it can be done. Whether we have sufficient interest, commitment, technical know-how, or sheer ambition to eat into our vegetable and fruit imports is yet to be determined.



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InTouch

CATHAL BOHANE
TECHNICAL & SERVICE
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

DRY COW MINERALS: START WITH THE SILAGE

Mineral nutrition should be central to the winter-feeding plan. The aim is that cows should calve without metabolic problems, maintain good intakes, and start lactation strongly. That requires understanding the forage, matching supplementation to requirements, and ensuring every cow receives her allocation, rather than simply choosing a mineral bag.
Start with a representative mineral analysis of the dry cow silage. Standard feed analysis describes energy, protein, and preservation, but separate mineral testing identifies deficiencies and imbalances. Content varies between farms, fields, and cuts while bought-in forage adds uncertainty. Test this winter's feed rather than relying on last year's results.
Potassium and magnesium deserve particular attention. High potassium reduces magnesium absorption, while magnesium supports calcium regulation around calving. A previously successful programme may, therefore, disappoint when forage changes. Where potassium is high (>1.8 per cent), review the complete diet with your nutritionist. Lower-potassium forage, dilution, and adjusted magnesium supply may be needed.
Chloride- or sulphur-based anionic products require a professionally balanced, monitored programme.
Copper, zinc, and selenium support normal immune function, with mineral status also relevant to reproduction and calf development. Irish grass silage does not supply enough of these based on almost 1,000 samples taken by Alltech. Antagonists matter – molybdenum and sulphur reduce copper availability. Avoid increasing supplementation without understanding the sources as background supply risks excess intake or breaching legal limits. Minerals should be more than chasing the highest number on the bag.

Mineral	% of requirement supplied by silage	Mineral (Antagonists)	% of requirement supplied by silage
Selenium	27%	Iron	1783%
Copper	46%	Potassium	148%
Magnesium	78%	Sulphur	115%
Zinc	70%		
Cobalt	80%		

Compare products on more than price per tonne. Check daily feeding rates, mineral quantities, and mineral sources. Organic sources, including Bioplex copper and zinc and Sel-Plex selenium, should form part of a targeted programme addressing trace mineral deficiencies and antagonists.
Delivery is easily overlooked. Check the bag feeding rate, weigh each group's allocation and adjust for changing cow numbers. When dusting minerals on silage, split the allowance between feeds and provide sufficient barrier space. Begin supplementation at least six weeks before calving and ideally at drying off and not just before calving.
Minerals cannot compensate for excessive body condition, poor intake or overcrowding. Review milk fever and retained-cleaning records with your vet and/or nutritionist alongside forage results and feeding practice. Test, balance, and deliver consistently; these form the foundation of an effective dry cow mineral programme.

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Irish Country Living editor, Ciara Leahy.



Dairy farmer, Pat Carroll.

CHANGES MADE TO AGRI AWARE BOARD

Agri Aware has made a number of changes and appointments to its board. *Irish Country Living* editor, Ciara Leahy, replaces her colleague, CEO of the Agricultural Trust, William Minchin. In addition, well-known beef and sheep farmer, and former Kildare Irish Farmers Association (IFA) county chair, Thomas O'Connor, has vacated his place on the board, with Tipperary native and dairy farmer, Pat Carroll, taking his seat.
Thomas took his seat on the board in 2023 and has played a significant role in key Agri Aware activations, particularly in his native Kildare where two open farm events were held in 2024 and 2025.
William has also played a key role on the board since taking up his seat in 2024. The Carlow native is stepping down as he takes on the role of president of the Agricultural Science Association (ASA).
Ciara comes to the board with significant experience in agricultural journalism and communications. A Cork native, she began her career with Agri Aware before joining the *Irish Farmers Journal,* where she has worked across food and consumer journalism, features, education, and recruitment.
Meanwhile, Pat is a dairy farmer from New Inn in Co. Tipperary and he joins the board after completing his term as chair of South Tipperary IFA this year. Pat has represented farmers on a wide range of issues during his term as county chair and previously on the IFA dairy committee bringing over 10 years' experience to the board table.
Commenting on the recent changes to the board, Agri Aware chair, Shay Galvin said: "On behalf of the board I would like to thank both Thomas and William for their contributions over these past few years and wish them well going forward. I welcome both Ciara and Pat, both of whom bring a wealth of expertise and knowledge that will no doubt be of considerable benefit to Agri Aware.
"Both Pat and Ciara's work engaging directly with farmers and rural communities provides a valuable perspective on the opportunities and challenges facing Irish agriculture as the organisation continues its mission of enhancing agricultural literacy."



Damien O'Reilly
EU Affairs and Communications Manager, ICOS

LETTER FROM BRUSSELS

Last month, more than 400 farm and co-operative leaders and stakeholders from across Europe gathered in Stockholm for the European Farmers Congress organised by COPA & COGECA, the European umbrella body for farm organisations and co-operatives.
It was a timely gathering given that EU heads of government were, at the same time, meeting in Brussels to continue with the process of agreeing post-27 EU budget and, within that, the financial structure of the next Common Agricultural Policy. EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, Christophe Hansen and EU Commissioner for Environment, Jessica Roswall were in attendance along with Irish Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon. It was notable that it was the first time an EU Commissioner for Environment addressed the conference; a positive move considering the important current synergy between EU food production, water-quality targets, and tackling climate change. Working in the same, rather than opposite, directions is the only sensible way to meet binding climate targets while ensuring food security.
It is also a sign of where the future direction of EU farming is going that the three themes of the plenary debates focussed on security, competitiveness, and enlargement. All three headlines are cornerstones of a resilient, profitable and sustainable agricultural structure in uncertain geopolitical times. On security, the debate focussed on the necessity to encompass food security as part of any overall EU defence plan. And there was a roadmap laid out regarding enlargement debunking any fears that Ukraine, for example, joining the EU would create a threat to already scant supports for EU farmers.
The congress finished with the signing of the Stockholm Declaration, described by COPA & COGECA as 'a landmark collective appeal urging Europe's leaders to recognise the gravity of the situation and take decisive action, as European agriculture is approaching breaking point.'
The Declaration, COPA & COGECA, says calls for 'farming to be recognised as a pillar of Europe's security, preparedness and defence. The production of food, feed, fuel and fibre is a strategic asset, while farmers and agri-cooperatives constitute Europe's first line of defence in preserving productive territories and ensuring a reliable and affordable food supply.'
It was signed by Irish Farmers' Association president, Francie Gorman and ICOS president, Edward Carr who were among the high-level delegation of farm and co-op leaders in the Swedish capital. At this late point in the Irish EU presidency, it's doubtful that the next CAP will be signed off before year end, but worth watching the fight between those member states that want more spending and those that want cuts over the next few weeks.



Silage Testing and How We Use the Results

Dr. David Lawrence
Head of Nutrition, Agritech.

It is that time of year when silage pits are sampled across the country and analysed to see their potential feed value. The most important step in testing silage is knowing what actions to take based on your analysis.

What do the results mean?

The FAA accredited labs in Ireland test silage and measure dry matter (DM), which is the weight of a sample after all the moisture has been removed (typically 24-32%), and crude protein and PDI, which are measures of the protein in the sample. Digestibility of the DM (DMD %) is the proportion of the silage DM that is available for the cow to digest. Energy is recorded as ME (metabolisable energy) or UFL/UFV (net energy). Some samples may indicate the intake potential of the silage. There is also NDF, which is fibre and ash, which is the inorganic material (mineral component and sometimes soil contamination).
All this information can be simplified by putting silage into three categories. Suitable for dry cows (66-71% DMD), suitable for productive cows (72% DMD and beyond) and silage that will need considerable supplementation regardless of stock type (<65% DMD).

Dry cows need to be monitored for body condition gain beyond 68% DMD. Straw is increasingly helpful here, the higher the DMD of the silage. Milking cows need to be on the best quality available (>74% DMD). A 74% DMD silage will require 4-4.5 kg of concentrate to produce 18 litres of milk. This increases approximately 1 kg of concentrate for each additional 2 litres, or 1 kg of concentrate for every 4 DMD points. Growing stock will require 2 kg of concentrate on poor silage vs. 0.5kg on very good silage. Dry cows on <66% DMD silage will require additional concentrate energy to maintain or gain body condition. Silage made in late September/early October will have high protein and nitrogen and lower dry matter.

This highly digestible forage is a welcome addition to tight fodder budgets; however, the utilisation of this silage needs careful consideration. It is likely to cause loose dungs in growing cattle and is also too rich in protein and energy for dry cows. It is suitable for milking cows, however it needs to be diluted with drier, lower protein forage to balance. The best approach for utilising these bales is to feed alongside other silage for the winter, trickling through your stock until they are used up.

For further advice, contact your local Agritech Sales Advisor or visit www.agritech.ie





A REAL-LIFE ORCHARD THIEF

Editor, Matt O'Keeffe, was very much looking forward to tasting his first crop of juicy pears this year, but he was not the only one. Returning home one day, Matt found this a real-life orchard thief enjoying the fruits of his labour – literally!

FARMERS URGED TO ATTEND TEAGASC WATER QUALITY CONFERENCE

Teagasc is hosting a water quality conference in November which will focus on farm compliance, reducing nutrient losses to water, and the role of good farming practices in protecting water quality. The event provides an opportunity to share experiences, discuss challenges and identify practical actions to improve water quality across Ireland.

The first session at the conference is titled 'Increasing Compliance with National Agricultural Inspections Programme (NAIP)', with contributions from Cork County Council and Teagasc, providing practical advice for farmers on how to prepare for a farm inspection, and how to upgrade farm infrastructure to minimise nutrient loss to water. And a Limerick dairy farmer will outline the improvements he made to the infrastructure on his farm.

The second session will examine how to reduce nitrogen (N) losses to water, by improving N balances on grass-based production systems. The role of cover crops in reducing N loss from tillage systems will also be discussed. We will hear directly from a tillage farmer and a dairy farmer on what actions they have implemented on their farms.

The third session at the water quality conference will look at 'Environmental Policy and Compliance'. With the first paper titled 'Habitats Directive and Water Framework Directive: compliance when granting individual Nitrates Derogations'. There will also be a presentation on the importance of the closed period for slurry spreading and a case study presented on the Moynalty Catchment of the river Boyne.

Speaking in advance of the conference, Noel Meehan, head of the Teagasc water quality knowledge transfer department said: "The Teagasc water quality conference is an opportunity for farmers, advisors, researchers and key stakeholders to share knowledge and practical solutions to improve water quality. The collective effort of everyone in the sector is important to achieving results, and I would urge as many as possible to attend this event."

The conference is taking place on Tuesday, November 24 in the Heritage Hotel, Killenard, Co. Laois. To see the full conference programme and to register visit Teagasc's website.

PRODUCT NEWS



MSD LAUNCHES SENSEHUB LIFETIME

MSD Animal Health has launched SenseHub Lifetime, a system that monitors dairy animals at every stage of life from newborn calves to replacement heifers, and throughout the cow's entire lactation. From day one, according to MSD, it helps farmers detect calf-health issues before visible symptoms appear, ensures replacement heifers meet target breeding weights on time, and keeps mature cows productive and healthy year after year.

Along with the ability to monitor animals at every stage of life, the following practical new features are now available:

- **Heat stress reporting:** Hot weather can affect cow rumination, milk yields, and conception rates. SenseHub Lifetime alerts farmers when heat stress levels begin to rise, helping them take action before herd performance is affected.
- **Group management:** Farmers can monitor different groups of animals and quickly see how dietary changes impact performance. For example, it can track how the herd responds to buffer feeding, once-a-day milking, on/off grazing, and other management changes.
- **Bespoke custom reports:** Farmers can create reports based on the needs of their herd, such as identifying cows suitable for sexed semen, grouping cows according to milk performance, assigning cows to specific winter housing groups, and highlighting animals with lower-than-expected rumination.
- **Youngstock Plus:** A new SenseHub Youngstock feature will help farmers monitor a calf as she matures into a heifer. The system will display the onset of puberty, cycling events, and pre-breeding insights, allowing farmers to implement the most suitable breeding strategy for each heifer.
- **Seasonal operations module:** This new feature will bring calving, breeding, and milk performance figures together in one dashboard. This will allow farmers to view the entire season at a glance, check progress against KPIs, and compare performance with previous years.



Dale Crammond, director of Meat Industry Ireland.

THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR IRISH MEAT

DIRECTOR OF MEAT INDUSTRY IRELAND, DALE CRAMMOND, REPRESENTS THE IRISH INDUSTRY ACROSS BEEF, SHEEP, POULTRY, AND PIGMEAT. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH EDITOR, MATT O'KEEFFE, HE DISCUSSES THE STATE OF THE IRISH AND GLOBAL MEAT INDUSTRY

Giving an overview of the sector, Dale comments on its value: "This is a multi-billion-euro industry; the Bord Bia figures confirm that fact. The poultry and pig sectors are important parts of Irish meat production. Poultry is going well, and pig numbers are up by four per cent this year. Producer numbers are relatively small, but the integration and efficiency are excellent. Some of the demand that we've lost on the beef side has undoubtedly gone to the poultry sector, and we have to acknowledge that. The sheep sector is under a bit of pressure in terms of both producer and sheep numbers."

Dale's observations on the global markets point to a period of 'flux and transition': "If you look at the big exporters around the world, obviously Brazil dominates. The Chinese market is very important to them and the new tariff and quota on Brazilian beef going into China is going to create a challenge for the rest of the year. The US has created some opportunity by removing the 26 per cent tariff and Brazil has been actively taking advantage of that. It will prevent some product from coming into Europe, and into the UK. The EU has a suspension imposed on Brazilian beef since September. We would worry about the opportunity still for Brazilian beef to go into the UK and undermine the foodservice channel there. We have to see how that plays out."

Anecdotally, Dale says, he has heard that a lot of Brazilian beef entered Europe ahead of ahead of the suspension but the truth of this will be established, he says: "We'll know those volumes as the final statistics come in towards the end of the year. But there's no doubt we're in a little bit of flux. Ultimately, from an Irish point of view, we continue to trade into the UK and European markets in the main."

GLOBAL CATTLE POPULATION

In terms of the current global herd size, Dale comments on the challenges that the US is facing: "The US is at an historic low, and they're having a real challenge in terms of rebuilding the herd. Water and drought are the major limiting factors. That's why beef prices have gone so high in the US, and it's become a political issue for the Trump administration leading into the midterms. Ultimately, they got rid of the tariff to bring beef prices down a little bit," he says.

> **SOME OF THE DEMAND THAT WE'VE LOST ON THE BEEF SIDE HAS UNDOUBTEDLY GONE TO THE POULTRY SECTOR, AND WE HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT**

The Irish herd, too, Dale says, has experienced its own challenges but there is some positivity on the horizon. "The European herd has been declining, back to about 6.3 million tonnes of production. Last year was very tough for Ireland where we lost around 200,000 head of cattle out of our kill. We went from 1.8 million head back

> SOME OF THE DEMAND THAT WE'VE LOST ON THE BEEF SIDE HAS UNDOUBTEDLY GONE TO THE POULTRY SECTOR, AND WE HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT

to about 1.56 million. It looks like we could achieve parity this year, and Bord Bia is indicating that there might be some growth in supply next year. That's positive and it's testament to our farmers. The suckler herd had been in decline and has stabilised and increased by about 15,000 cows. I'd be hopeful we would see a similar increase in 2027. It reflects more positivity around the industry. There are ups and downs, as everyone knows, but I think the long-term trajectory is really positive, if we can just stay in the markets."

PRICE OUTLOOK

Providing some insight into market prospects, he said: "Demand is pretty good now. My members have been filling orders for the Christmas period. It was a tough start to the year, there's no getting away from that. We saw a big consumption decline, particularly in the UK in the first six months. As the World Cup got going, the market picked up and it's been steady for the last couple of months. The kill is up a good bit on this time last year. That's positive, and our objective is to return the best price possible to the farmer."

When asked about Teagasc calculations on finisher margin requirements, he says: "Teagasc have a job to do in terms of informing finishers on costs and returns. Some of those numbers are sobering. I think farmers need to look at their individual situations and budgets, when they're making purchasing decisions, buying animals to feed them over the winter. Hopefully we will have a little more stability in the market. But it's difficult to predict these things."

FEWER PRODUCERS

Dale recently completed his tenure as president of the Agricultural Science Association. The theme of generational renewal, a focus of that organisation, continues to be a challenge: "It's a critical issue. We must approach this in two ways. We shouldn't get too negative. There are a lot of young people coming into the industry, and we need to call that out. There is positive work going on among the processors I represent, whether it's ABP or Kepak or Dawn with their young farmer programmes. They're trying to support that next generation and show them there's a viable future in cattle production. Yes, there are challenges in all sectors that we need to manage. The next Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is going to be important. We've seen taxation changes in the budget that should help in terms of farm partnerships and enabling transfers to happen earlier within those partnerships. We really need to focus on what is working well and how we can improve and develop what we have. As an industry we are all proud of, we must promote the opportunities for young people as well as addressing the challenges."

CHANGING ATTITUDES

Dale reflects on the sustainability of cattle production, and the criticism that the sector has attracted: "There's been a lot of criticism over the last 10 years. I spent some time in Washington DC between 2015 and 2019 and when I came home, I sensed a change in attitudes towards agriculture. Thankfully, I think we're in a slightly better place now, which gives me a lot more optimism. For the first time, the EU Commission has a European livestock strategy. It's completely opposite to the Green Deal, designed to rebuild resilience in the livestock sector. It fully recognises its role in rural economies and the part it plays in supporting human nutrition.

"The renewal of the nitrates derogation was a success for the whole industry. We worked closely with farm organisations and our colleagues in the dairy industry. It is a critical issue. We must continue to improve water quality. The challenge now has been set down for us. We have another three-year period, and we need to use that wisely. We have some of the best water quality in Europe, so we are working from a strong base."

FARMER ENGAGEMENT

Producer/processor relations can be an issue at times, Dale says, adding that positive engagement is really important: "We need our farmers to produce raw material for us. From time to time, we will have our disagreements, but generally, since I've come into this role, I've seen very positive engagement. We've far more in common than divides us on so many issues. The next CAP is going to be critical. We need to find ways to get the money to that productive farmer."

EFFICIENCY GAINS

Dale says he is impressed by the adoption of new technologies to drive farm efficiency: "The innovation over the last five years has been remarkable. We are well on the way to achieving the ambition of being the first country in the world to genotype our entire herd. The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) has made remarkable progress in breeding. If you look at sexed semen adoption, the dairy and beef sectors are becoming much more integrated. That's all positive. We're seeing real value coming through the commercial beef value index. That's science at its core coming into our industry and making us more efficient."

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WINTER ON THE FARM: PREPARATION GOES A LONG WAY

THE EVENINGS ARE DRAWING IN, TEMPERATURES ARE STARTING TO DROP, AND WINTER WEATHER IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO TAKE A WALK AROUND THE FARM AND MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS READY FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD, WRITES CIARAN ROCHE, FBD RISK MANAGER

A few simple checks and repairs now can help prevent problems later. Buildings, lighting, electrics, yards, machinery and water supplies all deserve some attention. Most importantly, taking the time to prepare can help keep you, your family, and anyone working or visiting the farm safe this winter.

CHECK YOUR FARM BUILDINGS

Take some time to look over sheds and other farm buildings, particularly before and after storms or severe weather. Check for loose sheeting, damaged roofs or other problems that could get worse in high winds, heavy rain or snow. If repairs are needed, put safety first. Working at height is particularly dangerous and needs to be properly planned, with suitable equipment such as scaffolding or a mobile elevated work platform (MEWP). Remember, not every job needs to be done by yourself. If you cannot carry out a repair safely, bring in a competent contractor.

LIGHT UP THE FARMYARD

Short winter days often mean starting or finishing jobs in the dark. Good lighting around the farm can make a big difference. Check lights in yards, sheds, entrances, steps and other busy areas. Replace damaged lights and make sure fittings are suitable for the conditions, particularly where they may be exposed to rain or moisture. Don't take a chance climbing up to replace a light. If you don't have a safe way of reaching it, or electrical repairs are needed, call an electrical contractor.

DON'T FORGET THE ELECTRICS

Farm electrics have to cope with tough conditions. Cables, sockets, and fittings can be damaged by machinery, livestock, water and everyday wear and tear. Keep an eye out for damaged plugs, cables, sockets or fittings and have problems repaired – do not put this off. Test your current residual devices (RCDs) regularly using the test button. And before using portable equipment, such as a power washer, have a quick look at the plug and lead for signs of damage.

KEEP YARDS AND WALKWAYS CLEAR

A tidy farmyard is a safer farmyard. Clear away clutter from sheds, yards and walkways, and keep drains and channels free from leaves and debris. When frost and ice arrive, pay particular attention to the routes you use every day. Grit or salt busy walkways and working areas and watch out for surfaces that may look wet but are actually frozen.

BE READY FOR THE FREEZE

A little preparation before a cold spell can save a lot of hassle. Insulate exposed water pipes and make sure milking equipment and other vulnerable systems are protected against frost. Check anti-freeze levels in tractors and other vehicles. Before setting off, fully de-ice windscreens and mirrors and give yourself a little extra time when conditions are poor.

MAKE LIFTING EASIER

Winter can mean more physical work, particularly when livestock are housed. Carrying feed, handling bales and feeding animals can all take their toll. Before lifting something heavy or awkward, stop for a moment and consider whether there is an easier way. Use lifting or handling equipment where possible, reduce the weight of the load, and ask for help when you need it.

TAKE THE TIME TO PREPARE

Winter will always bring its share of challenges, but a little preparation can make life easier and safer. Take a walk around your farm, deal with the small jobs before they become bigger ones and prepare for the colder weather ahead. Most importantly, take your time and don't take unnecessary risks.

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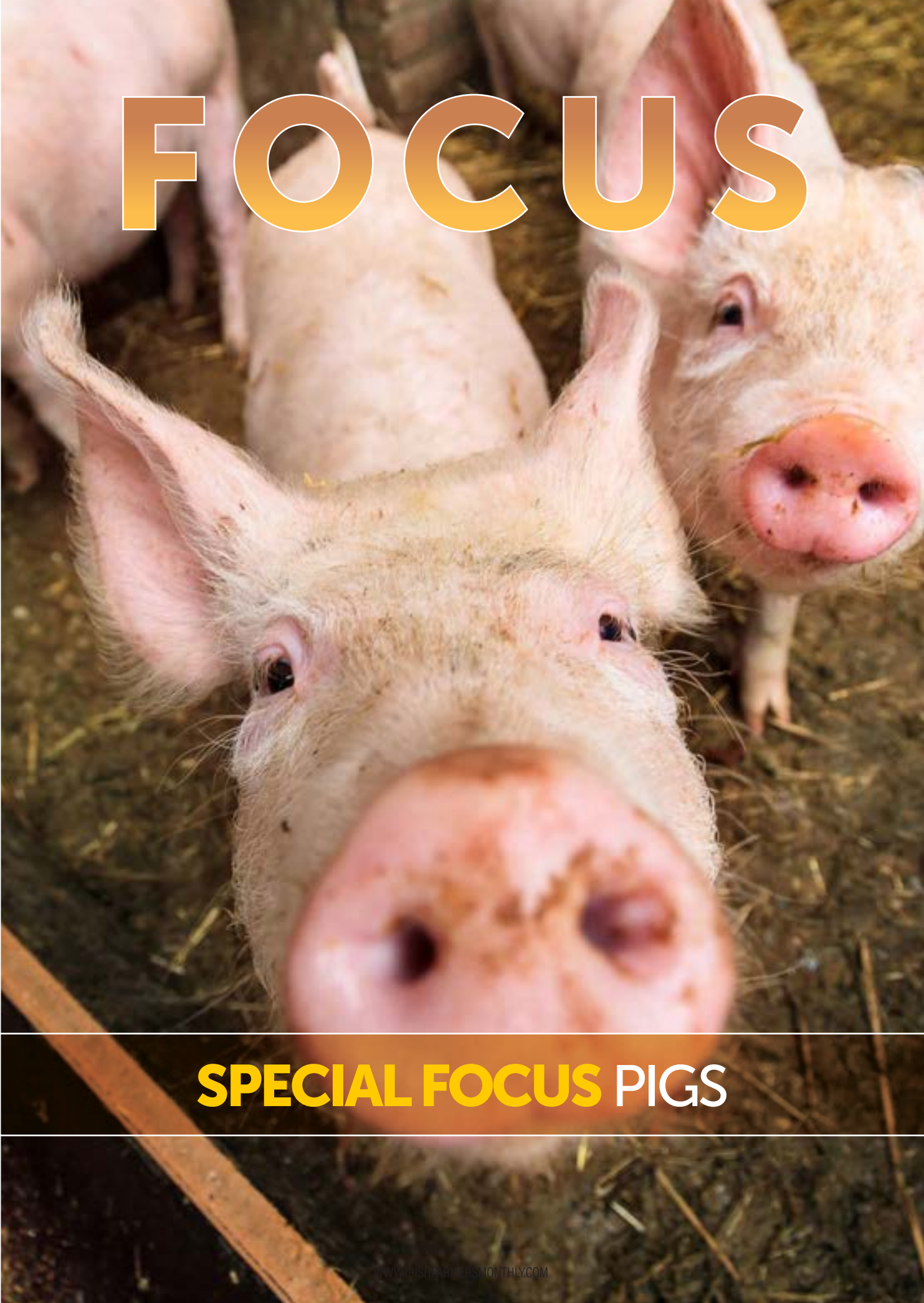
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FOCUS

SPECIAL FOCUS PIGS



QUICKER TO SLAUGHTER AND REDUCED CARBON FOOTPRINT

NEW RESEARCH FROM UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN (UCD) SHOWS THAT TREATING FEED GRAIN WITH ORGANIC ACID INSTEAD OF DRYING IT, CUTS FOSSIL FUEL USE BY UP TO 81 PER CENT, GETS PIGS TO SLAUGHTER UP TO 10 DAYS SOONER, AND REDUCES THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF PORK BY ALMOST 10 PER CENT

By the time a typical Irish pig leaves the farm at 118kg, it has been responsible for about 382kg of greenhouse gas emissions. That is 3.24kg of CO_2-equivalent for every kilogramme of live pig. The figure covers every stage up to the farm gate: growing the feed crops, including seed, fertiliser, sprays and machinery; drying or preserving the grain; producing and shipping imported soya, minerals and amino acids; milling the feed and transporting it; the energy used on the pig farm; and the slurry the pigs produce. A life cycle assessment (LCA) carried out at UCD shows that this figure can be cut by almost 10 per cent, through a change made in the grain store rather than the pig house.

OVERLOOKED SOURCE OF EMISSIONS

Irish wheat and barley are often harvested at about 18 per cent moisture, too damp to store without going mouldy. The standard practice is to run the grain through an energy-intensive dryer until the moisture falls to 14 per cent. This burns a considerable amount of fossil fuel, yet grain drying is rarely included when the carbon footprint of animal feed is calculated. The alternative is to treat the grain at harvest with a preservative based on propionic acid, an organic acid that pigs already produce naturally in their gut. The acid prevents mould from growing, and no drying is required.

Shane Maher, Nick Holden, Torres Sweeney, and John O'Doherty used LCA to compare the two approaches. LCA is an internationally standardised method for calculating the environmental impact of a product at every stage of its production. Their analysis followed Irish-grown wheat and barley from sowing through harvesting, preservation, milling and delivery to a commercial pig farm, where 80 sows and their offspring were followed from the start of pregnancy to slaughter.

▸ Savings in the grain store

Preserving grain with acid rather than drying it cut the fossil fuel used in storage by 74-81 per cent. The carbon footprint of each tonne of grain fell by 15-18 per cent.



Savings in the pig

The larger gains came from the animals themselves. Pigs fed acid-preserved grain throughout their lives ate about the same amount each day as pigs on dried grain but grew noticeably faster. After 24 weeks, they weighed 127.7kg, compared with 117.6kg for pigs on dried grain, and their carcasses were about 8kg heavier. The preserved grain carried fewer moulds after storage, and the pigs that ate it digested more of their feed. At slaughter, about one fifth less of the nitrogen they ate was passing out in their manure. Faster growth meant these pigs reached slaughter weight up to 10 days sooner and needed less feed to get there. Because feed accounts for more than 60 per cent of the environmental impact and cost of pig production, that saving matters. With manure included, the carbon footprint came to 3.24kg of CO_2-equivalent per kilogramme of live pig on dried grain and 2.96kg on acid-preserved grain, a saving of about 33kg for a finished pig. The benefit was greatest when preserved grain was fed to both the sows and their offspring. The true saving is likely to be larger. The calculation assumes that manure emissions are the same in both groups, but pigs losing less nitrogen in their manure should produce slurry that gives off less nitrous oxide and ammonia.

WHAT IT MEANS ON THE FARM

For pig producers, the findings go beyond carbon. Pigs that reach slaughter weight up to ten days sooner free up finishing space earlier, and heavier carcasses at the same age mean more saleable meat from each pig. Better use of dietary nitrogen also matters for farms working within nitrates limits. For tillage farmers and grain merchants supplying the pig sector, acid treatment removes the need to dry feed grain, along with the fuel bill and the bottlenecks at the dryer in a wet harvest.

HOW THE FIGURES COMPARE

Carbon footprints for pork are only comparable when calculated the same way: per kilogramme of live pig or of meat, with or without manure, and with or without emissions from clearing South American land for soya.

The first three rows are measured on the same basis: up to the farm gate, per kilogramme of live pig, with manure included. On that footing, both UCD results sit well below the Dutch national average, and pigs fed acid-preserved grain came in lowest of all. The Teagasc figures are expressed per kilogramme of pigmeat, so they are not directly comparable with the UCD results. Converted to a carcass basis, the UCD figure for dried grain would be about 4.3kg, still well below the Teagasc national average of 5.52kg. Much of that difference is likely to reflect herd performance.

THE NEXT STEP: REPLACING SOYA

The LCA shows where most of the remaining emissions arise. The finishing stage accounts for most of the footprint because that is when pigs eat the most. Within the feed, imported soya bean meal is responsible for 55per cent of the environmental impact.

The UCD group has already begun to tackle this. In a study published in *Animal Feed Science and Technology* in 2026, replacing soya bean meal with faba beans in finishing diets reduced global warming potential by 33-38 per cent. That opens a further opportunity for Irish tillage farmers to grow protein for the pig sector. Together, the studies point to a practical route for Irish pig farming: preserve cereals with acid instead of drying them, and replace part of the imported soya with home-grown protein. Better slurry storage and biogas would add further gains.

Ready to use now

Organic acid preservatives are already on the market and can be applied with standard equipment at harvest. The authors describe the approach as an immediately deployable strategy for reducing emissions from pig production.

Study	Carbon footprint (kg CO_2e)	Measured per
UCD LCA, dried grain	**3.24**	kg live pig, farm gate
UCD LCA, acid-preserved grain	**2.96**	kg live pig, farm gate
Netherlands, national average, 2020	4.60	kg live pig, farm gate
Teagasc national average, 2023	5.52	kg pigmeat
Teagasc, top 10% of farms, 2023	5.31	kg pigmeat
Teagasc, best farm assessed, 2023	3.95	kg pigmeat

The research was funded by Research Ireland through the BiOrbic Bioeconomy Research Centre and by Adesco Nutricines, which supplied the preservative. This article was submitted on behalf of the researchers by John O'Doherty, professor of monogastric nutrition at UCD's School of Agriculture and Food Science.



NAVIGATING MARKET CHALLENGES; BUILDING FOR FUTURE GROWTH



Shauna Jager, Bord Bia.

DESPITE A CHALLENGING TRADING ENVIRONMENT THIS YEAR, THE PIG SECTOR REMAINS RESILIENT, WRITES SHAUNA JAGER, CLIENT EXECUTIVE, PIGMEAT AND POULTRY AT BORD BIA

The Irish pig sector experienced a mixed trading environment in 2026. Production continued to expand, reflecting the efficiency of the industry, while market returns came under pressure as increased global supplies, a saturated European market, and softer demand weighed on prices. Despite these challenges, the sector remains resilient supported by strong production fundamentals, a trusted product offering and ongoing investment in domestic and international market development.

SUPPLY AND PRICE SITUATION

Supply has remained one of the defining stories of 2026. Irish pig throughput continues to run ahead of previous years, reflecting strong production performance across the sector. By the end of September, more than 2.6 million pigs had been processed in Irish plants, an increase of over 110,000 head compared with the same period in 2025. This represents growth of approximately 4 per cent, highlighting the sector's ability to maintain output despite ongoing pressures. This follows a similarly positive trend in 2025 when Irish pig slaughterings exceeded 3.3 million head, continuing a pattern of growth that has seen the sector increase production. A key driver of increased Irish pig production this year has been the continued retention of pigs for slaughter within the Republic of Ireland. Improved processing capacity and strong demand from Irish processors have supported throughput growth while helping maximise value retention within the domestic industry. However, while production remained robust, a weaker market environment weighed on prices. After reaching historically favourable levels during previous years, pig prices,



> ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN RECENT YEARS IN THE EXPORT MARKET HAS BEEN THE CONTINUED REDUCTION INCHINESE IMPORT DEMAND

globally, have come under sustained pressure throughout 2026. Higher levels of total European production have resulted in an increasingly saturated market, placing downward pressure on prices alongside softer global demand. Current Irish pig prices as reported by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) over the most recent five weeks are averaging €1.68/kg excluding VAT, around 12 per cent lower than the corresponding period last year. Earlier in the year, average prices stood at around €1.76/kg excluding VAT, significantly below the levels experienced during parts of 2025. Despite this decline, Ireland continues to maintain a premium over many of its European competitors. Irish pig prices have, generally, remained above the EU average throughout the year, reflecting strong processor demand, Ireland's reputation as a trusted supplier of pigmeat and the value placed on assured standards.

INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

International trade continues to play a critical role in shaping market conditions for Irish pigmeat. While a significant proportion of production is consumed domestically, developments in global markets have a direct influence on pig prices and producer returns in Ireland. One of the most significant changes in recent years in the export market has been the continued reduction in Chinese import demand. Following the rebuilding of China's domestic herd after African swine fever (ASF), import requirements have fallen considerably from the exceptional levels witnessed in 2022/23. Despite this, China remains an important market, its increasing self-sufficiency in pork production has tempered import demand for primary cuts, but China continues to require significant volumes of imported fifth-quarter products, providing ongoing opportunities albeit limited so far in 2026 given softer pricing conditions. Total Irish pigmeat exports to mainland China reached €50m by the end of August this year, down €14m (22 per cent) on the corresponding period in 2025.

A number of other Asian markets provide opportunities for Irish pigmeat. In Japan, Ireland benefited particularly in early 2026 from the continued absence of Spanish pork following the country's ASF outbreak, creating opportunities for alternative European suppliers. However, increased competition from lower-cost suppliers has since intensified, limiting some of this advantage. South Korea also presents potential for future growth, with imports of Irish pigmeat increasing in recent years and demand for imported pork remaining strong. Meanwhile, the Philippines continues to provide an important outlet for a range of cuts and fifth-quarter products, supporting the diversification of Irish pigmeat exports across the region.

Outside Asia, export performance was mixed, with non-Asian exports valued at approximately €184m in the year to August 2026. Strong growth was recorded in Africa (+19 per cent) and Canada (+553 per cent from a low base), while exports to the EU (-27 per cent), Great Britain (-25 per cent) and Oceania (-14 per cent) declined year-on-year, reflecting challenging trading conditions and increased competition across international pork markets.

DOMESTIC MARKET

While international markets play a vital role in maximising carcase value, the domestic market remains a significant part of the Irish pork market. Domestic retail performance for pork remained positive during 2026, supported by changing consumer purchasing habits. Elevated beef prices encouraged some shoppers to switch towards more affordable protein options, benefiting both pork and chicken. While chicken captured much of this demand pork also performed well, particularly within value-added products. Recent consumer research undertaken by Bord Bia has highlighted both the strength of the pork category and the opportunity that exists for future growth. Irish consumers continue to hold highly positive perceptions of pork and bacon, with more than 90 per cent rating pork positively for taste and expressing strong trust in Irish provenance. The challenge facing the category is not consumer perception, but everyday relevance. While consumers like and trust Irish pork, many instinctively default to chicken or beef when planning weekday meals. In response, Bord Bia has developed a growth strategy focused on increasing the frequency of pork consumption by reinforcing its versatility, convenience and suitability for modern meal occasions.

This strategy has been brought to life through the 2026 Quality Mark Pork and Bacon campaign, which targeted younger consumers aged 25-44 through television, video-on-demand, social media, YouTube, digital audio and working with influencers. The campaign highlighted the flavour, versatility and nutritional benefits of Quality Mark pork and bacon, with evaluation results indicating strong engagement, positive sentiment and encouraging purchase intent among the target audience.

OUTLOOK

Looking ahead, market conditions are likely to remain challenging. Global demand remains uneven and international competition continues to intensify. However, there are also reasons for confidence. Irish pig production remains efficient and competitive, supported by strong consumer trust at home and a well-established reputation in international markets. While the sector faces a challenging and increasingly complex trading environment, its proven ability to adapt, combined with continued investment in innovation, promotion and market development, provides a strong foundation to navigate future challenges and support the sector's future development.



IMPROVING VACCINATION PRACTICES

EMMA SARGENT, VETERINARY TECHNICAL MANAGER WITH MSD ANIMAL HEALTH, PROVIDES SOME SIMPLE STEPS THAT CAN HELP TO IMPROVE ON-FARM VACCINATION PRACTICES

Vaccinations are one of the most valuable tools available to pig producers. They help protect your pigs from disease, support responsible antibiotic usage, and contribute to productivity and profitability. The success of any vaccination programme relies not only on the vaccine itself, but also on how it is handled and administered. Recent research presented at the European Symposium of Porcine Health Management (ESPHM) in 2026 sheds light on two critical, yet often overlooked, aspects of the vaccination process: the cleanliness of our equipment and the accuracy of our injection technique. The findings suggest that by failing to get these basics right, we may be unintentionally causing tissue trauma, introducing bad bacteria and putting our pigs at risk of infection.

IMPORTANCE OF CLEAN EQUIPMENT

Think about the needles and vaccinator guns that you use. Are they truly clean? Research that tested vaccination equipment on 10 different farms in Germany found some alarming results (see Figure 1). Evidence of bacterial contamination was found across all farms. Swabs taken from vaccinator guns and needles showed that nearly 99 per cent of samples were contaminated, with over 80 per cent showing high bacterial loads, falling short of European standards set for water for injection into animals. Troublingly, the bacteria identified included *Clostridium spp.* (found in 90 per cent of samples), as well as *Streptococcus suis* and pathogenic *Escherichia coli*. When introduced during injection, these bacteria have the potential to cause abscesses, inflammation, and even systemic infection.

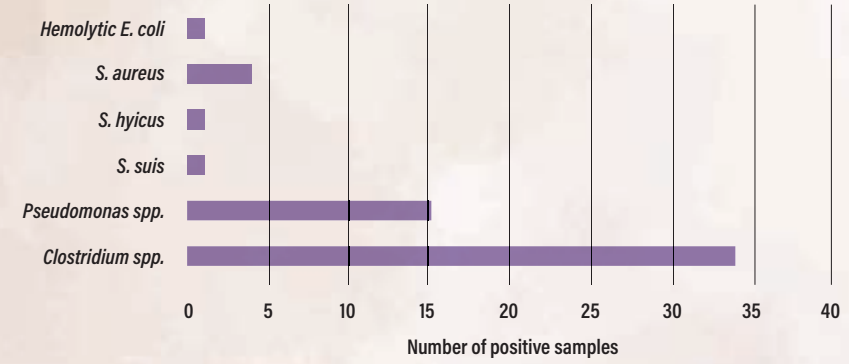


Figure 1: Number of samples tested positive for different bacteria (n=46; except for *Clostridium spp.* n=38).



▲ ▼ **Researchers found unhygienic storage of vaccinator guns and needles, with visible contamination.**



To minimise risk from contaminated equipment, needles should be replaced after each litter or every 10 pigs.
Vaccinator guns should be thoroughly cleaned according to the manufacturer's instructions after each use. Avoid harsh disinfectants or chemicals, as residues can damage equipment or interfere with subsequent vaccines. Store equipment in a clean, dry, dust-free location such as a sealed container or cupboard, and inspect regularly for wear and tear. The volume administered should also be tested before vaccinating.

HITTING THE TARGET

Even when equipment hygiene is excellent, another important factor influences vaccine success: where the vaccine is delivered. The same German researchers found that 43 per cent of injections were placed outside the recommended injection zone in the neck.
The most common mistake was injecting too far back towards the shoulder. Why does this matter? For an intramuscular

(IM) vaccine to work best, it needs to get deep into the muscle of the neck, avoiding bony landmarks like the shoulder blade. Injecting in the wrong area could also damage nerves, blood vessels, or salivary glands, causing pain and stress for the piglet, which may also compromise their immune response to vaccination.



Injection too far caudal.



Injection too far cranial.

Needle length is another important factor here. If the needle is too long for a small piglet, there is an increased risk of penetrating beyond the target muscle and causing unnecessary damage to underlying structures. If your needle is too short, you might only be injecting into the fat layer, which may impact vaccine uptake.

NEEDLE-FREE TECHNOLOGY

For farms looking to overcome these common pitfalls, needle-free technology offers a compelling alternative. Intradermal systems like IDAL deliver a precise dose of vaccine into the skin without a needle, minimising the risk of contamination and disease transmission from dirty equipment and ensuring consistent, accurate vaccine delivery. Piglets vaccinated intradermally also show less lying and more suckling behaviour after vaccination.

By avoiding intramuscular injection-site lesions, IDAL can also directly reduce carcass damage and subsequent downgrades. Furthermore, it serves as a highly sustainable option; delivering a micro-dose of just 0.2ml without the use of a needle can significantly reduce vaccine packaging and medical waste from the farm's environmental footprint.

GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT

These studies remind us that proper vaccination is a technical skill that requires attention to detail. By focusing on two simple principles - using clean equipment and hitting the right injection site - farmers can help to reduce complications like abscesses, injury and infections to support a healthier herd.

Farmers should discuss their vaccination regime with their vet, who can also advice on infection control and on-farm biosecurity.

References available on request.





NAVIGATING THE PEAKS AND TROUGHS OF IRISH PIG PRODUCTION

CHAIR OF THE IRISH FARMERS' ASSOCIATION'S NATIONAL PIG COMMITTEE, MICHAEL CAFFREY, RUNS A PIG-PRODUCTION ENTERPRISE IN CO. CAVAN BRINGING ALL PROGENY 'FROM BIRTH TO BACON'. HERE, HE CHATS TO EDITOR, MATT O'KEEFFE, ABOUT NAVIGATING THE PEAKS AND TROUGHS OF IRISH PIG PRODUCTION

Pig prices right now are in one of their all-too-regular troughs, Michael says: "Markets are very poor at the minute. If you're selling at a flat price, you're talking around €1.68 per kilogramme (kg). And if you're grading well, you're talking about a range between €1.68/kg to €1.72/kg. That's way behind a breakeven point. Feed costs at the minute are getting worse with rising grain prices. At around the start of October, feed cost was €1.25/kg. Then you put 45c to 55c of additional costs on top of that, depending on bank repayments, energy, labour and everything else. It's different cost factors for different farmers, but the bottom line for everyone is that pig producers are losing money at the minute. Teagasc calculates that, with repayments and everything, breakeven is around €1.85/kg. Increased energy prices, be it electricity, diesel, haulage, are a huge burden on production costs."

PRICE PROSPECTS

Asked about an immediate improvement in pig production margins, Michael says he doesn't see it: "We're in that trough, with no upside at the moment because there's an awful lot of bacon on the European market, mainly coming from Spain. For as long as this is the

> **YOUR PEAKS AND YOUR TROUGHS ARE HAPPENING QUICKER AND YOUR TROUGHS ARE DEFINITELY A LOT WORSE THAN THEY USED TO BE**



> THE HOME MARKET IS KEEPING US IN BUSINESS RIGHT NOW

case, Europe is more than self-sufficient in pork. The sow herd has fallen in Europe as we speak but not by enough to bring us into a positive situation. The Chinese have restructured and expanded their pig production model. They are not buying as much pork as they used to and that's adding to a global surplus looking for viable outlets."

Michael continues: "Irish consumer loyalty is strong and our DNA traceability scheme shows strong consumer, processor and retailer support for Irish product. The home market is keeping us in business right now."

PREVENTING DISEASE

Over the past few years, disease has impacted global pig production and with the EU insisting on even higher production standards, these present a real financial burden for farmers. Michael reflects on the situation: "We take a very preventative approach in Ireland as far as possible, with vaccines playing a big role. The recent budget did support vaccines, especially for respiratory illnesses; they don't cover every disease, but they are a big help in keeping the Irish herd healthy."

"There are an awful lot of new regulations in the pipeline, but let's be honest, with the way things are at the minute, producers can't afford to implement them. Loose farrowing is being talked about now. It's going to come in, but it's not going to come in straight away because, unless there's massive help, producers can't afford to implement it. Higher production requirements are a challenge and over the years, all this regulation and this price volatility has delivered the Irish industry to where it is now with just a couple of hundred producers at most. In addition, price volatility is more acute than it ever was. That's a problem going forward as well, especially in attracting new people into the sector. Your peaks and your troughs are happening quicker and your troughs are definitely a lot worse than they used to be."

LABOUR MANAGEMENT

Like all agricultural production sectors, labour availability is a challenge across the pigs sector, Michael says: "I won't say that it's harder than ever, but it's a problem and you have to manage it. Without foreign workers we would have a big problem. With workers from abroad, we need to ensure their language skills are adequate so that everyone understands what's going on, and how to follow instructions and engage with each other and with management. Teagasc has been very supportive and active in providing training and advice. It has launched a new programme recently to support the sector. It is doing its bit."

HIGH EFFICIENCY LEVELS

Michael points to the high efficiency standards of Irish producers: "We are well up there in terms of production efficiency. You hear of massive figures coming out of Denmark but they have their problems as well. I would definitely say our industry is on a par with anyone.

"And in terms of trying to squeeze more out of the enterprise, there are producers trying to develop biomethane units to add value. There are a couple of biomethane plants using some pig slurry. We've looked at different models, in Northern Ireland, for instance, and we're looking at the viability of slurry separation and how that could add value. Teagasc is also putting a programme together to look at slurry and the way it can be managed."

FUTURE FOR IRISH PIG PRODUCTION

Asked about the direction of Irish pig production in the years ahead, Michael says: "I'd say there will be further rationalisation in the sector. The degree depends on individual circumstances. Whether producers have someone willing to take on the enterprise, for instance, is an issue. There are young people coming into the industry and thankfully it's a priority in the IFA at all levels.

"We have interaction across all the production sectors on the issue of refreshing the farming workforce. The IFA pig committee membership itself has one of the youngest age profiles across all the national committees, so that's a positive indicator for us. In fairness, when you see the amount of money we're losing at the minute, it's very hard for a young person to want to take it on. On the other hand, on that point of getting through the troughs, there's always been an understanding between the finance houses and pig producers that you'll have those times when you can't make repayments, that it's almost inevitable. I haven't had anyone come to me with issues with the banks. I think there would be a genuine relationship there, and understanding around the volatile nature of the pig production sector."

THE HIDDEN THREAT INSIDE THE FEED BIN

DR HAZEL ROONEY, EUROPEAN PIG SPECIALIST, ALLTECH TECHNOLOGY GROUP, DISCUSSES THE RISKS POSED BY MYCOTOXINS, AND THEIR IMPACT ON PIG HEALTH

For pig producers, every tonne of raw material represents an investment in performance, pig health and, ultimately, profitability. Yet within the feed bin lies an often-overlooked risk that can quietly undermine these goals: mycotoxins. Invisible and odourless, these toxic compounds can infiltrate even the highest-quality raw materials, compromising pig performance and eroding margins long before any outward signs of trouble appear. As pressure mounts on producers to balance cost control with higher productivity and better health, managing this hidden threat has never been more important.

WHAT ARE MYCOTOXINS?

Mycotoxins are naturally occurring chemical compounds produced by certain moulds and fungi that grow on crops in the field or subsequently during storage. Cereals, forages and feed by-products can all be vulnerable. Ireland's temperate climate, often marked by wet summers followed by mild autumns, provides the perfect conditions for these moulds to thrive. Even small fluctuations in humidity or temperature during storage can accelerate their growth.

While contamination may begin in the field, improper handling or storage of harvested grains can exacerbate the problem inside the feed bin. That is what makes mycotoxins such a persistent challenge: they are invisible, widespread and easily overlooked until pig performance is noticeably affected. With changing weather patterns and increasingly volatile harvests across many regions in Europe, the risk from mycotoxins continues to require close attention.

WHY ARE PIGS PARTICULARLY AT RISK?

Pigs are among the most sensitive livestock species to mycotoxins. Their digestive tract, and particularly the intestinal barrier, is highly responsive to these toxins, even when they are present at low levels. This means that pigs can experience health and performance setbacks long before clinical signs become obvious. Low-level, chronic exposure is the most common and the most deceptive form of contamination. It can show up in many ways, such as:

- Reduced feed intake and growth rates;
- Impaired immune response, leaving pigs more vulnerable to secondary infections;
- Reproductive challenges in breeding sows and gilts; and
- Subtle digestive disturbances that increase nutrient losses.

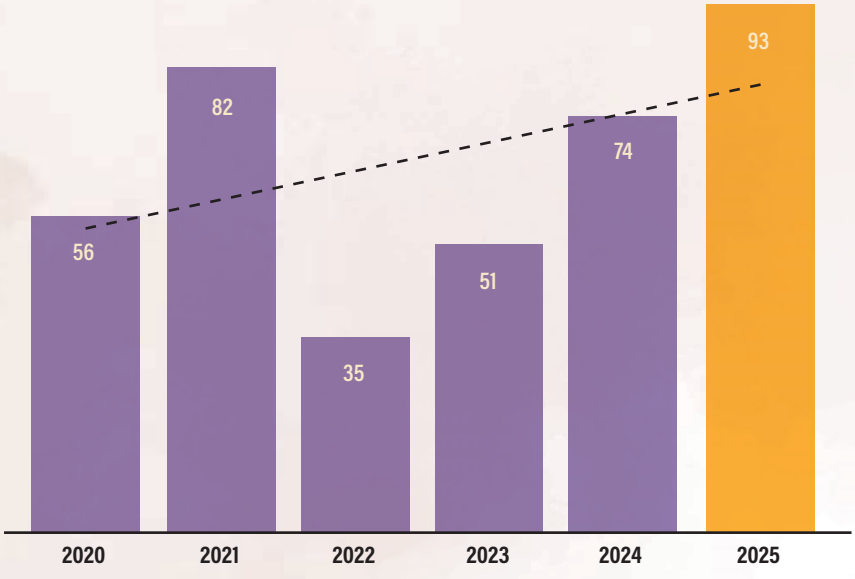
Because these effects are often subclinical, they can slowly eat away at farm efficiency without being easily traced back to a single cause. The result is a gradual decline in productivity and profitability across the herd.

THE EVOLVING MYCOTOXIN LANDSCAPE

Alltech 37+ analysis of Irish and European raw materials over successive harvests shows a complex and evolving picture. While deoxynivalenol (DON; see Figure 1) and zearalenone (ZEA) remain the most frequently detected mycotoxins in small grains, other mycotoxins such as fumonisins and ochratoxin A are also increasingly found in feed materials, often in combination.

This mycotoxin cocktail effect is an even greater concern. Multiple mycotoxins acting together can have a cumulative or even synergistic impact, amplifying their negative effects on the gut health, organ function, and immune performance of pigs. In practical terms, this means that even when individual toxin levels are within acceptable limits, the combined challenge can still cause losses for both the pig and the producer.

Figure 1: Alltech 37+ analysis of DON in European wheat and barley, 2022-2025.





PIG PERFORMANCE IS IMPAIRED EVEN WHEN MYCOTOXIN CONTAMINATION LEVELS ARE BELOW EU AND US REGULATORY THRESHOLDS. FOR INSTANCE, PIGS EXPOSED TO MYCOTOXINS SHOWED A REDUCTION IN AVERAGE DAILY GAIN OF NEARLY 80G. FEED INTAKE ALSO DECLINED, COMPOUNDING THE PROBLEM

The Alltech 2026 European Harvest Analysis, which assesses this year's new-crop grains and forages, will be released in January 2027. Keep an eye on Alltech's social media channels to sign up and read the full 2026 report as soon as it is released.

EVIDENCE FROM THE FIELD

A published meta-analysis by Weaver et al. (2024) reviewed multiple studies to examine the effects of mycotoxin challenges on growing pigs. The results clearly demonstrated that pig performance is impaired even when mycotoxin contamination levels are below EU and US regulatory thresholds. For instance, pigs exposed to mycotoxins showed a reduction in average daily gain of nearly 80g. Feed intake also declined, compounding the problem. Importantly, pigs that received Mycosorb, Alltech's mycotoxin management solution during mycotoxin exposure, maintained significantly better growth rates under both moderate and high challenge conditions. While no single technology can eliminate the risk entirely, these findings highlight how a proactive, data-driven approach to mycotoxin control can protect herd performance and efficiency.

OPTIMAL MYCOTOXIN MANAGEMENT

For Irish pig producers, managing mycotoxins effectively starts with recognising that prevention is always more cost-effective than cure. A structured mycotoxin control programme can be built around three simple steps: identify the risk; quantify the risk; and mitigate the risk.

- Risk identification: Testing raw materials for mycotoxin contamination is the cornerstone of effective mycotoxin control. Because mycotoxins are invisible, visual inspection alone is unreliable. The Alltech 37+ laboratory analysis, based in Dunboyne, Co. Meath, is one such testing service. It screens feed ingredients for more than 50 mycotoxins across seven groups, giving producers, vets and nutritionists a clear picture of their current contamination status.
- Risk quantification: Knowing which mycotoxins are present in a sample is only part of the story; it is important to understand what the test results actually mean for pig health and performance. Alltech's unique Risk Equivalent Quantity (REQ) metric uses data from the Alltech 37+ analysis to assess the potential impacts on pigs across different life stages, from breeding gilts and sows to weaners and finishers. This detailed quantification allows producers to make informed choices about diet formulation, raw material sourcing and whether further action is needed.
- Risk mitigation: Once the risk has been identified and quantified, the next step is mitigation. Alongside good feed storage practices, such as maintaining dry, well-ventilated bins and regular cleaning and maintenance schedules, the inclusion of mycotoxin binders such as Alltech's Mycosorb® technologies can help to significantly reduce their harmful effects within the pig. Mycosorb® and the EVO solutions, Mycosorb A+ EVO and Mycosorb EVO, are designed to bind a wide range of mycotoxins within the gastrointestinal tract, reducing their absorption and helping to maintain pig health and performance. Backed by nearly 30 years of research, Mycosorb's safety and efficacy have made it a globally trusted component of integrated mycotoxin management programmes.

Ultimately, controlling mycotoxins is about more than safeguarding feed; it is about protecting pig health, productivity and profitability. When pigs can use feed efficiently and maintain a strong immune system, the benefits are evident at every level: improved growth rates, optimal reproductive performance and a greater ability to cope with disease challenges.

The threat from mycotoxins may be hidden, but its effects are anything but. As Irish pig producers continue to navigate volatile markets, shifting weather patterns and evolving feed supply chains, a proactive approach to mycotoxin management is an investment that delivers measurable returns. For more information on mycotoxin testing, risk assessment tools, and proven mitigation strategies, visit **www.knowmycotoxins.com**

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Maintaining the proven features of the Mycosorb range, Mycosorb® A+ Evo is the optimal choice for managing higher-risk mycotoxin challenges or when feeding sensitive animals, including breeders and ruminants.

As mycotoxin contamination remains a persistent threat across feed ingredients, a highly efficient mitigant such as Mycosorb® A+ Evo is an essential part of a proactive risk management strategy.

Key benefits of Mycosorb® A+ Evo include:

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- Evolved mycotoxin control
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And we're off...

Hello, my friends, a very warm welcome to our special *Irish Farmers Monthly* machinery supplement for this year's Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show, taking place in Punchestown, Co. Kildare from November 17-19. It has been two years since the last show so expectation and anticipation are high for what is the biggest show yet. Demand for exhibition areas was strong, and were sold rapidly for this year's event, resulting in 180 exhibitors setting out their stall across the Punchestown site for three days, according to organisers.

In this supplement, we bring you a flavour of what to expect over the three days including new launches, latest machinery news, and new kit for the Irish machinery market in 2027.

I would like to thank all the importers, distributors, and manufacturers for their help in compiling this publication, and the FTMTA, as always, for all its help and input! I wish you all a very successful show.

Enjoy the show, and the read!

Noel Dunne
Machinery editor: *Irish Farmers Monthly*
Sole Irish jury member: Tractor of the Year

IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY

TRACTOR OF THE YEAR 2027
JURY MEMBER FOR IRELAND









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The new cab offers more space, improved sound insulation, and a more modern interior design.

Upgraded Pantera offers more space and comfort

Amazone's upgraded Pantera 4504 is sure to attract great interest at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Machinery Show.

This self-propelled sprayer features a new generation of cab, which enhances driver comfort and further simplifies operation, according to the company. This upgrade is complemented by an updated design and LED work lights. These are standard and support safe and comfortable working in the dark, while improving the illumination of the working area.

The new cab offers more space, improved sound insulation, and a more modern interior design. The ergonomic layout generates a pleasant working environment and contributes to a high level of driver comfort during those long working hours.

Three cab variants

The Pantera 4504 is available with three cab variants. In addition to the standard cab with comfort seat, two versions with an integrated cat. 4 filter system are on offer. Depending on the variant, equipment includes, among other things, leather comfort seat with seat heating and ventilation, a cool box, integrated footrests, fabric carpet and side sun blinds.

A key component of the cab is the armrest. Developed in-house by Amazone, it is designed for even greater clarity and follows a straightforward operating concept with a deliberately small number of logically arranged buttons, Amazonen explains. All the main functions can be operated intuitively without the need to switch from multi-function joystick to other controls while driving. An integrated smartphone holder completes the practical features. Be sure to stop by the Farmhand stand to learn more.



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Showing up for the sector

The 2026 Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show returns with a bigger and better offering than ever before. Editor of *Irish Farmers Monthly*, Matt O'Keeffe, chats to FTMTA executive director, Michael Farrelly, about what's in store for this year's three-day event at Punchestown

The thing about a biennial event is that the two-year interim period greatly heightens its anticipation, and it gives organsers time to build on the previous event, and tick all the best boxes for the next one. This certainly is the case for the FTMTA Farm Machinery Show. Two years ago, the numbers spoke for themselves: 160 exhibitors highlighted innovation, sustainability, and the growing role of technology in Irish agriculture; and a record attendance of more than 20,000 visitors were there to see it all. This year, exhibitor demand has been even greater than in 2024 and more footfall, too, is expected.

Michael explains: "We were at capacity at the Punchestown racecourse venue for the previous show, so we have added another 4,000 square metres of exhibition space. It is an indoor event and that ensures that weather won't affect it. And we have scheduled it to avoid clashing with Agritechnica, which is also biennial. That will next take place in November 2027."

Avoiding duplication

The criteria for exhibiting at the FTMTA show are straightforward, but essential in maintaining its high quality and the extensive variety of machinery on display. Michael explains: "We don't allow any duplication. There will only be one brand per stand. Some people, for example, want to put a flail and a hedge cutter on the tractor, because that tractor's going to be on another stand. That's not allowed, and it works for us; it just means one brand on one stand, and not three or four selling the same thing on different stands around the place.

"Ninety-five per cent of the exhibitors at the show are the manufacturer or the importer distributor themselves. So, it's a great opportunity for the manufacturers to speak to the end users, and for the end users speak to the manufacturers, and not just the dealer. They can share their experiences of the machine, and that's invaluable. That's the magic dust for our show."

An important economic driver

Almost one year ago, the FTMTA published a historic report that confirmed, for the first time ever, the actual economic value and impact of the machinery sector. The association's three-day machinery show illustrates the strength and significance of the sector very well. Michael comments: "The farm machinery sector is hugely important, in terms of servicing the farming sector, in employment and in economic productivity. We

Membership

The FTMTA itself, Michael confirms, is in good shape: "Our membership is constantly increasing, with four new members registered at our last council meeting in September. Our membership is diverse, including the international tractor manufacturers, as well as the global machinery manufacturers. We have members across importation, distribution, as well as dealerships and those supplying components and parts. Finance companies and other service providers are also associate FTMTA members. It's a broad spread and we are conscious of representing and supporting our indigenous manufacturers. They are a key part of the sector and have been a bit overlooked in the past."



FBD Insurance announced its association with the FTMTA Farm Machinery Show for 2026. Pictured are: Molly Kenny, FBD Insurance; Michael Farrelly, executive director, FTMTA; Michael Berkery, chairperson of the FBD Trust; and Claire Daly, FTMTA.

commissioned a report last year to quantify its value. The findings showed that the sector is worth €5 billion annually to the economy and supports 21,000 jobs. The report concluded that the farm machinery sector is worth almost as much as international tourism to the country."

Providing and improving services to its members, especially in the areas of training and apprenticeships, are ongoing priorities for the FTMTA, says Michael. "Our agricultural mechanics apprenticeship is being updated and that will roll out next year. There is ongoing training provided by manufacturers in terms of upskilling mechanics who are servicing their vehicles. Some of that is done here in Ireland, some in the UK. The manufacturers provide a good level of training. While we [as an association] don't get involved in the technical training of people, what we try to do is provide training that's not ordinarily available to our general membership. We've been focusing on things like sales training, time and territory management, workshop efficiency, training for stores people, because, there's no official training programme for stores people, but it is a very important part of any business."

He continues: "We're also providing training for owners and managers, in terms of finance programmes, and dealer principal courses. One course we're doing this year focuses on selling through dealerships, which is a bit different. It's to help people, like the manufacturers, who are selling through a network of dealers. They're not actually engaging with the end customer. An important aspect for a manufacturer is understanding how a dealer's business is affected by stocking their product? How you get them to remember your machine in the day-to-day humdrum, because a lot of them would have their main franchise brand.

"We're looking at AI courses, because that's affecting everybody, and everyone should be and will need to be using AI in their business going forward."

State of the sector

With tractor sales up 6 per cent year to date, Michael says he has confidence in the sector: "There are reports of a strong year so far and when some farm sectors seemed to be struggling, there were still strong sales right throughout the year, better than probably most people thought would be the case. New tractor sales are slowing down a little bit towards the end of the year. What's interesting is that recent statistics show that the top spot is shared by the 100hp to 120hp tractor category. That suggests that a lot of the cattle farmers who had a very strong 2025 may be investing in a new tractor. It's just interesting to see that category grow because it wouldn't have grown for a number of years."

> **"They can share their experiences of the machine, and that's invaluable; that's the magic dust for our show"**

Driving efficiency

The FTMTA director highlights the value of new technologies - all of which will be on display at the show: "It's all about efficiency in every area, in terms of using your inputs efficiently and monitoring and measuring accurately. That's what modern technology will allow you to do. Avoiding soil compaction and managing field traffic, all of that kind of stuff comes into it.

"Things always keep changing. There is ongoing transformation. A few years ago a dairy farmer wouldn't have thought about precision agriculture on the farm, and now they're definitely adopting it. What's also interesting is to see how the tillage farmers who converted to dairying, immediately committed to using efficiency technologies. The cost of inputs is crazy and you have to be as efficient as possible."



The Fendt 300 Vario Gen5 is a natural front loader tractor for yard work and grassland.



The larger 500 Vario Gen4 brings VarioDrive and a 4.9-tonne payload into a compact frame that suits Irish field sizes and road conditions.

New Fendt tractors' Irish debut at FTMTA show

The new Fendt 300 Vario Gen5 and the new Fendt 500 Vario Gen4 make their Irish debut at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm machinery Show

These two new models join a comprehensive tractor line up including the 600 Vario, 700 Vario Gen7.1, and the new Fendt 800 Vario Gen5.

"These new smaller tractors have many features consistent with our larger machines, including similar cabs and our FendtONE operating system. Both are well suited to the Irish market and we are looking forward to showing them at FTMTA," says Sean Gorman, Fendt area sales manager for Ireland.

The Fendt 300 Vario Gen5 features AGCO's Power 44HD four-cylinder engine which delivers a maximum output of up to 152hp with DynamicPerformance providing an additional 10hp when required. The 300 also provides up to seven independent hydraulic valves, including two or three for the front loader.

The FendtONE workstation connects field and office through a consistent user interface. Field data and orders can be scheduled on a computer or smart device and sent directly to the machine. This system is shared in the larger 500 Vario Gen4 which uses Agco's Power CORE50 engine across four models (Fendt 513, 514, 515 and 516 Vario), with power outputs from 134hp to 164hp.

"FTMTA is the right place to show these tractors for the first time in Ireland. Irish farms demand versatility, whether that's dairy, livestock, tillage or contracting, and the new 300 and 500 fit that mix well. The 300 Gen5 is a natural front loader tractor for yard work and grassland, while the 500 Gen4 brings VarioDrive and a 4.9-tonne payload into a compact frame that suits Irish field sizes and road conditions," Sean says.

> "Both are well suited to the Irish market and we are looking forward to showing them at FTMTA"

Full range

To demonstrate the full range, Fendt is also showing the Fendt 600 Vario which offers 164hp to 224hp in a compact, manoeuvrable package with a payload of up to 5.8 tonnes. The Fendt 700 Vario Gen7.1 spans 203hp to 303hp and has recorded the lowest diesel consumption in its class in independent testing. Lastly, the Fendt 800 Vario Gen5 demonstrates its place as a leading draft work tractor with up to 343hp, and a payload of 7.6 tonnes.

"With these four tractor ranges Fendt covers 100hp to 343hp with a consistent operating platform in FendtONE. I'd encourage anyone at the show to come to the stand and see what these machines can do," Sean adds.



When you no longer want to compromise.

The new Fendt 500 Vario combines compact design with state-of-the-art technology: Fendt DynamicPerformance and Fendt VarioDrive deliver optimum performance and traction at decisive moments, while the Fendt iD low-speed concept ensures maximum efficiency. Boasting a hydraulic oil flow rate of 152 litres per minute, every implement is under your control and thanks to the VisioPlus cab, as well as GroundVision, you have everything in view.

More information at: fendt.com/500-vario-gen4

Leaders drive Fendt.



The TF30.7CS brings Merlo's Cab Suspension (CS) technology to a compact and highly manoeuvrable agricultural telehandler.

Check out the fab four at the Merlo stand

Merlo Ireland returns to the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show with a four-machine line-up that is sure to please browsers and buyers

On display at the Merlo stand is the compact TF30.7CS, the P27.6PLUS, the TF33.7-115 and the medium-capacity TF42.7-136, covering applications from livestock and mixed farming to larger agricultural and contracting operations.

A particular highlight is the TF30.7CS, bringing Merlo's Cab Suspension (CS) technology to a compact and highly manoeuvrable agricultural telehandler. Designed with operator comfort firmly in mind, the hydropneumatic system helps isolate the cab from the stresses and movement of working across uneven surfaces, providing a smoother working environment during long days in the cab, according to the company.

Alongside it, the P27.6Plus combines capability with compact dimensions and manoeuvrability, making it particularly at home in livestock buildings, traditional farmyards, and confined spaces.

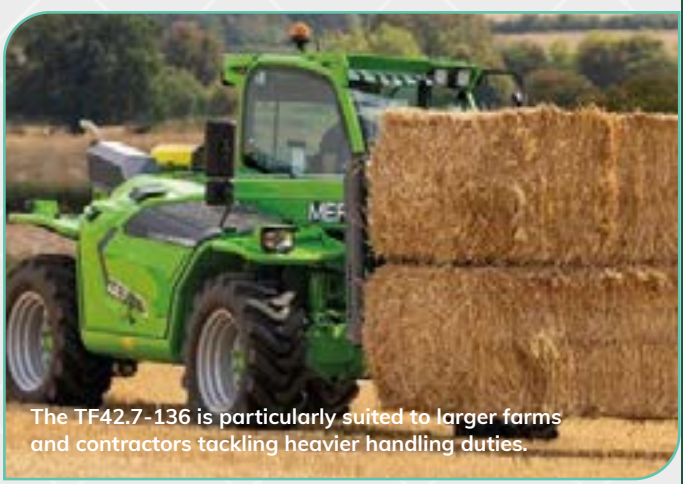
The TF33.7-115 offers a versatile step up through the TurboFarmer range and an all-round solution for everyday duties including feeding, bale handling and loading.

Completing the line-up, the TF42.7-136 brings greater lift capacity for more demanding applications, making it particularly suited to larger farms and contractors tackling heavier handling duties.

Across the range, Merlo says is a combination of excellent visibility, manoeuvrability, operator-focused cabs, hydrostatic transmission and technology designed to make every day work safer, easier and more productive. Visit the Merlo Ireland stand to explore the latest Merlo telehandlers, see the difference Cab Suspension can make to operator comfort, and meet the Merlo Ireland team and the Merlo Ireland dealer network.



The TF33.7-115 offers a versatile step up through the TurboFarmer range.



The TF42.7-136 is particularly suited to larger farms and contractors tackling heavier handling duties.

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McHale is showcasing an extensive selection of its grass machinery range at this year's Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show

McHale showcasing extensive grass machinery range



A treat of innovations are on display this year including the new and largest R80-90 centre delivery rake.

A key highlight at this year's show is McHale's brand-new generation of Pro Glide front and rear mowers. The newly designed machines are lighter than previous models while maintaining a robust build quality, according to McHale. The new mowers also feature the X-Edge cutterbar, designed and manufactured at the McHale factory in Co. Mayo. There have been a number of other changes made to these new mowers to improve performance and deliver a clean cut in all crop conditions.

Visitors to the stand will also have the opportunity to see the latest updates to McHale's C4 straw blower and silage feeder range, ahead of the winter housing season. The updated machines feature heavier-duty slats and U-bolts, along with a new belt slippage detection sensor for optimum performance. These developments follow previous updates to the C4 range, including a Hardox-lined flywheel and wired joystick remote.

Fusion range

The McHale Fusion 4 range will feature prominently at this year's show. The Fusion 4 Plus will be on display with Film Binding Technology while also incorporating the new hydraulic driven TerraDrive axle option. Visitors will also be able to see the Fusion Vario Plus, a fully automatic integrated baler wrapper equipped with Film Binding Technology. This versatile machine can produce hay and straw bales ranging from 0.6m to 1.68m, as well as haylage and silage bales from 1m to 1.45m.

Innovations

Additional innovations on display will include the new generation of McHale variable chamber balers in the form of the V6750-II, the new and the largest R80-90 centre delivery rake. The popular McHale F5 fixed chamber baler range will also be available to view, with the F5-550 featuring a 15-knife chopping unit. Since their release, these new developments have been popular with contractors and farmers around the world, according to the company. The popular McHale Propel tedder range will also feature on the stand, with both the mounted six-rotor M6-770 and trailed 10-rotor T10-1260 on display. The range offers solutions for farms and contractors of different sizes, highlighting the versatility of McHale's grass machinery offering. A wide selection of McHale's round bale wrapping range will be on display, including the proven 991 wrapping range and the McHale Orbital, the company's top-of-the-range round bale wrapper.

Also on the stand will be the newly kitted-out McHale fan shop, offering a wide selection of official McHale clothing, accessories and merchandise. Visitors will have the opportunity to pick up some new McHale gear at special show-discounted prices throughout the event.

With an extensive line-up of new machinery, updated products, and proven favourites, McHale's stand will provide visitors with an opportunity to see the latest developments across the company's grass machinery range.

McHale's sales and service team will be available throughout the three-day show to discuss the latest products, technologies, and solutions.

Career interest?

A representative from McHale's recruitment team will also be available on the stand to discuss careers and employment opportunities with the company. With a number of vacancies and apprenticeships currently available, visitors interested in joining the McHale team will have an opportunity to learn more about the roles on offer. If you are interested in speaking with a McHale team member about a role at the company, then you are invited - and encouraged - to the stand for a conversation about your potential future career.


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Lemken says the new drill was developed fo farms that want to sow reliably, accurately, and efficiently.

Mechanical seed drill technology goes up a gear

With the new Saphir XMR mechanical seed drill, Lemken introduces the successor to the Saphir 10

This new seed drill builds on the strengths of the previous series while setting new standards for precision, ease of use, and area coverage. It was developed for farms that want to sow reliably, accurately, and efficiently, even under tight time pressure, according to Lemken. At the heart of the Saphir XMR is the metering system, which delivers precise seed metering and is built for ease of use. The metering wheels can be removed individually without tools, making it just as easy to switch between different seed types as it is to clean and maintain the machine. Different seed wheels ensure that both fine and larger seeds are sown precisely and evenly. As standard, the system includes a double-sided electric drive with half-width section switch. By reducing overlap at headlands or on irregularly shaped fields, this helps save seed and reduce costs.

In addition to its precise metering, the Saphir XMR stands out for its ease of use, says Lemken. Well-designed adjustment options make it easy to adapt quickly to changing operating conditions. Depth is adjusted via a central lever, while coulter pressure and sowing depth can be adjusted separately. The patented tramline control system is also designed for flexibility: operators can easily select different tramline patterns and working widths. The iQblue drill offers an Isobus-based operating concept with logical, clear access to all key machine functions. Depending on the specification, functions such as calibration testing or residual seed emptying are available with digital support. To ensure reliable seed placement, Lemken adopts the tried-and-tested parallelogram-guided double disc coulter with pressure roller. This design ensures consistent seeding depth and good soil contact even under varying soil conditions and at higher driving speeds, for uniform crop emergence. In addition, coulter pressure can be easily adjusted to up to 45kg using the grid adjustment mechanism. The mechanical drill continues to be available with row spacings of 12.5cm or 15cm.

The mechanical drill continues to be available with row spacings of 12.5cm or 15cm.

> "Well-designed adjustment options make it easy to adapt quickly to changing operating conditions"

Performance

The Saphir XMR covers large areas and can work for long intervals with tank sizes of 900, 1,200, or 1,500 litres. The generous opening, with a rigid, waterproof plastic lid, makes filling with big bags or a front loader easy. The MultiHub can be installed as an optional 200-litre auxiliary tank for micro-granules or catch crops. The Saphir XMR can be mounted as a proven, high-performance combination on the Zirkon EMR and Zirkon XMR power harrows. For the first time, a 600-series roller is available for this purpose, offering significantly reduced rolling resistance and improved reconsolidation, particularly on light soils. Thanks to the semi-mounted design, hydraulic cylinders lift and swivel the seed drill forwards simultaneously. This reduces rear axle load and ensures stable weight distribution – an important advantage for smooth road transport.

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Come see us at FTMTA Show







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LEMKEN THE AGROVISION COMPANY



The Impax range offers solutions for different baling requirements.

Twine technology focus at the Tama Ireland stand

As balers evolve to produce heavier, denser bales, the demands on baler twine have increased too. But simply making twine thicker isn't the answer and at the Tama Ireland stand, its Impax twine technology will illustrate this point.

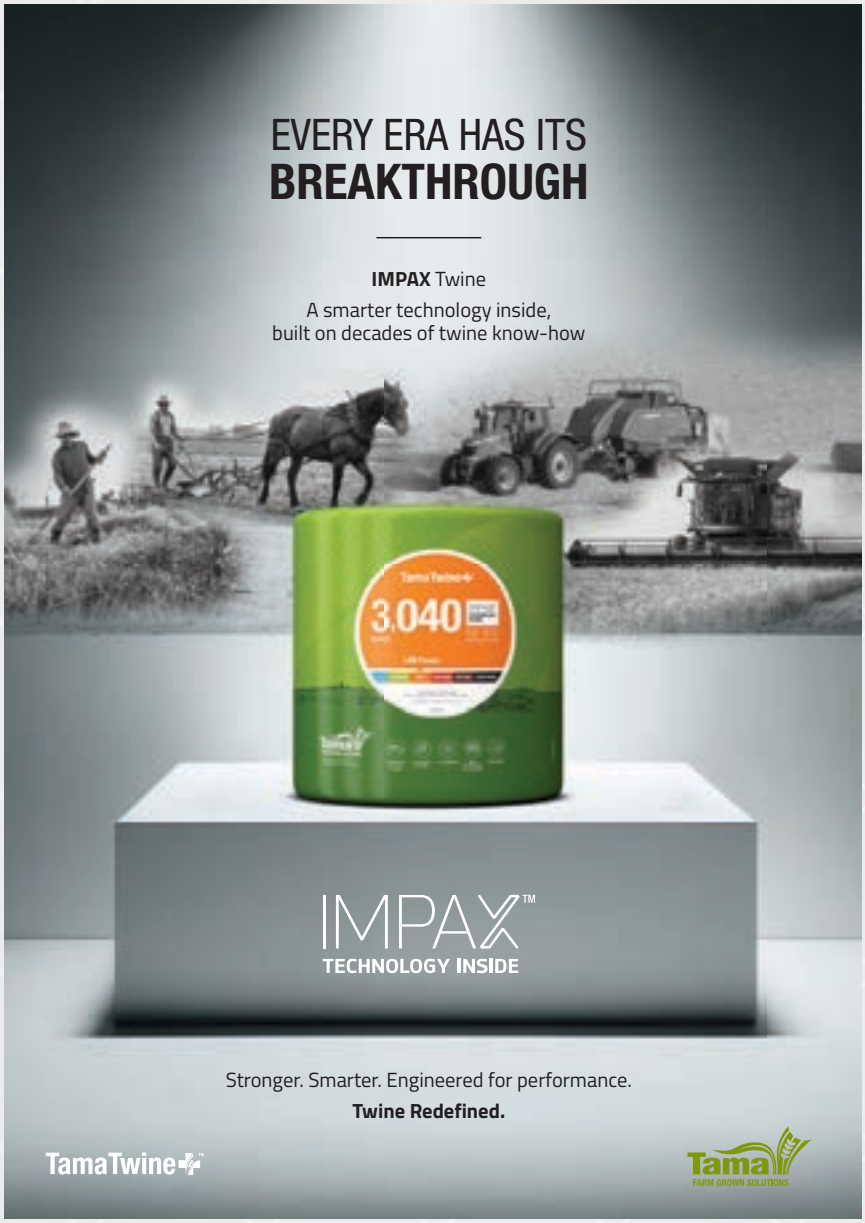
Developed through decades of twine know-how, Impax tackles one of the biggest challenges in high-density baling, according to the company: the shock loads that twine experiences as the bale is compressed and ejected from the baler.

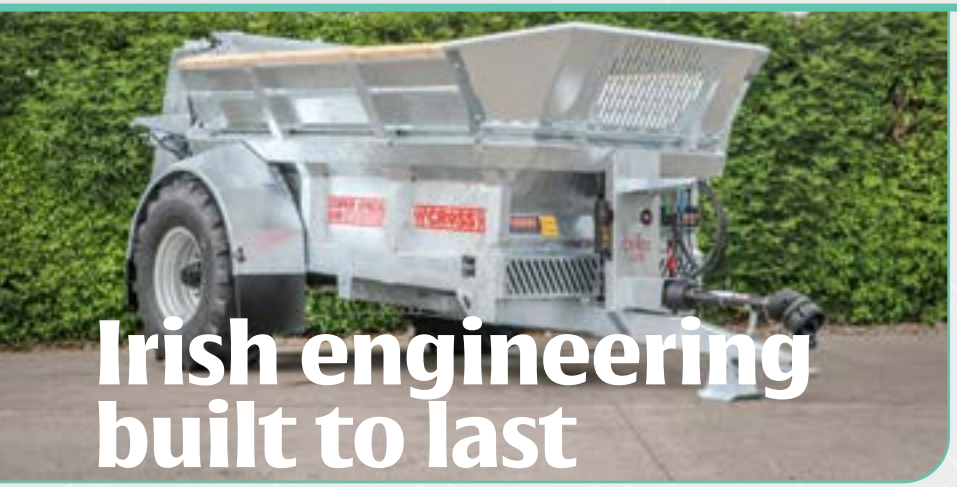
Rather than relying on thickness alone, Impax is engineered to absorb these impacts while maintaining the strength needed for reliable knot performance.

The result is a high-performance twine that is up to 20 per cent thinner than comparable traditional high-density thick twines, without compromising strength.

A thinner, high-performance twine has several practical benefits. More twine can be packed onto a spool of the same weight, helping operators produce more bales before reloading. Its design also helps reduce wear on knotter components, potentially lowering maintenance requirements, while reliable knot performance helps keep baling operations moving.

The Impax range offers solutions for different baling requirements, from mixed crop operations to demanding high-density applications. With options including Impax LSB Power, HD Prime and HD Ultimate, operators can choose a twine suited to their machinery, crops and working conditions, according to the company.





Irish engineering built to last

Kildare manufacturer, Cross Agricultural Engineering, takes its Super Spread muck spreader range to the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show this year. Here, we take you through the spreader's toughest features

Manufactured at the company's factory in Rathangan, the spreaders cater for smaller livestock farms through to busy agricultural contractors. The range is available in both fully galvanised – offering additional protection against rust – and painted finishes, with capacities from 6-16 tonne (t).

Muck spreaders have a tough working life with wet manure, slurry, and Irish weather taking their toll, particularly where paintwork becomes scratched or damaged. The fully galvanised range benefits from a durable protective zinc coating, providing long-lasting resistance against rust and corrosion, according to the company. This helps reduce the time spent treating rust and maintaining bodywork, which is an advantage for farmers and contractors who need a machine ready to work when conditions allow, the company says

Tough Irish conditions

Strength remains central to the Cross design, the company explains. Each spreader is built around a heavy-duty box-section steel chassis, designed to cope with the stresses of carrying and spreading heavy loads. Galvanised models also come with a stainless steel floor as standard. As manure is continuously dragged towards the rear beaters, the floor is one of the machine's hardest-working areas. Stainless steel offers greater resistance to wear and corrosion, while the bolt-in design makes replacement easier when eventually required.

Cross uses four chains to move manure along the floor, rather than two. These help distribute the load more evenly and reduce the chance of bent floor slats when handling heavy material. The speed of the moving floor can also be adjusted to control how quickly manure reaches the beaters, allowing operators to suit the feed rate to the load.

The galvanising is carried out to I.S. EN ISO 1461:2022, a recognised standard for hot-dip galvanising. This ensures a consistent protective coating, including areas that can be difficult to keep protected with paint alone.

An even spread

Spreading quality is just as important as carrying capacity. Two vertical beaters at the rear of the machine break up manure and spread it across the field. The Cross beater design uses individual tooth housings to break up lumps and produce a finer, more even spread. This helps farmers distribute valuable nutrients more consistently, rather than leaving large lumps across the field.

Working widths are approximately

Each spreader is built around a heavy-duty box-section steel chassis, designed to cope with the stresses of carrying and spreading heavy loads.

9-12 metres (m), depending on the material being spread. The beater tips are reversible, allowing operators to extend their working life before fitting replacements.

The same heavy-duty beater gearbox is fitted to every model, from the smallest spreader to the largest. This means smaller machines are not fitted with lighter-duty drive components, while built-in driveline protection helps protect against damage if an obstruction reaches the beaters.

> Each spreader is built around a heavy-duty box-section steel chassis

Practical features

All Cross spreaders can include mudguards and rear mudflaps to help reduce road spray when travelling between farms and fields. Side marker lights improve visibility, particularly during darker winter days. A rear slurry door helps contain wetter manure during transport, while LED rear lights have protective covers that close over them during spreading. Heavy-duty commercial axles and brakes are fitted throughout the range. Farmers can also choose from different tyre sizes to suit their own ground conditions.

Irish engineering built to last

With five generations of metalworking experience behind the Cross family, the Rathangan business continues to manufacture agricultural machinery for customers in Ireland and overseas. Whether choosing the traditional painted version or the fully galvanised option, farmers get the established Super Spread design. For those seeking extra corrosion protection and reduced upkeep, the galvanised range offers a practical long-term choice.



FTMTA president, Jennifer Ryall.

FTMTA steals the show

Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) president, Jennifer Ryall, speaks to Sonja Storm about the return of the highly anticipated Farm Machinery Show and its new features, how her tenure as president has been going, and what is yet to come

The culmination of nearly two years of preparation is on show from November 17-19, when the biannual FTMTA Farm Machinery Show, in association with FBD, takes place at Punchestown.

While Jennifer says she can't take credit for any of the on-the-ground preparations, bookings, or daily planning of the show – that's all down to her FTMTA colleagues Michael Farrelly, Claire Daly and Sarah Jeffares – she admits it's still been a very busy year leading up to the event.

The last show, in 2024, was the biggest it had been at the time, with 160 exhibitors and over 20,000 visitors over the three days, all very happy with the event. This year, Jennifer says, the show exhibitor spaces sold out very quickly, and there will be a total of 180 exhibitors. Planning to accommodate for all the people exhibiting as well as those visiting is a big job in itself, but there's also another side to this, Jennifer explains. "While the show is getting bigger, the machinery is getting bigger as well, so the logistics of getting the machinery in for each stand, there's a huge amount of organisation that goes into this."

Something new

The show, which displays the latest machinery from both national and international agricultural manufacturers, along with the benefit of industry expertise and new product launches, also has something new on offer this year, Jennifer says.

First of all, there's a new transport link, a bus running from Sallins (train station) via Naas and out to Punchestown every hour. This is to help people arriving by train to get to the show. But perhaps something Jennifer is even more excited about is a particular new exhibitor entity. "There are colleges exhibiting, like Munster Technological University (MTU), the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), and further-education colleges from around the country, along with Teagasc and SOLAS in what we have called the education hub. It's a new thing for this year, to show that there are different types of careers in agriculture, and to show what's out there for prospective students or anybody who wants to get involved in the industry. There will be a communal area within the education hub where people can chat and learn about the possibilities available in the sector."

A work in progress

Regarding education, one of Jennifer's main aims when she took on the presidency at the start of 2026 was to work on updating apprenticeships in the agricultural sector, such as for farm machinery technicians. Now, at the other end of the year, Jennifer says that while some progress has been made, there are a lot of hurdles to overcome.

"It has not progressed as much as I would have hoped, because I have found that the Government runs very slowly. We have been engaging with the Department of Higher Education, with SOLAS, and all relevant departments, keeping pressure on them. And we have made progress, but there are so many steps to getting something rolled out," says Jennifer.

She explains that while the

apprenticeship syllabus has been updated, it is already a few years old, and with machinery developing so quickly and incorporating more digital processes and artificial intelligence (AI), it is already deemed out of date. Jennifer says it's also a matter of finances. All the colleges involved in this type of training need to update their machinery to the latest standard, and this requires investment of a lot of money while waiting for an updated syllabus to actually be signed off. So, for now, it's still a waiting game.

"It is not going to be rolled out this year, but we will continue to engage and keep pressure on the department in order to get it rolled out, because what's on offer at the moment is not fit for purpose," Jennifer says. While Jennifer is stepping down as president at the end of the year, she will still be an FTMTA council member and plans to continue to push this next year.

Grants uptake

Another aim for Jennifer at the start of the year was to make sure FTMTA members are aware of the grants available to them when they plan to invest in their businesses. The *Economic Report on the Value of the Farm Machinery Industry in Ireland*, published in late 2025, showed, at the time, that while 67 per cent of the FTMTA membership were planning to invest in their businesses, only 6 per cent were planning to avail of grants. Taking on the presidency, Jennifer said, there was a need to figure out whether this was because of lack of knowledge or because the wrong kinds of grants were available.

While there are no updated statistics since the report, Jennifer says the FTMTA is continuing to educate its membership about what's available, and ensures that if anyone needs help with applying, the FTMTA is there to provide it.

Cost of doing business

As well as her role of FTMTA president, Jennifer is financial controller at Ryalls Farm & Industrial Equipment Ltd, her family-machinery-business. So, when the 'cost-of-doing-business' topic comes up in conversation, she is well read on the matter. Regarding the recent national budget, she says she doesn't think it will be much help. "Every business owner knows it costs more to do business. We have service vehicles on the road and the cost of fuel is higher. A lot of our customers are also very massive fuel users, so with fuel costs going up, they have less money to spend on new machinery, they're more cautious with spending," says Jennifer.

> **There will be a communal area within the education hub where people can chat and learn about the possibilities available in the sector**

"For us doing business, there's been an increase in wages, which is warranted because of the cost of living in Ireland, but this still has to be absorbed by the business. There was the auto enrolment last year, the sick days, extra bank holidays. These are not bad things, these are great for the employees, but everything just has to be absorbed by the business with no support coming from the Government." This is particularly hard on small- and medium-sized, Irish-owned family businesses, which cannot rely on the large incomes of multinationals, says Jennifer. "There are small things here and there [in the budget], but these will only just about cover inflation," says Jennifer.

Fuel costs

When it comes to the cost of fuel, Jennifer says while the Government can't do anything about the cause of the crisis, she feels they could do more to support, and she understands why the protests, disruptive at times, took place earlier in the year. "I think the protests were a result of non-engagement. People – farmers, hauliers, contractors – they were just at their wits' end, they felt that nobody was listening, and that they had no alternative but to protest," says Jennifer.

She feels there had been peaceful protests earlier on, but with no response from Government at all, so despite the disruptions, Jennifer feels they were warranted at the time. "I don't think they [the protesters] felt they had anywhere else to turn to, except to protest."

While Jennifer says there's definitely now more electric farm machinery being sold – a rare beneficial effect of the fuel crisis – this mostly comprises small machinery such as utility terrain vehicles and smaller tractors; most machinery is still fuelled by diesel. "While there are already a lot of electric cars out there, the agri industry isn't quite there yet. Diesel is still by far the main fuel source," she says.

FTMTA presidency – looking back

Looking back at her year as president, Jennifer says she's really enjoyed it.

"It's been very busy, but it's been great to interact with everybody and to get to know other dealers and manufacturers. It's given me the opportunity to meet and engage with people that I wouldn't have normally engaged with, so that's been really positive."

While the updated apprenticeships won't be rolled out this year, she's still very proud of all the work that has gone into making this to happen, and will continue to work on this. The next few months will involve supporting the incoming president (who will take office in January 2027) in their tenure, and Jennifer looks forward to concentrating on the family business next year. For now, however, all eyes and focus are on the 2026 FTMTA Farm Machinery Show and ensuring it is a great success.



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The Kverneland iXtrack T4 is now available with a larger 5,300-litre tank.

Tillage, grass, and crop-care machinery at the Kverneland stand

Kverneland Group Ireland is bringing a broad selection of machinery to this year's Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show, with two of its higher-capacity crop-care machines set to feature alongside equipment for tillage, seeding, and grassland

Among the larger machines on the Kverneland stand is the latest iXtrack T4 trailed sprayer with a 5,300-litre tank, alongside the TL Geospread fertiliser spreader. On the grass side, the FastBale is certainly a highlight; it is the world's only non-stop, fixed-chamber, baler-wrapper. Two of the newer additions to Kverneland's grass machinery range, the Tactus twin-rotor rake and Tersus 4000 flail chopper, will also feature.

5300L iXtrack T4

The Kverneland iXtrack T4 is one of the largest machines on the stand in many aspects, with the latest version now available with a larger 5,300-litre tank. Aimed at operators looking to cover larger areas between fills, the T4 combines its increased tank capacity with Kverneland's precision spraying technology. The sprayer is designed with a focus on stability and boom performance in the field, while a range of control and application technologies are available depending on specification. Joining the T4 will be the Kverneland TL Geospread, representing the higher-capacity end of Kverneland's fertiliser spreader offering and bringing precision spreading technology to the crop care display.

Tillage and seeding

Kverneland's tillage and seeding ranges are also represented at the FTMTA show, with a five-furrow ES reversible plough among the machines planned for the stand. The plough is joined by the 3m Enduro cultivator, covering stubble cultivation and seedbed preparation. A 3m Saturia seed drill is also set to feature. The machine combines seedbed preparation and drilling in a single pass and will complete a line-up covering cultivation through to crop establishment.

Grass machinery

The Kverneland FastBale Premium is among the main attractions on the Kverneland stand at this year's show. Combining baling and wrapping in one machine, the FastBale Premium uses a twin-chamber design to allow continuous baling without stopping to discharge the completed bale. The integrated wrapper then wraps the bale while the next bale is being formed. The machine will be joined by two of the newer additions to Kverneland's grass-machinery range, the Tactus twin-rotor rake and Tersus 4000 flail chopper.
The Tactus range covers working widths from 6.4m to 7.8m and features Kverneland's TerraLink Plus ground contour-following system and Duo tine system. The Tersus 4000 range is available in working widths from 2.35m to 3.25m, with 500mm hydraulic side-shift fitted as standard.
Kverneland Group Ireland staff and product specialists will be on the stand throughout the three-day show to discuss the machines and the different specifications available.

McConnel and Siloking

Kverneland is also set to feature machinery from McConnel and Siloking, which it imports to, and distributes in, Ireland. Two models from the McConnel Power Arm hedgecutter range are planned for the show, with the 6572 and 7782 set to feature along with the new Pioneer and Voyager controls.
The 6572 represents a familiar machine for Irish hedgecutting applications, while the larger 7782 will give visitors a look at a machine aimed at operators requiring greater reach and capacity. A 20m³ Siloking trailed feeder wagon rounds out the display, representing the company's range of feeding equipment for livestock farms.

ADVERTORIAL

Weidemann range on display at FTMTA show

Lyons & Burton will showcase the Weidemann range of telehandlers and telescopic loaders on stand D09 in hall D at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show.

Chief among the range is the new Weidemann 3090T telescopic loader – the first of its kind in the country! Lyons & Burton has been selling the Weidemann range of products for two years, with great success, from the largest 9580 11-tonne machine to the 1140, which is the smallest model. Its best sellers are the ever-popular 5080T 3-tonne machine, the 4060T 2.5-tonne machine, and 1260LP 1.2-tonne.

James Carroll of Lyons & Burton explains: "We bring in machines on Euro headstock up to and including 75hp, we find that the end user has a tractor and loader, so implements are compatible. Manitou and JCB customers – both very popular makes – would request higher horsepower pin and cone, or preferred headstock, depending on what they are using."

New full-spec 3090T

James says Lyons & Burton is thrilled to be able to introduce the new 3090T telescopic loader at the machinery show, which is the first machine in the country. He adds: "The 3090T machine on display at the stand will have full spec including: 40km/hr, Euro headstock, boom suspension, dynamic loading assistance (loading aids), load-sensing hydraulics, air-con, reverse camera and sensors, air seat, 550 tyres, 75hp, 4-cylinder (no AdBlue), 2.5-tonne lift, 5m reach, LED lighting pack, to name a few features."

Service and back up

James continues: "Customers are migrating to us for their loader needs due to the range we can offer and the service back up we are renowned for at our branch in Kildare, and at our sister company, WR Shaw in Tullamore and Carlow, where we also offer the Weidemann product range."

James adds: "Our experience dealing with Weidemann's machines has been faultless with over 60 units out and nothing but praise from all the customers. We welcome anyone to try their preferred model for themselves, or contact our sales team at any of our three depots for more details. Better still, touch base with us at the FTMTA show over the days; our sales team will be on hand to answer any queries. And for any Weidemann customers out there, we carry all service kits and parts that you may need."

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Versatile and well-suited to Irish farms

With different design variants and a load volume of 30 to 38 m3, the new MX is positioned as a high-performance mid-range model for professional forage harvesting.

With the new MX generation, Krone is introducing a loading and forage wagon that has been completely redesigned from the previous model

The new MX uses Krone's OptiGrass system to deliver high-quality forage in a lighter, easier-to-pull machine. The result is a versatile wagon that is well suited to Irish dairy, beef and mixed farms where high-quality silage is a priority. It is well suited to hilly ground, smaller fields and farms with restricted access. It is designed to require less power while providing smooth crop flow and consistent chop quality.

Models to suit different sizes

The new MX range is available with capacities from 30m³ to 38m³ and has been developed with efficiency in mind, according to Krone. A new lightweight design makes the MX around one tonne lighter than the previous model. This can reduce fuel use, minimise soil compaction, and improve transport performance. The MX 310 offers up to 30m³ capacity and a lower overall height of approximately 3.4m, making it ideal for farms with low sheds or those operating on steeper ground. The MX 340 sits in the middle of the range with up to 34m³ capacity, while the MX 380 offers up to 38m³ capacity for farmers looking to maximise output.

EasyFlow and OptiGrass

The new MX is equipped with a wider EasyFlow pick-up, offering a 2.02m working width for efficient crop intake. Its new hydraulic drive allows operators to adjust pick-up speed from the tractor cab to suit different crop conditions. The pick-up follows ground contours closely to reduce crop losses and protect the sward. A major highlight of the new MX is the OptiGrass chopping system. Previously only available on KRONE's larger RX and ZX wagons, the OptiGrass system is now fitted to the MX range.

A large 760mm rotor and SplitCut knife system help deliver a clean, even chop. Customers can choose between the OptiGrass 37 system with 39 knives and a theoretical chop length of 37mm, or the OptiGrass 28 system with 52 knives and a theoretical chop length of 28mm. Both options are designed to provide excellent forage quality, smooth crop flow, and low power requirements.

For more information on the new MX wagon, visit the Farmhand stand at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association Farm Machinery Show.

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Horsch develops 18m models to meet demand

Horsch says it is seeing growing demand for 18m variants of its existing products for customers looking to increase efficiency and productivity. An 18m version of its Avatar direct drill is already on the market, and the company is developing an 18m Joker cultivator and 18m Serto drill too.

"Contractors and farmers are looking to work faster and more efficiently, to take advantage of tighter operating windows that are being brought on by changing climate conditions," explains Stephen Burcham, general manager at Horsch UK. "Our versatile min-till and direct drilling machinery have low draft requirements for their size, so moving to an 18m model does not require a huge jump in horsepower. This enables customers to do more with the tractors they already have."

More output, less compaction.

Hertfordshire-based farming enterprise, AT Bone, purchased an 18m Avatar, a decision that was largely driven by output and weather resilience. "The Avatar is marketed as a direct drill but as a cultivated drill, it's fantastic," explains James Ashley, operations manager at AT Bone.

Headlands were a key concern. He continues: "If you look at people's field yield maps, it's always the first 15m that will let you down, because that is where you are turning with everything. It gets a pounding, but with the Avatar, you're 9m from the edge, which reduces compaction."

Pulled by a 410hp John Deere 8RX, James notes that not requiring huge horsepower has been another benefit. "It's a great combination, and only needing a 20-tonne tractor helps keep diesel costs down. I'm doing 55 acres/hour at 13km/hr; I'm not going fast or stressing. I'm not wrecking tractors by pushing them to the limit, and I'm burning just 50-60 litres of diesel an hour. It's a dream."

18m working width

Horsch says it carefully considers the full operating spectrum of its machinery, including transport. The 12m Joker RT, introduced in 2024, featured a new folding mechanism and twin axle to keep the transport height to 4m. Innovations such as this will ensure the new Joker and Serto models are as easy to handle on the road as in the field. The Joker RT is ideal for stubble cultivation, mixing of harvest residues and efficient seedbed preparation. It produces a high amount of fine soil in the germination horizon and can handle high amounts of straw, organic fertilisers or catch crops. The Serto SC is a compact seed drill with working widths currently extending from 10m to 13.5m. It already features a sophisticated folding technology to keep the transport width to 3m, and a low horsepower requirement due to separate seedbed preparation and seeding operations. This offset seeding method allows for wider seeding windows, especially in very wet years.





BKT and Massey Ferguson co-engineer new tyre combinations

BKT has created three new Agrimax V-Flecto tyre sizes specifically tailored for Massey Ferguson.

A collaboration between BKT and Massey Ferguson has resulted in the production of three new VF tyre sizes. These were created on the back of a specific challenge made by Massey Ferguson, and accepted by BKT: identify a tyre solution that could support the tractor's performance while remaining fully aligned with its technical architecture. The target was to go beyond the conventional rear tyre diameter of around 1.93m and reach a 2.0m configuration, without compromising the tractor's engineering constraints or the correct balance between rear and front axle fitment. BKT responded, it says, by developing three new Agrimax V-Flecto tyre sizes specifically tailored for Massey Ferguson: VF 650/70 R 42 rear tyre; VF 710/60 R 44 rear tyre; and VF 600/65 R 30 front tyre.

Together, these sizes make two world-premiere tyre combinations available for the MF 7S Mark 2. In both cases, the rear tyre is paired with the VF 600/65 R 30 front tyre, selected to maintain the correct fitment balance and make the most of the new rear dimensions, according to BKT. The new combinations were developed around the tractor's architecture, power range, typical applications, and expected field performance.

The VF 650/70 R 42 rear tyre, combined with the VF 600/65 R 30 front tyre, provides a versatile set up for farmers and contractors working across different applications. With its 2.0m rear diameter and balanced 650mm width, it is intended to support a large footprint, good manoeuverability and efficient performance in ploughing, transport, and daily field operations.

The VF 710/60 R 44 rear tyre, also combined with the VF 600/65 R 30 front tyre, is the most distinctive configuration in the project, says BKT. By introducing an industry-first VF 710/60 R 44 rear tyre size in this tractor category, the solution is designed to support a large contact area, low-pressure field work and strong stability, especially in demanding applications, on slopes and during transport.

The match between the MF 7S Mark 2 and the new Agrimax V-Flecto combinations is also clear from a design perspective. The updated sidewall gives the tyre a more technical and purposeful appearance, in line with the tractor's own visual identity. Both combinations move in the same direction: a larger footprint, improved traction potential, reduced soil impact, and better operating efficiency.

BKT says the project confirms the role of tyres as an integral part of tractor performance: diameter, footprint, inflation pressure, traction, rolling resistance and stability all influence how effectively a tractor works in the field and on the road.



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Mastek launches new Solo System

Mastek's new Solo System has a remote-control range of up to 3km.

Mastek is introducing its new Solo System at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show. This is a remotely controlled umbilical slurry pumping station designed to reduce operating costs and allow contractors to manage the entire spreading process with just one operator, according to the company. The Solo System combines an engine-driven slurry pump, a separately powered compressor and a 1,000m drop-off hose reel bobbin on one transport trailer, eliminating the need for a second tractor and operator at the pumping station.

With a remote-control range of up to 3km, the operator can manage the entire pumping process without leaving the spreading tractor. The system allows the operator to: prime the pump and circulate slurry back to the storage tank; remotely divert slurry flow from the storage tank to the field; adjust pumping engine RPM to match spreading requirements; switch flow back to the storage tank when changing fields or adding hose; and remotely start the compressor to blow out the pipeline using air or a sponge.

Mastek is also unveiling a new Tandem 4,000-gallon slurry tanker with an innovative overhead boom as the standout feature, engineered to solve a common problem with conventional tanker-mounted systems. Traditional booms can interfere with rear-mounted applicators, limiting the operator's options, so Mastek has overcome this challenge with a 3,500kg-rated ring gear system that keeps the boom from extending behind the tanker. This allows operators to fit a rear-mounted applicator without removing the overhead boom, saving time and making the tanker more versatile. A quick-release system also allows fast boom removal when required. Built for demanding agricultural conditions, the new 4,000-gallon tanker features a 6m fully seam-welded barrel, Granning 26,000kg high-speed axles, BKT 710/50 R26.5 tyres with air/hydraulic brakes. This tanker is equipment with an 8-inch automatic filling arm, load-sensing hydraulics, LED work lighting, and a 10m Mastek dribble bar. The tanker also incorporates Mastek SmartSpread Live technology, providing real-time slurry flow monitoring.



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MX tractor-mounted loaders will be on display at the Farmec Ireland stand.

Full range on display from Farmec

A full range of farm machinery from SIP to MX, Twose to Ovlac – and more – is on display at the Farmec Ireland stand at this year's Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show

SIP Farm Machinery

Slovenian SIP Farm Machinery's range includes tractor-mounted and trailed disc mowers with working widths from 2.16m suitable for tractors from 40hp up to trailed machines with working widths up to 14.5m. There is also a full complement of mounted and trailed tedders with working widths from 3.4m up to 14.8m and a range of tractor mounted and trailed rakes with working widths from 3m up to 12.5m wide. "Years of testing, 100 per cent quality control, and carefully selected suppliers guarantee reliability and robust machinery which are covered by a three-year warranty," says Geoff Daly, Farmec Ireland.

MX loaders

MX tractor-mounted loaders, with origins going back to 1951 and developed in close association with farmers and contractors, will be represented at the stand. These are compatible with roughly 50 different tractor brands including John Deere, New Holland, Fendt, Massey Ferguson and are original-equipment choice of Case-IH, Claas, and Kubota. The product range includes tractor-mounted loaders, front linkages, weights, buckets, silage-feeding buckets, and bale-handling equipment. "The new MX U500 Series loader will be at the show," says Geoff. He continues: "This is suitable for tractors from 40hp upwards with a focus on visibility from the tractor seat and exclusive decompression of the third service, which is operated without entering the tractor cab and auto unload and dump simultaneously."

Twose

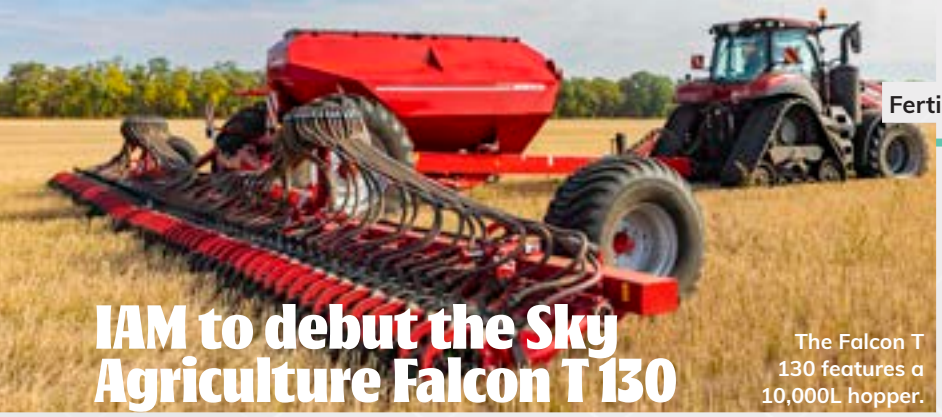
Twose hedge cutters offer a range of machines with reach options from 3.2m up to 7.7m. Twose has been creating quality, high-performance hedge cutters and grass maintenance machinery for farmers and contractors for more than 195 years. The range of machines includes reach options from 3.2m up to 7.7m. Twose manufacturing benefits from the skill, design, and production experience and after-sales support of the largest hedge cutter manufacturer in the UK.

Ovlac

Ovlac is the largest plough and tillage machinery manufacturer in Spain and exports some 70 per cent of its production to markets all over the world. The company manufacturers a range of high-quality ploughs with unique oscillating hitch which make it possible for the plough to move freely from a central pivot. "The full range includes hydraulic release ploughs, cultivators, sub soilers and disc harrows," says Geoff.

Also represented at the show is Bargam which manufacturers a range of tractor-mounted, trailed- and self-propelled sprayers which are popular on many farms around the country.

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IAM to debut the Sky Agriculture Falcon T 130

The Falcon T 130 features a 10,000L hopper.

IAM Agricultural Machinery will introduce Sky Agriculture's new-generation Falcon T 130 trailed fertiliser spreader to the Irish market for the first time at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show.

The Falcon T range is available in four models – the Falcon T 100, 130, 160 and 240 – offering hopper capacities from 7,500L to 16,000L. In particular, the Falcon T 130 features a 10,000L hopper and combines precision, working speed, and versatility to meet the demands of modern farming and contracting operations. The range can spread granular fertilisers across widths of up to 52m and, with the appropriate equipment can handle materials including lime, manure, chicken pellets, organic fertiliser pellets and suitable screened composts, according to the company. The machine can be converted from spreading mineral fertilisers to handling a variety of bulk materials in as little as seven minutes.

Designed to maintain accurate spreading as field conditions change, the Falcon T dynamically adjusts application rates and spreading width to suit forward speed, field gradients and the characteristics of the product being spread. Isobus control and automated functions operated from the tractor cab help make managing the machine straightforward while working, says IAM. A major highlight is FertiEye, Sky Agriculture's innovative image analysis system, which will make the Falcon T the first machine in the company's range to feature this technology. Using artificial intelligence and image recognition, FertiEye analyses the size, shape and characteristics of fertiliser granules to calculate the correct spreader settings for the product being used. The settings are then sent directly to the machine via Wi-Fi in seconds. Unlike systems that rely on estimates or comparisons with existing databases, FertiEye analyses the specific fertiliser being spread, helping reduce setting errors and the risk of over or under application, IAM explains. The technology can also be used before purchasing fertiliser, allowing farmers to assess product quality using a smartphone and check the maximum spreading width achievable. By improving accuracy and helping farmers make better use of fertiliser inputs, FertiEye can support crop performance and farm profitability. The system received a silver medal at the Agritechnica Innovation Awards 2025. Visitors can see the Falcon T 130 and the FertiEye innovation at the IAM Agricultural Machinery stand throughout the three-day event.





The 284hp 6260, which is exhibiting at the FTMTA show, features multi-mode four-wheel steering for exceptional manoeuvrability, and an advanced suspension system for both axles, not just at the front.

JCB to debut highly anticipated Fastrac 6000 Series

For many farmers and contractor s in Ireland, the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show offers the first opportunity to see JCB's new Fastrac 6000 Series tractor

The all-new design, a more powerful machine in an agile four-wheel-steer package, builds on the success of the 178-235hp 4000 Series by delivering enough power to get greater productivity from using larger, higher-output implements. The 284hp 6260 being exhibited, and the 335hp 6300 have features that no other mainstream tractors can boast, according to JCB, including multi-mode four-wheel steering for exceptional manoeuvrability, and an advanced suspension system for both axles, not just at the front.

Large, externally mounted disc brakes are easy to reach for maintenance, anti-skid ABS provides stable performance on hard and loose surfaces alike, and the 66km/hr legal top speed delivers quicker, time-saving journeys between farmyard and field.

True to Fastrac form

JCB Agriculture managing director, John Smith said: "The Fastrac 6000 Series stays true to JCB's innovative and ground-breaking concept that defines all Fastracs, resulting in an outstanding combination of productivity, efficiency, versatility and operator comfort.

"It also takes the JCB Fastrac into a new power and performance category, meeting the needs of farmers and contractors with exceptional features that create a highly productive machine providing unique capabilities in the field and on the road."

JCB's familiar Fastrac architecture is well-known for its unique combination of power, traction, speed and four-wheel steer agility, and for its signature axle suspension, front and rear. This set up not only provides the best operator comfort over long working days but also ensures sure-footed field work and road travel. The Fastrac 6260 and 6300 deliver more power than the popular 235hp 4220 but still in a relatively compact and manoeuvrable package ideally suited to tillage farming cultivation, drilling and transport operations, and high-output grassland work.

Fastrac features

Features include an FPT engine and ZF stepless transmission performance-matched to deliver smooth speed transitions and efficient power and torque delivery. Up in the cab, the highly configurable touch-screen iCON control centre offers Isobus implement operation and comprehensive factory-installed precision farming features. These include a JCB multi-mode guidance system with a unique twin satellite receiver installation that provides reliable accuracy, especially over rolling terrain.

> "It takes the JCB Fastrac into a new power and performance category, meeting the needs of farmers and contractors with exceptional features"

In addition to straight-line and curve guidance, the system provides a choice of automated headland turn pathways to increase ease of use through automation and boost overall productivity, while the Twin Steer option individually controls the two steering axles for ultra-precise guidance.

The new series goes further by introducing additional performance-enhancing features, including a fully integrated central tyre inflation system (CTIS) operated through the iCON touch-screen control centre in the cab. This enables operators to set optimum pressures for fast road travel and lower pressures in the field for maximum traction and to minimise soil compaction; swapping between different inflation pressures takes just a few minutes.



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Vogelsang and BeTEC's high-performance product lines in the field of dribble bar and trailing shoe technology are being consolidated under the 'Vogelsang-BeTEC' brand.

Vogelsang and BeTEC establish a strategic joint venture

Vogelsang and BeTEC have recently established a strategic joint venture in slurry application technology. As part of this agreement, BeTEC will drive forward the needs-based production and technical development of the applicators. At the same time, all sales activities in Europe will remain exclusively with Vogelsang within the existing organisational structures. The partnership combines Vogelsang's comprehensive expertise in sales and after-sales with BeTEC's effective construction and production processes.

Harald Vogelsang, managing director of Vogelsang said: "We are very pleased to shape the future of slurry application technology together with BeTEC and to set new standards in precise slurry application with modern applicator systems for all customer types and price segments. As the inventors of dribble bar technology, we are now taking this defining product line of our company to a new level through a European partnership."

Effective immediately, the high-performance product lines of both companies in the field of dribble bar and trailing shoe technology are being consolidated into a new product portfolio under the 'Vogelsang-BeTEC' brand. Starting immediately, Vogelsang will offer customers an even broader range of slurry application technologies, working widths and solutions across different price segments. The expanded portfolio will cater for a wide range of operations, from large-scale farms and agricultural contractors to smaller and part-time farming businesses. Initially, the focus will be on the pan-European market, supported by Vogelsang's combined expertise and its established network of subsidiaries and dealers.

Mark Hughes, managing director of Vogelsang Ireland, said: "This joint venture strengthens our agricultural portfolio by expanding our slurry applicator range in the Irish market. It gives OEMs, dealers and end users greater choice in spreading technology, helping them find more cost-effective options to suit their needs."



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Richard Halpin
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Niall Brady
Donegal
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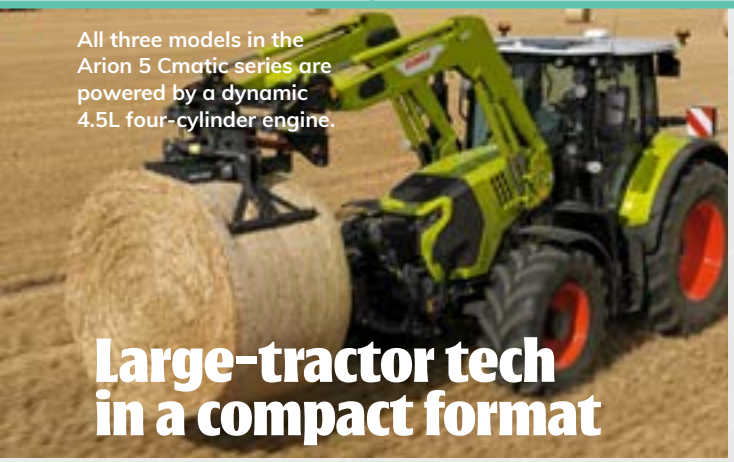
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All three models in the Arion 5 Cmatic series are powered by a dynamic 4.5L four-cylinder engine.

Large-tractor tech in a compact format

Claas's new Arion 5 Cmatic comprises three models that slot into the four-cylinder tractor segment. We take a look at some of its features here and if you want to find out more, be sure to stop by the Claas stand at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Show (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show

These successors to the Arion 500 series boast continuously variable, power-split Cmatic transmission, a power range from 140hp to 180hp, and are suitable for versatile agricultural use in fields, on grassland, on roads, and around the farm.



The four-cylinder concept, optimised for performance, efficiency and driving comfort and featuring a durable Cmatic gearbox, combined with comfort-enhancing cab features and front axle suspension, delivers a premium driving experience across all areas of operation, Claas says. All three models in the series are powered by a dynamic 4.5L four-cylinder engine delivering up to 180hp and a maximum torque of up to 730Nm at 1,500 rpm. They, therefore, represent a compact, manoeuvrable, lightweight and extremely versatile alternative to the Arion 6 CMATIC series, which also comprises three models with a longer wheelbase and covers a power range from 145hp to 205hp.

Top model

Particularly noteworthy, Claas points out, is the top-of-the-range model, the Arion 5.180 Cmatic, with a 'genuine', permanently available maximum power output of 180hp and a power-to-weight ratio of just 42.8kg/hp. Its favourable ratio of engine power to operating weight makes it a high-performer in many areas from powerful loading cycles with a front loader (in exclusive wheel loader mode) through to harvesting forage with a front-rear mower combination, four-rotor rake or round baler, right through to handling tillage and sowing implements with working widths of 3m to 5m. It is said to impresses during transport work thanks to its continuously variable 50km/h (at 1,490 rpm), optimally tuned Proactiv front axle suspension and the state-of-the-art comfort and safety features of the Cmatic gearbox.

The gearbox has highly efficient power train management and is designed for a long and trouble-free service life. In addition to first-class load responsiveness and optimisation of engine characteristics and gear shifting, it features functions such as the automatic trailer overrun brake and the unique wheel loader mode for front loader operations. Furthermore, according to Claas, the power train management system is equipped with adaptive drivetrain management.

Cab comforts

Numerous comfort features, such as the Proactiv front axle suspension and the quiet, fully suspended cab of the Arion 5 Cmatic, work together to ensure stress-free and fatigue-free working, even on long days. The controls are clearly laid out for intuitive operation, and with the Cmotion multifunction lever, the driver has not only the driving controls but also eight freely assignable function keys, as well as control of the rear linkage and CSM headland management, all within easy reach of one hand, without having to change grip.

A new premium driver's seat with a massage function, semi-active suspension, and seat climate control is available for the Arion 5 Cmatic. On long working days involving extended periods in the driver's seat and little change in posture the massage function promotes the driver's well-being and concentration, reduces muscle tension and supports good health. In addition, a new high-end multimedia system with Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and DAB+ is available.

One to watch: MF 5S Dyna-VT

A machine to watch in 2027 – and one that will be available on the Irish market – is the Massey Ferguson 5S Dyna-VT. We share some of its highlights here



The MF 5S 145 Dyna-VT is a finalist in the Utility category at Tractor of the Year 2027.

Complementing existing Dyna-4 and Dyna-6 versions, the Dyna-VT models have been added to the 5S line-up to meet growing demand for 'extra versatility and comfort for farmers', according to the company. All five MF 5S Series models from 105hp to 145hp with mid-range Efficient and top Exclusive specifications are available with Dyna-VT transmission. Those buying base Essential specification machines have the choice of the Dyna-4 or Dyna-6 gearbox. As well as the new continuously variable transmission, Dyna-VT models feature new front and rear axles, a new hydraulic system, and a new rear linkage and hitch.

Dyna-VT transmission has a single range of gears and allows stepless adjustment of travel speeds from 0.1km/hr to 40km/hr. Speed control is by the foot accelerator pedal, the hand throttle lever or the power control lever, and the maximum 40km/hr can be achieved with the engine operating at a low and economical 1,550rpm.

For added convenience, two virtual speed ranges can be saved and selected using a switch on the transmission control lever.

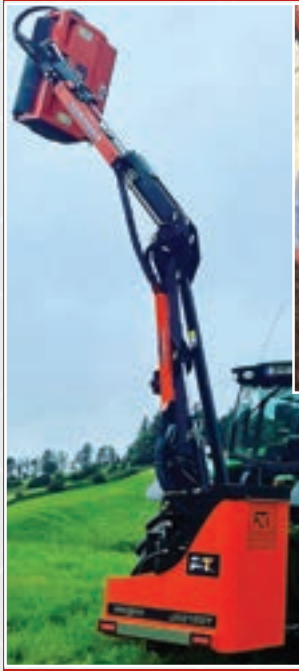
The tractor's management system selects the most efficient engine revs and transmission drive ratio for the selected speed and conditions, and these are constantly optimised as the working load alters. When working with PTO or hydraulic-driven implements, the required engine speed can be set and stored in the A and B engine speed memories while the operator adjusts the travel speed independently.

Dyna-VT provides significant benefits for both novice drivers and more experienced users. Automatic working modes ensure the engine and transmission operate together at maximum efficiency, while more advanced settings enable professional operators to prioritise extra fuel economy or achieve even higher work rates.

Capable and productive

All MF 5S series Dyna-VT models share the same, 2,550mm wheelbase. This provides excellent stability for loader work, traction for field tasks, and enhances ride comfort for transport applications. All five models come standard with 6,000kg rear linkage lift capacity. For more information, stop by the Massey Ferguson stand.

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> **The closed period is the time to set it up**

Each operator gets a job card on their phone: the fields on a satellite map, the gate, the work, and the client's number. GPS tracks the routes taken in field or on road. The invoice is made from the plan, hours and loads already on it. The client gets a link and a QR code that opens the invoice on their phone, IBAN, amount and reference in front of them, ready to pay. With it goes a one-page job record: fields, LPIS parcels, what was applied and how much. At year end, export the lot to Xero or QuickBooks for the accountant.

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Brendan Egan, founder of FarmObair says: "The closed period is the time to set it up so the fleet is costed, the fields are mapped, and the jobs are planned before the tanks come out again in the new year."









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Pöttinger's grass and tillage offerings and updates for 2027

Here, we take a look at some of Pöttinger's offerings and updates for 2027 in the grass and tillage categories. For further information, be sure to stop by the stand at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association Farm Machinery Show



Automatic swath placement is available in the coming season.

There is a digital upgrade to the company's Novocat V 10000 ED/RC Collector mowers in the form of a new automatic swath placement system. This automatic feature ensures that these mower combinations with a cross-conveyor belt always deposit the forage correctly. Merging swaths to one side of the machine – intelligent mowing – is more efficient and easier than ever before. There is around 40 per cent less raking work involved, ther is lower fuel consumption, and better utilisation of harvest machinery because there is more forage in each swath, all of which lead ultimately to much more cost-effective harvesting. What is more, skipping lanes enables larger turning circles at the headland, which reduces damage to the sward, according to Pottinger.

Previously, swath merging systems were a challenge for the drivers because they had to keep switching the cross-conveyor belt manually. The automatic swath placement system from Pöttinger automatically switches the cross-conveyor unit depending on which lane is being mowed. This results in the forage being placed correctly, and significantly reducing the risk of operator errors. Drivers can focus fully on the machine and the surroundings, clearly reducing fatigue. If the machine is equipped with Pöttinger Connect, the mowing pattern is intuitively displayed on the map in the Harvest Assist app. This means that the drivers always have a complete overview to efficiently plan their working day.

Double hopper or metering system

The precision metering and rugged coulter system on Pöttinger's new high-output seed drill, the Aerosem M, enables exact placement of the seed and the best seed emergence as a result, according to Pöttinger. The latest generation of the Aerosem seed drill offers a choice of two hopper systems: a standard hopper, with or without Precision Combi Seeding (PCS); or a double hopper with a pressurised hopper system. Regardless of which hopper is installed, the centrepiece of the Aerosem M is the Intelligent Distribution System (IDS), which controls each outlet via the bus system. This feature is available as an option and opens up a wide range of possibilities for controlling the coulter pipes and tramlines and provides the best platform for contract work and machinery rings. The machine is also convenient to operate, delivering cost effectiveness and efficiency, Pöttinger says.

The standard hopper holds 1,250 litres of seed material and can be expanded by a further 600 litres. The injector metering system ensures consistent distribution, even in difficult operating conditions. The combined effect of the precision metering system, the large, versatile distribution head, and the coulter rail with Dual Disc coulter system sees the Aerosem M achieve very accurate seed placement for high yields and successful bottom-line results.

For sowing using the single-shoot method, the double hopper is partitioned 60:40 and has a separate metering unit for each hopper. This means that different components can be optimally mixed and placed together in the same seed slot. Drilling seeds of different sizes, depositing fertiliser granules, and sowing a companion crop, the double hopper with pressurised hopper system opens up a wide range of possibilities and new agronomic strategies. With a capacity of 2,000 litres, the high-volume double hopper can handle application rates of up to 520kg/ha.



Deposit up to three components at the same time with a two-partition seed hopper and the optional Tegosem seed spreader.



Pöttinger's new Top V 6520 C is a compact twin rotor rake without chassis

New twin rotor rake

Pöttinger's new Top V 6520 C is a compact twin rotor rake without chassis that delivers impressive manoeuvrability, and is ideal for farms with consistently high volumes of forage and complex logistics, says Pöttinger. Featuring an innovative pivoting headstock, the rake follows the tractor perfectly when cornering, and rakes a central swath. The high centring force of the mechanical stabiliser struts on the pivoting headstock allows the machine to run smoothly without swaying from side to side. In addition, the machine is prevented from running forward when driving downhill.

The floating rotor suspension ensures three-dimensional ground tracking. The new Multitast jockey wheel is available as an option and is mounted directly on the headstock, allowing the rake to glide over any bumps in the ground. Equipped with these features, the rake works neatly to ensure a low crude ash content and high forage quality. The tandem axles compensate perfectly for uneven ground. This results in very smooth running, even at high speeds.

Impressive new features

A multitude of new and proven features as well as numerous customisation options make the new Synkro stubble cultivator a true all-rounder in conservation tillage, according to Pöttinger. The linkage-mounted, two-gang (rigid, with a working width of 2.5m or 3m) and three-gang (rigid or folding, 3m to 5m) Synkro universal cultivators are excellent at stubble cultivation, primary tillage in autumn, seedbed preparation for mulch drilling, and terminating cover crops.

The rigid variants are now also available with depth wheels as an option. These ensure a consistent working depth, particularly on rough ground and undulating fields, which is perfect for preparing the soil ahead of the seed drill.

This means that the rear roller can be easily removed from both the rigid and folding versions when required. Working without rear rollers results in a loose, non-consolidated soil structure, so it is ideal for primary tillage in autumn and for farms that operate without deploying a plough. When used without rear rollers, organic matter remains on the surface, significantly reducing the risk of soil erosion.

The Synkro V models with hydraulic folding have four parking stands available as an option. This allows the machines to be stowed safely in the folded position to save space. In addition, the symmetrical tine configuration on these models ensures that they operate without side pull and produce excellent levelling results.

The levelling tools on the Synkro V can be conveniently adjusted from a central point and are now equipped. The Nova mechanical stone protection system with horizontal springs and a triggering pressure of 550 kg is now maintenance-free. The levelling tools on the Synkro V can be conveniently adjusted from a central point and are now equipped with overload protection on all models. Adaptable settings, a selection of tillage tools, and a choice of equipment options, allow a site-specific strategy to handle a wide variety of operating conditions. A precise machine set-up enables uniform working results that provide the basis for subsequent work steps and success in arable farming.



The levelling tools on the Synkro V can be conveniently adjusted from a central point and are now equipped.









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Denis Drennan
President ICMSA

DIRECT SUPPORTS MUST BE RESERVED FOR FOOD PRODUCERS

The reports just a few weeks ago that the so-called 'frugal' group of EU Member States had given a very cool response to the Irish Government's attempt at getting agreement to a seven-year budget seem to confirm a decisive negative turn in the funding of the next Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

We were critical of the Irish Government's timidity in putting forward the case for proper funding of CAP post 2028 – and we were right. Their approach has been defeatist and is more 'cap in hand' than the proper and reasoned argument highlighting the absolute necessity of the EU being able to feed itself out of its own indigenous farming and food sectors. There was – and is – a compelling argument to make for a reinvigorated CAP, but the Irish Government has failed to make it and the 'frugals' now seem set to push through a wholesale amputation of the CAP budget on the wholly ironic grounds that money must be diverted to increased defence spending.

Ireland should have been pointing out that there's no point in having more tanks and battleships to defend ourselves if we are incapable of feeding ourselves. But it seems that that (battle)ship has sailed.

A HOTCH-POTCH

While continuing to argue, and we will do so vigorously, for proper funding of a reinvigorated CAP, we are duty bound to now consider the possibility that a hotch-potch CAP, with a massively reduced budget and more and more qualifications for reduced direct supports, looks much more likely to be the destination. The question then becomes: do we carry on doling out these reduced supports to the present number in the present haphazard fashion based largely on the vague idea of 'land stewardship'? Or, do we move to a system that prioritises meaningful food production over 'land stewardship' and actually make meaningful payments to a smaller group of those farmers who are producing meaningful amounts of food? Or, do we carry on paying as much (or more) to someone with 500 acres of land with little or no animals, or do we cut that payment so that we can give meaningful support to the dairy, suckler, tillage or beef farmers producing raw materials that are 'backboning' our dairy and beef production and actually feeding populations? These are the questions looming as the reality of a hugely reduced (24 per cent with the possibility of a further reduction for a special young farmers' fund) CAP moves into view.

SOLUTIONS

Some people are pretending not to see the questions – much less coming up with the answers. That's never been the ICMSA way; we deal with real decisions that will have real consequences. That's why nearly six months ago, we started a debate about the criteria for receiving direct supports under a new greatly reduced CAP. We think that in those circumstances, CAP direct supports must be re-connected to food production and must be disconnected from the ever-increasing raft of environmental requirements.

It's very fair to say that our proposals were not universally welcomed and that's completely understandable but support for our proposal is growing; there are people who receive CAP payments who are completely uninterested in the idea of producing food. There are people who regard the receipt of CAP direct support as their rights as they pursue a form of 'land stewardship' that sits in complete opposition to the traditional model of producing food for sale. There is even a growing number of already wealthy people who regard the right to claim CAP payments as the 'cherry on the top' of elaborate tax avoidance schemes wherein they use farm succession and inheritance measures to pass on non-farming wealth to their family.

CLARITY

The ICMSA's response has been clarity itself: there may have been a time when we could afford to pretend that all these positions and definitions were equally valid and that, indeed, there was no one single idea of a 'farmer' that should be prioritised over any other. But that time – and the budget that permitted that complacency – is now under real pressure in front of our eyes. The possibility of a much smaller budget is going to mean, in our view, much reduced – bordering-on-irrelevant – payments to everyone or it's going to mean a much more stringent view of who is a farmer and what criteria we use to decide who is a farmer deserving of direct supports from a possibly hugely reduced CAP.

None of this is to be interpreted as ICMSA just 'giving up the ghost' on keeping the CAP budget at a realistic level, in which case we can go on fudging the idea of who is a farmer and who is therefore eligible to apply for direct supports. But there has been no indication that the Irish Government understands either the standalone importance of a properly resourced CAP or the implications that must follow a greatly reduced CAP post 2028. They'd better start understanding them – and fast.



Ciaran Fitzgerald
Agri-food economist

BUDGET 2027: MAIN IMPLICATIONS FOR THE IRISH AGRI-SECTOR

THIS MONTH, CIARAN FITZGERALD PERUSES THE MAIN FARMING-RELATED AND AGRI-BUSINESS COMPONENTS OF OUR RECENT NATIONAL BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENT

Through a combination of over-hyping and pre-budget-day leaking, the actual impact of the national budget on the Irish agriculture sector can be hard to assess. Moreover, many of the most pressing and strategic challenges facing the sector are not specifically part of the budget process. These include challenges such as embedded production costs and income volatility. Additionally, for an agri-food sector that exports more than 90 per cent of its product, external trade uncertainties and broader macroeconomic risks, such as potential US trade tariffs affecting Irish food and drink exports, are not addressed in the budget process.

KEY CONCERNS

At a strategic level, the key localised concerns in Irish agriculture and agri-business, currently, are the nitrates derogation and environmental pressures, which have the capability, if withdrawn – or in the case of environmental regulation, intensified – to devastate livestock numbers and fundamentally undermine the scale and economic value of the sector. These issues were addressed in the budget process particularly regarding the financial burden placed on farmers to expand slurry and manure storage capacity and in the ongoing support for the European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs).

BUDGET HEADLINES

The total Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) allocation is to be €2.3bn, made up of €335m of capital, and €1.967bn of current expenditure. The Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES) has received financial subvention of €280m to support approximately 54,000 participating farmers with their biodiversity and environmental actions.

Bovine TB eradication got a €157m total allocation, including an additional €85m to roll out the Bovine TB Action Plan. Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon, is putting a lot of political capital into this initiative ultimately delivering significant reductions in TB incidence.

The Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) were allocated €88m in capital investment for farm infrastructure, safety, animal welfare, and efficiency.

The livestock and beef/sheep sectors got an annual allocation for 2027 of €131m for related livestock and animal farming supports.

Acknowledgement of the viability challenges faced by the tillage sector saw at least €50m targeting tillage growers (including protein aid and straw incorporation schemes), while organic farming received an allocation of €58.6m to continue supporting organic conversion and maintenance. Increased supports in recent years for organics has resulted in a significant surge in farmer numbers converting to organic farm practices.

The ambition to continue and increase land area devoted to forestry has not been matched in recent years by actual increased planting. The forestry programme for 2027 has an allocated stipend of €93m. The urgency of continued actions to improve water quality and increase slurry storage capacity was recognised by a renewal of the accelerated capital allowance for slurry storage for four years. A financial allocation of €60m is aimed at ensuring the continuation of the Farming for Water projects under the EIP.

TAX & RELIEF EXTENSIONS

Notable addendums to existing financial reliefs include extensions to capital gains tax (CGT), restructuring relief (expanded to include woodlands/forestry), and farm consolidation relief, (expanded to non-commercial woodlands). In the same vein, there are four-year extensions to young, trained farmer stamp duty relief and related generational renewal reliefs. This is an ongoing policy and adds little towards any fundamental effort to improve and promote generational renewal, but welcome and reassuring, nonetheless. The contentious residential zoned land tax (RZLT) has been given continued exemption opportunities for genuinely farmed and active agricultural land.

Ongoing fuel reliefs

The budget also extended the diesel relief scheme, introduced initially in March 2026, at €100m total (€20 million per month from March to July 2026), providing a support rate of roughly 20 cents per litre (c/L) based on verified 2025 green diesel usage. Budget 2027 also extended the fuel income support scheme with an additional €31m allocation to cover a further five-month period.

DRIVING ENTERPRISE SCALE

The budget also saw the announcement of a €1bn investment programme delivered through the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) in cooperation with Enterprise Ireland to help indigenous Irish companies scale internationally while remaining rooted in Ireland. The key details of the ISIF programme include the increased funding volume of €1bn, allocated over a multi-year/three-year window. There is to be a partner agency, developed and managed in direct cooperation with Enterprise Ireland. The core objective is to provide growth capital, support larger investment rounds, and fund expansion or acquisition projects for ambitious Irish companies.

In addition, the target of retaining these businesses under Irish control, management and ownership is viewed as an important focus, so that domestic businesses can scale up globally, without being brought under the majority ownership or management of external investors, or moving their headquarters outside Ireland.

To be clear, the fund is not providing new money and is not confined in any way to the agri-food business sector. Moreover, the current risk and regulatory assessment processes (by Government agencies largely) used to assess and validate projects will still apply, notwithstanding the addition of a declaration by the Tánaiste Simon Harris and the Minister for Public Expenditure of the need for a bolder, less risk-averse approach to qualifying projects. Is there a contradiction in those declarations?

IN SUMMARY

The overall role of the budget is to communicate to both citizens and investors a core sense that spending and revenues are aligned while also meaningfully addressing short term spending and cost issues. Much of the public debate in Ireland currently is, correctly, around whether the huge windfall from corporation tax is being spent wisely and, crucially, whether there is both a long-term plan to manage an economic shock involving this revenue source, and an industrial development plan geared towards increasing the economic contribution from the non-foreign direct investment (FDI) parts of the economy. This latter piece will not be adequately addressed by the ISIF fund. A targeted capital investment and innovation scheme with the agri-food sector at its heart would enhance the current Irish economy contribution of the sector, which underpins 220,000 jobs directly and indirectly. Such a scheme must be focused on meaningful, bespoke support for decarbonisation across the agri-sector (not unlike the energy sector supports), and also include access to long term 'patent' capital (preferably in the form of grant aid) to accelerate innovation. Such a scheme/programme would, in effect, be mirroring the industrial development supports that drove the initial development, largely in the US, of the multinationals which have domiciled in Ireland over recent years.

MESSAGES

- November grass plan drives spring grass availability.
- Teat seal all cows except ones with high mastitis data.
- Group cows by BCS and manage accordingly.
- Manage replacement heifers based on their weights.
- Preventative health care recommendations.
- Options, if cash is tight.



By Matt Ryan

NOVEMBER GRASS PLAN DRIVES SPRING GRASS AVAILABILITY!

- Decisions made now will influence, directly or indirectly, grass grown/growth rates to next May.
- Facts drive good decisions. Every extra day's grazing you achieve in autumn gives you approximately €2.0/cow profit, while the figure is €2.50/cow in springtime. With good planning, even now, you can maximise both. Every day you delay closing in the autumn reduces spring available grass by 12kgs DM, whereas every day you delay grazing in spring only increases yield by 8kgs DM.
- The key Autumn Cover Target Date is December 1.
  - You must decide your opening spring target average farm cover (AFC) for February 1. It will be between 800 and 1100kg DM/ha, depending on stocking rate, calving pattern, soil type, etc.
  - You will know, by consulting PastureBase, all your daily winter growth rates and they generally range between 1-5kg DM/day. From this it is easy calculate your target December 1 target AFC.
  - From this, generally, you will be aiming to have an AFC on December 1 of 650-900 depending on stocking rate (Table 1).
  - If you plan to close up on November 10, then you must work out the amount of grass you expect to grow in November and subtract from the December 1 target so as to know your November 10 closing target.
- There is a case to be made to close one or two paddocks with covers of 1500-1600 so as to have adequate grass in early March.
- If you are not into the detail of grass measurements, contact your adviser immediately, your discussion group or other grass training workshops.
- 60-70% of the farm's grazing area must be grazed off by November 1. If that is not done and a high proportion remains you must get in extra stock to get that proportion eaten off quickly.
- Therefore, keep grass in cows' diet as long as possible, ration the silage (as little as possible, to get good 'graze-outs') and feed some meals now.
- Measure grass weekly to STOP grazing when target closing covers are arrived at (Table 1). Even grazing one extra paddock at this time of year can have a major impact on AFC.
  - For example. If you have a 40-ha milking platform with an AFC of 550, therefore you have 22,000kg DM available. If you are grazing 2 ha/day with a PGC (pre-grazing cover) of 1200, then you are reducing the available grass available by 2.400kg DM, reducing the total available grass to 19,600 or 490kg DM/ha (19,600 divided by 40). This is way below target.
  - From what we know, growth rates for the last two weeks of November are usually 12kg DM/day. If you are deciding to house all cows on November 15, then you will grow 180kg DM up to December 1. Therefore, you AFC at closing on November 15 should be 570kg DM so as to be 750kg DM on December 1.
  - A grass budget must also be done – get help from your adviser.

Table 1: Target Covers per cow and Average farm cover (AFC)

	2.5 Cows/ha		3.0 Cows/ha		% Grazing Platform Closed		
Date	Cover/Cow AFC		Cover/cow AFC		2.5SR	3.0 SR	Heavy Land
Nov 1	280	700	275	820	60%	65 – 70%	80 – 100%
AFC Dec 1	600 – 750*		750 – 900*			– 650*	

***AFC on December 1**

- The remaining paddocks to target for grazing should be:
  - Clover paddocks because we need to have less than 450-500kg DM on them on December 1 so that we maintain clover levels in them in 2027.
  - Paddocks to be grazed in late March to early April or,
  - Paddocks that are ear-marked for slurry in early spring.
- Due to winter feed issues the temptation to 'graze on' late will be strong but this must be avoided at all costs in order to have adequate grass available next February.
- As ground conditions this autumn have been excellent, it is an opportune time to spread lime. Be guided by your most recent soil test but remember a lorry load of lime will do 10-12 acres.
- Fields that are very low in P & K should get a basic dressing now.
- Both the lime, P & K will help these fields grow more grass over the winter.

TEAT SEAL ALL COWS: BAR EXCEPTIONS!

- This must be the policy: teat seal all your cows at drying off except cows with high SCC readings.
- Firstly, however, go to the AHI website and view the videos to refresh your memory on the correct way to do this task.
- As the cure rate of mastitis/scc is 50-70% with dry cow treatment, this is one cost, €3-7/cow, that should not be avoided.
- To use an antibiotic dry cow treatment, you must get a prescription from your vet now, but you must:
  - Teat seal cows that don't need antibiotic.

- Use on cows who have had no clinical mastitis during the year and on the last milk recording SCC test were under 100,000 and consistently under it during the year.
- The overuse of antibiotics is a major concern for farmers and the general public.

- Dry off cows that:
  - Are within 56 days of calving.
  - Have a daily milk yield of 7 litres (0.7kg MS), or less, per day.
  - That have SCC levels of over 300,000.
  - First calver that have milked for 270 days.
  - Thin cows, being particularly concerned about high yielders, who 'milk off their backs.'
- Drying off cows is not an easy task and much care, time and planning must be set aside for the job. Don't do more than 20 cows in one go because people lose their concentration.
- The following suggestions should be taken on board:
  - Treat all quarters of each cow with the same treatment.
  - A milk recording one month before dry-off, plus a sensitivity test, has merit.
  - Abruptly dry off all cow – no OAD milking.
  - Milk out the quarter fully before infusing the dry cow antibiotic/sealant.
  - Disinfect the teat end, starting from the back teats – vigorously rub the teat end for 10-15 seconds with cotton wool soaked in methylated spirits, starting with the furthest away teats.
  - Do not contaminate the nozzle of the antibiotic tube before insertion into the teat canal, starting from the front teats.
  - Infuse the contents of the antibiotic tube into the quarter – hold teat-end firmly between thumb and forefinger and with other hand, gently massage the antibiotic upwards into the teat (NOTE: This is not done with teat seal).
  - Teat spray (post milking teat disinfectant) treated quarters immediately after infusion at a rate of 20 cc/cow.
  - Record cow number, date and product details of all dry cow treatments.
  - Mark the cow (leg band or spray paint on udder) so that cows that have received dry cow antibiotic therapy can be readily recognised.
  - Post treatment standoff cows on a clean yard for one hour.
  - Maintain dry cows separate and put dry cows in clean, dry paddocks (particularly for the first two weeks after drying off) to reduce teat exposure to environmental mastitis bacteria.
  - The cow is at a greater risk of new infection for the first three weeks after drying off.
  - Keep a close eye on cows to identify new infections.
- It is not advised to teat seal heifers unless, historically, more than 2-3% of heifers have calved down with mastitis. But, if being done, it must be done extremely carefully and is a tough job.
- You should cull cows that:
  - Had three or more clinical cases this year and had 2-3 high SCC readings during the year.
  - It is a wase of money treating these cows as they will continue to spread infection to other cows next year.

DIVIDE UP COWS BY BODY CONDITION SCORE

If you did not body condition score (BCS) cows in October (the advised date) you must do so immediately and divide up the cows at housing as follows and feed as per Table 2. Divide up your cows into three groups, based on condition score:

- Group (1): BCS 2.75 - 3.25
  - Most of the herd will be in this group and will need no special attention with silage 68% DMD or better.
- Group (2): BCS 2.75 or less:
  - For sure these cows need meal, the amount depending on the quality of silage (see Table 1) and, if calving in February, must be dried off in early November. A cow that is 2.75 BCS now and due to calve in early February in a BCS of 3.25 and being fed 68% DMD silage; she has 84 days to calving of which there are 40 days where no BCS is added. Therefore, she only has 44 'effective' days for meal feeding and she needs to put on extra 0.5 BCS or approximately 25-30kgs of weight. This will require 150+kgs of meal or 3.4 kgs/cow/day for the 44 days. Therefore, the meal feeding period is too short.
  - But thin cows on good/very good silage need no meals if calving late February.
- Group (3): BCS 3.25+ cows:
  - Cows that are very fat at calving down will underperform by milking poorly and have a lower in-calf rate next year.
  - Some farmers push on the left-over silage from groups (1) or (2) to these animals.
  - Other farmers will feed only 5kgs DM per day of silage with straw. That means only giving them 25-30kgs of fresh (20% DM) silage per cow per day plus 4-5 kgs fresh straw.



Table 2: Recommendations For Dry Cow Feeding (10-12 Weeks Dry Period)

Silage DMD	Body Condition Score at Drying-Off			
	< 2.5	2.5	2.75	> 3.0
> 72	Sil + 1 Kg	Sil ad-lib	Sil Restr.	Restr.
68 – 72	Sil + 2 Kg	Sil + 1 Kg	Sil ad-lib	Restr.
64 – 68	Sil + 3 Kg	Sil + 2 Kg	Sil + 1 Kg	Ad-lib
60 – 64	Sil + 4 Kg	Sil + 3 Kg	Sil + 2 Kg	Sil + 1 Kg

Sil = Silage Restr = Restrict

- Some farmers see these three grouping requirements as impractical, but it will result in 3-4 more cows per 100 being in-calf, less calving problems, less feed wasted on fat cows and higher peak yield next April/May.
  - If separate grouping is an issue with you, then, you must invest a small amount of money in this requirement.
  - This piece of advice will reduce the silage requirement – very important this year.

REPLACEMENT HEIFER CARE

- First things first: weigh your weanling (called R1s) and your incalf (R2s) heifers now to see how they compare with the targets (Table 3). Targets: R1s and R2s should be 40% and 80% respectively of their mature weights.

Table 3: Target weights (Kgs) for R1's and R2's on 1st November

Breed	Mature Wt.	R1s (40% Mature Wt.)	R2s (80% Mature Wt.)
Holstein:	580	224	448
British Fr/NZ Fr	550	220	440
Jersey x HF	545	218	436

- Animals under target should get extra meal as per Tables 3 and 4.
  - With good silage, for every 10kgs R1s are under target they need 40kgs of extra meal and for every 10kgs R2s are under target they need an extra 60kgs meal over a period to bring them to target.
  - Because of the good response to low level meals feeding, feed at least 1kg/day to all R1s until January.
  - Be aware of the % protein levels in meal when related to the % protein in silage (Table 5).

Table 4: Meal requirements for Weanling Heifers (R1s) on Silage.

	Silage DMD		
	65	70	75
Gain on Silage only (kg/day)	0.24	0.41	0.58
Light Weanlings			
(Meal to give 0.7kg/day)	2.0	1.4	0.5
Heavy Weanlings			
(Meal required to give 0.5kg/day)	1.0	0.4	*

- Therefore, know your animal weights and the silage quality being fed.
- All this information is essential to bring to the attention of contract calf rearer's so that subsequent hastle doesn't arise.

Table 5: Protein levels (%) in meal required to supplement silage of different % Proteins to R1s

Kg Meal	% Protein in Silage			
	8%	10%	12%	14%
2kg	20%	18%	16%	14%
3kg	18%	16%	14%	12%

- Many farmers give the Lepto vaccine now or earlier to R1s to minimise spring work.
- Mix the in-calf heifers with the 1st calvers so as to minimise stress now and particularly after calving when stress then can have a detrimental effect on her subsequent weight gain.

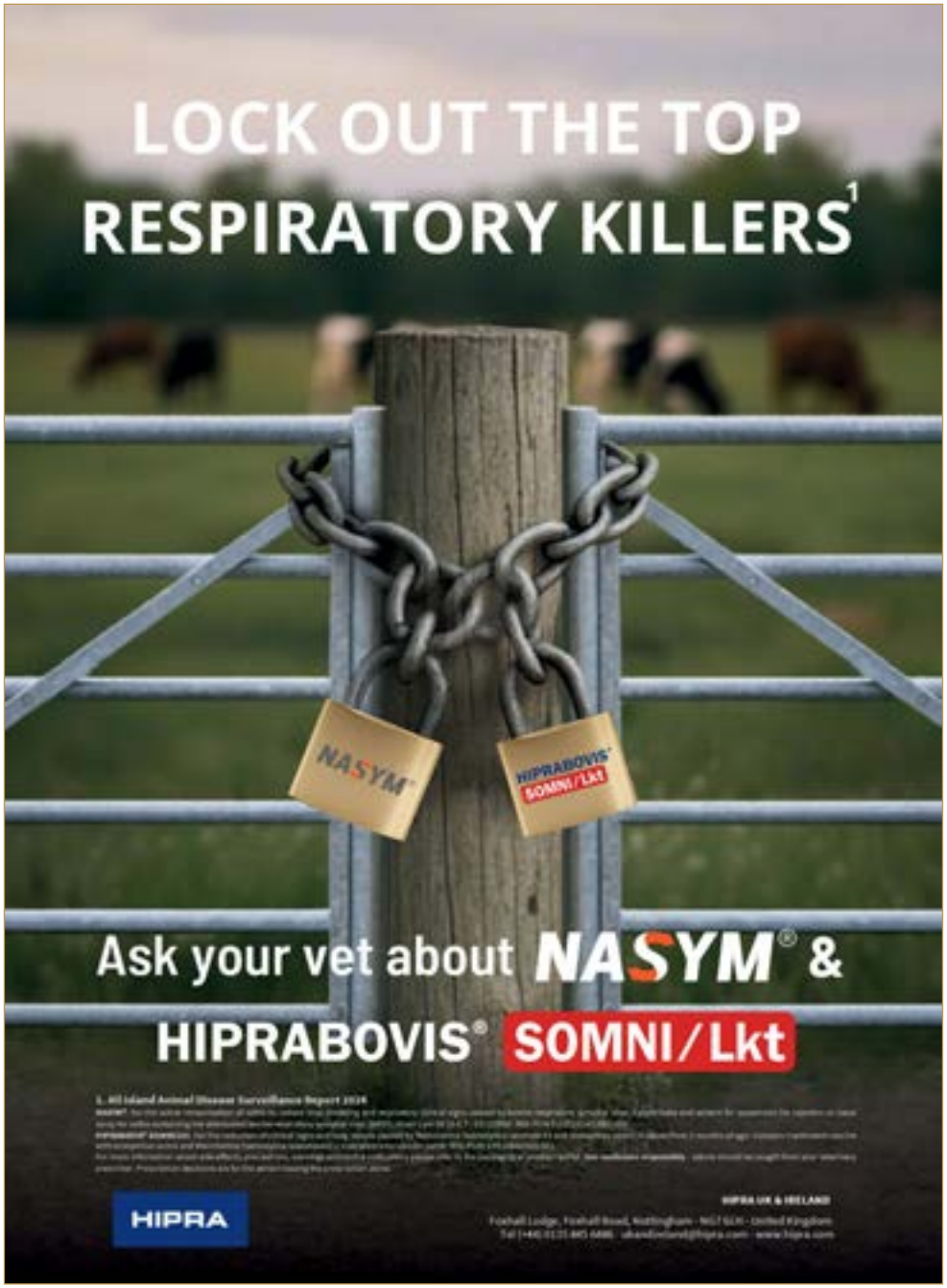
PREVENT HEALTH ISSUES

- Firstly, cows need good facilities – the details are overlooked by many farmers:
  - Each cow has a cubicle, i.e. 50 cows need 50-55 cubicles.
  - Each cow has 2 ft. of head space if being fed meals.
  - Each cow has 0.75 to 1.0 ft. silage feeding space.
  - Cubicle and yard surfaces are in good repair, kept clean every day.



- Access to feeding area is adequate, and not restricted, with an access passage, 6ft wide, from cubicles to silage area every 5-6 cubicles.
- Cows have adequate ventilation, which is enough inlet and outlet area, with no draughts.
- You should walk and observe your cows daily, to ensure none are sick, lame or stressed, are free of mastitis and putting on body condition.

- Because parasites reduce animal performance, we must deal with them.
- Weanlings must be dosed at housing for ostealgia type two stomach worms.
- You never know when fluke hits; therefore, get a dung sample tested by your vet; but, if in doubt, dose all stock, including cows, for fluke. Remember, all fluke doses have a milk withholding period, so it is best not done until drying off.
- All animals will need to be treated for lice at housing.
- Lameness must be addressed and prevented by:
  - Avoiding overcrowding, poor ventilation, with bad surfaces
  - and poor nutrition management.
  - Getting the Farm Relief Service to examine the whole herd and deal with lame cows has real merit – experts know what they are doing!
  - A footbath three consecutive days every month will have merit if there is a problem on the farm.
- Consult your vet on dosing/vaccination management now to alleviate these tasks in spring.
- The following reminders may help:
- Have a well thought out preventative programme in place for all animal health and welfare issues: do this in consultation with your vet.
- Test faeces for fluke and lungworm at the regional laboratory on five individual animals costing (€4 each for each parasite); also, for coccidiosis if that is a problem on your farm.
- Test aborted foetus, if you have any, for Brucellosis and Salmonella.
- Do a mastitis culture and sensitivity test on the milk from 5-6 cows, to know which dry cow tube to use.
- If heifers and mature cows have not been done for salmonella in September, there is no need to do them now as the risk of Salmonella abortion has passed.
- Generally, dry cow minerals will not be fed to spring calving cows in November but feed



Getting ready for your Bord Bia dairy audit



Bord Bia audits under the Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme (SDAS) are essential to supporting the Irish dairy sector. The data collected helps Bord Bia and Irish dairy processors to substantiate environmental and quality claims about Irish dairy. These assurances are vital in a competitive global market, where buyers increasingly require robust data on sustainability, quality, and animal welfare.
Preparing for your Bord Bia audit is straightforward when you know what to expect. This guide offers practical advice to help you get ready and highlights the key checks to make before the audit.

Set the date

A key step in preparing for your renewal audit is to schedule a date and time with the auditor as soon as you are contacted. This ensures that certification remains active while the renewal process is ongoing. Completing the audit early won't shorten your certification period –your next 18-month cycle still starts from your current expiry date.

What to expect on the day?

When the auditor arrives, they will first explain the process during the opening meeting and answer any questions you may have.

They will then walk around the farm with you, looking at stock, housing, equipment, and the farmyard. Most aspects of the audit are completed through observation of good farm practices and conversations with you about your typical farm operations.
Following the farm walk, the auditor will carry out some paperwork and record checks to confirm that the information gathered during the walk matches the farm records.
During the audit, the auditor will discuss any findings with you as they arise and will go through everything again with you before leaving the farm (the closing meeting).
A typical dairy audit lasts 2 to 2.5 hours, but the better prepared you are, the shorter the audit will be.

What happens after the audit?

At the end of the audit, the auditor will explain if any issues are identified as non-conformances. Rest assured, you will not fail the audit on the day if any issues arise. Instead, you will be given up to 28 days to address the issue (or issues) and provide evidence that corrective action has been taken. For example, if an auditor identifies that a lagoon is unsafe, they may request a photo within 28 days showing that the lagoon has been made safe.
Evidence can be sent by text message to the Bord Bia Helpdesk or if preferred by email or post. You can also upload evidence by logging onto farm.bordbia.ie. You can nominate an individual, such as a relative or neighbour, to do this on your behalf. Your milk processor will also be able to assist you with closeout and related queries. This 'close-out' process does not apply if no issues are found during the audit.

Common non-compliances

Dairy hygiene

During the farm walk, the auditor will check that the milking parlour and bulk tank area are clean, tidy and well maintained, with washable surfaces and no obvious risks to milk hygiene. They may also review recent milk collection dockets and milk analysis results to confirm that milk quality is within regulatory limits.
Ensure potable water is available for hand washing and for cleaning all milk-contact surfaces, and store cleaning products safely.

Water test

If you use a private well for dairy washing, make sure you have a valid water test report. The test must be less than three years old and show that Enterococci and E. coli are absent in 100 ml. A report is not required if your water comes from a group water scheme.



Farm safety

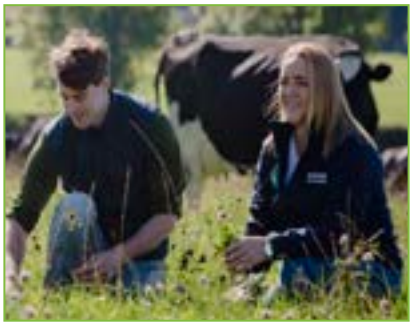
For farm safety, ensure you have a completed and up-to-date Farm Safety Risk Assessment (FSRA). Where three or more people are employed on the farm, an up-to-date Farm Safety Statement (FSS) is required instead. This is also a legal requirement designed to reduce the risk of injury or ill health.
An incomplete, outdated, or unreviewed assessment or statement may result in a non-compliance. Before the audit, check that the correct document is in place and up to date.
The FSRA form can be downloaded and printed from the Health and Safety Authority website. The form can also be completed online at www.farmsafely.com.

Animal remedies

Before your audit, ensure that you have a full and complete record of all medicines purchased and all medicines administered at least back to the last audit date.

For animal remedy **usage**, check that every entry includes:

- Date of administration.
- Name of medicine.
- Quantity given.
- Identification of animal.
- Name of person giving the medicine/ remedy or the name of the prescribing vet.
- Record the actual date the withdrawal period ends, not just the number of withdrawal days — this is a common non-compliance.



A treatment record must clearly identify the animal or animals treated. For an individual animal, record the tag number or freeze brand. For a group treatment, record enough detail to identify every animal in the group, for example all calves born from 1st January to 31st March.
Animal remedy purchase records should include complete and up-to-date information. Check that each purchase record includes all of the following:

- Date of purchase.
- Medicine name.
- Quantity purchased.
- Name and address of the supplier.

Top-tip: Ask your veterinary practice for an account statement covering the period since your last audit and check it against your own records so that no purchases are missing.

Audit satisfaction

A recent survey conducted with farmers after their audit found:
97% believed that the audit took a reasonable amount of time.
99% found the auditors themselves to be professional.

The Bord Bia Helpdesk

The Helpdesk can help you to prepare for the audit and answer any queries about the process. 01 5240410. Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm.

BORD BIA
Farmers & Growers

minerals all through winter to in-calf heifers not on meals.
- Badger-proof cattle sheds, as there is now evidence suggesting foraging by badgers into sheds during winter spreads T.B.

CASH TIGHT: OPTIONS!

- High costs and lower milk prices will have had a serious effect on the cash available this autumn. When you are heavily borrowed, greater than €2,000/cow, generating low profits with high living expenses, cash available for productive purposes becomes an issue on farms.
- Can you free up money from any source to avoid having to rely on negative thinking? The solutions/options I suggest might seem drastic but consider the consequences if you don't act.
- Deposit accounts must be raided:
  - They are usually put there for the 'rainy day' and now it is here for some; because in the good times we must set aside a 'rainy-day fund'. They are yielding less than 1% interest whereas they could earn 15-25% return if invested on the farm or 5-6 % if used to pay off some critical loans.
  - Children's deposits/savings or children's allowance should not be immune to review, as they are all part of the farm family team. Money in their deposits won't be much good if the farm goes to the brink of insolvency.
- Pension Savings don't fit this analysis.
- Sell what you can including less productive animals:
  - Cull cows now, because they make minuscule extra profit to fatten.
  - All non-replacement dry stock.
  - Sell surplus in-calf heifers but make absolutely certain you don't want them for expansion next year because that is one of the few ways you will increase your income/cashflow if stocking rate allows.
- If you can't generate any cash from these sources, you must go to your bank and borrow money to pay off 'good management bills'.
  - Make your case with cashflow projections for next year and longer.
  - If your credit worthiness is low, you will need a good accountant or adviser working in your corner.
  - There are many sources of credit out there other than banks, so take advice on which suits best.
- Now you have some bit of cash freedom, let us look at where to invest:
  - Soil fertility (you must bring Lime P & K levels up to target), animal health and animal body condition are the main areas.
  - Invest time in financial management planning and planning the autumn/spring grass budgets.
- Many farmers and some co-op personnel are pushing farmers to buy meal to push out milk to improve cashflow. This might seem a good idea and seems an easy message to sell but, generally, it is not economically viable.
  - A carry over of large unpaid meal bills into next spring is the very last thing you need to be doing.
  - Research shows that for every kg of meal fed we get back 0.7kg of milk (some cows are less efficient) and that we should not feed more than 2-3 kgs meal/cow/day in the autumn. Research also found that for every €1 you spent on feeding meal the actual cost is €1.60. This latter makes meal feeding less than break even.
  - In summary, feed 2kg meal with almost all grass to any cows you justify keeping milking, otherwise, dry off when producing less than 0.7kgs MS/cow/day.
- I think, if this year, after following a great year, proves anything, it is that you must develop a low-cost system and 'stick with it' as a system of farming.

EXTRA BITS OF ADVICE

- Get your Profit Monitor started and have it 'done and dusted' by December.
  - Little or no sales or costs will be accrued between now and year end; you can easily estimate those figures,
  - You can analyse the costs/profits and use them for your financial planning for next year.
- Maintenance work while weather is good:
  - Farm roadways, paddocks fences/entrances should be repaired.
  - Make sure lighting around the yard is good.
  - Is your farmyard a safe working place for staff?
  - Is your farmyard 'thief proof'?

MESSAGE FOR THE MONTH

"Methane emissions by livestock have a negative impact on the Earth's temperature: killing all of the Earth's 1.6 billion cattle would change the global temperature by only 0.04 Degrees C."
Happer & Wijngaarden

Water Quality Conference



Tuesday,
24 November

Heritage Hotel,
Killenard, Co. Laois

The Water Quality Conference brings together farmers, advisors, researchers and key stakeholders to share knowledge and practical solutions to improve water quality.

This year's conference focuses on farm compliance, reducing nutrient losses to water and the role of good farming practices in protecting water quality.

The event provides an opportunity to share experiences, discuss challenges and identify practical actions to improve water quality across Ireland.

Session 1:
Increasing Compliance with National Agricultural Inspections Programme (NAIP)

Session 2:
Reducing Nitrogen Losses to Water

Session 3:
Environmental Policy & Compliance

Booking for this event is essential and closes 5pm on 13th November

IASIS Points Available

www.teagasc.ie/water-quality-conference

Teagasc

Better Farming for Water
8-Actions for Change



LANDINI'S UTILITY RANGE: NEW ADDITIONS, NEW CAPABILITIES

LANDINI'S NEW ADDITIONS TO ITS MEDIUM-POWER UTILITY RANGE, THE SERIE 6RS – THE 6-135RS AND 6-145RS – HAVE IMPRESSED, WITH THE LATTER SHORTLISTED IN THE BEST UTILITY CATEGORY OF THE PRESTIGIOUS TRACTOR OF THE YEAR 2027. HERE, WE LOOK AT SOME OF THE NEW ADDITIONS' FEATURES

The 6-135RS and 6-145RS deliver maximum power of 127hp and 143hp, respectively, and feature a 2,470mm wheelbase, a shipping weight of approximately 5,100 kg and a maximum permissible weight of 8,500kg. The Serie 6RS is powered by FPT F36 Stage V four-cylinder engines with 16 valves, turbo intercooling, and electronically controlled common rail injection. The 6-135RS develops maximum torque of 518Nm, while the 6-145RS reaches 600 Nm. The compact Hi-eSCR2 aftertreatment system is integrated in a compact configuration, while the fully opening monobloc bonnet makes routine maintenance easier, according to the company..

Landini describes its Serie 6RS as a 'tireless workhorse' of the heavy-duty utility tractor segment; the ideal all-rounder for field work, livestock operations, and transport tasks.

The Robo-Four and Robo-Six transmissions, designed by Argo Tractors, offer four or six Powershift speeds respectively and four ranges, for a total of 27F/27R speeds or 40F/40R with creeper. Smart Auto Power Shift automatically manages gear engagement, while the RPS electrohydraulic power shuttle features adjustable modulation. The Robo-Six version can also reach 50km/h with the engine at 1,965rpm, while at 40km/h engine speed drops to 1,600rpm, reducing fuel consumption and noise during transport.
The Category III electronic rear hitch offers a maximum lift capacity of 6,600kg, while the front hitch reaches 2,250kg and can be combined with a 1,000rpm front PTO and the L30 front loader.

TRIM, STEERING, AND AXLE

The range is available in two trim levels, Dynamic and Dynamic Plus. Dynamic prioritises ease of use and integrates a 10-inch touchscreen monitor, while Dynamic Plus integrates a digital 12-inch instrument cluster and 12-inch DSM Plus monitor, a SmartPilot Plus joystick and Isobus preparation.
Dynamic Plus can also integrate the precision steering management system, GNSS antenna with RTK modem, satellite-assisted guidance, section control, variable-rate application and advanced Isobus TC functions.
The front axle, also developed and manufactured by Argo Tractors, is available in a suspended version adjustable through three damping levels and can be combined with the mechanical cab suspension. This solution improves comfort during transport and when working on uneven ground, while also reinforcing the value of in-house design within the group.

> **UP TO FIVE REAR REMOTE VALVES ARE AVAILABLE, THREE MECHANICAL AND TWO ELECTROHYDRAULIC**



THE FRONT AXLE, ALSO DEVELOPED AND MANUFACTURED BY ARGO TRACTORS, IS AVAILABLE IN A SUSPENDED VERSION ADJUSTABLE THROUGH THREE DAMPING LEVELS

HYDRAULICS

The Serie 6RS can be equipped with an open-centre hydraulic system delivering 77L/min plus 39L/min dedicated to auxiliary services, or with the closed-centre CCLS system using a 123L/min pump. The first solution is aimed at users seeking a practical, functional tractor with a more competitive purchase price; the second is intended for professional farms and contractors that use the tractor more intensively and require higher hydraulic performance. Up to five rear remote valves are available, three mechanical and two electrohydraulic.

DAILY MAINTENANCE SOLUTIONS FOR THE SERIE 6RS

1. The bonnet can be opened 90 degrees to allow quick, tool-free maintenance.
2. The engine oil can be topped up without opening the bonnet, as the oil filler cap with dipstick is located in the lower part of the engine.
3. The engine air filter is easy to clean and replace.
4. The radiator coolers open fully from a single latch to allow simple, quick and thorough cleaning.
5. The HI-eSCR2 exhaust aftertreatment system is maintenance free. This reduces operating costs and unplanned downtime.
6. The fuel and AdBlue tanks are easily accessible and equipped with different coloured caps for quick and safe refuelling.
7. The in-cab air filter is easily accessible for quick maintenance.
8. The transmission oil level can be easily checked through the transparent oil filler cap with level gauge located at the tractor's rear.
9. The windscreen wiper fluid reservoir is located at the rear of the cab.
10. The My Landini App reminds you to carry out the necessary maintenance checks and inspect the spare parts to always keep your Serie 6RS in good working order.



NOEL DUNNE
Machinery editor

BACK IN THE GAME

Well, my friends, I am down off the plane and back in the game! I spent a few very enjoyable days in North Italy a few weeks ago with Argo Tractors. Argo Tractors is a family-owned business that manufactures Landini, McCormick, and Valpadana tractors over five factories all based in the province of Reggio Emilia. On this visit I was at the Fabbrico-located factory, which is home to the Landini brand. Our main focus was Landini's entry into Best Utility category in the 2027 Tractor of the Year competition. This year, it has entered the new Landini 6-145 RS model. Once again, we weren't disappointed; it is a nice tractor that will gain particular interest from mixed farm enterprises here in Ireland. It is officially launched at EIMA International in (early) November; I don't think we will see it on this side of Europe until LAMMA 2027. But you never know where it might pop up – will we see it at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show? Well, we will have to wait and see!

Now, speaking of the FTMTA show, everyone I meet and talk to, both in and out of the farming community, is like a kid on Christmas Eve with excitement! They can't wait to see what this long-sold-out show has to offer. It comes at a positive time for Irish tractor sales, which are up year on year, while machinery sales (generally) are up in some cases and on par with last year. Overall, the Irish machinery market is doing well against a backdrop of high fuel prices and uncertainty in commodity prices. Visitors to this year's show will, for the most part, be positive in relation to the outlook of Irish farming – and there is nothing like a show such as this to bolster that. The purchase of farm machinery is an investment in long-term growth and in the future of their business practices, and a domestic machinery show is an incredible thing to have on our doorstep when making big decisions at big cost. Farmers are changing what they are sowing, and as different crop options are being considered, contractors, too, must change and tool up the job at hand.

There is so much to see, do, and view at the 2026 FTMTA Farm Machinery Show from new sprayers, to tractors, to slurry kits, to mowers, balers, tedders and rakes! In this issue, we feature a very special FTMTA Farm Machinery Show supplement to give you a flavour of the feast that awaits you. We hope you enjoy it – and you can pick up a copy of it at the show, also! This is a show not to be missed so book your tickets today, and come say hello to us at our stand! Looking forward to many chats over the three days! Until next month, farm safely, farm wisely.



Tom Murphy
Professional Agricultural Contractors of Ireland

POLICIES DOMINATE

My article in the October issue dealt with Ireland's lack of self-sufficiency around food, especially fruit and vegetables. So, I was intrigued – and delighted – to see RTÉ's excellent show, How to Shop Well Now, broadcast shortly after publication. The show covered the Government's lack of policy in addressing the dramatic reduction in our horticultural businesses and the role of supermarkets in their demise. Will the spotlight make a difference? I very much hope that politicians have seen, heard, and will take action.

UPTAKE OF SMART FARM TECHNOLOGY

In a previous issue, I questioned if the Government had a plan-B to deal with power outages, whether accidental, or by targeted attack, particularly in relation to the use of smart machinery and technology. On reflection, I didn't need to worry too much as Enable Research estimates only 15 per cent of Irish farms use high-end precision machinery and the European Agricultural Machinery Association (CEMA) states that Ireland's uptake of heavy precision hardware lags behind grain-producing countries like France, Germany, and Denmark. Even so, overall adoption of smart technology in the EU is poor, with an article in the Journal of Agriculture and Food Research stating that fewer than 25 per cent of EU farmers are using precision machinery or smart farm technologies (SFT). Where it is used, it is predominantly by large-scale enterprises in countries where farms tend to be over 100 hectares.

With reduced Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments, farmers cannot survive without incorporating SFT into their day-to-day farming practices, so they must change or go out of business. Brussels are masters at getting farming organisations battling for financial help when a crisis occurs, but what are their policies to help small farmers, who make up a large percentage of the EU farming sector, become more productive? What we need now is for the Government and by that, I mean the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), to immediately adopt policies to encourage the use of SFT, through the introduction of substantial grants. However, in doing so, they must recognise that, since the introduction of mechanisation, small farmers turned to agricultural contractors when it was not economically viable for them to purchase expensive machinery. It is fair to say that without the considerable financial investment made by agricultural contractors over the years, the agricultural sector in Ireland would have collapsed. The DAFM needs to acknowledge the vital role that agricultural contractors have and continue to play and, in the national interest, include contractors in all machinery grants that are available to farmers. If the DAFM needs any convincing of the success of SFT then they need to study those EU countries that have embraced it. Before I hear the shout that Ireland has adopted SFT, let's be clear that it has only been embraced in certain areas and grants are restricted and not open to agricultural contractors. If they were included and invested in SFT, the benefits would be available to all their clients, giving farmers a much-needed boost in productivity while at the same time reducing their inputs.

I do believe there are department officials who would agree with me and my hope is that they can influence a change in policy that would have such a positive effect on Ireland's agricultural output.

MURPHY MACHINERY TO LAUNCH EVRARD SPRAYER AT FTMTA SHOW



At this year's Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show, Murphy Machinery will launch the Evrard self-propelled sprayer. Evrard comes to Murphy Machinery from the Exel Industries Group – well known in precision spraying equipment across the agricultural industry. The group owns brands that have a long and distinguished presence in the Irish market such as Berthoud, already distributed by Murphy Machinery and Tecnoma, distributed by Agriquip.

The Evrard self-propelled sprayer, which will be on display at the Murphy Machinery stand, comes from a company with a long association of manufacturing self-propelled sprayers. Evrard's story began in 1952, when Aime Evrard designed spraying equipment that could be adapted to a jeep, meeting the specific needs of local farmers. In 1972, Evrard created the first French self-propelled sprayer the OR4000, which had a 4,000L tank capacity and a 36m boom.

From that rich history of innovation comes the Evrard Vega, designed to meet the needs of today's farmers as closely as possible, prioritising reliability and robustness, the company says, and capable of withstanding the most demanding conditions.

Today's Vega self-propelled sprayer was subjected to unique endurance testing at the Cetim in Beauvais. This is the French technical centre for mechanical industries and one of the largest industrial research organisations in Europe. Machine performance and comfort are to the fore in the newly designed machine allowing the operator to work faster with enhanced filling, product incorporation, and final rinsing all allowing for greater autonomy. Spray quality is measured in terms of impact density and coverage rate. Evrard says it believes that enhancing operator comfort and reducing fatigue were strategic requirements of this newly designed machine. Murphy Machinery invites you to see this self-propelled sprayer at the show, where it will also showcase the extensive range of Berthoud sprayers.



Sylvain Blaise, president and CEO, Manitou Group with Jaeyoung Moon, president and CEO, HD Construction Equipment.

MANITOU AND HD CONSTRUCTION AGREE NEW PARTNERSHIP

Manitou Group and HD Construction Equipment have recently announced a cross-distribution partnership agreement for dedicated construction ranges.

Through its two brands – Manitou and Gehl – Manitou Group develops, manufactures, and provides equipment and services of handling, access platforms, and earthmoving for the construction, agriculture, and industrial markets. HD Construction Equipment is a machinery company that offers construction equipment supported by a business portfolio spanning engines and aftermarket services.

Through this partnership, Manitou Group says it expands its portfolio of compact solutions by incorporating product lines engineered by HD Construction Equipment. This range will be marketed internationally under the Manitou and Gehl brands through the group's dealer network, which will provide all associated product support and services.

In return, HD Construction Equipment will leverage Manitou Group's engineering and manufacturing expertise in the compact equipment segment to enhance its own product catalogue across its global distribution network. The company says it aims to boost its market presence by enhancing its compact construction equipment lineup. By 2030, this activity aims to contribute around 5 per cent to Manitou Group's total sales.

Sylvain Blaise, president and CEO of Manitou Group, said: "This agreement fully aligns with our strategic roadmap aimed at accelerating our growth in compact equipment ranges. By combining the industrial excellence and innovative capabilities of two major industry leaders. This alliance allows us not only to reach a new milestone in product line expansion, but also to deliver enhanced value to our dealer network and customers worldwide."

Jaeyoung Moon, president and CEO of HD Construction Equipment, added: "This partnership is more than just enhancing our product lines; it opens up important new growth opportunities through significant market expansion. By bringing together our strengths, we will boost the competitiveness of our compact products and enhance our global presence."

NEW MX – A LIGHTER LOAD

Krone's new MX loading wagon uses its OptiGrass system to deliver high-quality forage in a lighter, easier-to-pull machine, the company says. The result is a versatile wagon that is well suited to Irish dairy, beef, and mixed farms where high-quality silage is a priority. It is well suited to hilly ground, smaller fields, and farms with restricted access, and is designed to require less power while providing smooth crop flow and consistent chop quality.

Krone says that the new MX range is available with capacities from 30m^3 to 38m^3 and has been developed with efficiency in mind. A new lightweight design makes the MX around one tonne lighter than the previous model. This can reduce fuel use, minimise soil compaction, and improve transport performance.

The MX 310, for example, offers up to 30m^3 capacity and a lower overall height of approximately 3.4m, making it ideal for farms with low sheds or those operating on steeper ground. The MX 340 sits in the middle of the range while the MX 380 offers up to 38m^3 capacity for farmers looking to maximise output.



The new MX is equipped with a wider EasyFlow pick-up, offering a 2.02m working width.

The new MX is equipped with a wider EasyFlow pick-up, offering a 2.02m working width for efficient crop intake. Its new hydraulic drive allows operators to adjust pick-up speed from the tractor cab to suit different crop conditions. The pick-up follows ground contours closely to reduce crop losses and protect the sward. A major highlight of the new MX is the OptiGrass chopping system. Previously only available on Krone's larger RX and ZX wagons, the OptiGrass system is now fitted to the MX range. A large 760mm rotor and SplitCut knife system help deliver a clean, even chop.

Customers can choose between the OptiGrass 37 system with 39 knives and a theoretical chop length of 37mm, or the OptiGrass 28 system with 52 knives and a theoretical chop length of 28mm. Both options are designed to provide excellent forage quality, smooth crop flow, and low power requirements.

The MX is available with either a combined or hydraulic suspension system and can be fitted with large 22.5-inch or 26.5-inch tyres for improved flotation and reduced ground pressure. An articulated drawbar, standard self-steering axle and optional hydraulic forced steering provide excellent manoeuvrability both in the field and on the road. Operation is made simple through Krone's latest Isobus control system, which features a redesigned user interface and configurable automatic functions. Operators can quickly access key controls and tailor settings to suit their harvesting operation.



Several tractors from Massey Ferguson's heritage collection are now on long-term loan with Peter Drinkwater in the Cotswolds.

MASSEY FERGUSON HERITAGE COLLECTION FINDS NEW HOME

This is one for MF tractor enthusiasts. Massey Ferguson has announced that a number of tractors from its heritage collection are now on long-term loan with Peter Drinkwater in the Cotswolds. The tractors had previously been on display with Mike Thorne at the Coldridge Collection in Devon and include very low hour MF 35 and 135 tractors, the last ever prototype built at Banner Lane an MF 4370 and the well-known tractor puller 'The Nipper'. The new owners of Mike Thorne's museum, the Dunsfold Collection, were unable to keep the tractors, so a new home was sought.

"We are thrilled to be working with Peter Drinkwater," said Jerome Aubrion MF's vice president, global marketing. "The Drinkwater family has been using Ferguson and MF machines on their farm for over 75 years and now have a fantastic collection running into hundreds of tractors and implements, it was the natural place for us to home some of our cherished heritage collection".

The tractors will be displayed along with a wide range of Ferguson and Massey Ferguson machines and literature at Peter Drinkwater's museum at Ebrington near Chipping Campden. These are part of a much larger collection owned by Agco, while a large permanent display is part of the Agrispace visitor centre in Beauvais, and several tractors are exhibited at the Coventry Transport Museum.





FTMTA GOLFING SOCIETY WINNERS

The second outing for 2026 of the FTMTA Golfing Society took place at Athy Golf Club in September with an *Irish Farmers Monthly* representative taking top spot in the ladies' section. Congratulations to Barbara O Keeffe (representing *Irish Farmers Monthly)* who was the overall winner of the ladies' competition and who took home the First Citizen Agri Finance Perpetual Trophy. Congratulations, also, to the overall winner of the men's competition and the FTMTA Golfing Society Perpetual Trophy, Jim Kelly, Athy Golf Club and president of the FTMTA Golfing Society.

Pictured here with Jim and Barbara are Pat O'Neill, First Citizen Agri Finance (far left) and Karol Duigenan, Claas Ireland and captain of the FTMTA Golfing Society (far right).

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QUALIFIES FOR
TAMS
TILLAGE GRANT

AGRIQUIP TO DEBUT HEVA G-DRILL AT FTMTA SHOW

The new HeVa G-Drill will make its official Irish debut at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show (November 17-19). The drill will be launched at the Agriquip (part of Murphy Machinery) stand.

The drill is designed primarily for sowing newly established grass fields as well as repairing existing grass fields, and it can also be used for sowing cereal crops. The machine is built with a working width of 3m, with later models offering widths of 4m, 5m and 6m, as well as hydraulic folding. The sowing element consists of 400mm disc coulters angled 13° relative to the driving direction, creating a furrow, for example 20mm deep, into which the seed is placed. The disc coulters have a serrated edge, ensuring rotation is even when sowing into old grass fields. Precise sowing depth is ensured by the machine being supported during operation by a packer roller. Various roller elements are available and can be selected according to sowing tasks and soil conditions. To ensure accurate sowing depth on very hard soil surfaces, HeVa offers, as optional equipment, a construction that increases the coulter pressure using the tractor's lift arms. At the same time, it also offers optional spring-board levelling boards. To achieve a layer of loose soil on the surface for covering the seeds, we also recommend tine harrow sections with 12mm tines for mounting in front of or behind the disc coulters.



The drill is designed primarily for sowing newly established grass fields as well as repairing existing grass fields.

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Email: pat@agriquip.ie **Web:** www.agriquip.ie



AMAZONE LAUNCHES NEW MOUNTED REVERSIBLE PLOUGH

Pictured is the Teres 300 V Onland with WXL 35 solid mouldboar.

Amazone is now offering the Teres 300 mounted reversible plough with on-land ploughing capability. The new model enables operators to switch quickly and easily between conventional in-furrow and on-land ploughing, providing greater flexibility across a range of field and soil conditions, according to the company.

Available in five- or six-furrow configurations, the new Teres 300 models are designed for use with tractors of up to 300hp.

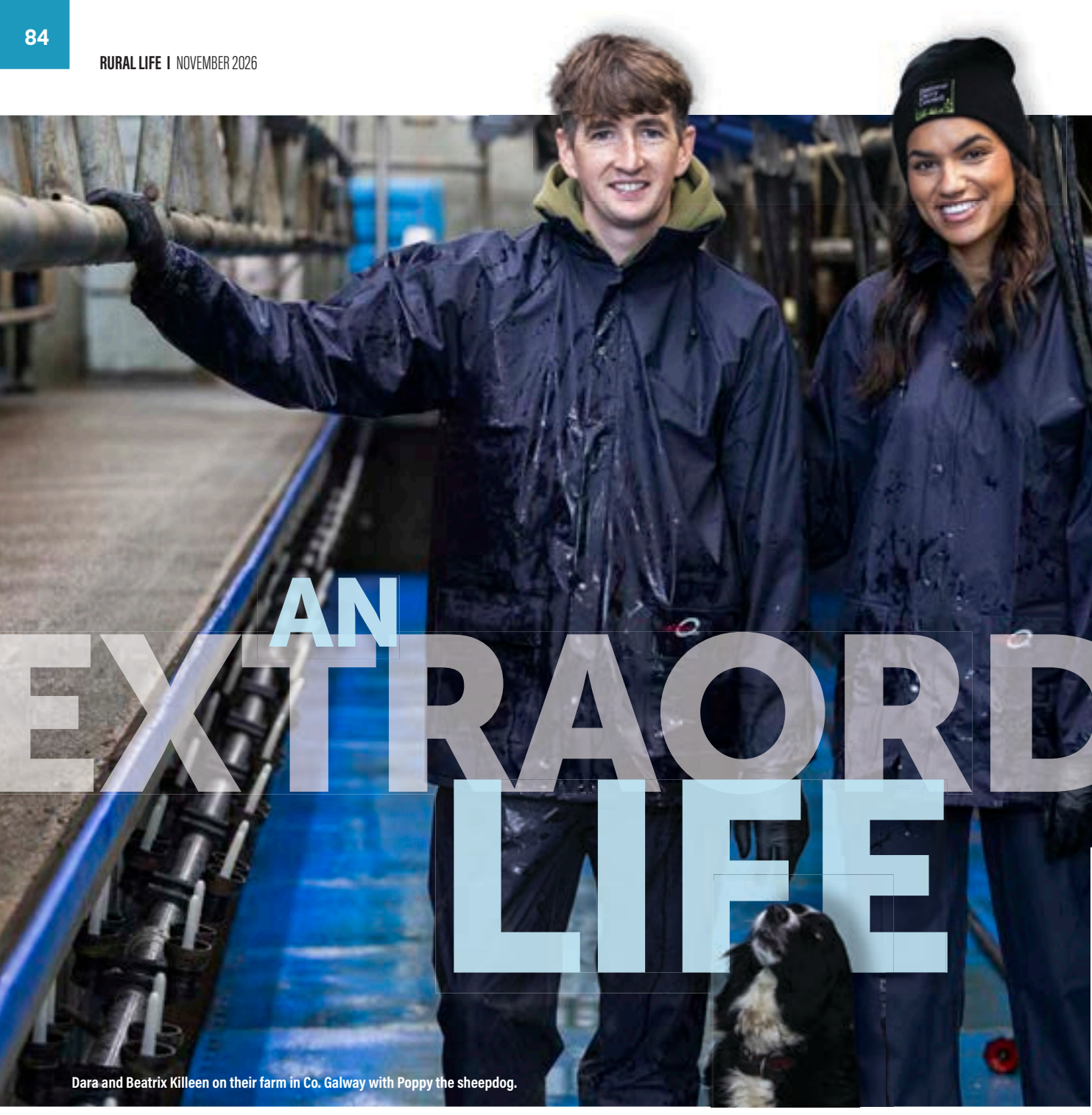
On-land ploughing offers particular advantages for tractors fitted with wider tyres or tracks. Large tyres often have limited space in the furrow and can cause compaction by travelling over loosened soil. Operating outside the furrow reduces ground pressure and helps preserve soil structure. At the same time, water infiltration and soil aeration are improved, creating favourable conditions for root development. Modern GPS guidance systems also support accurate and efficient operation.

Switching between in-furrow and on-land operation can be carried out easily from the cab via the parallelogram adjustment centre. Furrow width and front furrow settings can also be adjusted hydraulically, enabling the plough to be adapted quickly and easily to changing field conditions.

Another feature is the AutoAdapt automatic front furrow adjustment system. This ensures a clean match from bout to bout, even when the overall furrow width is adjusted, helping to maintain a consistent finish across the field.

A key feature of the Teres 300 Onland is the SpeedBlade plough body, which incorporates a patented extra-large front shin positioned ahead of the mouldboard. Even at higher working speeds, the main wear point is concentrated on this enlarged front shin rather than the main section of the slatted or solid mouldboard. As a result, only the worn front shin typically needs to be replaced initially, helping to reduce maintenance requirements and wear costs compared with conventional plough bodies.





AN EXTRAORD LIFE

Dara and Beatrix Killeen on their farm in Co. Galway with Poppy the sheepdog.

LIFE IS ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY FOR BEATRIX KILLEEN. FROM WORKING IN CORPORATE GOVERNANCE TO RUNNING A FAMILY FARM, TO BEING A NATIONAL DAIRY COUNCIL (NDC) AMBASSADOR, EVERY DAY BRINGS SOMETHING UNIQUE AND DIFFERENT. *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY* SPOKE TO BEATRIX ABOUT HER VARIOUS ROLES, BEING A MOTHER OF THREE YOUNG CHILDREN, AND OF COURSE, LIFE ON THE FARM

With a background in corporate governance, Beatrix is centrally involved in running a 300-acre dairy farm in Meelick, Eyrecourt, Co. Galway, along with her husband Dara, a fourth-generation farmer. Dara grew up on a mixed beef and sheep farm before converting the family business into a modern dairy operation in 2019. Beatrix grew up in Hungary and recalls spending a lot of time with her grandparents, who were farmers – those were her first experiences on a farm and where she first developed an appreciation for the farming mentality. She eventually moved to Ireland at the age of six with her parents, later in life, she took on a career specialising in corporate governance, and the rest is history. Beatrix may not come from a farming background, but her connection to farming and agriculture goes well beyond the farm gate – she has completed her Green Cert and is studying for a Master's in nutrition. She is also an NDC farmer ambassador and is involved with Dairy Women Ireland. She combines her passion for food and knowledge of corporate business to bring a unique perspective to the farm.



LIFE ON THE FARM

Beatrix and Dara milk around 155 cows with a central focus on animal welfare, milk quality, and sustainability. Prior to Covid-19, Beatrix recalls being in the office full-time and farming at the weekend. Eventually, she found more flexibility in her corporate role. Beatrix tells us about the farm's transition to dairying. "My husband took over the family farm in 2018 and that's when we decided to convert it from sheep and beef to dairy – the land is just very suitable for dairy farming. It was nice to be part of a new beginning and that's what pulled me into the farm life," she says. She continues: "I recognise it as a family business. You put in the hours, you put in the hard work, and you hope to pass it on to your children one day."

Their commitment to the environment includes responsible grassland management, clover-rich and multi-species swards, efficient nutrient use, and practices that protect local wildlife and habitats, including the provision of 100 acres within the Shannon Callows Special Area of Conservation.

"We do a lot, from grass measuring to focusing on breeding. We also have cow collars that are constantly tracking their health. This is great because it gives us precision in our decisions and it also offers a good perspective on how we are minding our cows and that they are as healthy as is possible," she explains.

AMBASSADORIAL ROLE

Beatrix has been an NDC ambassador since 2024, an initiative she describes as an opportunity for farmers to be able to tell their story a little more. "We get to tell our story and let the consumer see where their product comes from. Also, for me as a trained nutritionist, it allows me to be able to highlight how we are trying to produce really nutritious food efficiently, all while protecting the soil, water, and biodiversity."

Her role in Dairy Women Ireland started a few years ago when she connected with an old friend. "It has become a great network of women in the industry. We do everything from knowledge sharing to personal support. A lot of friendships have now been built as a result," she explains. "It is a strong group of people, where we know we can identify with one another or reach out when there is a challenge."

THE FAMILY AND THE FARM

Beatrix and Dara's family continues to grow – she welcomed her third child, Henry, earlier this year and is currently taking a bit of time off. Her two other young children, Isabella who is 13, and Oliver who is three, love being part of the farm.

"The older kids love to be outside in nature and being with the animals. But for us, we always made sure that the farm doesn't impact our family life too much. Yes, it's all hands on deck sometimes, but we also make time to get away," she explains. "I will never put pressure on the kids to take over the family farm, but I would like to make it as attractive as I possibly can without me saying the words. It's about investing in technology, making it relatively stress-free. There are so many amazing careers in the industry as well, so I wouldn't be sad if they went into doing some research work with Teagasc, who we rely on so heavily for our development, or possibly veterinary work. It's about making sure that they're happy with whatever work it is that they're doing, and hopefully they continue to carry on the legacy if that's what they choose to do."

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

At the moment, Beatrix is focused on finishing up her studies, raising her three children, and continuing to champion Irish dairy and the producers. "We are just out of the newborn trenches! We will keep our heads down at the moment, but I'm pretty open-minded as to what's to come over the next three years for us. I think the 'farm-to-fork' concept has become really important to people now. People are a lot more conscious about where their food is coming from and what's in their food.

"I would also like to continue championing Irish dairy. It's an incredibly nutritious product, and we're so lucky that we can create that here at home: it doesn't have to travel the world to get to us. And I want to get behind our other amazing food producers in Ireland — our vegetable growers, our sheep farmers, our beef farmers. I want to get the facts behind me in terms of nutrition and really champion all the Irish products we have on our doorstep."



MATT O'KEEFFE
EDITOR

FEEBLE CATCALLS WILL HARDLY UPSET PHIL HOGAN



Diarmuid Ferriter obviously had his axe well-honed when he attempted a hatchet job on Phil Hogan in a recent article in *The Irish Times*. He poured scorn on the former minister and EU commissioner's ambition to head up the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN. Hogan comes with a near perfect CV for the role, in my view. He has served as both EU Commissioner for agriculture and for trade, and as an environment minister in an Irish Government, not to mention his firsthand knowledge of food production from growing up and working on a farm. However, according to Diarmuid, he carries supposed baggage as a political bruiser who took few prisoners when times were tough in the post-economic-collapse Irish Government of 2011-2014.

Ferriter also elucidated on Phil Hogan's lapses in regard to Covid-19 restrictions, for which he paid a heavy price, forfeiting his position as EU Commissioner for Trade. If every politician's errors of judgement were punished with a life sentence of being cast into eternal darkness, there would be very few to view in the light of day. Even the former commissioner's declaration of having made a 'fulsome' apology for his Covid shortcomings was admonished by Diarmuid who defined the word as 'excessive' or 'insincere.' A Man of Letters such as he would be fully aware of another, quite contradictory definition of 'fulsome' from its original meaning as being 'abundant', 'copious,' or 'full.' But who are we to question a master of the written word?

As a curious sidenote, UCD, where Diarmuid Ferriter is a history professor, saw fit to confer a degree of Doctor of Science on Phil Hogan in 2024, with Professor J. Peter Clinch, Jean Monnet Full Professor of Public Policy, citing 'his distinguished contributions in the domains of the environment, rural development, food, climate, the bioeconomy, as well as economics, trade, EU policy and politics.' I suspect Diarmuid did not concur with either UCD's conferring decision or its accolade of Phil Hogan's contributions to Ireland and the EU.

The UCD professor also saw fit to query Phil Hogan's use of his own money to pursue the FAO role, as if self-funding a political campaign is an unheard-of, illegal or, at least, abhorrent practice. The €225,000 salary that comes with the UN role also drew comment from Diarmuid Ferriter, though such a figure is relatively modest in comparison to many public role salaries.

> FERRITER ALSO ELUCIDATED ON PHIL HOGAN'S LAPSES IN REGARD TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS, FOR WHICH HE PAID A HEAVY PRICE

> WHILE LIVE AID SOUGHT IMMEDIATE FOOD AID FUNDING FOR STARVING PEOPLE, THE ROLE OF THE FAO PRIORITISES LONGER TERM, STRATEGIC PROGRAMMES

It is to be hoped and expected that Hogan, should he be successful, would expend all his energies and talents in performing the full-time job for which he would be paid.

Not satisfied with criticism of what the professor must feel are major shortcomings in Phil Hogan's career as a politician, and his fitness, or otherwise, to serve as director general of the FAO, Diarmuid Ferriter's article also contained what some, at least, would consider snide name-calling of Hogan as 'Feed the World Phil', equating him to a self-styled 'new Bob Geldof.' Most people understand that, while Live Aid sought immediate food aid funding for starving people, the role of the FAO prioritises longer term, strategic programmes for improving food security and the sustainability of agricultural production systems across the planet. The history professor would be aware of that fact. Still, never let the facts get in the way of a feeble catcall.

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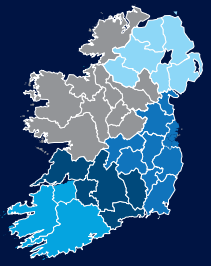
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