www.irishfarmersmonthly.com

OCTOBER 2026

IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY



SPECIAL FOCUS
HERD HEALTH & FORESTRY

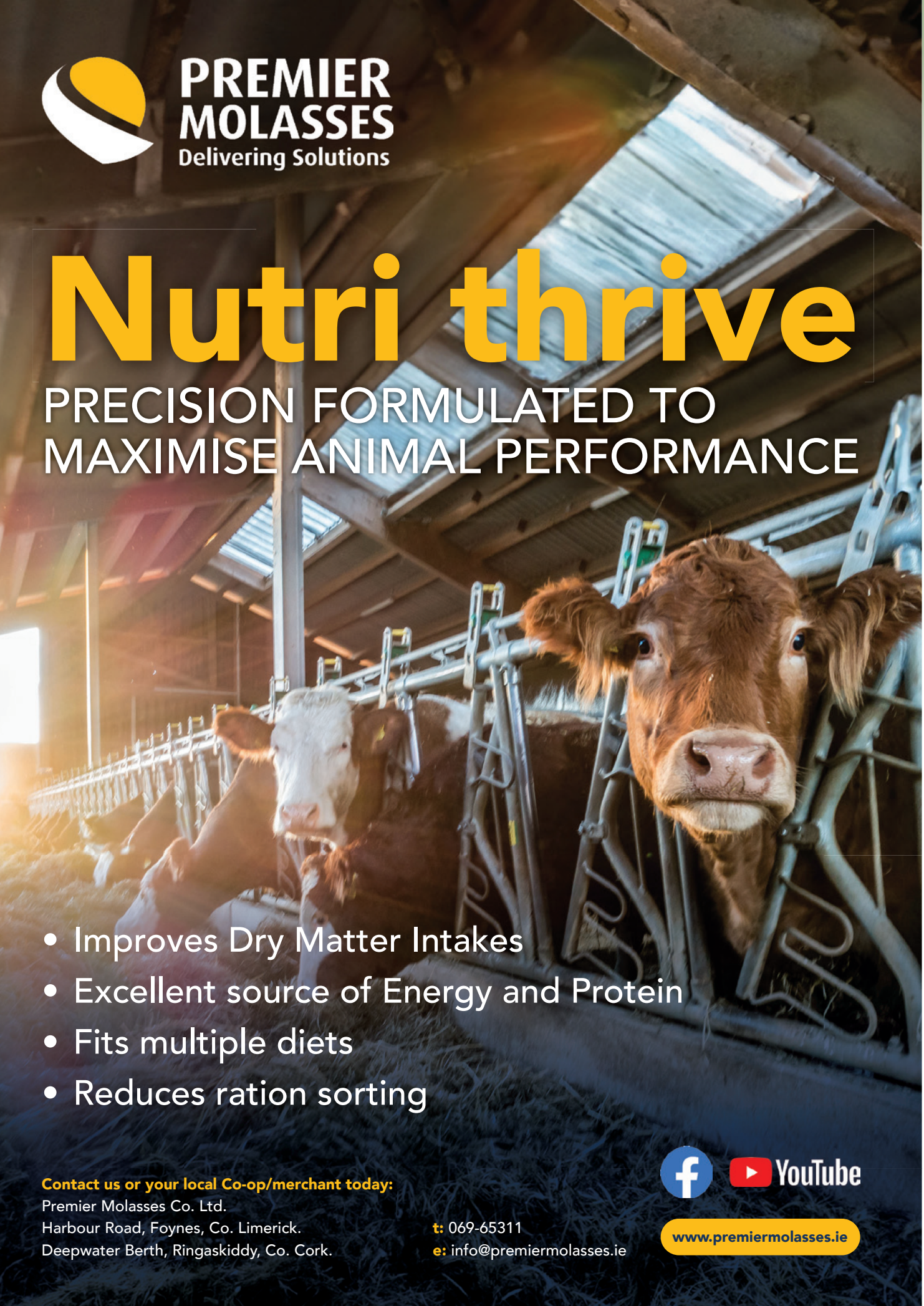
TOP SPOT FOR KARINA
INTERVIEW: KARINA PIERCE
UCD SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE

BEEFING UP THE SECTOR
INTERVIEW: JOE BURKE
BORD BIA

BIOECONOMY
MAPPING A BIOECONOMY THAT FITS IRISH FARMING

ANIMAL HEALTH
TARGETED PARASITE CONTROL AT HOUSING

IFM AVAILABLE ONLY THROUGH DIRECT MAIL


PREMIER
MOLASSES
Delivering Solutions
Nutri thrive
PRECISION FORMULATED TO
MAXIMISE ANIMAL PERFORMANCE
• Improves Dry Matter Intakes
• Excellent source of Energy and Protein
• Fits multiple diets
• Reduces ration sorting
Contact us or your local Co-op/merchant today:
Premier Molasses Co. Ltd.
Harbour Road, Foynes, Co. Limerick.
Deepwater Berth, Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork.
t: 069-65311
e: info@premiermolasses.ie
YouTube
www.premiermolasses.ie

OCTOBER 2026

EDITORIAL



Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

WOULD EU BUDGET POSTPONEMENT BE A LEAST-WORST OPTION?

While certainty is what we might prefer, if that certainty involves financial loss, then postponement and procrastination are better options. It is increasingly likely that agreement on reform of the next Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will be kicked down the road for 12 months. There is currently a lack of agreement on an increase, if any, in the funding of the next CAP and Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). With several EU Member States unwilling to fund a larger CAP budget, there is little prospect of agreement being secured in the short term. Under current budgetary proposals, EU farmers are facing significant reductions in payments over the next seven years. Losses to Irish farmers could amount to €2.4bn or an almost 25 per cent reduction between 2028 and 2034. If agreement is not reached before the Irish presidency of the European Council ends in December, there is no likelihood of any agreement being finalised in the following months.

There are critical national elections across the EU in 2027 and any political party in Italy, France or Spain that promotes either higher taxes or lower CAP payments will incur the wrath of some or other critical elements of their electorate. Postponement of EU financial spending decisions may be preferable to losing votes. Unfortunately, postponement brings risks. If the Far right takes the French presidency, then a quite antagonistic approach to the European Union may emerge in French foreign policymaking. Likewise, Italy could opt for a more sceptical post-election EU policy. Spain is another critically important EU Member State, and a change of Government there next year could herald a significantly different set of priorities, with potential implications for EU policy generally and, especially, funding priorities. While Germany is more than two years from a national election, the recent State elections suggest a lurch to the right, with significant implications for the EU if it is ultimately reflected in any future German Government composition. Even in the short term, German government policies across defence, migration, Russia/Ukraine and funding the EU Budget will be shaped by a necessity to counteract the rise of the Right among its electorate.

All of this feels far from home. The reality, however, is that political developments across the EU impact Ireland and Irish policies. Our politicians are acutely aware of the need to appease sectoral interests. Farmers are one such cohort. Fuel-price protesters are another, as we saw earlier in the year and may see again before the year is out. This month's budget is an exercise in appeasement as much as it is a responsible effort to manage the country's finances. Initiatives such as the development of investment fund options for savers are mere distractions to the real issues facing our economy. The need for vastly increased investment across energy infrastructure and resilience is just one example of where our policy focus should be. Our defence spending is entirely inadequate for protecting our national interests as a sovereign and neutral country.

As an addendum on Government spending priorities, we embark on an enormously costly underground transport system without a clear, up-to-date cost/benefit analysis. Six years ago, the Systra report calculated the financial benefit of building the then €4bn Metrolink at between 2.41 and 3.02. That's a return of €9.64bn over the long term. The Metro is now estimated to cost a minimum of €17bn. Is there an updated cost/benefit analysis to confirm that figure still allies to a 2.41 benefit? Building a Metro simply because everyone else has one is a poor rationale. We need a Metro if it can deliver a worthwhile financial return for passengers, social activity and economic development.

CONTENTS

4 Upfront
7 News
Including Letter From Brussels
10 Interview:
Historic Top Spot for Karina
Karina Pierce, UCD
13 Interview:
Beefing Up The Sector
Joe Burke, Bord Bia
16 Farm Safety
Ciaran Roche, FBD Risk Manager
18 What Does The Vet Say?
Interview – Part 2: Mike Burke
Vets Without Borders Ireland
20 Bioeconomy
Mapping A Bioeconomy That Fits Irish Farming
46 Management Hints
50 Machinery
59 Opinion: ICMSA
Denis Drennan, ICMSA president
60 Rural Life
The Case for Paludiculture
62 Opinion: A Word In Your Ear
Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

23 FOCUS: HERD HEALTH
25 Impact of generics on pain relief and disease management
28 Targeted parasite control at housing
30 What will your dry cows actually be eating this winter?
34 The future of farming is already here

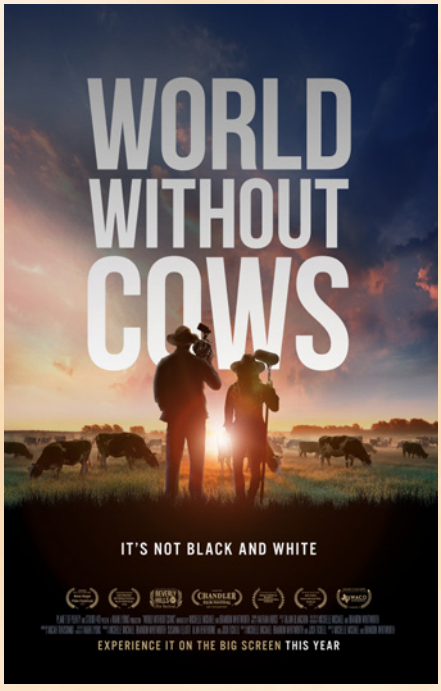
23 FOCUS: FORESTRY
28 Forestry sector: Strengths, challenges, and prospects
40 Oak: King of the forest, lord of biodiversity
42 Growing in different directions
44 Land use and forestry options and financial rewards

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
Chief Executive: Rebecca Markey **Printing:** W&G Baird **Publishers:** IFP Media **Subscription:** €46 per annum
Irish Farmers Monthly, Castlecourt, Glenageary, Co. Dublin.
Tel: +353 1 7096900 · **Email:** berniecommins@ifpmedia.com · www.irishfarmersmonthly.com
Copyright IFP Media 2026. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any material form without the express written permission of the publishers.

Download on the App Store
Google play

WWW.IRISHFARMERSMONTHLY.COM

TRACTOR OF THE YEAR TOTY
JURY MEMBER FOR IRELAND



IT REALLY ISN'T 'BLACK AND WHITE'

Spanning 22 countries across five continents, the Alltech-commissioned documentary 'World Without Cows' examines the role of cattle in the economic, environmental, and social lives of millions of people across the planet. The documentary does not shirk from addressing a prevailing doctrine that cattle are bad for the planet. It addresses this head on, and provides ample proof that cattle herds are positive for soil fertility and structure. The methane impact on climate is countered by scientist-based assertions that the gas is short-lived and returns to the soil and plants as recycled carbon, or CO_2, and water.

The premiere of its global screening tour took place in Dublin last month, in the Pearse Lyons Distillery. Originally conceived by Alltech CEO, Dr Mark Lyons, the documentary was directed by Michelle Michael and Brandon Whitworth, both well-established and independent journalists and documentary makers. One of the most impressive aspects of the well-balanced review of global cattle production, is in highlighting the vital role cows play in the lives of farmers and pastoralists from Africa to the Americas, India and Australia.

The historic importance of Irish cattle farming is long established. The Céide Fields in north Mayo showcase well-organised cattle grazing systems dating back thousands of years. Ireland's intrinsic connection to cattle is further reflected in historical references to cattle farming (and raiding) and dairy production, as well as in our ancient literature and poetry through such examples as the Táin Bó Cúailnge, the legendary Cattle Raid of Cooley.



Macra national president, Josephine O'Neill and national chair of the Agricultural Affairs Committee, James McElearney pictured with European Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, Christophe Hansen, at the 2026 National Ploughing Championships.

MACRA'S POTENTIAL LEADERS RALLY FOR SUPPORT

With Josephine O'Neill heading into her second and final rally (annual conference) as president of Macra, there will be considerable discussion and speculation at the event as to who will take over her role as leader of the young farmers representative group at the Macra AGM next May. The annual rally is usually when aspiring leaders put their heads and hands up as possible candidates for the presidency. As yet, there are no firm favourites but rumour has it that the three vice presidents are all calculating their chances of promotion to the top job. Macra, under Josephine's leadership, has had a high profile in recent times, with Macra's campaign for generational renewal providing the organisation with a key focus both at home and in Europe, where Macra's policies on farm transfer are highly regarded in Brussels circles. Macra's succession policy was referenced by EU agriculture commissioner, Christophe Hansen during his visit to Ireland in September, where he took the opportunity to engage with farm leaders including Josephine. Meanwhile, internal succession in Macra will assume more prominence and urgency during that organisation's 'think-in' and socialising event in the Woodlands Hotel in Limerick on the October bank holiday weekend. There is general agreement that Josephine is an outstanding representative and advocate on behalf of young rural Ireland. Her ability to engage, debate, and provide positive direction for her members is quite impressive. She is now, perhaps, facing the most challenging period of her presidency, with Common Agricultural Policy reform and internal organisational rejuvenation the major priorities in the months ahead. It was noticeable at the Macra Young Farmer of the Year Awards that Josephine had a long conversation with Macra's elder statesman Hugh Ryan. His advice and council have always been a valuable asset to Macra presidents. Long may that continue to be the case.


We are doing better every year
We went from 2.24 to 2.34 kilos of milk solids a day this year.
We tested the silage, put a plan together, and set a target of 22 UFLs of energy into the cow every day, enough for her to peak over 30 litres.
Happy where we are now. It's not about expanding anymore, just refining what we have.
Dan O'Reilly,
Kells
MILK SOLIDS GROWTH
Talk to your Milk Solids Growth Specialist today.
Tirlán

'OFFALY' POPULAR



An aerial shot of Trump International Golf Links in Doonbeg. Photo: trumpgolfireland.com.

What a week it was between Thursday, September 10 and Thursday, September 17. It began with all eyes on Offaly golfer, Shane Lowry, as he competed in the Amgen Irish Open at Trump International Golf Links Ireland, aka Doonbeg. And what an outcome! Not only did he win the Amgen-sponsored event, he did it with a record-breaking 23 under par, including a birdie one-under-par on the 18th hole in the final round to complete the win in style. He then went on to accept the top prize of over $1m from President Donald Trump who owns the golf resort on the west coast of Clare. As a parting gift the US president – who was combining a non-State visit to Ireland with attendance at his beloved golf venue announced tariff relief on Irish whiskey exports to the US. Wow! What a man. We should invite him over often!

While Shane Lowry was, without doubt, the star of the Irish Open, a four-legged supporting cast could be seen just outside the confines of the Doonbeg golf course. Happily grazing lush green grass, and entirely oblivious to the huge cheering crowds, not to mention the arrival of Airforce One and an enormous helicopter circling overhead, the Shanahan herd of Friesians provided the perfect pastoral scene to broadcast Ireland's natural attractiveness to millions of TV viewers across the planet. Expect a surge in tourism numbers next year as 'coolcations' become popular; Ireland has all the climatic, scenic, golfing, livestock, food and socialising attractions needed by any discerning traveller. After a drought hiccup during which parts of the country developed a pale grey hue, the rain arrived in time to return our countryside to its natural green splendour with fields full of contented livestock. Within two days of Lowry's Irish Open conquest, all eyes had focussed on Offaly itself as Screggan hosted the National Ploughing Championships. Again, a marvellous spectacle, showcasing all that is best in Irish agriculture.



Kilkenny Lions Club recently acknowledged George Candler's service to Kilkenny, as well as Cillín Hill Mart. Photo: kilkennymart.ie.

A LIONS SHARE OF CREDIT TO GEORGE

With over 50 years of devotion to livestock auctioneering, George Candler deserves every accolade. Last month, Kilkenny Lions Club acknowledged his service to Kilkenny, as well as Cillín Hill Mart, at a special occasion at the Kilkenny livestock sales venue. George's latest endeavour was to raise €10,000 to support various services offered by Cois Nore, Relay for Life, and Carlow Kilkenny Home Care Team. The Roscommon-born, Kilkenny domiciled auctioneer was clearly taken aback by the praise being heaped upon him, but the reality is that George has contributed enormously over so many years to the social and economic life of his adopted home.

Kilkenny Livestock Cooperative itself is celebrating 70 years since its foundation in 1956. The original committee was headed up by the late Michael (Mick) Gibbons, former IFA stalwart and ICOS president. Coincidentally, his son Declan has written a definitive history of Kilkenny Mart over those 70 years. The book is due to be published in the coming weeks, mapping a timeline from the mart's initial location at Barrack Street in the middle of Kilkenny city until 2007, to its current location on a 30-acre site just outside the city boundary. Home to a range of agri- and non-agri related businesses, as well as the livestock mart, the latest addition to the Cillín Hill site is a set of padel courts. A good fit, surely, for an enterprise base that includes the aforementioned mart, a gymnasium, hardware, livestock feed outlet, insurance, butchery, deli, restaurant, tyre centre, tractor sales, a creche, an FRS depot and an NCT centre, to mention just some of the businesses that have made their home at Cillín Hill.



SOLAR RETURNS ON CAPITAL

Much of the discussion on rooftop solar installation, either on private homes, business premises or farm buildings, hinges on the potential pay-back timescale. That is a reasonable focus when borrowing for funding the installation is involved. There is, however, another, presumably sizeable, potential solar adoption group who are less often considered. We hear about the huge amount of savings (€170bn) in bank accounts earning no or low interest rates. The Minister for Finance, for some peculiar reason, wants to encourage these savers to invest in volatile global capital markets. Assuming there are a lot of people with a lot of savings, as distinct from a smaller group of savers with an even larger amount of savings, there is another investment they could make, less risky, with a high level of return on capital. An investment of €12,000 could deliver an annual return of at least 10 per cent, perhaps even greater, depending on the orientation of their roofs. South is optimal. Take an annual electricity bill of €2,000. Solar installation could reduce purchased electricity costs by two thirds to €666. That's a reduction of €1,333 per annum, providing a return on investment of 11.15 per cent. That's a guaranteed, secure, long-term return on capital. No risky investments in AI tech companies. No risk of losing some or all their life savings in the next, inevitable economic downturn or stock market crash. Just watch on your solar app as the sun turns your savings into homegrown electricity.



Damien O'Reilly
EU Affairs and Communications Manager, ICOS

LETTER FROM BRUSSELS

It's hard to believe we are heading towards the end of the Irish presidency of the EU. In reality, it is more like a four-month presidency as little happens in July and August, and things wind down here in Brussels from mid-December. So, October will be a pivotal month for Ireland in terms of progressing talks about the post-2027 EU budget known as the Multiannual Financial Framework. And, of course, within that lies the pot of money set aside for agriculture, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

On his visit to Ireland for the National Ploughing Championships last month, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, Christophe Hansen was not dismissive of the idea that under the current CAP proposal could not be increased substantially. Farmer and co-operative organisations under the COPA COGECA umbrella in Brussels have made it clear that nothing short of a €500bn budget will suffice. MEPs agree. Under the current proposal, the figure coming from the EU Commission is shy of €300bn.

But the ball has only been thrown in at this point, and there is a lot to play for over the coming months. It will effectively be left up to the Member States themselves to work out where the money to fund the EU between 2027-2035 is going to come from. The horse-trading will be done in the EU capitals. This is where it becomes disruptive with a half dozen countries; Germany, Denmark, Finland, Austria, Netherlands and Sweden known collectively as the 'frugals' looking for huge cuts in the European budget. Meanwhile, in the opposite camp, the 'friends of cohesion' want to protect agriculture, fisheries, and regional funding, which the Commission's proposal would cut compared with the current budget. The group includes 17 Member States, among them Spain, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Portugal and the Baltic trio. Ireland is not a member of either club.

The first test of that battle will take place in mid-October when the EU Heads of State meet under the chairmanship of Micheál Martin in Brussels. Meanwhile, regardless of the funding uncertainty, discussions around the texture and structure of the next CAP are already beginning. Discussions around the definition of a farmer, eligible hectare, degressivity and capping, agri-environmental schemes, and funding of young farmers are going to be intense and unpalatable before a penny is divvied out.

There was a lot of anticipation ahead of Ireland taking hold of the EU reins in July but in reality, the Government has been able to hide behind the 'honest broker' door in not declaring its hand in terms of the funding and structure of the next CAP. Soon, that ball will be handed onto Lithuania. Ireland will not host the presidency of the EU again until at least the beginning of 2040. What will the farming and food landscape look like then? Getting the next seven years right in terms of supporting food security will be the foundation for that.

icos
Irish Cooperative Organisation Society



October is a month of preparation

Dr. David Lawrence
Head of Nutrition, Agritech.

The foundation for 2027 spring grass supply is laid during the autumn closing period. Beginning your closing round early will offer an opportunity to re-enter some of the earlier-closed pastures if we happen to have above-normal growth during October and November. The final round is less about dates and duration and more about carrying the correct cover through the autumn, not too much or too little. 750 Kg DM/ha of grass is a good farm cover to aim for on the 1st December.

This should lead to an opening cover of 1,000 kg DM/ha or more by the end of January. Delaying the closing date past the 15th of November has a negative effect on spring grass supply. However, autumn growth has been exceptional in recent years, so setting a target closing cover rather than a closing date seems to work well in most scenarios.

Invest time in understanding your dry-off approach now; by reviewing milk recording data, and performing a culture and sensitivity test on your higher cell count cows. This will help identify the root cause of cell count issues, along with shedding light on the most effective dry cow therapy required to tackle the problem for next year.

Body condition is a cornerstone of calving success. You should look at your herd critically now for body condition. Ideally, 90% of cows should be between a BCS of 3 and 3.25 and that condition should be maintained through drying off. There is huge variation in cow BCS this year. Targeting thin cows with additional feed early, while they are still milking, is an easier approach than managing multiple groups of cows during the dry period.

Dry cow nutrition is centred on good silage analysis, so getting silage pits sampled early offers flexibility when it comes to choosing the correct silage for milkers, vs young stock, and dry cows. A mineral sample of the dry cow silage is also very useful for planning ahead and addressing nutritional issues such as high potassium (K) levels and mineral antagonists.

Dry cow minerals are a big talking point on farms at the moment. Look for a dry cow mineral that contains highly bioavailable sources of trace minerals, a highly soluble source of magnesium and good inclusions of vitamins particularly vitamins A, D and E along with Biotin, such as Welmin Dry Cow Elite.

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





InTouch

CATHAL BOHANE
HEAD OF INTOUCH NUTRITION

PROTECTING MILK SOLIDS AND COW CONDITION

Recent rainfall, warm soils and the release of stored nitrogen have driven a strong recovery in grass growth. This should help extend the grazing season and has eased pressure on silage stocks, allowing many farmers to close pits for winter. In some areas, further cuts are also being taken to strengthen reserves.

Maintaining production remains a priority. Many herds are still producing around 2kg of milk solids per cow and, with milk price improving, every effort should be made to hold output. Anticipate grass shortages or weather-related challenges and introduce appropriate supplementation before performance declines. Milk lost at this stage of lactation is unlikely to be recovered.

Body condition score must also be central to management decisions. In approximately 10 weeks, most cows should be at BCS 3.25. The thurl region should appear U-shaped (see below), which indicates a body condition score of 3, or greater, rather than V-shaped. A high proportion of V-shaped cows may indicate they are approximately 0.5 BCS units behind target. For a 600kg cow, this equates to around 24kg of body weight.



Restoring this condition over 10 weeks will require more than 125kg of additional feed dry matter, or close to 2kg per cow per day, specifically for condition gain. Action is required now. The benefit of concentrate or other supplementation is not measured in milk solids alone; feed also supports body condition. Complete a feed budget now to identify any winter shortfall. Removing unproductive or empty cows will reduce demand and direct feed towards animals that can provide a return. Test silage for nutritional and mineral content, particularly silage intended for dry cows. Reliable analysis will support balanced diets and an appropriate mineral programme for the season ahead.

KEENAN an Alltech company Alltech®



Pictured at the launch of the 2026 FTMTA Farm Machinery Show: Molly Kenny, FBD Insurance; Michael Farrelly, executive director, FTMTA; Michael Berkery, chairperson of the FBD Trust; and Claire Daly, FTMTA.

COUNTDOWN IS ON TO FTMTA FARM MACHINERY SHOW

The Farm Tractor & Machinery Trade Association's (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show returns to Punchestown Event Centre this November. At its recent launch, FBD Insurance announced its association with the 2026 event taking place from November 17-19, inclusive. Building on the success of the show's most recent staging at Punchestown in 2024, organisers say that some exciting new features have been added to this year's show, which they are confident will attract an even larger attendance.

FTMTA executive director, Michael Farrelly, said: "The level of interest from exhibitors was exceptional from the outset, with all available exhibition space booked much earlier than anticipated." He continued: "What sets the FTMTA machinery show apart and makes it unique is the presence of the machinery manufacturers themselves. It offers manufacturers the opportunity to showcase the latest innovations and technologies, while allowing them to engage directly with the end user." Commenting on FBD Insurance's decision to support the show, Michael said: "FBD Insurance is a prominent name in Irish agriculture, and we are very proud to have them associated with the FTMTA Farm Machinery Show. Their support demonstrates their commitment to our sector and, on behalf of the association, I would like to thank them for that."

Michael Berkery, chair of FBD Trust, said: "The FTMTA Farm Machinery Show showcases the technological innovation and engineering that help to shape the future of Irish farming. Machinery and technology play an increasingly important role in supporting efficiency, productivity and sustainability on farms across the country. FBD Insurance is proud to support this event that highlights the contribution of the agricultural machinery sector to modern farming and rural Ireland."



Pictured at the launch of the Guild of Agricultural Journalists of Ireland's (Agri Guild) biennial awards 2026: Chairman of FBD Trust, Michael Berkery; chair of the judging panel, Pat O'Keeffe, corporate affairs director of Tirlán; and secretary of the Agri Guild, Bernie Commins, deputy editor of Irish Farmers Monthly. Photo: Claire Nash.

AGRI GUILD AWARDS OPEN FOR ENTRIES

Entries are now open for the Guild of Agricultural Journalists of Ireland's biennial Agri Guild Awards 2026, sponsored by FBD Insurance. The awards recognise outstanding work by journalists in national and regional media, as well as consultants in the communications sector, across nine different categories. This year's judging panel will be chaired by former journalist, Pat O'Keeffe, who is corporate affairs director of Tirlán. He will be joined by Professor Gerry Boyle, former director of Teagasc; Roz O'Shaughnessy, head of communications at Bord Bia; Liam Lavelle, executive producer at Agtel Productions; and Sara McCracken, communications specialist. The deadline for submissions of entries is 5pm on Thursday, October 15, 2026. The winners will be announced at a black-tie ceremony in Dublin on Thursday, November 19 chaired by former RTÉ broadcaster, Damien O'Reilly, who is EU affairs and communications manager at ICOS.

CALIBRE OF ENTRIES

Commenting on the launch of the awards, Agri Guild chairperson, Stella Meehan said: "Every time we launch the Agri Guild Awards, we are blown away by the sheer number and calibre of entries.
"It is an opportunity to highlight the best of work carried out by journalists and communicators about the industry and we look forward to another stellar display of achievement at this year's awards.
"We kindly thank our exclusive sponsor, FBD Insurance, for their generous and steadfast support of these awards."
Michael Berkery, chairman of FBD Trust said: "FBD is proud to continue our long-standing support of the Guild of Agricultural Journalists. Agricultural journalists and communicators play an important role in exploring and communicating the issues affecting farming, food production, and rural communities with integrity and professionalism.
"We are pleased to support awards that recognise excellence, commitment, and high standards across agri-journalism and communications."
Chair of the judging panel, Pat O'Keeffe said: "Having worked in agricultural journalism for 17 years, I have deep appreciation for the skill, integrity and commitment that underpin quality journalism. In an age of abundant information, the role of trusted journalists in reporting facts and informing audiences has never been more important.
"I am honoured to chair this year's judging panel and to be joined by an excellent group of judges. I encourage professional communicators from across the sector to submit their work and look forward to a strong entry for what is always a highly competitive competition, culminating in the award of the coveted Bull."

CATEGORIES

This year's award categories include Best News Story Best Feature, Best Visual Report, Best Audio, Best Technical Report, Best Targeted Campaign, Best Environmental Reporting, Best Photograph, and The Rising Star Award. In addition to cash prizes for each category winner, 'The Bull,' the prized bronze trophy, will be presented to the category winner whose exceptional merit is recognised by the adjudicating panel.

ENTRIES

Applicants must be members of the Agri Guild while non-members are required to join the Guild prior to submitting entries. Applicants may only submit one entry per category. However, this does not preclude multiple entries in each category from different staff members working for the same agri-media organisation. Each entry must have been published between September 1, 2024, and August 31, 2026. Entry to the awards for 2026 can be completed via the Agriguild.ie website; members will be able to login to the awards entry portal.
For queries about membership, please contact Agri Guild Secretary, Bernie Commins, at the following email address: southernsecretary@agriguild.ie. For payment queries, please contact Agri Guild Treasurer, Michelle Jordan at the following email address: michelle.jordan@bordbia.ie.





Professor Karina Pierce, recently appointed dean of agriculture and head of the School of Agriculture and Food Science at University College Dublin.

HISTORIC TOP SPOT FOR KARINA

PROFESSOR KARINA PIERCE IS THE NEW DEAN OF AGRICULTURE AND HEAD OF THE SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCE AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN (UCD), WHICH CELEBRATES 100 YEARS IN 2026. KARINA IS THE FIRST WOMAN TO BE APPOINTED TO THE ROLE AND HERE, SHE TALKS TO DEPUTY EDITOR OF IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY, BERNIE COMMINS ABOUT HER CAREER JOURNEY, HER AMBITIONS FOR HER TENURE, AND HER LOVE OF FARMING

As a fresh-faced cohort of first-year students embark on their agriculture studies at UCD, they are not alone in starting a new chapter. Their school head, Karina Pierce, is also embarking on a 'first year' of her own. Although she has been an academic staff member of the School of Agriculture and Food Science for 19 years – as well as a graduate before that – she has just commenced her first of a five-year term in the top spot at the school. And, while she says it is a bit daunting as 'there are a lot of expectations with the role', she is really excited about what is to come.

CAREER JOURNEY

Karina's career journey so far has seen her reach many milestones across academia, research, and leadership areas. But her interest in agriculture was really nurtured from her earliest years at home on the family farm in Roundwood, Co. Wicklow, with her late father, mother, and four siblings. "I grew up on a farm of 60 acres, so it was a small farm, but there were five of us reared on it," she says. "We had beef and sheep on the farm in a very rural area a few miles outside Roundwood; so, a harsh part of the world to farm in.

"We saw good years on the farm and we saw tough years, and when you are at that scale – 12 to 15 suckler cows and around 150 ewes – you are very vulnerable," she explains. Her mother worked from home as a seamstress, and Karina recalls the big Singer sewing machine in the kitchen; a symbol of a strong work ethic required to make the economics of the family farm work, and to rear five children on it. "It was a busy house, but a great spot to grow up, and I loved it," says Karina.

PASSION FOR EDUCATION

Karina loved it so much, she says, that she was almost six when she started school. "I just couldn't be moved out of the place," she laughs. While Karina may have preferred the great-outdoors life of farming to the classroom in her very, very early years, once she started, another passion was soon formed – education: agricultural education, to be precise. Completion of her third-level studies saw her graduate from UCD with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science (BAgrSc) and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in animal nutrition. She has conducted research on sustainable dairy-cow production systems spanning grassland management, dairy-cow nutrition, greenhouse gas emissions, and farm profitability. She worked her way consistently along the academic ladder reaching the post of programme director of the BAgrSc Dairy Business programme and also held the role of director of external relations, leading strategic engagement with industry, Government,



Professor Karina Pierce pictured at the launch of a special book to celebrate 100 years of agriculture at UCD.

and alumni at the School of Agriculture and Food Science. This latter role, Karina says, saw her work closely with her predecessor, Professor Frank Monahan, outgoing dean of agriculture and head of the school. This gave her a great insight into the role, she says.

HISTORIC APPOINTMENT

In handing the reins to Karina, Frank referred to her appointment as an 'historic' one. She is the first woman to be appointed to the role. In what is both the 100th anniversary of the School of Agriculture and Food Science at UCD, and the International Year of the Woman Farmer, Karina notes the significance. "You're there to do a good job regardless of gender, and I think that's the most important thing. But I have noticed that, certainly, being the first woman in the role does garner attention. So many women in the industry have come up to me and commented on it being such a positive thing. So, I suppose, I try not to think about that too much, but it is obviously significant. This industry has traditionally been very male dominated, so [since I started in it] I'm kind of forging a path or working along that for my whole career."

COMMUNICATION

Karina recognises the importance of participation and communication when it comes to creating awareness of what is happening at the School of Agriculture and Food Science, and why it matters. In the agri-industry, Karina is very well known and

> **YOU'RE THERE TO DO A GOOD JOB REGARDLESS OF GENDER, AND I THINK THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**

respected because she understands – and acts on – this, and it is something that she wants to further promote in her new role. She explains: "I've always been really interested in the school of agriculture being outward facing; being out and about in industry. Because there's a lot of knowledge in the school, and that knowledge is only of value when we are communicating it out there. So that's something I've tried to do; to be very involved in industry, because I see the benefit of that and, hopefully, over the next five years in my term, I will encourage many others in the school to do the same. There's a huge and really capable team of academics and researchers in the school. They have really prominent and important roles on lots of committees and boards, so we do contribute across the industry, but I think I'd like to see us doing it a little bit more."

PRIORITIES

There are other priorities on Karina's list for the coming five years and the first area she touches on is artificial intelligence (AI). "In academia, there can be a negative connotation to AI, but actually – and it's so evident when I'm talking to companies – AI is being used every day in every walk of life now, and we need to equip our students to be ready for the working world." This lines up with a second aim, Karina explains, and one which highlights the importance of the School of Agriculture's alumni network. "That is to work really closely with industry over the next number of years because industry is doing this [AI] on the ground, today. We have so many industry partners, alumni and graduates who are willing to work with us and help us. So, we lean into that." As well as approaching AI via the curriculum, she explains that it would also be addressed, preferably, through student work placements and industry-led talks to students. "You may not be 100% up to speed with AI because you're a researcher in animal nutrition, for example. And while that is a hugely important part of what we do, our students need other skills as well, so those kinds of industry interactions are going to be really important." Another area of importance, Karina highlights, is the need to equip graduates with robust communication skills so they can articulate their expertise. Karina explains that the school has collaborated with industry on this to introduce a communications-focused lectureship initiative, co-funded by UCD alongside the Our Food Roots initiative. Karina says: "Our graduates have a really important role to play in that because while they're agricultural

scientists, they will need to be able to communicate effectively." This, she agrees, is more important than ever as the spotlight intensifies on the agriculture sector around emissions and its environmental impact.
"Another area I've been really looking at is that of entrepreneurship and innovation," says Karina. "There are so many challenges for the agricultural sector, and I don't think we see enough of our graduates coming out to solve those problems. But then I had to ask myself, where are we giving them the opportunities to be creative, to think, to problem solve, to come up with solutions or innovations?"
Karina has been seeking the answers to these questions and, she says, there will be developments in this area in the coming year or so.

Our Food Roots brings together organisations from across Ireland's agri-food sector in response to the challenge of a growing disconnect between people and where their food comes from.

CAMPAIGN IMPACT

Our Food Roots features further in our conversation, based on its recently launched campaign titled 'We Make Greatness from Grass,' which coincided with the results of a body of research that it also carried out. The unique campaign centres on an original hip-hop-inspired song and music video. It is a departure, for sure, from your regular farming-related communications, but the research released by Our Food Roots alongside it showed a 'need to find new and relevant ways to build connection between younger audiences and the food they eat, where it comes from and the people behind its production' the entity said.
Karina comments: "The awareness of agriculture is poor, and there are statistics telling us that a great number of kids now have never been on a farm, and that is something that has changed hugely over the last few generations, where everybody had an uncle and aunt, a granny or a granddad who came from a farm.
"It's our job now to educate the general public about farming and I think that's what those kinds of campaigns are doing. There have been mixed views, I would say in the farming community about it. But what I would say is that it is not for me; it is not for farmers. It is

> **I'VE ALWAYS BEEN REALLY INTERESTED IN THE SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE BEING OUTWARD FACING; BEING OUT AND ABOUT IN INDUSTRY**

for a a younger demographic, a cohort that has no real interest in agriculture, or one that maybe sways a little bit towards the negative."
Hot on the heels of this campaign, the National Dairy Council launched its own titled 'A True Irish Legend', also coinciding with new research that it says 'highlights a generational gap in connection with Irish dairy'. Bord Bia also recently launched a domestic beef campaign aimed at younger Irish shoppers. Such campaigns are integral in communicating to target audiences about our agricultural sector, says Karina: "What they're saying is we have a really important industry here in Ireland, we have a grass-based industry, which is really different, and that it's in our DNA and we should be proud of it. While I'm not denying that there are challenges, and we have to deal with those challenges, own up to them, and deal with them, it is something that we can actually be really proud of. I suppose that's what I see in those campaigns."
Karina references the role of Agri Aware in this space also and the work that it does with primary and secondary schools. It is necessary work, she says: "Most of them are doing agricultural science [in secondary school], but a lot of them don't have a background in farming. So, farmers opening their farms, us speaking to school students more, educating people from when they're small right up, I think that is something that we need to do, and I think the whole industry is starting to buy into that."



Professor Karina Pierce, UCD (second from left) with co-judges Dr David Gleeson, Teagasc (far left) and Professor Patrick Wall, UCD (second from right), with Jeanne Kelly, Ornua and and Emma Walls, National Dairy Council. Photo: Tom Ryan Casey Photography.

2026 NDC & KERRYGOLD QUALITY MILK AWARDS

Karina was a member of the judging panel for the 2026 NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards. As someone immersed in farming and agricultural education her whole life, she is well placed to attest to the exceptionally high standard of entries, as well as the rigorous judging process involved: "The awards are a fantastic way of recognising the commitment, skill and attention to detail involved in consistently producing high-quality milk. The judging process is extremely rigorous, looking at 12 months of performance including milk quality and hygiene, grassland management, environmental measures, and biodiversity. The farm visit is particularly valuable, as it allows us to see these practices in action and meet the people behind the farms. The exceptionally high standard of the finalists makes judging challenging, but it is a privilege to be involved in this competition and to see the level of excellence being achieved on Irish dairy farms."

BEEFING UP THE SECTOR

A RECENT DOMESTIC BEEF CONSUMER CAMPAIGN, THE IMPACT OF THE SUSPENSION OF BRAZILIAN MEAT IMPORTS INTO EUROPE, AND THE STATUS OF OUR OWN BEEF EXPORTS WERE JUST SOME OF THE TOPICS OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY*'S DEPUTY EDITOR, BERNIE COMMINS, AND BORD BIA'S BEEF AND LIVESTOCK SECTOR MANAGER, JOE BURKE

Europe's suspension of meat imports – mainly beef and chicken – from Brazil came into force on September 3. The ban was sweet music to the ears of farm organisations and beef farmers in Ireland and across Europe. They had bitterly opposed the Mercosur trade agreement based on the double standards at play in relation to antibiotics usage and other safety concerns around Brazilian beef production.
Joe comments: "Some of us are around the industry long enough to remember 2008, which was the last time that Brazilian beef was effectively suspended from the European market. And it had a relatively significant impact at that time," says Joe.
"Back then, in 2008, the ban was because of a lack of traceability standards. Now the focus is on anitibiotics use and reassuring the European market and its consumers that where antibiotics are used, that the correct withdrawal periods are observed and that the animals can be identified. And, the EU has clearly stated that it is not satisfied that those things can be assured."

TIGHT SUPPLIES

Total annual EU consumption of beef is around 6.3 million tonnes. Four hundred thousand tonnes of it that is imported, with Brazil's contribution amounting to roughly 100,000 tonnes. The latter's volume is not huge, even added to the additional volumes that would have entered through Mercosur. But the suspension comes at a time of already tight European supply. Joe says: "It comes on top of production declining already. And the market, over the last couple of years, has been in relatively tight supply. Hence, why the likes of Brazil had been doing everything it could to ramp up both its exports and focus on Europe." While cold water has been poured on those ambitions, for now, Joe says he believes the ban will have longer-lasting reputational consequences for Brazil.



Bord Bia's beef and livestock sector manager, Joe Burke.

"Stopping the exports says something fairly significant and important to customers that are either buying or considering buying Brazilian beef; that it's not meeting the standards that are set out by the EU. So I think that it will have a longer-term impact than the ban itself in places where we have seen more beef being purchased from Brazil."

WHERE TO?

But the question arises, if not Europe, then where does that Brazilian product end up? The UK, no longer bound by EU rules, has not suspended meat from Brazil so should this be of concern for us? While the UK remains Ireland's most important market for agri-food produce, accounting for exports of €8.1 billion in 2025, and Irish beef is our leading agri-food export to the UK to a value €1.7 billion, the reality is that things are changing. Joe explains: "The UK imported nearly the same amount of beef this year as last year. But our [Ireland's] market share within those imports has fallen from 77 per cent to 64 per cent."
That, he says is a direct result of increased beef imports from Australia and New Zealand, primarily. But Brazil, too, is growing its market share in the UK. Joe continues: "We have a very good footprint and very loyal following among our retail and our quick-service customers but just at that foodservice level, it has dropped.
"Our main focus in the UK has been on maintaining those very strong relationships that we have with retailers who have that British and Irish sourcing policy, and with the quick-service restaurant chains."
In early August, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon, visited the UK in collaboration with Bord Bia for a series of meetings to support and promote the Irish beef sector there. Commenting, the minister said his visit 'underlined our commitment to the UK market and our commitment to seeking to strengthen this relationship.'
Following these meetings, Bord Bia recently rolled out a UK campaign highlighting the natural nutritional benefits of Irish beef and what makes it distinctive. Aimed at a younger audience, it sought to tackle the challenge of said shoppers not feeling compelled to purchase beef, nor placing importance on its origin.

CLOSER TO HOME

While the UK remains a priority export market, closer to home, Bord Bia recently launched



Bord Bia's domestic campaign focuses on items such as mince, burgers, and steaks, showcasing how Irish beef can be incorporated into midweek meals. It also encourages consumers to look for the Bord Bia Quality mark, and support Irish farmers, when purchasing beef

a new consumer campaign to promote increased sales of beef right here. It is the first such campaign since 2020 and comes at a time when the latest retail data shows a 4.3 per cent decline in beef sales volumes. The campaign, titled 'Because You Deserve It,' targets younger Irish shoppers, encouraging them to purchase Irish beef and highlighting its taste, nutritional benefits, and versatility as an everyday meal option. Joe comments: "Bord Bia's promotion and support for the Irish beef sector has strategically focused on overseas markets as over 85 per cent of Irish beef is exported. The domestic market accounts for up to 15 per cent of Irish beef sales, and all major retailers sell Quality Assured beef. However, we have seen some challenges in the Irish market in recent months, and we recognised an opportunity to increase our focus here to support demand for Irish beef.

"Through this campaign, we want to re-engage younger shoppers and remind them of the quality, taste and versatility of Irish beef, while encouraging them to actively look for the Bord Bia Quality mark when making their purchase."

OTHER MARKETS

Moving away from home again, Joe talks about some of the other markets that are performing well for Irish beef exports. The double-digits exports drop to the UK has been compensated, he says, by 'higher exports to continental European markets.'

Growth of Wagyu in Ireland

Wagyu is growing strongly from a very small base, according to Joe, from around 3,000 animals four or five years ago to 7,500 last year. Wagyu has gained traction in Irish retail, partly because smaller pack sizes, such as single-serve steaks, make the price point more accessible for trial or special occasions.

Italy is one such standout market, with strong retail listings for Irish Angus, Hereford, and grass-fed PGI beef, Joe says. He notes that unlike in the UK, where Irish and British beef are often seen as equivalent, Irish beef in Italy has its own distinct identity and story, and is highly regarded at consumer level.

INTERNATIONAL

Accessing the Chinese market has been stop-start for Irish beef, Joe says, with several trade disruptions over the last few years. Alongside that, he adds, the recovery of Chinese domestic pork production has dampened beef demand and prices, but where that demand exists, China has increasingly turned to South America, Australia, and New Zealand for supply. Restoring full access to China, including offal, is still on the agenda, but the timeline is uncertain. Elsewhere in Asia, markets have been established in Japan, the Philippines, Korea and Hong Kong, but such markets are receptive to more specialist beef items only. For example, we export a lot of beef short ribs to Korea because it works well in their cuisine and their cultural cooking methods, explains Joe. He adds: "Similarly, Japan is the highest priced market by far for the beef tongue. And we'll send practically all of them to that market. But apart from specialist items going to certain markets, it is a challenge to compete in some of those markets. Our exports, collectively, into international markets have been down this year," he adds. Certain European countries are growing an appetite for cuts that wouldn't have ordinarily been on their menus, says Joe. "The beef cheek is really popular now in France, Belgium, and Switzerland because of its flavour and slow-cooking attributes, particularly going into the winter months."

OUTLOOK

Work done by Bord Bia on the 10-year outlook for European and UK beef production, according to Joe, points to continued gradual decline. But Ireland's natural advantages such as our grass-based production, relatively low stocking densities, quality assurance schemes, and strong market access give reason for optimism. "It would be a pity if we were to see our own production decline at a time when we have opportunities to fill the gap that is going to arise in many of our key markets."

ACCOUNTANCY | PLANNING | ADVICE

ifac

More than tax.

Ifac work with farmers to plan for their future, from business structure to college fees, succession and retirement.



50 years advising farmers, call us today on **1800 33 44 22** or **visit ifac.ie**



SAFER FARMING FOR LIFE

RECOGNISING THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH FARMING AS WE AGE, AND TAKING PRACTICAL STEPS TO MANAGE THEM ARE ESSENTIAL, WRITES CIARAN ROCHE, FBD RISK MANAGER

The latest full-year figures from the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) show that there were 24 work-related fatalities in agriculture in 2025, accounting for almost 40 per cent of all work-related fatalities in Ireland. Twelve of these fatalities involved people aged 65 or over.

OLDER FARMERS AT GREATER RISK

Older farmers are disproportionately represented in fatal farm incidents. The HSA's most recent data for the period 2016-2025 shows that 56 per cent of fatal farm accidents involved people aged 65 or older. According to the HSA data for the period 2015-2024, the main causes of fatal farm incidents involving people aged 65 or older are:

- Vehicles – 36 per cent;
- Livestock – 26 per cent;
- Falls – 17 per cent;
- Falling loads – 8 per cent; and
- Drowning – 8 per cent.

AGE-RELATED RISK FACTORS

Many farmers remain fit, healthy, and capable well beyond traditional retirement age. But it makes sense to be aware of changes that can occur over time. Key areas to consider:

- **Strength and flexibility** decline with age. Be aware of your physical limits and avoid lifting, carrying or moving loads or carrying out tasks that are beyond your capability.
- **Reduced mobility, balance or reaction time** can make it more difficult to respond quickly around livestock, machinery, and moving vehicles.
- **Changes in eyesight** can make working in poor light, judging distances, or seeing hazards more difficult.
- **Hearing loss** can make it harder to hear vehicles, machinery, animals, alarms, or warnings from other people.
- **Illness, medication, joint stiffness and fatigue** can affect working ability from one day to the next. Take these factors into account before starting a demanding or higher-risk job.

PRACTICAL SAFETY TIPS

Before beginning a task, particularly one involving machinery, livestock, heavy physical work or working at height, ask yourself:

- Can I do this job safely today?
- Do I need someone to help me?
- Would a contractor or specialist be better equipped to do it?
- Do I have the right equipment?
- Is there a safer way to do the job?

MACHINERY AND VEHICLES

Keep all farm machinery in good working order. Do not use equipment that is unsafe or unsuitable simply because you are familiar with it. Vehicles remain the largest single category associated with fatalities among farmers aged 65 and over, so extra care around tractors and machinery is particularly important.

LIVESTOCK HANDLING

Good handling facilities can reduce the need to rely on physical strength or quick reactions. Well-designed pens, gates, and handling equipment can help separate the farmer from the animal and make routine tasks easier and safer. Take particular care around unpredictable animals, including cows at calving, and avoid putting yourself in a position where you need to move quickly to escape danger.

REVIEW HOW YOU FARM

Consider whether equipment, facilities, or the farming system itself could be adapted to reduce physical and mental demands. Investing in equipment that reduces manual handling, improving facilities, using contractors for demanding jobs, and reviewing the type and amount of work undertaken can all help. Also, consider succession planning as part of managing workload and preparing for the future.

STAY CONNECTED AND HEALTHY

Let someone know where you are working, particularly before undertaking a higher-risk job. Carry a fully charged mobile phone and keep it on your person at all times.

Your health is part of farm safety. Consider having regular health checks including a hearing test and an eyesight test. Be aware of the side effects of any medication you are taking, adjust your workload when unwell, tired, or experiencing reduced mobility or joint stiffness.

EXPERIENCE IS AN ASSET

Getting older does not mean having to step away from farming. The key is to adapt.

A lifetime of farming experience is most valuable when it is combined with an honest assessment of what can be done safely today. Take time to review your own safety on the farm. Talk to your family about jobs that are becoming more difficult, invest in safer equipment and facilities where possible, and ask for help when you need it.

For more farm safety information, scan the code

SUPPORTING FARMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES FOR OVER 50 YEARS.

*Talk to us today to find out why 9 out of 10 customers stay with FBD.**

Visit your **local branch** or call us on **0818 18 18 18**

SUPPORT. IT'S WHAT WE DO.

FBD INSURANCE

*Based on all FBD Insurance direct renewal data from 01/09/25 – 31/03/26.

FBD Insurance plc is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

This is an ad.

SUPPORTING FARMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES FOR OVER 50 YEARS.

For over 50 years FBD has been invested in agriculture, farming and rural life in Ireland. With our local network of 34 branches across the country we are uniquely placed to support Irish farmers and their communities.

Talk to us today to find out why 9 out of 10 customers stay with FBD.*

Visit your local FBD branch or call us on **0818 181818**.



This is an ad.

*Based on all FBD Insurance direct renewal data from 01/09/25 – 31/03/26.
FBD Insurance plc is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.



Surya Bikram Sapkota, a goat farmer from the Kaski district of Nepal. Photo: Vets Without Borders Ireland.

'RURAL DEVELOPMENT IS NOT AN ABSTRACT CONCEPT'

IN PART TWO OF A TWO-PART SERIES, BERNIE COMMINS CATCHES UP WITH CEO OF VETS WITHOUT BORDERS IRELAND AND VET, MIKE BURKE, TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE WORK THAT THE ORGANISATION DOES WITH SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST MARGINALISED FARMING COMMUNITIES

Since 1999, Vets Without Borders Ireland has supported thousands of people through impactful veterinary and animal health projects in countries including Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Romania, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, and Nepal. It places One Health at the centre of everything it does – the recognition that the health of people is closely connected to and intertwined with the health of our animals and our environment. But what does that look like in a developing world's agricultural system? Mike explains: "The concept is the same whether we are talking about agriculture in Ireland or in a developing world farming context, but the issues are different. In Ireland, the nitrates issue is a good example of the One Health approach, that illustrates the relationship between livestock, water quality, and human health, where if one is impacted, all are impacted.

"In countries where we work, deforestation is a more common example with loss of habitat driving wildlife toward humans and livestock, which increases the risk of the spillover of zoonotic disease (disease that affect both animals and humans). This not only weakens biodiversity, but communities also lose clean water, climate change resilience, and food security."

Antimicrobial resistance – a global issue

To tackle this issue, Mike explains, livestock projects overseen by members of their network usually incorporate the recruitment and training of local farmers as community animal health workers to provide basic veterinary services in rural areas that often have no veterinary personnel. Using these technicians in the medicine-supply chain means there is some advice for farmers around antibiotic selection, dose rates, withdrawal periods for example, all of which impact antibiotic resistance. VSF International has also been heavily involved, in collaboration with the World Organisation for Animal Health, in trying to standardise the training of community animal health workers and getting them official recognition.

IRISH SOLIDARITY

Vets Without Borders Ireland says its values are rooted in 'a sense of solidarity with small-scale livestock farmers in the developing world arising from our backgrounds in agriculture and veterinary medicine in Ireland'. Mike explains that for Irish people of a certain vintage, 'rural development' is not an abstract concept. "I am 60, and for people like me, who grew up on farms in Ireland in the 1970s, we've seen first-hand how access to knowledge, expertise and resources can transform a farm, a family, and an entire community," says Mike.

He suggests that, perhaps because of our own history, we also have a particular empathy for rural communities facing hardship and a lack of resources. He continues: "My great-grandparents were born during The Famine, an experience that remains embedded in our national memory and, in many ways, in our collective DNA. We understand the difference that opportunity, support, and the right resources can make, and what can happen when access to those is not there.



> **WE ARE LIVING IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD, AND COMMUNITIES THAT DEPEND ON AGRICULTURE ARE OFTEN AMONG THE MOST VULNERABLE TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

"We are living in a rapidly changing world, and communities that depend on agriculture are often among the most vulnerable to climate change. Helping them develop the skills, knowledge and resources to adapt, and to do so sustainably, makes communities more resilient and, ultimately, benefits us all.
"In many ways, it is the same challenge we face here in Ireland: how do we help our rural communities adapt, thrive, and build a sustainable future? The difference is, the communities our projects are operating in, are starting from a very different base, whereby survival and quality of life are the core issues for both animals and humans.

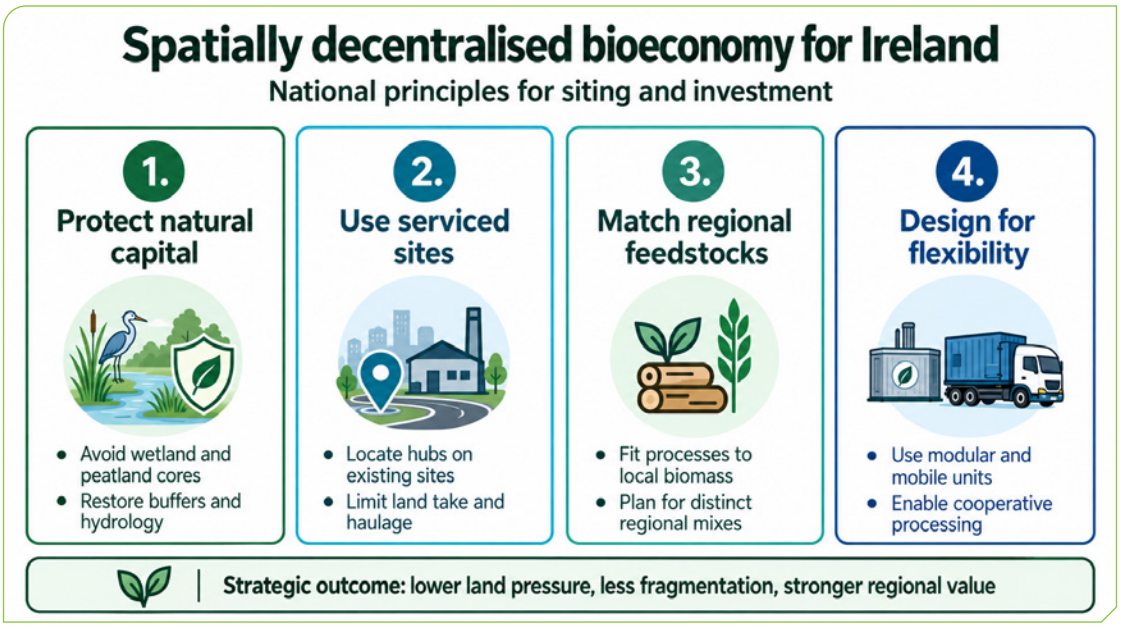
LOOKING AHEAD

Over the next five to 10 years, Mike says, he would like to see Vets Without Borders Ireland grow in a way that strengthens the organisation without losing the values and personal commitment that has always defined it.
"Until now, Vets Without Borders Ireland has been wholly volunteer led. As our work has become more complex, we recognised that this was no longer sustainable. This year we took an important step by appointing our first employee, Rebecca Reynolds, to lead strategy and development. Our medium-term priority is to build the structures, capacity, and partnerships needed to allow Vets Without Borders Ireland and our projects to grow and thrive."
And like anything, change and growth also bring challenges and one of the greatest of these, says Mike, is climate resilience. He explains: "These farmers are not separated from their food systems in the way many of us are. Their crops and livestock are often literally outside their front doors, and when harvests fail or livestock are affected by drought, disease or extreme weather, they have very limited resources to fall back on. Helping communities develop the knowledge, skills, and resources to adapt sustainably will become increasingly important."
In terms of partnerships, he says he hopes to build on existing relationships within the Vétérinaires Sans Frontières network, particularly with smaller member organisations, sharing knowledge, expertise and resources and identifying opportunities for collaboration.
He adds: "Ultimately, I would like to see Vets Without Borders Ireland become a stronger, more sustainable organisation, able to respond to emerging challenges such as climate change and antimicrobial resistance, while remaining focused on what we have always done best: supporting communities to build their own capacity and create lasting change."

SUPPORT

Irish farmers and vets have a particularly important role to play in supporting Vets Without Borders Ireland, Mike explains: "They understand first-hand the value of healthy livestock, sustainable farming and strong rural communities. That experience and expertise create a natural connection with the communities we support overseas.
"The most direct way to support our work is through donations and fundraising either by taking part in one of our organised fundraisers or by hosting your own. People can also make a huge difference simply by spreading awareness of Vets Without Borders Ireland and encouraging colleagues, friends and farming networks to get involved."

Part one of this interview featured in the September 2026 issue of *Irish Farmers Monthly.*



National siting principles for a regional bioeconomy strategy. Source: CoBioEcon, 2026.

MAPPING A BIOECONOMY THAT FITS IRISH FARMING

FARM STRUCTURES, LAND USE, AND LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SHAPE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR IRELAND'S BIOECONOMY. DR JON PAUL FAULKNER FROM UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN (UCD) EXAMINES WHAT COBIOECON'S MAPPING REVEALS ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES ACROSS, AND WITHIN, OUR THREE REGIONS

Farm size tells only part of the story when assessing an area's bioeconomy potential. The surrounding mix of grassland, tillage, forestry, and peatland is of paramount importance, as are the people available to supply, operate and service new enterprises. CoBioEcon's next stage of analysis brings these features together to map five broad types of rural areas. Its findings show why the same investment or support will have different prospects in different places. They also challenge broad regional assumptions; namely that commercial farming type accounts for a similar share of mapped land in all three regions. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that overall farming and environmental profiles differ considerably across regions.

LOOKING BEYOND THE FARM GATE

The analysis combines three of the latest available datasets at time of investigation:

1. CSO Census of Agriculture 2020;
2. The CORINE Land Cover Geodatabase for Ireland 2018; and
3. CSO Census of Population 2022.

Together, they connect farm structures and land cover with the employment and education profiles of surrounding communities. The work examines rural electoral districts, using a population-density threshold of <150 people per square kilometre (EU definition). Of 29 indicators initially considered, 26 were retained. These include average farm size, farm numbers, grassland and crop shares, livestock, peatland, forestry and local workforce characteristics.

There were two stages of spatial investigation. Factor analysis first identified features that tended to occur together. Cluster analysis then grouped areas with similar combinations of those features into types. The resulting spatial typology describes the wider setting in which agriculture operate.

THE PATTERNS BEHIND THE MAP

The first stage distinguishes traditional medium-to-large pasture-based farming from larger commercial farming and identifies smaller arable systems alongside more varied local employment. It also separates mixed cattle-and-sheep landscapes, livestock areas interspersed with forestry, and districts with many smaller holdings and limited cropping.

The CoBioEcon project is a collaboration between University College Dublin (UCD) and the University of Galway. It is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM). The project aims to co-produce, with a wide-range of stakeholders, Ireland's first regional bioeconomy strategy.

Other patterns captured farming mixed with natural vegetation, semi-rural areas with self-employment and practical skills, and peatland-dominated landscapes. These

> **AN AREA CAN RETAIN SUBSTANTIAL FARMING ACTIVITY WHILE MUCH OF ITS WORKFORCE EARNS A LIVING IN SERVICES, TRADES OR PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT**



distinctions are important because small farms and environmentally sensitive land have fundamentally different characteristics, even where they overlap geographically. The population data adds another dimension. An area can retain substantial farming activity while much of its workforce earns a living in services, trades or professional employment. Equally, established agricultural communities may have considerable technical and practical expertise. Combining these patterns produced the five distinct area types. This explains why a region can feature strongly in the analysis of commercial agriculture while also containing extensive semi-rural or environmentally sensitive areas. It is important to note that county and regional averages conceal this kind of local variation.

NORTHERN AND WESTERN REGION

In the northern and western region (NW), traditional medium-to-large farming in semi-rural areas is the region's largest type, covering 34 per cent of mapped land. It is particularly prominent in Monaghan, Roscommon and Cavan. These are established farming communities with a pasture and livestock base, offering a foundation for producer cooperation and locally organised processing. That sits alongside a substantial commercial farming type; 22 per cent regionally, rising to 41 per cent in Sligo. Describing the whole NW region as small-scale or marginal would, therefore, miss an important part of its agricultural structure. Elsewhere, the analysis highlights smaller and fragmented farming structures, especially in Mayo, Galway and Donegal. The marginal agriculture and rural transition type covers 17 per cent of the region, compared with roughly 8-9 per cent in the other two

Region	Northern & western	Southern	East & midlands
Semi-rural, with arable farming and diversified structures	5.7%	28.4%	33.2%
Marginal agriculture and rural transition	16.8%	8.7%	7.8%
Large-scale commercial farming	22.3%	24.1%	24.1%
Environmentally sensitive, with small-scale livestock	21.2%	12.8%	13.2%
Medium-to-large traditional farming in semi-rural areas	34.1%	26.0%	21.8%

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

> FARM SIZE TELLS ONLY PART OF THE STORY WHEN ASSESSING AN AREA'S BIOECONOMY POTENTIAL

> SENSITIVE LANDSCAPES MAY REQUIRE WAYS OF REWARDING STEWARDSHIP ALONGSIDE APPROPRIATE PRODUCTION

regions. Shared machinery, cooperative supply arrangements, and mobile processing are possibilities identified in the report for addressing these constraints.
Environmental sensitivity is equally significant. This typology, combining sensitive landscapes and small-scale livestock covers 21 per cent regionally, and 44 per cent in Donegal. Here, the analysis points towards low-impact farming, peatland restoration and income linked to carbon, water and biodiversity services. Such activity needs to fit the land's ecological functions and the livelihoods already attached to it.

SOUTHERN REGION

The findings suggest the strongest regional expression of large-scale commercial farming was found in the southern region (SR), particularly across Kilkenny, Wexford, Tipperary, Waterford and parts of Cork.
This points to opportunities to connect new processing with existing agri-food businesses, including biorefining, anaerobic digestion and nutrient recovery. However, the picture is varied. Commercial farming covers about a third of mapped land in both Cork and Kilkenny. Traditional farming in semi-rural settings accounts for about 42 per cent in Tipperary and Limerick, while Wexford stands out for the semi-rural type combining arable farming with a more diversified local economy. Kerry presents another starting point; 38 per cent falls within the environmentally sensitive livestock type. The findings also identified sensitive upland and farming landscapes elsewhere in the region. Hence, opportunities could include agroforestry, restoration, and environmental payments, alongside farming. Across the south, the task is to match processing scale, cooperative support and conservation activity

EASTERN AND MIDLANDS REGION

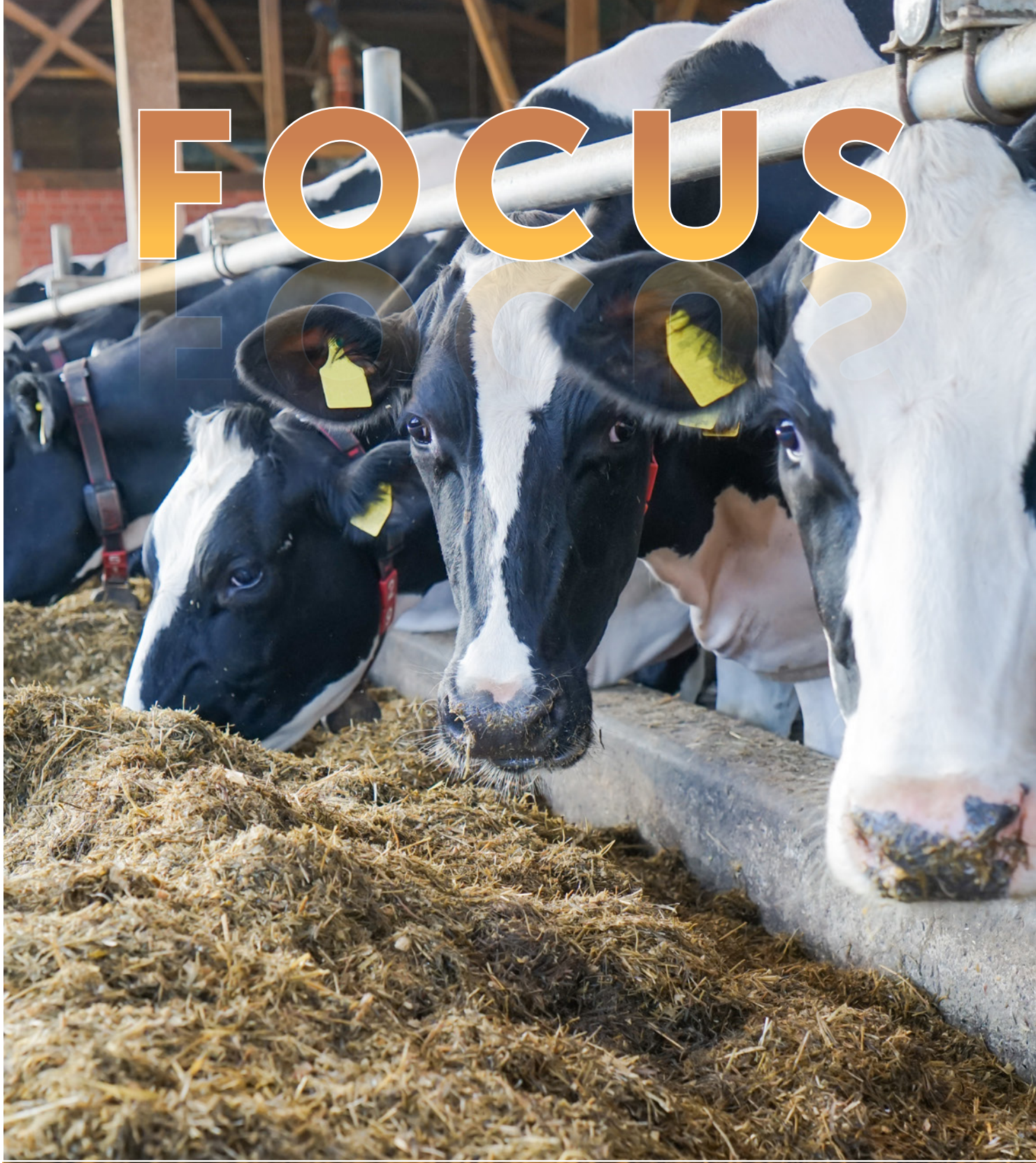
The semi-rural type is most prominent in the eastern and midlands (EM) region, covering one-third of mapped land and more than half in Meath, Kildare and Louth. Arable farming sits within a broader economy of services, professional work and other employment. This combination creates opportunities to connect rural production with nearby buyers, technical expertise, and processing businesses. Commercial farming remains substantial, covering 24 per cent regionally and around 37 per cent in Westmeath and 35 per cent in Offaly. The analysis identifies potential for crop-residue processing, nutrient recovery and collaboration between farming, enterprise, and research.
The midlands and eastern counties also contain very different landscapes. Traditional farming in semi-rural areas covers 41 per cent of Longford, while the environmentally sensitive livestock type accounts for 37 per cent of Wicklow. Offaly features strongly in the separate peatland analysis. These contrasts show why proximity to Dublin, or a strong agricultural base, cannot by itself determine which bioeconomy activities belong in a region.

TURNING EVIDENCE INTO VALUE

For farmers, the useful contribution is a clearer basis for deciding what support and partnerships a region needs. Larger farming concentrations may support shared processing linked to existing businesses. Dispersed holdings may benefit more from pooled supply, shared equipment and smaller facilities. Sensitive landscapes may require ways of rewarding stewardship alongside appropriate production.
These remain options to investigate. The datasets provide a baseline from 2018, 2020 and 2022; the typology does not establish available feedstock volumes, transport costs or a viable return from a particular plant. Local assessment must establish those details, including who invests, who carries the risk and how farmers share in the value. Demonstration, practical training and farmer participation are central to making that assessment credible.
This analysis is feeding into the development of Tier 2 of Ireland's first regional bioeconomy strategy; tailored to all three regions: the NW, southern, and EM regions. Alongside other investigations, which included a traditional spatial analysis and examination of land-use change, it helps identify where production, processing, cooperation or restoration may be appropriate. The regional drafts are a work-in-progress, to be tested and refined with farmers and other participants through co-design. Their purpose is to translate the evidence into locally suitable choices about land use and investment, with viable farming livelihoods and environmental protection considered together.

> DISPERSED HOLDINGS MAY BENEFIT MORE FROM POOLED SUPPLY, SHARED EQUIPMENT AND SMALLER FACILITIES

FOCUS



HERD HEALTH






Xavier Molins, chair of Access VetMed.

IMPACT OF GENERICS ON PAIN RELIEF AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT

ACCESS VETMED, THE REPRESENTATIVE ASSOCIATION FOR THE EUROPEAN GENERIC VETERINARY MEDICINES INDUSTRY, HELD ITS LATEST GENERAL MANAGERS MEETING RECENTLY IN CO. TIPPERARY. THE ASSOCIATION'S CHAIR, XAVIER MOLINS – WHO IS ALSO BIMEDA'S HEAD OF REGULATORY AFFAIRS FOR EUROPE – SPOKE TO *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY* ABOUT THE GENERICS INDUSTRY, COST CHALLENGES FACING IT, AND THE POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS AND THEIR CLIENTS

IFM: To start, can you outline for readers the differences between generics and pioneer medicines?

XM: A generic contains the same active substance – the components that treat the condition – at the same strength, in the same pharmaceutical form and administered by the same route as the reference product, and must demonstrate bioequivalence to it. It is manufactured to the same standards, assessed by the same regulatory authorities, and carries identical pharmacovigilance obligations. On safety, quality and efficacy the standard is the same.

IFM: Can inactive components – parts of the medicine that do not treat the condition – in generic medicines impact taste or tolerance for an animal, and what steps do generic providers take to mitigate these?

XM: Excipients – inactive substances – can differ, and yes, that can affect palatability, injection site tolerance, or the physical handling of a product. This is why generic development is not simply a copying exercise. Oral products undergo acceptance or palatability testing, injectables undergo local tolerance studies where the inactive components differ significantly from those in the reference product, and the formulation may be adjusted where needed. If an animal will not take a medicine, it does not work — so this is tested rather than assumed.

IFM: Can you provide some figures indicating levels of generics usage in Europe and Ireland?

XM: Access VetMed's annual market analysis tracks marketing authorisations rather than sales value, so I can speak with confidence about availability of products across Europe. Our members hold a substantial share of all generic veterinary marketing authorisations in Europe. As of May 2026, generic products account for approximately 60 per cent of all valid marketing authorisations in Europe. For companion animals specifically, around 70 per cent of valid authorisations in Europe derive from generic dossiers.

In the Republic of Ireland, the overall figure is higher still: 70 per cent of all valid authorisations are generic, and for companion animals the figure is approximately 67 per cent. These figures underline how far access to veterinary medicines in smaller markets such as Ireland depends on generic and added-value companies.

A word of caution on reading those numbers: they count authorisations, not sales value, and the two tell different stories. Generics became established earliest in food-producing animals, where cost per animal is decisive and the principal molecules — antiparasitics, antimicrobials, anti-inflammatories — have been off patent for many years. Companion animal generics are the newer and faster-growing segment, as the first generation of blockbuster pet medicines reaches the end of its patent life. So, the trend in large animals is better described as mature than static, while companion animal uptake is rising.

IFM: Are there areas of cattle disease management or prevention where generics have proven particularly effective?

XM: On the prevention side, the clearest case is selective dry cow therapy. Affordable internal teat sealants made it economically realistic for dairy

farmers to seal uninfected cows rather than treat every cow with antibiotic at drying off. This leads to less antimicrobial use, not more, because a non-antibiotic alternative became cheap enough to use at scale. On disease management, the example I would highlight is non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). When generic NSAIDs became widely available, the cost of pain relief fell sharply, and its use moved from severe cases only to routine practice, alongside antibiotics in bovine respiratory disease and in mastitis, and routinely at disbudding. That is a significant animal welfare gain delivered not by a new molecule but by making an existing one affordable and available, especially in small markets that may not be attractive to large players.

IFM: Can you elaborate further on the economic advantages of generic medicines, giving an example?

XM: There is the direct saving on the generic itself, and there is the effect of competition on the reference product, whose price typically falls once a generic enters. The benefit, therefore, extends beyond those who buy the generic.

In cattle, parasite control is a good illustration, though not in the way it is usually framed. Best practice now is targeted treatment guided by monitoring rather than blanket dosing of the whole group, and affordability supports that rather than cutting against it. When product cost is high there is a real temptation to dose to the average animal rather than the heaviest, to stretch a pack further than it should go, or to skip quarantine dosing of bought-in stock. Each of those is a recognised driver of resistance. Affordable product removes the economic incentive to cut corners, and keeping the full range of classes commercially viable is what allows treatment to be matched to the parasite rather than to the budget.

IFM: To what extent does the lack of a harmonised regulatory framework remain an issue? Can you point to an example where Ireland, for example, is having undue difficulties accessing an effective cattle disease remedy?

XM: Regulation (EU) 2019/6 – this is the European Union's main legal framework governing veterinary medicinal products – was a genuine improvement, and we supported it. However, divergence persists in how it is implemented nationally in some Member States, in labelling and language requirements, and in the handling of variations. A single EU framework has not yet produced a single EU process. For a market of Ireland's size, though, the sharper issue is economic rather than legal. Our 2026 member survey found pharmacovigilance budgets rising by 22 per cent in a single year and regulatory fees by 16 per cent. When the fixed cost of holding an authorisation rises, the smallest markets are the first to stop covering it. The product is then withdrawn there or never launched in the first place. I would rather not single out individual products, but the pattern is consistent: older, low-margin, low-volume medicines, and treatments for minor species. Those are the first to go, and they are often precisely the products veterinary practitioners most want to keep.

> **WHEN GENERIC NSAIDS BECAME WIDELY AVAILABLE, THE COST OF PAIN RELIEF FELL SHARPLY, AND ITS USE MOVED FROM SEVERE CASES ONLY TO ROUTINE PRACTICE**

IFM: What role do generic medicines have in the battle against antimicrobial resistance? Has Access VetMed taken any initiative in this regard?

XM: This is a more important one than is generally recognised, and it runs counter to intuition. Responsible-use guidance directs veterinary practitioners towards older, narrower-spectrum, first-line antimicrobials, and reserves newer classes for cases where nothing else will serve. Almost all of those first-line products are generic, and almost all are low margin. That creates a real vulnerability. Antimicrobial stewardship depends on the continued availability of exactly the medicines least able to absorb rising regulatory costs. If they become uneconomic and are withdrawn, prescribing necessarily moves up the ladder to newer, broader-spectrum agents, the opposite of what stewardship is trying to achieve. The same logic applies to anthelmintic resistance. Resistance management depends on having the full range of classes available so that treatment can be targeted and classes rotated, and those older classes are almost entirely generic and low margin. If they become uneconomic and disappear, prescribing concentrates on the newest chemistry, which is precisely how resistance accelerates. Availability is a resistance issue, not only a cost issue. Making the case for the viability of those products is central to our work.

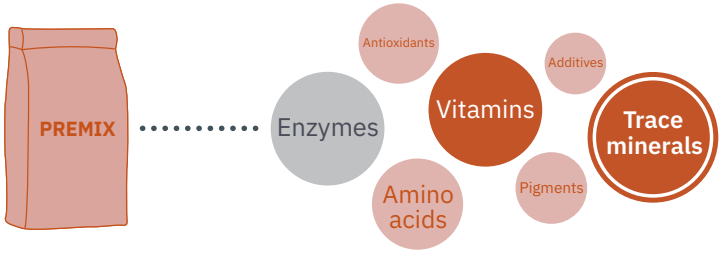
On initiatives, our contribution is evidential rather than promotional. We respond to EU consultations on antimicrobial policy, we take part in the technical discussions where these rules are shaped, and we are closely involved in the work on dose optimisation for older antimicrobials. Our annual market analysis gives regulators something they otherwise lack, that is evidence on which first-line antimicrobials are being withdrawn, and in which markets. And our member surveys quantify the regulatory cost pressure falling on precisely the low-margin products that responsible use guidance depends on. Putting that evidence in front of the people making the rules is, in our view, the most useful thing an association in our position can do.

IFM: What are Access VetMed's three key objectives for the next two to three years, and their benefits. Could you also explain what benefits these objectives might have for veterinary practitioners, for farmers, and for pet owners?

XM: First, proportionate and predictable regulation. Rising costs are not an abstract complaint. Second, safeguarding availability particularly of older first-line medicines, treatments for minor species, and supply to smaller markets where the economics are most marginal. Third, ensuring that the specific characteristics of the veterinary sector are properly recognised in EU policy, rather than approaches designed for human medicines being applied by default. For veterinary practitioners, that means a fuller toolbox and the ability to prescribe the appropriate first-line treatment rather than the only one still on the market. For farmers, it means preventive and welfare interventions that remain affordable at herd scale. For pet owners, it means chronic conditions that stay treatable over a number of years rather than becoming a financial decision.

CHOOSING BIOPLEX®

Why is Bioplex superior?



Chelated minerals

Unstable complex/chelate

Amino acids bound weakly to metal ion

Not all chelated minerals are created equal

Bioplex® chelated minerals

Stable chelate

Peptides and amino acids (AA) bound to metal ion

Performance

By providing a stable chelate structure, more mineral is available for absorption, allowing for utilization and maximizing performance

Bonds

The types of bonds present determine the chelate's properties, including its strength and stability

Bioavailability

The strength and stability of the bonds will impact how much mineral reaches the absorption site

Structure

The raw materials and manufacturing processes utilized impact the type and quality of the chelating bonds

Poor stability + Reduced bioavailability

Improved stability + Enhanced bioavailability

BIOPLEX®

Designed to improve the absorption of essential trace minerals



+1.7kg
More milk per day

21%
Reduction in SCC

Increased performance and productivity

Reduced waste

Contact your local Alltech representative or email **KnowYourMinerals@Alltech.com** to learn more about Alltech Mineral Management.

Alltech®

Source: Pomport *et al.*, Journal of Applied Animal Nutrition, 2021, 9(1): 23-30



TARGETED PARASITE CONTROL AT HOUSING

EDITOR, MATT O'KEEFFE, TAKES A LEAF OUT OF ANIMAL HEALTH IRELAND'S (AHI) BOOK WHEN PLANNING FOR WINTER HOUSING AND HE SHARES SOME OF THE ORGANISATION'S TOP RECOMMENDATIONS ON A RANGE OF HEALTH AND WELFARE ISSUES BOTH IN THE RUN-UP TO HOUSING AND FOR THE FOLLOWING MONTHS

It's October, so planning has begun for winter housing. Apart from the potential fodder shortages on some farms, there is also the challenge of ensuring that those soon-to-be-housed livestock have optimal health and productivity outcomes from their confinement.

Parasite control is always high on the list of health priorities. As Animal Health Ireland confirms in its advisory notes, the most common parasite groups include stomach and intestinal worms (or 'gut worms'), lungworms, and liver fluke as well as lice and mange. Rumen fluke is another subset of parasite to be considered in individual herds.

While the most chronic instances of stomach worms and fluke provide obvious visual symptoms, including coughing, scouring, and observable physical ill health traits, AHI also highlights the less easily identified sub-clinical component of parasitic infection, with its potential impact on growth rate, milk yield and fertility. AHI says: "Poor productivity in sub-clinical worm and liver fluke infected animals is mainly due to reduced appetite and feed intake. Once these effects are appreciated, it is easy to see why cattle cannot perform to their full potential when they are infested with parasites." On top of this, there are other reasons, as highlighted by AHI, for productivity losses caused by worms. These include poor nutrient digestion and absorption, often further complicating the effects of reduced feed intake.

PARASITE PROBLEMS INCREASING

Research, as well as on-farm experience, points towards increasing problems with parasites in Irish livestock herds. One consequence of a regimented treatment regime for parasite control is the likely increase in anthelmintic resistance from a blanket-use approach. To counteract this emerging challenge, AHI advises a more nuanced policy towards parasite control, advocating 'appropriate use of anthelmintics for sustainable parasite control'. It adds: "Because of differences in susceptibility resulting from acquired immunity to worms, it is best to consider cattle in three different age categories: adults, second grazing season (SGS), and first grazing season (FGS)."

WHY HOUSING TIME IS CRITICAL

Livestock pick up the various internal parasite infections while out grazing. This vector is closed off during housing, with only existing parasite infestations to be managed. This means that effective anthelmintic (wormer) treatments at or during housing should keep the animals free of worms and liver fluke until they return to grazing the following spring.

AHI advises that parasite suppression should be given priority on at least three occasions annually. AHI's *Guide to Parasite Control at Housing* provides the advice required by farmers to manage parasite control in the various livestock cohorts.

Housing offers an opportunity to assess animal health in regard to parasite infestation and manage that assessment appropriately. A part of that assessment will include a review of animal performance in the preceding months, including milk yield, thrive, and overall performance. For breeding animals, cows and maturing heifers, this will include fertility/pregnancy rate performance as well as body condition score (BCS). The target parasites for cattle of all ages at housing,

Effective anthelmintic (wormer) treatments at or during housing should keep animals free of worms and liver fluke until they return to grazing.

as listed by AHI, are stomach worms (*Ostertagia ostertagi*), lungworms (*Dictyocaulus viviparus*), liver fluke (*Fasciola hepatica*), chewing lice (*Bovicola bovis*), sucking lice (*Linognathus vituli*) and mange mites (*Sarcoptes scabiei, Psoroptes ovis*, *Chorioptes bovis*). "The number of parasites carried by cattle at housing can vary according to several factors, including their age, health status, previous grazing management and level of previous anthelmintic treatment," AHI notes. It has been confirmed that immunity to lungworms increases as animals age. The period of maximum vulnerability, then, is during the first grazing season. Suboptimal performance can be attributed variously to type 2 ostertagiosis disease, hoose, and increased risk of viral and bacterial pneumonia. The AHI website lists the various parasite treatments appropriate to each parasite category as well as each animal age category, while also differentiating between dairy and drystock at the various age and productivity stages. The appropriate treatment, depending on the degree of infestation, is also outlined. In addition, AHI advises on a collaborative approach between farmers and their vets for optimal treatments and outcomes. A cautionary note is that, with the possible exception of liver fluke, the chances are that many parasite categories are present on farms at any one time.

A TARGETED APPROACH

Several of the treatment products are available as combinations, usually a flukicide and a general wormer or an endectocide, AHI confirms: "Thus, with some externally applied and injectable combination products, it is possible to effectively treat almost all the different types and stages of the target parasites. Whatever is used, it is time well spent for farmers and their vets to discuss the treatment options and whether broad or narrow treatments are required. These parasites are difficult, if not impossible, to eliminate at the farm level (with the possible exception of mange). All are in some part responsible for both clinical disease and sub-clinical production losses, thus the rationale for their control is strong and housing provides a unique opportunity to simply and simultaneously treat a broad spectrum of potentially pathogenic parasite species."

DIAGNOSTIC SCIENCE

If parasites are suspected of having adverse effects on performance, diagnostic sampling is recommended throughout the grazing season, AHI advises: "Contact your veterinary practitioner for advice to plan your parasite investigation. It is recommended that approximately eight weeks after fluke treatment at housing, dung samples are taken in order to review efficacy." Over the longer term, abattoir results should be monitored for liver fluke, with animals routinely checked for the presence of adult liver fluke, enlarged gall bladder, fibrosis and calcified bile ducts. Outcomes will indicate the level of infection, if any, in the remainder of the herd. Elsewhere, diagnostic tests across blood samples, milk samples, and faecal samples are encouraged to identify the presence of parasite infestation as well as the levels of infestation across a representative sample of each herd or cohort on farms. Obviously, this forensic approach carries a cost, but there is general agreement that it is money well spent, allowing appropriate treatment depending on the degree and severity of parasite infestation, the potential to reduce treatment across the herd and the targeted interventions needed for both different animal groups and ages as well as more precise matching of parasitics with the parasite types to be controlled.

Q FEVER

Do you recognise these signs?

Early embryonic death
Abortion
Infertility
Retained placenta
Stillbirth
Metritis
Premature calving
Weak newborns



A new UCD study of 2,687 Irish dairy herds found that 62% were exposed to Q fever[1]

Did you know?

- 62% of Irish dairy herds exposed to Q fever[1]
- It causes reproduction and fertility issues in cattle, sheep and goats[2]
- It is also a zoonotic disease, with implications for those working with livestock
- It is caused by the bacterium *Coxiella burnetii*
- Infection is primarily via inhalation but also via faeces, milk and vaginal mucous
- *Coxiella burnetii* can be carried on the wind[3,4,5]
- *Coxiella burnetii* is persistent, surviving up to 5 months in soil[6]

Speak to your vet about diagnosis and vaccination if you are concerned about Q Fever.

References: 1. Corridan K., Wall P., McGrath G. et al. Q fever in the Irish dairy herd. Ir Vet J (2026). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13620-026-00343-5. 2. López-Gatius F., Almería S., García-Ispierto I. (2012) Serological screening for *Coxiella burnetii* infection and related reproductive performance in high producing cows. Research in Veterinary Science Aug. 93 (1) 67-73. 3. Welsh et al., 1959. Q fever studies. XXI. The recovery of *Coxiella burnetii* from the soil and surface water of premises harboring infected sheep. Am. J. Hyg. 70 : 14-20. 4. Hawker JI. et al. 1998. A large outbreak of Q fever in the West Midlands: windborne spread into a metropolitan area. Commun Dis Public Health. 1998; 1:180–7. 5. Nusinovici S. et al. 2015. Q Fever infection in dairy cattle herds: increased risk with high wind speed and low precipitation. Epidemiology & Infection 143.15 (2015): 3316-3326. 6. Clark et al, 2018. Airborne geographical dispersal of Q fever from livestock holdings to human communities: a systematic review and critical appraisal of evidence.

This information was provided by Ceva Animal Health (Ireland) Ltd, makers of Coxevac® COXEVAC® suspension for injection for cattle, sheep and goats contains inactivated *Coxiella burnetii*, strain Nine Mile ≥72 QF Unit*/ml. *Q-fever Unit: relative potency of phase I antigen measured by ELISA in comparison with a reference item. LEGAL CATEGORY: IE POM For further information, please refer to the product SPC, data sheet or pack insert. Use medicines responsibly.

Ceva Animal Health (Ireland) Ltd, 10 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin, Dublin 2, D02 T380
Tel: +353 1 9697 644 (Option 5) | Web: ie.ruminants.ceva.com

COX3BADIE

PARTNER PROMOTION



WHAT WILL YOUR DRY COWS ACTUALLY BE EATING THIS WINTER?

WILL YOUR COWS BE EATING SILAGE, BOUGHT-IN FORAGE, HAY, OR STRAW THIS AUTUMN? IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR FORAGE IS SUPPLYING AND MAKE SURE YOUR DRY COW MINERAL PROGRAMME IS READY FOR THE JOB, WRITES SARAH MAHER, SOUTHEAST REGIONAL BUSINESS MANAGER WITH ALLTECH

It may be a couple of months before cows are dried off in spring-calving herds but now is a good time to start thinking about what they will actually be fed this winter. Following a challenging grass-growing season, forage plans may look different on many farms. Some silage stocks may already be needed for milking cows, while bought-in silage, hay, straw or a combination of forage sources could play a greater role later in the year. If the forage changes, the minerals it supplies can change too. That doesn't necessarily mean a mineral programme that worked well last year needs to change. However, it does make it worthwhile to understand what your forage is contributing and ensure the programme continues to meet the requirements of the dry cow.

MORE THAN ENERGY AND PROTEIN

When we think about forage, we often focus on dry matter, energy, and protein. But mineral content matters too, particularly during the dry period as the cow prepares for calving and the next lactation. Recent Irish research provides a useful reminder of why this is important. A study published in the *Irish Veterinary Journal* in 2025 *(Dry cow pasture silage mineral concentrations and dry cow mineral requirements and supplementation practices on Irish dairy farms)* analysed pasture silage from 27 commercial Irish dairy farms and compared

mineral concentrations with the estimated requirements of pregnant dry cows. The results were striking. Every silage sample analysed:

- Failed to meet estimated requirements for copper, selenium and iodine; and
- Exceeded estimated requirements for iron and sulphur.

The study also found that only 26 per cent of farms surveyed had analysed their pasture silage for mineral content. While these findings relate specifically to the farms included in the study, they highlight the potential gap between what forage supplies and what dry cows require.

WHAT'S HIGH MATTERS TOO

Mineral nutrition is not simply about correcting deficiencies. Some minerals can interfere with how effectively others are utilised by the cow. For example, high levels of iron, sulphur and molybdenum can reduce copper availability. This means that having copper present in the diet does not necessarily tell us how much copper is available to the animal. Looking at the overall mineral picture, including what is low, what is high and how minerals interact, can often provide a more useful assessment than looking at individual minerals in isolation.

WHY COPPER, SELENIUM AND IODINE MATTER

The finding that all silages sampled failed to meet estimated requirements for copper, selenium and iodine is particularly relevant during the dry period.

- **Copper**
  Copper plays important roles in immune function, fertility, enzyme activity and calf development. It is also one of the minerals most affected by interactions with other dietary minerals.

THE STUDY ALSO FOUND THAT ONLY 26 PER CENT OF FARMS SURVEYED HAD ANALYSED THEIR PASTURE SILAGE FOR MINERAL CONTENT

- **Selenium**
  Selenium supports antioxidant protection, immune function and muscle development and plays an important role in both cow and calf health.
- **Iodine**
  Iodine is essential for normal thyroid function, metabolism and the healthy development of the unborn calf. The goal is not simply to feed more minerals. The

HOW ARE YOU **PREPARING** YOUR **CATTLE** FOR **CALVING** & **BREEDING?**

AGRIMIN

Would you like more than an injection can provide and a product which lasts longer from a single application?

AGRIMIN'S ***9 in 1*** comprehensive support for calving and breeding contains SELENIUM, COPPER, MANGANESE, ZINC PLUS...



I **IODINE:**
- Crucial in supporting optimal fertility and body condition

Co **COBALT:**
- A vital component in the production of B_{12}
- Important in supporting the increasing energy demands at calving and around breeding

DON'T FORGET THE IMPORTANCE OF VITAMINS...

A **VITAMIN A:**
Essential for: *calf development during pregnancy*

D_3 **VITAMIN D_3:**
Essential for: *optimal reproductive performance in the cow and supports proper skeletal development of the growing calf*

E **VITAMIN E:**
- 97% of dairy cows have a shortfall[1]
- Responsible for 50% of antioxidant activity in cattle[2]

GUARANTEED DAILY supply of trace elements & vitamins for **6 MONTHS** through a **SINGLE APPLICATION**

GIVE YOUR CATTLE THE **AGRIMIN ADVANTAGE**

www.agrimin.co.uk | T: +44 (0)1652 688046
OLIVER DILLON, Commercial Manager Ireland, **T: 087 473 6347** | **E: odillon@agrimin.com**

REFERENCES
1 - Mary, et al., 2021.
2 - Nor-feed, 2021.

objective is to ensure cows receive the minerals they need in a balanced and effective manner.

POTASSIUM AND MAGNESIUM: AN IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP

Trace minerals are only one part of the dry cow mineral picture. The same Irish research found considerable variation in potassium levels between silages, ranging from 0.88 per cent to 2.99 per cent of dry matter.

Why does this matter? High potassium can reduce magnesium absorption. This becomes particularly important around calving, when magnesium plays a key role in helping cows mobilise calcium and manage the risk of clinical and subclinical milk fever. Where forage potassium levels are high, magnesium nutrition may therefore require closer attention. Again, the message is simple: understanding what is in the forage helps support better decision-making.

WHAT ARE YOU ACTUALLY GOING TO FEED?

This could be one of the most important questions to ask this autumn.

- Will dry cows be fed the usual home-grown silage?
- Has some of that silage already been used for milking cows?
- Will bought-in silage be required?
- Will hay or straw make up a greater proportion of the diet?
- Will dry cows receive a combination of forage sources?

Different forage sources can bring very different mineral profiles to the ration. Bought-in forage may have been grown on different soil types, with different fertiliser programmes and management practices. Hay, straw, and silage can each contribute different levels of both macro and trace minerals. A mineral programme that worked perfectly last year may still be the right programme this year. The key is understanding what will actually be fed and ensuring the programme remains appropriate for that diet.

TEST WHERE YOU CAN

Ideally, forage destined for dry cows should be analysed for mineral content. Testing every forage source may not always be practical, but it can be particularly valuable when:

- Forage has been purchased.
- The winter-feeding plan has changed.
- Multiple forage sources are being used.
- There is a history of transition cow or mineral-related challenges.

A forage mineral analysis can help identify:

- What is lacking.
- What is excessive.
- Possible mineral interactions.
- Areas where supplementation may need attention.

This provides farmers and their advisors with a stronger basis for making nutritional decisions.

LOOK AT THE SOURCE

Once forage supply has been assessed, there is one more part of the picture: the source of the minerals being fed. Not all trace mineral sources are the same, and the form in which minerals are supplied can influence how effectively they are utilised by the animal.

That is why it is important to look beyond the headline levels of copper, selenium or zinc on the label and consider the quality of the mineral programme as a whole. For example, Bioplex organic trace minerals and Sel-Plex organic selenium yeast have been developed to provide trace minerals in forms designed to support effective utilisation by the cow.

When included as part of a balanced dry cow mineral programme, they allow nutritionists to consider both mineral source and mineral supply when supporting cow health and performance through the transition period. A well-designed mineral programme considers:

- The cow's requirements;
- The minerals supplied by forage;
- Potential mineral interactions;
- The level of supplementation provided; and
- The source of supplementary trace minerals.

TARGET WHAT'S NEEDED

Drying off may still be a few months away, but now is the time to understand the forage available for the winter ahead. The best dry cow programmes are built on strong foundations: knowing what is being fed, understanding what that forage is supplying and targeting supplementation where it is needed most. Get those foundations right and you'll give cows the best opportunity to transition successfully through calving and into the next lactation.

AUTUMN DRY COW CHECKLIST

Before drying off this year, take time to review the basics:

- ☑ Assess winter forage stocks.
- ☑ Identify any bought-in forage that may be fed.
- ☑ Test forage mineral content where practical.
- ☑ Review your dry cow mineral specification.
- ☑ Consider potential mineral interactions.
- ☑ Evaluate both mineral levels and mineral sources.
- ☑ Discuss results with your nutritionist or advisor.

THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK THIS AUTUMN

1. **What am I actually going to feed?** Home-grown silage, bought-in silage, hay, straw or a combination of forage sources?
2. **Do I know what it is supplying?** Test forage where practical, particularly if forage has been purchased or the feeding plan has changed.
3. **Am I confident in my mineral programme?** Consider what is low, what is high, potential interactions between minerals and both the level and source of supplementary trace minerals.

NeoMilk®



The right decisions that build lifelong performance.

Scan for more information and the full **NeoMilk®** range

Every feeding decision shapes the future of your herd.

With **NeoMilk**, you build strong calves today for lifelong performance - powered by nutritional science and designed to maximise the value of every feeding.

Cargill Animal Nutrition IRE
Monread Industrial Estate
Monread Road, Naas, Co Kildare
Ireland, W91 VW63
Tel: +353 45 257 312
Email: Sales_Ireland@cargill.com
www.cargill.co.uk
www.provimi.ie

@CargillAnimalNutrition

NeoMilk. Start Strong. Perform for Life.

Cargill | Animal Nutrition & Health

092026



THE FUTURE OF FARMING IS ALREADY HERE

IN THIS ARTICLE, JOACHIM KÄHLER, CEO OF VIRTUAL FENCING COMPANY, NOFENCE, WRITES ABOUT THE IMPACT THAT INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS CONTINUE TO MAKE ON THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN TERMS OF ANIMAL HEALTH, FARMER EFFICIENCIES, AND PRECISION LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

Livestock farming has always depended heavily on the farmer's eye and instinct. This expertise remains fundamental. The challenge is that modern farms are often larger, more dispersed, and often farmers today are juggling separate careers, while managing their farm too. This is where technology can help.

For livestock farmers, reproduction is where profit is made or lost. A missed heat cycle means a longer calving window. An unattended birth can mean losing a calf. Gaining insight before a problem occurs changes everything. According to Teagasc, an average of 0.85 calves per cow per year means that only 85 cows in a 100-cow herd are weaning a calf every year.

For example, if a farmer would like to achieve 95 calves weaned per 100 cows in a herd, this requires excellent cow and calf management. Using technology to monitor heat cycles and calving alerts, animal activity and behaviour helps producers get a complete picture of cow and herd's overall health and reproduction. Rather than replacing observation, this creates an opportunity to make observation more targeted and routine.

FARM SIZE

According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO), the average farm size in Ireland is 34.7 hectares (ha) – about 85.7 acres – of utilised agricultural area. If you have a small herd, regardless of how far your herd is from your home or farmhouse, tracking issues such as their health and movement can now be done in real time through data. The old adage of prevention is better than cure, always remains true. By monitoring herds closely in the background, a significant reduction in activity could alert a farmer to poor health. According to Teagasc, in Ireland, cattle can experience a range of common health issues such as pneumonia, or bovine respiratory disease (BRD), parasitic diseases such as coccidia or

> **THE OBJECTIVE IS NOT TO AUTOMATE EVERY DECISION, BUT TO AUTOMATE PREDICTABLE ACTIONS WHILE GIVING FARMERS BETTER INFORMATION**

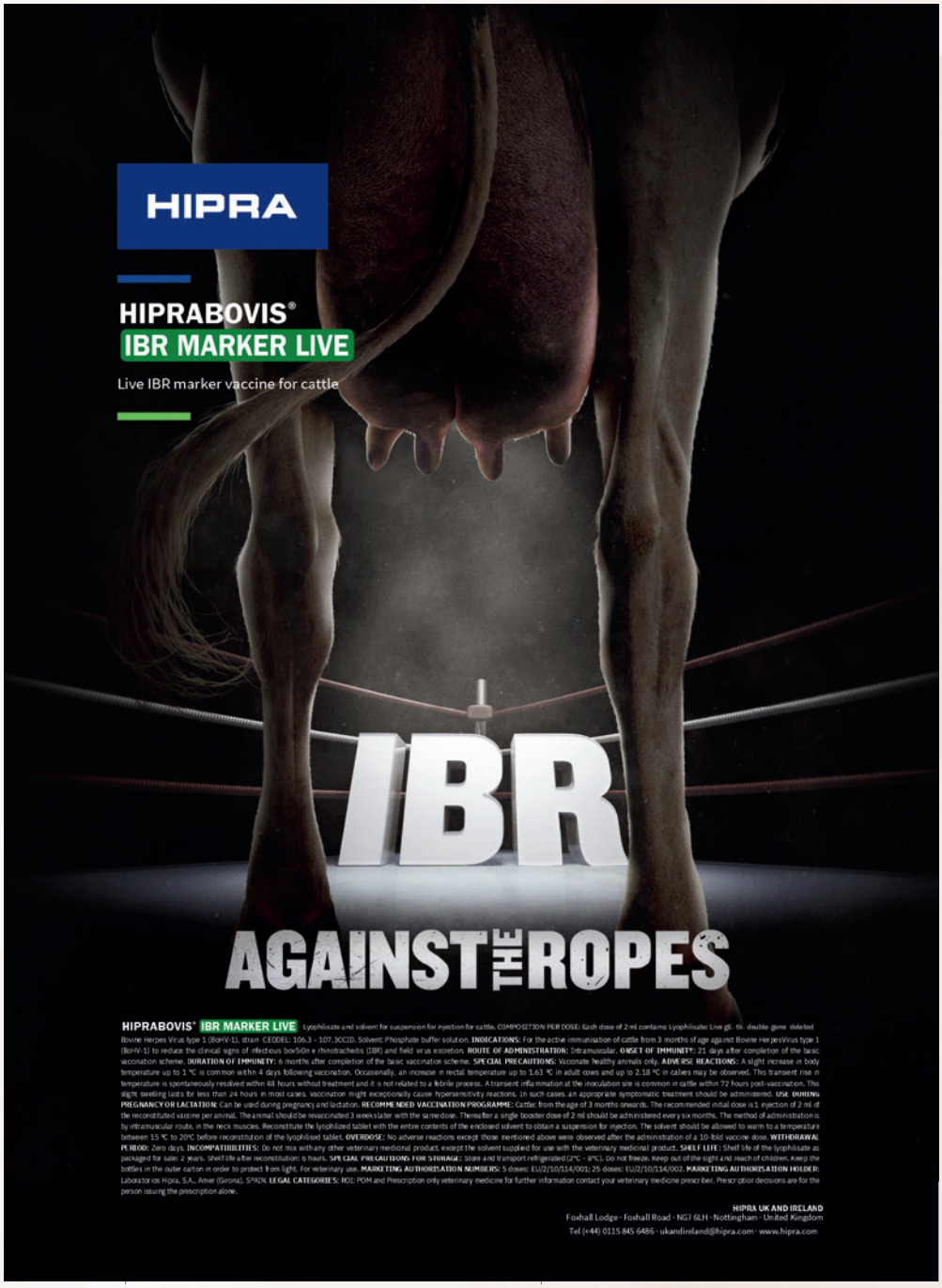
lung worms. Identifying these health issues early and addressing them can be a lifeline for a farmer. That distinction could become increasingly important as farms look for ways to manage labour more efficiently without compromising animal welfare and health. This often allows them to decide not to breed a cow, but to, instead, optimise their health and wellbeing and make a plan for the cow's future.

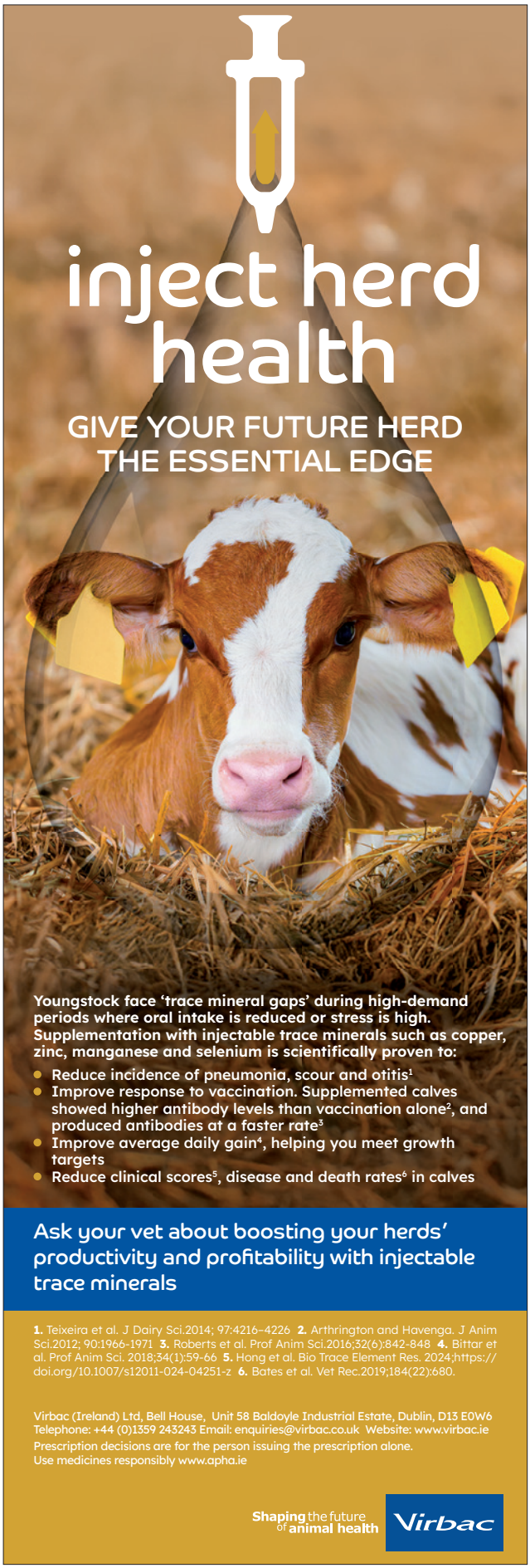
One of the barriers to agricultural technology has always been connectivity. However, according to a league table published by ComReg, Dublin, has the lowest level of fibre connectivity in the country, at 80 per cent. By contrast, the only rural counties that have less than 85 per cent fibre coverage are Mayo (83 per cent) and Sligo (84 per cent). As a result of this, WiFi can be reliable in many rural areas, but often technology that is relying on cellular connection disappears as animals move into valleys, forests or remote grazing areas. With precision management for livestock and collar technology, these challenges have been solved. New advances have developed independent connectivity systems built into collar technology for cattle and livestock: cellular where there is no coverage, so the herd stays connected; and satellite for land with no signal at all. Through the connectivity layers, the connection to the herd remains active, and the herd is visible from a farmer's phone, wherever they are.

Another area where technology can support a change in farming practice is grazing management. Rotational grazing is not a new concept, but managing multiple paddocks can involve considerable planning and administration. Digital mapping can make those decisions easier to manage. Paddocks can be planned, digitally, herd movements can be scheduled, and grazing activity can be recorded, automatically. Instead of relying entirely on handwritten notes or memory, farmers can build a historical record of how land has been used. That information has value beyond day-to-day grazing decisions. As environmental stewardship, conservation and sustainability programmes increasingly require evidence of land management, accurate digital records could reduce the administrative burden associated with demonstrating how land is being managed. This is an important characteristic of useful agricultural technology: it should not create another task for the farmer. Ideally, the technology should capture information as part of an existing farming activity and turn it into something useful.

REMOVING UNNECESSARY TASKS

A scheduled grazing move does not replace the farmer's judgement about when and





where cattle should graze. It can simply remove the need to be physically present to carry out a routine movement. The same principle applies across precision agriculture. The objective is not to automate every decision, but to automate predictable actions while giving farmers better information for the decisions that require experience and judgement. According to Ifac's 2023 farm accounts, 59 per cent believed ag-tech could improve the management of production and growth rates. This distinction is particularly relevant as labour availability becomes a consideration for many agricultural businesses. Technology that saves minutes on an individual task can save hours when repeated throughout a grazing season. Across a year, those accumulated efficiencies can become commercially significant.

PRECISION LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

Perhaps the biggest opportunity lies in connecting information that has traditionally existed in isolation. This is where the concept of precision livestock management becomes particularly relevant. The aim is not simply to collect more data. Farmers already have access to more information than ever before. The challenge is turning that information into useful signals.

The most valuable technological advances will, therefore, be those that make complexity simpler for the farmer; bringing relevant information into one place, identifying changes that warrant attention and allowing action to be taken without adding unnecessary administration. That does not mean technology will eliminate uncertainty from farming. Agriculture will always involve biological systems, weather, and environmental factors that cannot be completely controlled. However, better information can improve the odds of making the right decision at the right time.

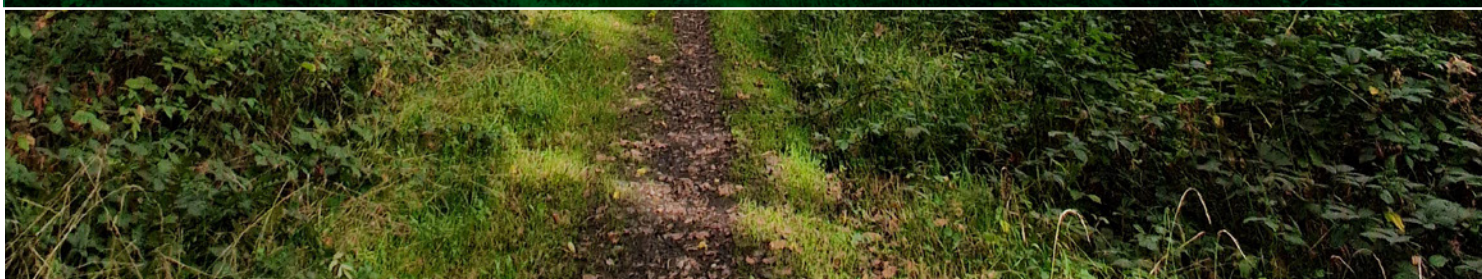
For agricultural technology to succeed, innovation ultimately has to work in the conditions farmers actually face. It needs to cope with rain, mud, dust, temperature extremes, and large distances. It needs to be straightforward enough to use during a busy working day. It needs to deliver value without requiring farmers to become technology specialists.

SOLVING A PROBLEM

Most importantly, it needs to solve a genuine problem. The development of virtual fencing demonstrated that livestock could be managed without relying solely on physical infrastructure. The next opportunity is to build on that principle and connect containment with the wider management of animals, grassland, and time. That represents a broader change in how we think about agricultural technology. The farm of the future will not necessarily be one covered in more devices, screens and sensors. It may instead be a farm where technology quietly works in the background, continuously collecting information and turning it into useful, timely insight. In Ireland, where farming is deeply rooted in community, family, and tradition, technological disruption must work with that heritage, not against it. The real measure of innovation remains simple: does it make the business easier to manage, improve outcomes for livestock and land, and give valuable time back to the people running the farm? That is where precision livestock management has the potential to make its greatest contribution, giving farmers more control over their business and more time for the parts of the job only they can do.

FOCUS

FORESTRY





Ballykeeffe Wood Nature Reserve. Photo: Bernie Commins.

FORESTRY SECTOR: STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS



Ciaran Fitzgerald
Agri-food economist

THE FORESTRY SECTOR IN IRELAND IS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS KEY OR CORE, NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF ITS IMPACT ACROSS THE RURAL ECONOMY BUT ALSO IN THE CONTEXT OF IRELAND'S OVERALL CLIMATE POLICY CHALLENGES AND IS CLEARLY TARGETED AND SUPPORTED AS A MULTI-DIVERSE RESOURCE FOR OUR ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT, AND SOCIETY, WRITES AGRI-ECONOMIST CIARAN FITZGERALD

Ireland has traditionally had the lowest level of forestry across the EU, where forests, on average, make up 34 per cent of agricultural land compared to as low as 3 per cent in Ireland up to the 1980s. In terms of the national plan for the sector, afforestation is targeted to grow substantially with forest plantations planned to account for 18 per cent of land use by 2030, compared to 11 per cent currently.
The latest afforestation plan also includes measures to support planting of native varieties and create a more balanced approach to afforestation which was in the past dominated by planting of Sitka spruce variety because it had a quicker growth profile.

OFF THE MARK

Crucially and critically, the annual target of adding 8,000 hectares of forest plantings annually, which underpins the national target, has not been achieved in 2024 or 2025, with annual plantings at 1,573ha in 2024 and 2,527 ha in 2025.
This speaks not only to the legacy of the administrative difficulties of recent years, but the business risk elements of changing agricultural land to forest and the direct experience in recent years of both storm damage and disease issues.
According to the forestry sector and the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) the main reasons why the current planting target has not started strongly include low farmer participation (farmers historically drove most private planting, but current incentives fail to re-engage them, leading to low uptake), as well as licensing and approval delays. Bureaucratic hurdles and slow processing times for forestry licences have previously stalled projects, leaving large, approved areas unplanted.

ECONOMIC VALUE AND OUTPUT

In terms of the diverse aspects of the forestry sector's contributions across the economy, comprehensive assessments by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), Teagasc, the Central Statistics Office (CSO), and the Council for Forest Research and Development (COFORD) outline its diverse economic and societal impact.

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

In terms of annual economic contribution, the total annual value of the forestry and timber processing sector is estimated at €2.3bn when indirect and induced multiplier

> CRUCIALLY AND CRITICALLY, THE ANNUAL TARGET OF ADDING 8,000 HECTARES OF FOREST PLANTINGS ANNUALLY HAS NOT BEEN ACHIEVED

effects are factored in. In relation to gross value added (GVA), Eurostat and Teagasc data track the precise GVA of the sector at factor prices. The combined GVA for forestry and logging, and the manufacture of wood and wood products stands at €699.2m.

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

CSO input/output models and other research highlights what is described as a 'type 2' output multiplier of 1.85 for forestry. This means that for every €1 direct economic value created, an additional €0.85 is generated in the wider economy, particularly within rural supply chains.

EMPLOYMENT AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS

The sector is heavily distributed across rural Ireland and often characterised as providing alternative employment outside of traditional agriculture.

COMBINED EMPLOYMENT

According to definitive COFORD socio-economic working group data from 2022, the industry supports 9,400 jobs. These are split between 3,500 jobs in the direct forestry and harvesting sector, and 5,900 jobs in the manufacturing of wood and wood products (such as sawmills and panel board processing).

THE PRIVATE ESTATE ROLE

Over 24,200 unique private forest owners (the vast majority being farmers) have utilised state grant aid to plant forests since 1980. A key issue in terms of meeting national targets is the complex question of whether forestry competes with or complements mainstream agriculture in Ireland which, as we know, is dominated by livestock production at 80 per cent of gross agricultural output, according to the CSO.

A DIVERSIFIED APPROACH

Farm income and land economics analysis based on the Teagasc National Farm Survey economic modelling posits that incorporating timber systems heavily diversifies farm risk. This survey data indicates that nearly 80 per cent of cattle-rearing farms and 70 per cent of cattle-finishing farms would generate a higher family farm income by converting a portion of their land to forestry. Conversely, only 11 per cent of highly intensive dairy farms would yield a higher financial return from forestry. Moreover, Government sources would point to significant tax-free incentives in the latest plan with sector's stability 'underpinned' by the Government's €93m budget allocation for the Forestry Programme 2023-2027, administered by the DAFM, providing income tax-free annual forest premia and upfront creation grants.

NON-TIMBER AND MACROECONOMIC IMPACTS

Much of the harvested material is processed domestically into construction-timber, wood panels, fencing, and pallets. Due to high domestic processing capacities, the sector is export-oriented, predominantly supplying construction timber markets in the UK. Economic studies value forest recreation and tourism at roughly €179m to €400m per annum, based on approximately 29 million annual visits to Irish public and private woodlands, according to COFORD.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Irish forests remove approximately 1.8 million tonnes of CO_2 annually, according to 2021 stats from the DAFM. Under international climate accounting, this carbon sequestration acts as an economic shield, offsetting national greenhouse gas compliance penalties for the broader agricultural sector.

By far the most significant challenge to the Irish forest sector in recent years has been the impact of severe weather events, namely Storm Darragh in December 2024 and particularly Storm Éowyn in late January 2025. These combined events resulted in devastating impacts to over 26,000ha of both private and State-owned forests. This equated to over 2.5 times Ireland's annual timber harvest. Overnight, it presented many logistical and financial challenges for forest owners. The extent of storm damage necessitated substantial re-planting of forest operations over the short and medium term to facilitate the harvest, recovery and marketing of windblown timber. It seems to be a general theme of observation of the impact of non-livestock farming activities in Ireland such as fruit and vegetable growing and forestry that, while there may well be complex reasons why these sectors are not meeting growth aspirations, or indeed might be in decline, a key factor is often declared to be over-focus on, or even direct subsidisation of the beef and dairy sectors. I would suggest that this is a diversion from the core principle of focusing on providing incentive levels that reduce the business risks specific to the sector including storm damage and disease such as ash die-back.

> OVER 24,200 UNIQUE PRIVATE FOREST OWNERS (THE VAST MAJORITY BEING FARMERS) HAVE UTILISED STATE GRANT AID TO PLANT FORESTS SINCE 1980



MICHAEL SOMERS, TEAGASC FORESTRY ADVISER, EXPLORES THE REMARKABLE HISTORY, USES, AND ENDURING IMPORTANCE OF THE ICONIC IRISH OAK TREE

OAK: KING OF THE FOREST, LORD OF BIODIVERSITY

The oak has long been regarded as the 'king of the forest' and remains one of the most striking features of the Irish landscape. Its influence reaches far beyond the woodland, with many Irish townlands named after the tree. Even two counties – Derry and Kildare – derive their names from the Gaelic word 'dair', meaning oak.

ANCIENT AND ESSENTIAL TREE

The oak was once widespread throughout Ireland and was an essential part of the ancient landscape. Revered by Celtic peoples and later valued by colonisers, oak provided food, shelter, materials and fuel, making it one of the most important trees in Ireland's history. Almost every part of the tree had a use. Its bark was particularly valuable, being used for tanning leather and, in earlier times, for making vessels to store food when pottery was unavailable. Its acorns – or mast – provided an important source of food for livestock, particularly pigs. A single mature oak can produce enough acorns in a good year to fatten a pig.

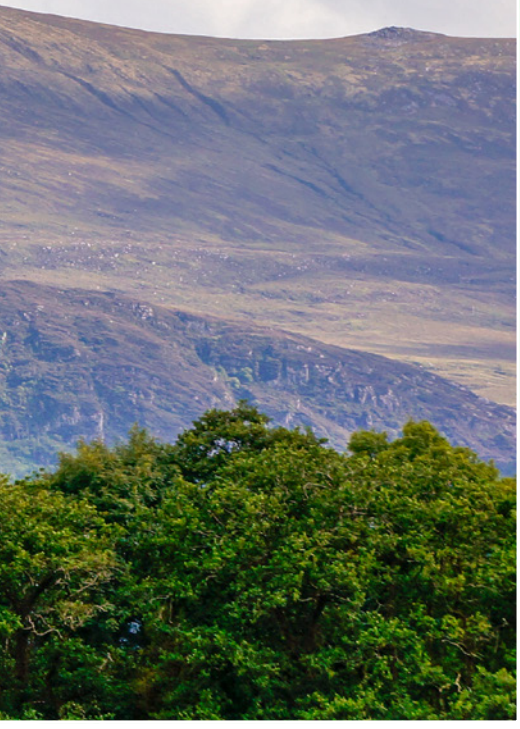
TIMBER FOR THE AGES

Oak timber has been prized for centuries. Hard, strong, and durable, it resists damp conditions, making it an ideal construction material. Until the mid-19th century, oak was the principal timber used in shipbuilding. The construction of a naval galley could require as much as eight hectares of oak timber. The widespread felling of oak profoundly affected Ireland's woodlands. During the Plantation of Munster in 1583, vast quantities of oak were harvested for shipbuilding, including naval vessels, as well as for timber-framed houses. This large-scale exploitation was a major factor in the decline of Ireland's native oak forests and woodlands.

Oak remains highly valued today, particularly for furniture making. Historically, however, its uses were remarkably diverse. Oak shavings were used for smoking food; bark was used in leather tanning; timber and charcoal supported iron smelting and other industries; and acorns provided valuable animal feed.

INVESTMENT MEASURED IN CENTURIES

Growing high-quality oak timber is a long-term undertaking. The production cycle can extend beyond a century, making it difficult to justify oak solely on the economics of timber production. But perhaps that misunderstands oak. The tree has existed for far longer than



A stunning oak tree in Killarney National Park. Photo: Adobe.

the science of economics and has continually reinvented its value through the many benefits it provides beyond timber. Today, the economics of growing oak can include a range of non-timber products and ecosystem services. One intriguing example is truffle production. You can inoculate oak trees with truffle fungi before planting, creating the potential for food production alongside timber and other benefits.

PATIENCE AND PRECISION

Oak can also be something of an ugly duckling among tree species. In its early years, a newly planted oak can appear crooked, poorly formed and anything but majestic. With time, however, it can straighten and develop into the impressive tree the species is renowned for. Formative pruning and careful management can help encourage good stem form. Thinning oak requires particular care. The species does not respond well to heavy thinning and can suffer thinning shock, producing epicormic branches, which are small, vigorous shoots that emerge from the stem. These branches are undesirable when the objective is to produce high-quality, knot-free timber. Careful selection and marking of potential final-crop trees is, therefore, essential. A useful principle is to identify the trees with the greatest potential and manage the surrounding stand accordingly, removing competing trees to give those selected oaks room to develop.

LORD OF BIODIVERSITY

As we enter a new era of sustainable carbon management and climate-conscious agriculture, oak plays an important role. Oak plantations generally have lower carbon storage rates during their first rotation than fast-growing conifer plantations such as Sitka spruce; however, the picture changes when we consider long-term equilibrium carbon storage. Oak forests can develop substantial biomass by the time of harvest and produce timber products that can remain in use for relatively long periods.

Let's Talk Trees

Adding value to your farm

Teagasc Agriculture and Food Development Authority

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Tuesday 3, November, 7pm - 10:30pm
The Devon Inn, Templeglantine, Co Limerick, V94 H489

Thursday 5, November, 7pm - 10:30pm
Mullingar Park Hotel, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 A4EP

Tuesday 10, November, 7pm - 10:30pm
Lawlor's of Naas, Poplar Sq, Naas, Co Kildare, W91 Y65N

Thursday 12, November, 7pm - 10:30pm
Landmark Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim N41 N9W4



Presentations from ***DAFM and Teagasc*** on:

- Supports for tree planting and management
- Forestry complementing farming
- Panel discussion including case studies
- One to one clinics with Teagasc forestry advisors & DAFM forestry staff

Find out more at www.teagasc.ie/forestry

Events are FREE and open to all, No registration required



Ballykeeffe Wood Nature Reserve. Photo: Bernie Commins.

GROWING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS

FARMER, STEPHEN MORRISON, IS THE 2026 WINNER OF THE RDS TEAGASC FARM FORESTRY AWARD BUT HIS STORY EXTENDS FAR BEYOND FORESTRY, WRITES MATT O'KEEFFE

Stephen operates a range of enterprises, including livestock production and tillage, on his 120-hectare farm in Kill, Co. Kildare where he lives with his wife Heidi and four children. He is also engaged in social farming and brings local and international visitor groups onto his farm to view his farming and forestry activities.

The Morrison farm hosts an organic herd of spring-calving suckler cows, bringing all progeny to beef. Stephen converted to an organic farming system three years ago. With forestry already established decades ago on the farm, over the last six years, 24 hectares of native forestry have also been planted. This, along with the establishment of hedgerows, digging of farm ponds, and the preservation of a unique fen, has transformed the biodiversity on the farm.

WHAT IS A FEN?

According to the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, a fen is a wetland system with a permanently high water level at or just below its surface. Its principal source of nutrients is from surface or groundwater and the substrate is an alkaline to slightly acidic peat soil. The vegetation is usually dominated by sedges. Fens occur throughout the country, most commonly in the west and midlands of Ireland.

ECONOMIC SUCCESS STORY

Asked if his adoption of forestry as part of his farm impinged on overall profitability or the productivity of his livestock, Stephen had this to say: "It hasn't had any negative impact, but the farm, as a whole, is more diversified, which is a positive for me." One particular bonus from the introduction of forestry on the Morrison farm has been the proliferation of a wide range of fauna, Stephen explains: "I have definitely seen an increase in bird numbers, specifically jays, kestrels, buzzards and woodcock. The buzzards have reduced the rabbit population, which is entirely positive. Pine martins have brought down grey squirrel numbers and allowed the red squirrel population to grow."

ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

The tree species profile is diverse, as Stephen clearly intended when planting: "We have a good mix in the award-winning plantation including hazel, birch,

I HAVE DEFINITELY SEEN AN INCREASE IN BIRD NUMBERS, SPECIFICALLY JAYS, KESTRELS, BUZZARDS AND WOODCOCK

alder, a lot of oak, Scots pine, spindle cherry, rowan and holly." But ambitions for his forestry extends further than growing and harvesting, he explains: "At the moment I'm shaping, pruning, thinning. That's an ongoing exercise. Individual species require different management practices. The purchase of a small sawmill unit is also planned. I saw the value of an integrated forestry enterprise when I worked on a farm in Switzerland some years ago. My intention is to produce planks, fenceposts, and other wood-based products, which should deliver a higher-value return from the forestry."

A forest garden is an additional attraction to an already diverse enterprise farm. Stephen explains the rationale: "A lot of farmer visitors take a particular interest in the garden. Most of them remember having orchards on their farms in previous generations and are positively disposed to restoring them onto their farms. My mindset has moved towards asking why not supply more of our own fruit or nut or berry needs when we have the land. Agroforestry is another option I'm considering."

PARTNERS AND COLLABS

Wild Kildare has had public walks on the farm and is carrying out its moth survey on the lands. Microsoft has become a partner in the native forestry establishment, with up to 80 Microsoft employees on the farm at various times, preparing ground and sowing trees. The farm has been used by Teagasc as a Benchmark farm with its third-level certificate in farming classes and Bord Bia has brought several international delegations to showcase an impressive and well-diversified Irish farm.

A NATURAL PROGRESSION

Some of Stephen's initiatives have had greater transformative impacts than he expected: "The biggest eye-opener for me was when I fenced off the water courses. What I noticed was how much nature just came back and took hold over the years." He has dug out a network of ponds in an area of fen to provide a habitat for any aquatic species that may colonise the area. Aside from the 18 acres of native woodlands, Stephen also has a two-acre plot that is in wild bird cover for the past three years. Additionally, a wild bird area has been planted with bushes and trees specifically chosen for their potential to provide nuts and seeds for birds located alongside the Hartwell Stream that flows through the farm. "It is about giving nature a chance, and sometimes it is more about what you don't do than what you do."

PINE MARTINS HAVE BROUGHT DOWN GREY SQUIRREL NUMBERS AND ALLOWED THE RED SQUIRREL POPULATION TO GROW



The winner of the 2026 RDS Teagasc Farm Forestry Award, Kildare farmer, Stephen Morrison. Pictured at the awards: Noel Kennedy, Teagasc forestry adviser; Ben Morrison; Stephen Morrison (winner); Frances McHugh, Teagasc forestry communications and digital media specialist; and John Spink, head of the crops, environment and land use programme in Teagasc.



Ballykeeffe Wood Nature Reserve. Photo: Bernie Commins.

LAND USE AND FORESTRY: OPTIONS AND FINANCIAL REWARDS

TEAGASC'S FOREST INVESTMENT VALUATION ESTIMATOR (FIVE) SUPPORTS DECISION MAKING IN RELATION TO POTENTIAL LAND USE AND FORESTRY OPTIONS. HERE, MICHAEL SOMERS, TEAGASC FORESTRY ADVISER, RUNS THROUGH HOW IT WORKS AND WHAT INFORMATION CAN BE GLEANED FROM IT

FIVE software applies discounted cashflow (DCF) analysis to model indicative financial returns for forestry land use options (forest creation) and management options (e.g. forest thinning). It provides financial output facilitating decision support, particularly in relation to reviewing pre-planting options and comparing criteria such as tree species, yield classes and forest rotation lengths according to landowners' preferences and objectives.

Potential timber revenues are generated by FIVE through the selection of forest characteristics and management regimes. A range of variables are used as inputs in a typical financial analysis. These include tree species, site productivity, rotation length (forest cycle), relevant premium payments, establishment and on-going management costs, as well as potential thinning and clearfell timber volumes and revenues and a limited number of other potential revenue streams, where available.

REVENUE STREAMS

Future cost and revenue streams from forestry scenarios are generated by FIVE and are discounted to present day values and presented as net present values (NPVs). The NPV refers to the net returns to forestry over one (or more) forest rotation(s). To compare forestry with other farm enterprise options (at an indicative level), the FIVE tool expresses different forest crop rotations on an annual per-hectare basis by generating the annual equivalent value (AEV) for each forest scenario.

The AEV expresses the NPV as a series of indicative equal cashflows over the forest rotation. Figures 1 and 2 present indicative financial returns for one hectare of the following forest types (FTs) [FT refers to the relevant forest type under the DAFM Forestry Programme 2023-2027, Intervention 1, Forest Creation].

- FT 12: Comprising mixed high forest (mainly spruce with 20 per cent broadleaves); and
- FT 7: Other broadleaf forest, comprising a fast-growing broadleaf species such as sycamore.

FIVE incorporates a range of assumptions including that the relevant forests are on stable sites and can grow on to reach financial maturity. If all costs and revenues associated with forestry land use are compared with all costs and revenues associated with agricultural land use (after adjusting to present values and the one-year cycle per annum basis) then the forestry AEV

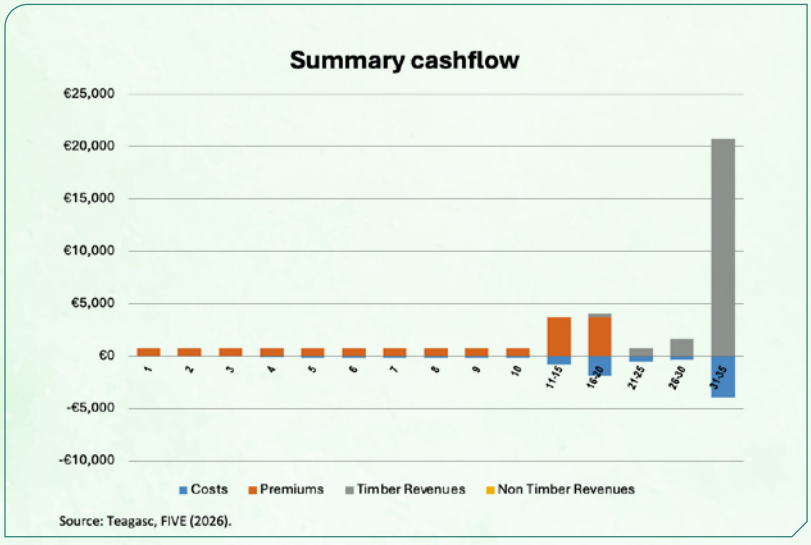


Figure 1: Indicative FIVE forest returns for one hectare of forest type 12 (FT12). Source: Teagasc, FIVE (2026).

per hectare and family farm income can be considered conceptually equivalent.

A summary of the comparative financial outputs from FIVE analysis for these two afforestation categories is presented in table 1. The respective indicative AEVs are €709/ha/year for FT12 and €535/ha/year for FT7.

ASSUMPTIONS

FT 12, mixed high forest with mainly spruce, 20 per cent broadleaf species, 15 per cent of area retained for biodiversity enhancement, initial spacing of 2m, forest cycle of 35 years, discount rate 4.5 per cent, 10-year average timber prices used, reforestation costs included.

This analysis can be used to compare agricultural incomes with projected future forestry income flows discounted to today's values and converted to annual equivalent. This allows an indicative rather than absolute comparison. With AEVs of up to €740/ha/year, it is evident that forestry returns based on proposed new premia levels in the Forestry Programme 2023-2027, can be very competitive when compared to many agricultural enterprises.

ASSUMPTIONS

FT 7, 85 per cent sycamore, 15 per cent retained area for biodiversity enhancement, initial spacing 1.5m x 1.5m, forest cycle of 70 years, discount rate 4.5 per cent, 10-year average timber prices used, reforestation costs included.

The above analysis involving the FIVE tool does not consider the current capacity for eligible forestry parcels to draw down direct payment supports in addition to the annual forestry premia. For qualifying applicants, with eligible hectares, meeting scheme criteria, these currently can include the following supports:

- Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) Scheme – average €154.6 per ha;
- Complementary Redistributive Support for Sustainability Scheme (CRISS) – average €44 per ha; and
- Eco-scheme – average €66 per ha.

We await the outcome of CAP negotiations in terms of the future direction of such current positive interactions. The FIVE tool also does not factor in the relative efficiencies in terms of labour inputs when compared to other enterprises or the potential income-tax free returns from future timber sales.

FIVE cannot account for uncertainties such as potential subsidies that agricultural and forestry land will attract in the future or what new values may emerge for the services produced by agricultural and forestry land uses.

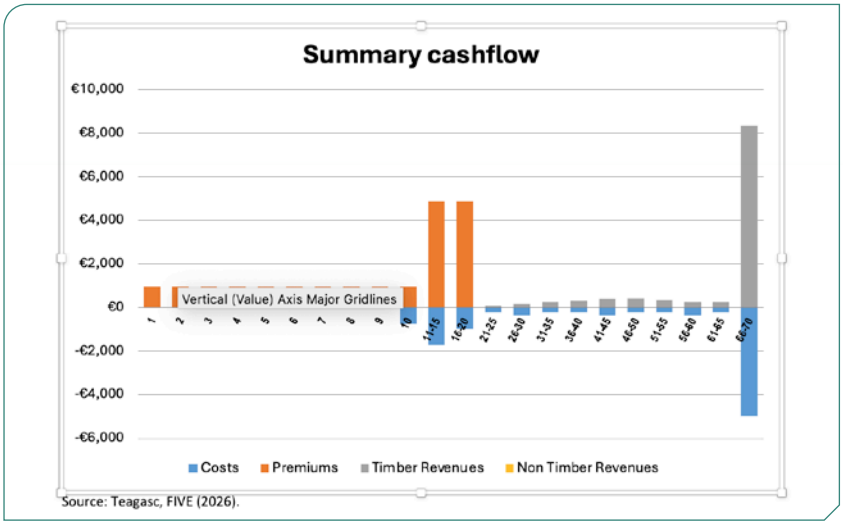


Figure 2: Indicative forest returns for one hectare of broadleaf forest (FT7)

Table 1: Comparative per-hectare financial outputs (€) – FT 12 and FT 7.

Proposed Forest Type Financial output	Forest Type 12	Forest Type 7
Total revenues (€)	38,417	30,278
Total costs (€)	8,490	10,845
Net present value (€/ha)	12,382	11,352
Annual equivalent value (AEV) €/ha/year	709	535

Source: Teagasc 2026

MESSAGES

- It is vital to body condition score (BCS) all cows in early October.
- Manage the last grazing rotation for spring grass.
- The autumn rotation plan is an essential support tool!
- Consider all your winter feed choices now!
- Silage and soil analysis will drive your winter feed management.
- Be aware of October scheme deadlines.



By Matt Ryan

IT IS VITAL TO CONDITION SCORE COWS NOW

- After a very difficult grass year on most farms, some regions were OK, cow body condition must now be the main focus.
- Each cow's body score is worth €100 – that's the approximate cost of putting on 40kg (= one BCS) of body fat with meals if she thin. But it is worth a lot more in lost income.
  - If cows calve down thin, they will not easily go back in calf and neither, will they milk well next year.
  - For every 50kg (1 condition score = 40-50kg) below target, a cow will milk 450 litres of milk less than her potential.
  - A few facts are worth knowing about the conversion for and from body condition:
  - It takes 72MJ of energy to put on 1kg liveweight on a dry cow whereas it takes 50MJ to do it while she is milking. Hence the value of identifying the problem in early October and feeding meals then to rectify the problem or going on once-a-day (OAD) milking.
  - The weight she puts on while milking is more efficiently used when she is losing it in spring because every kilogramme of weight lost in spring gives up 37MJ energy (74% efficient) while the weight put on by the cow only gives up 30MJ (42% efficient).
- If you have thin cows identified in October, you have a few management options to rectify it:
  - Dry off now to allow her to have a long dry period to put on weight.
  - With 120 days to calving for February calvers, no meals will be needed with good silage.
  - Go on OAD milking now.
  - Feed a low protein ration and milk on until early December, monitoring her all the way.
- If you wait until November to deal with thin cows you have only one option and that is to feed a lot of meals during the dry period which is inefficient and expensive.
- To get an accurate assessment of BCS put all cows through the cattle crush to handle them on tail head, ribs, short ribs, and backbone.
- The ideal drying off BCS is 3.0-3.25 and the following details, derived from a 'hands-on- approach' will guide you towards the BCS estimate:
  - Pins: Not prominent, distinct cover, and smooth.
  - Loin: Smooth and well covered, tips felt with slight pressure, tips visible as slight undulations.
  - Ribs: Smooth, firm pressure to feel, last two slightly visible.
  - Back bone: Rounded.
  - Hip-bone: Not very prominent, smooth.
  - Eye-muscle area: Slightly concave.
- If you don't know how to do it or need an update (all of us need to be updated), get your adviser or discussion group to show you:
  - There are people out there who do it for a fee.
  - Generally they will calve down in same condition as dried off, if the silage is good.
  - Cows with a BCS of 2.75 or less now, must be 'earmarked' for special attention.
  - Generally, they will calve down in same condition as dried off, if the silage is good.
  - As she has a deficit of 0.5 BCS, she is at least 25 kg below target condition, therefore, she will have to be fed an extra 130kg meal (5-6 times the weight).
  - This means feeding 2kg ration/hd/day for 65 days or she probably needs 12-14 weeks dry.
  - So, it is very important to identify the BCS of January and February calving cows now and act on the outcome.
- Which cows should be dried off from October 15?
  - Cows with a BCS less than 2.75.
  - First-lactation cow calving in January/February with 270 days' lactation done.
  - Cows milking less than 7-8L or 0.6kg MS/hd/day.
  - Cows with somatic cell counts (SCCs) greater than 200,000.
  - All these cows should either be housed, sold (if not in calf) or moved to outside blocks but off the grazing platform to allow all available grass for milking cows.
- Remember, the only way to improve the BCS of high genetic merit cows, who are thin the whole year, is to give them a long dry period, starting now.

THE LAST ROTATION MANAGEMENT!

- Amazingly, we have got back to near normal grass covers for late September.

- It was achieved by increased growth rates and farmers reducing demand so that in most cases average farm cover (AFC) increased by over 200kg DM/ha/week.
- The last rotation management is crucial in setting up the farm for next year's grazing:
  - Grazing very heavy covers and/or leaving too high covers at closing will result in very poor growth until May of next year.
  - Its management will influence the amount of meal you will feed this side of Christmas and the first half of next year.
  - Every extra kilogramme DM cover left at closing increases grass availability by 12kg DM in the spring. Therefore, operate closely to the farm covers recommendations in Table1.

Table 1: Target covers per cow and total farm cover (AFC)

	2.5 cows/ha		3.0 cows/ha		% Grazing platform closed		
Date	Cover/Cow	AFC	Cover/cow	AFC	2.5 SR	2.5 SR	Heavy land
Oct 1	400	1,000	380	1,150	40 days*	40 days*	35 days*
Oct 15	350	880	340	1,020			
Nov 1	280	700	275	820	60%	65-70%	80-100%
Fully housed	600-700**		700-800**		500-650**		

***Grazing rotation length.**
****AFC on day of fully housing.**

- If you don't achieve these covers in early October, you will have to house earlier than November 20 and the allocated area will not have near enough grass daily. The following suggestions should be considered:
  - Sell off cull cows now – a financial waste if feeding meals with cull cows eating grass. Cull cows are unlikely to be any more valuable in December than now.
  - Destock by drying off thin cows and heifers during the month and moving them away from the milking platform.
- Every day extra the cows graze in autumn delivers €2.20 per cow per day extra profit.
  - This year, because of the drought up to early September, many farmers are making the excuse that they will have to house early. No, the spring rotation plan will allow you to have grass in the cows diet as per usual, so that you still get that profit benefit from including grass in the diet.
- As the last rotation will be 40-50 days from start to finish, you must decide on your closing date. If closing is on November 20, then the last rotation should start on October 10.
  - The closing date will be early November on wet and/or northerly farms.
- Too many farmers are completing the last rotation too early and losing significant profits. This is particularly so for farmers who have wet land and are not committed to wet weather grazing techniques because they have inferior infrastructures.
- The last rotation must begin on October 1-16, the earliest date (and probably earlier) for wet land types.
  - If that doesn't happen you won't have grass next spring.
  - Spring is when you need grass most, as you will be trying to maintain milk yield and increase body condition as cheaply as possible.
  - Therefore, plan your paddock grazing strategy now.
- The first paddocks to be grazed next spring, from let-out to March 1 must be dry, be near the milking parlour and have 800-1,000kg DM/ha of grass cover. See Table 2.
  - These paddocks must be grazed from October 20 to November 5.
- The next paddocks to be grazed next spring, from March 1 to March 15, with covers of 1,000-1,400kg DM/ha, must be grazed in the last rotation from October 5-20:
  - If they haven't enough grass on them, skip other paddocks so as to graze them in early October.

You must have at least 60% of the grazing block grazed by November 1 on dry land and 70% on wet land and highly stocked milking blocks. Otherwise, you will be short of grass next February. Therefore, the last 30-40% of paddocks must be grazed from November 5-20:
Clover swards must be the last to be grazed in the autumn rotation so as to carry over low grass covers, 400-600kg DM, on those swards.

Table 2: Sequence of Paddocks, plus % of paddocks, to be grazed during the Last Rotations, based on the spring grazing sequence.

First rotation next spring	Last autumn rotation
% paddocks grazed + timing	% paddocks grazed + timing
30% grazed in February Dry, close to yard, guarantee early grass, PGCs 800-1,200kg DM/ha	30% grazed from Oct 20-Nov 5 Dry, close to yard, multiple access points, sheltered, quickest growing, reseeded.
30% grazed from March 1-15 PGCs >1,200kg DM/ha, dry with OK access.	30% grazed from Oct 5-20 Further from yard ok access and dry.
40% to be grazed March 15-Apr 5 Awkward paddocks, furthest from yard, poor grazing structure, old pastures, slow growing, silage ground.	40% to be grazed November 5-20 Awkward paddocks, furthest from yard, poor grazing structure, old pastures, slow growing, silage ground.

PGC = Pre-grazing cover.
Note: The approximate dates suggested are for dry land. For heavy ground, autumn dates should be 8-15 days earlier, while the spring dates should be 8-15 days later.



- You are now on last rotation, to finish on dry land on November 20-25 (two to three weeks earlier on wet land).
  - Each paddock must be well grazed out to 3.5-4cm (if you leave too much grass it will result in poor pastures next year because of lack of tillering).

USE THE AUTUMN ROTATION PLANNNER!

- This planner is available through PastureBase and surprisingly few use it to full advantage.
- This planner will make life extremely simple and easy to keep cows out until late November while at the same time ensuring adequate grass is carried over to spring.
  - It outlines the number of hectares you allocate to your cows each day from October 6 to November 25.
- If the area allocated each day doesn't give enough grass, indicated by very low post-grazing height, then cows must be supplemented with meals or, preferably, very good quality baled silage.
  - If silage is tight, consider feeding more meal, either soya hulls or palm kernel.
- If there is a lot of grass in the area, indicated by high post-grazing residuals, you either measured the area incorrectly or you have not enough cows for the farm or you are feeding to much silage and/or meals.
- By measuring grass weekly and recording on PastureBase the computer will 'map' the area eaten against the plan. It will be very easy see if you are on track.
- If, for any reason – a wet week for instance – you cannot graze then you will go 'off target' and you must graze double the amount the next week so as to finish the last rotation on the planned date.

WINTER FEED CHOICES?

Most farmers now know if they will be 'tight' for winterfed, however, many have not adequately considered their options or done much about it.

- Now, is almost your last chance to review your choices and do something economically beneficial about it if you are short of feed.
- Some or all of the following should be considered:
  - Firstly, be aware that it is not cheap to 'winter' animals. For a five-month winter, silage will cost over €320 to feed a cow; €260 to feed an R2; and €160 to feed a weanling (R1),
  - Therefore, it is not cheap to hold on-to surplus stock. Sell off:
    - Empty cows, which is obvious.
    - Cows that are underperforming should come under serious scrutiny, particularly if you are overstocked.
    - Lame, high SCC cows should be considered a liability.
    - All beef stock and bulls should be sold.
  - Young stock, R1s and R2s, could be outsourced for contract rearing, either for the winter or longer.
  - Buy meal, if value for money, so that you can 'stretch' your existing roughage (see table 3).
  - Buy wet forages (see table 3) so that you have enough fibre in the diet,
- Before buying any feeds, study table 3):
  - The value of feeds per tonne, as fed, are calculated based on barley and soyabean meal being purchased at €275 and €370 per tonne – if different, the other feed cost values will also change.
  - Price other feedstuffs on the market and insert the cost in the last column.
    - From the prices I have for molassed beet pulp, citrus, soya hulls, and PKA, a barley/soya mix would be cheaper, because they are more expensive than their value. But price around.
  - Many farmers will be thinking of buying wet forages, but it is easy to pay too much for any of these, particularly if you don't know the:
    - Feeding value.
    - Dry matter.
    - Actual weight.
  - Know these before buying sizeable quantities.
  - Straw, if available, would be worth considering as it is easy to feed with a suitable meal ration to dry cows, store cattle and some youngstock.

Table 3: Comparing the value and cost of feedstuffs if barley and soya bean are purchased at €275 & €485, respectively.

Feed type	UFL (per kg DM)	DM %	Value (per tonne fed)	Cost at merchant/tonne
Dry feeds		**		**Price these yourself**
Barley	1.16	86.6	€270	€275*
Soya bean	1.18	86.4	€370	€485*
Unmolassed beet pulp	1.14	88.1	€286	
Molassed beet pulp	1.14	88.1	€271	€355
Citrus pulp	1.16	87.5	€263	€300
Soya hulls	1.01	87.9	€265	€300
Palm kernal	0.96	89.0	€309	€310
Maize gluten	1.04	86.5	€287	
Maize distillers	1.16	89.0	€332	
Wet forages & feeds				
Grass silage (72 DMD)	0.81	20.0	€43	
Grass silage (65 DMD)	0.72	20.2	€39	
Hay (good quality)	0.69	85.0	€178	
Barley straw	0.44	88.0	€115	
Brewer's grains	0.92	20.5	€63	
Fodder beet	1.12	19.0	€55	
Maize silage (25% starch)	0.80	32.1	€69	
Whole crop silage (25% starch)	0.70	45.0	€90	
Baled silage 72DMD (600 kg)	0.81	30.0	€39	
Baled silage 65DMD (600 kg)	0.72	30.0	€34	

***If the cost of these are different from these, they will change the value of other feedstuffs**
****If the dry matter of yours are different from these, they will change the value of other feedstuffs**

Just in case you haven't assessed the amount of forage you have relative to requirement, let me remind you:
The following is the requirement/animal/day in dry matter (DM) which is the best way to do it:
Cows =11kg; R1s = 4.7kg; and R2s = 9kg.
If you are short of winter feed, decide on your options NOW.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

October 1: Prohibited period commences for the application of slurry.
October 13: Deadline for completion of all actions under the Beef Welfare Scheme.
October 14: Closing stock declarations must be made to the National Fertiliser Database (NFD).
October 14: ACRES CP application window for non-productive investments is open until this date.
October 31: The spreading of farmyard manure must cease after this date.
1st November: Prohibited period commences for the application of farmyard manure,
November 1: All SCEP weights must be submitted to ICBF by 5:30pm on this date.

BRIEF NOTES:

- It is uneconomical to feed more than 2-3kg meal (15% P) to produce milk now.
- You should get the Farm Relief Service to examine your herd for lameness, particularly, if you have a history of it.
  - At the very least, walk the cows through a footbath for three consecutive days once per week.
  - Also, there is merit in doing a locomotive survey of the herd as they walk from the parlour.
- Make a list of maintenance work to be done and group by either one-person or for two-person tasks.
  - Essential investments will reduce your tax bill.
- There shouldn't be much need to remind you to talk to your accountant in relation to your tax bill. Don't delay!
- Get your soil analysed to enable you to focus on where nutrients are required.
- Get silage analysed for feeding value and minerals, so that you can be more precise on your winter-feeding management.
- Replacement heifer weights should be compared with their targets (table 5). This how to manage them this autumn:

Table 5: Target weights (kg) for replacement weanling (R1s) and in-calf heifers (R2s) in October.

Cow type	Mature weight	Weanling Weight	In-calf heifer
		(37% of cow)	(77% of cow)
Holstein	580	215	445
Holstein X Nor. Red	550	205	425
Holstein X Jersey	530	195	410

Remember, autumn grass doesn't give good weight gains in cattle.

- Underweight R1s should get 1-1.5kg meal (16-18% P) to meet target weights on May 1.
- All animals below target weights must be taken away from main mob and given priority treatment.
- For every 20kg animals are below target they will need to be fed an extra 100kg meal (16+% P).
- It must be remembered that animals that are much greater than target weights are also a liability as they will underperform when milking and will be culled out of the herd sooner. Therefore, don't feed them meal!
- Small R2s need 1-2kg meal (12-14% P). Otherwise, they will calve down too light, resulting in 450L lower milk yields for every 50kg below target weight at calving.
- Fewer of them will go in-calf during the first three weeks of breeding next year.

NOTE

Milk powder went up €370/pallet in August, and it due to go up another €360 on October 1 and possibly again in January due to skim and whey going up in price.



The operator benefits from a cab that is one of the quietest in its class.

ALL-NEW CERVUS CVT – FLEXIBLE AND COMPACT DESIGN

OUR VIEW 'FROM THE CAB' THIS MONTH TAKES IN THE ALL-NEW CERVUS CVT, WHICH HAS SEEN STEYR TRAKTOREN ENTER A COMPLETELY NEW TRACTOR CATEGORY

The all-new Cervus CVT comprises the 360hp 6360 Cervus CVT, the 390hp 6390 Cervus CVT, and 435hp 6440 Cervus CVT (maximum power outputs). They make up a new flexible compact design equally suited to ballasted heavy draft cultivations and to unballasted high payload tasks such as transport or front/rear hitch work, according to the company..

The new Cervus CVT models bear the new Steyr styling, and feature new daytime running lights. The operator benefits from a cab that is one of the quietest in its class, while the comfort afforded by its semi-active suspension is complemented by a new independent suspended front axle. The result is maximum comfort that enhances in-field productivity, while smooth high-speed travel and haulage are assured on the road, according to the company.

TECH PACKS

Three configurable tech packs allow customers to match their Cervus CVT to precision farming needs. Each includes integrated solutions such as Isobus compatibility and tractor implement management (TIM) for plug-and-play touchscreen tractor-implement interaction, Easytronic II with GPS trigger to automate implement headland management, and S-Turn II for full headland steering and implement automation. All models feature Connectivity Included, for lifetime access to FieldOps for real-time farm management data, remote monitoring, and informed decision-making.

GREATER PERFORMANCE

Cervus CVT tractors are designed around a structural engine sump, for maximum tractor strength and minimal vibration. Powering the Cervus range is an 8.7L FPT Cursor 9 six-cylinder turbocharged and intercooled engine used for the first time in a Steyr tractor. Ownership costs are minimised thanks to specification ranging from long 750hr service intervals to a low idle feature that reduces engine speed when the tractor is stationary. A 680L diesel capacity cuts refueling downtime. Steyr's latest continuously variable



Cervus CVT tractors are designed around a structural engine sump, for maximum tractor strength and minimal vibration.

transmission development is a new 4x2 range CVT which, for the first time, has a maximum top travel speed of 60km/hr, to boost haulage efficiency, minimise travel time and get fieldwork underway faster. A new central tyre inflation system (CTIS) is the first integrated package available from Steyr. It enables tyres to be deflated to their minimum pressures for fieldwork, for a longer footprint that maximises traction and fuel economy while minimising compaction, before being reinflated within five minutes for full-speed road travel. The system features a twin-cylinder compressor incorporating idle management to minimise power consumption. Three pressure memory settings can be stored, and the compressor can also supply an external air line for machine cleaning.

With a 12,400kg base weight, the new Steyr Cervus CVT models have an 18,000kg maximum permissible gross vehicle weight, enabling the handling of high payloads to do more in each journey. The new Cervus CVT has the implement handling ability to match its power and traction, with an 11,760kg rear linkage lift capacity and up to five double-acting high-flow remote valves plus optional Power Beyond supply. A dual hydraulic pump provides 360L/min of oil flow. Up front, an optional 5,800kg electronic front hitch features pressure control that is adjustable via the Multicontroller armrest, to provide even consolidation with implements such as front packers. It can be supplemented by two double-acting spool valves and a 1,000/1,000E rpm PTO option.



NOEL DUNNE
Machinery editor

FROM TULLAMORE TO TUSCANY

Well readers, as I pen this month's column, I am sitting in my office looking out at a beautiful, crisp morning. The grass is growing, the weather is being kind, and my local GAA club Courtwood, which is very close to my heart, is in the senior county final.

The 95th National Ploughing Championships, which I was heavily involved in – for the three weeks of set-up and all the days of the event – had sunshine, light showers, and record numbers in attendance for the second year at Screggan, Tullamore, Co Offaly.

The highlights of this year's spectacle were the vast array of farm, plant, and construction machinery, livestock, motors, fashion, and much more besides. But what topped it all off, for me, was the atmosphere and the good humour of people against the backdrop of rising commodity prices and fuel charges.

There is no denying the appeal of The Ploughing, especially for media and content creators. Every tick-tocker, agri-influencer, and social media pundit was there. Content creators were banging out content on social platforms before the event, during the event, and after the event. I liken it to The Electric Picnic of agriculture. It was almost 'cool' to be in Screggan at the Ploughing. Politicians, presidents, bishops, ambassadors, and European Commissioners were all there! Robots, autonomous tractors, and solar panels were displayed alongside fashion shows and brown-bread making. Every Government department, bank, and business serving both urban and rural Ireland were present. All angles were covered and boxes ticked.

And that brings me to the point. How important is it to exhibit at The Ploughing and attend the event? People and companies have different views on this and that's fine, but can you afford to miss an opportunity to put your product or services in front of a potential audience of 245,000 people? Can you afford not to visit and learn about what is happening in rural Ireland, to find out what is making the headlines in agriculture in terms of machinery, tech, the environment, the social aspect, etc.? If you can, well, fair play! But I really think you should put it on your bucket list. Everyone should go one time, but it probably won't be their last! As the lights came down in Screggan, Tullamore, they lit up in Rathangan, Co. Kildare, as The Ploughing moves on once again in 2027 to a new home.

I walked out the gates of The Ploughing in Tullamore and, a few days later, was on a plane bound for Tuscany, in Italy, where I joined my Tractor of the Year jury members and friends. We drove the latest that Claas has to offer with their new tractor ranges. I can tell you, it is some experience to drive large kit on the wrong side of the road, as we would call it, on narrow Tuscan roads with sheer drops on both sides. No room for error. You would not want to be a nervous driver. The Claas event was held at the largest vineyard in the region, also the most technically advanced. It was just amazing to see and experience.

As we stood in the Tucsan sunset with a glass of the finest wine on offer, the conversation turned to fuel, fodder, finance, and farming, and the expansion of Indian and Chinese manufacturers into Europe. To sum up: finance on farms is going to be tight right across Europe; and as India and China set their sights on Europe, we must accept this new norm!

Until next month, farm safely, farm wisely.



A full LED lighting package delivers up to 20 lights and 40,000 lumens, providing 360-degree illumination around the tractor.

LANDINI SMART CAB MAKES IRISH DEBUT

LANDINI'S SMART CAB MADE ITS IRISH DEBUT AT THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS LAST MONTH ON THE SERIE 7 RANGE, WHICH WAS ON DISPLAY THERE; IT ATTRACTED GREAT INTEREST FROM FARMERS, CONTRACTORS, AND MACHINERY ENTHUSIASTS ALIKE



President of the Farm Tractor & Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA), Jennifer Ryall (right) of Ryall's Machinery performed the official ribbon cutting at the Landini stand. She is pictured here with Kevin Phelan, Argo Ireland general manager.

Visitors to Landini's stand at The Ploughing had the opportunity to explore Smart Cab's features designed to enhance operator experience, and one of the most noticeable is increased visibility. The four-post design provides an additional 14 per cent glazed area, helping to create a more open, panoramic view around the tractor.

The exhaust tailpipe is integrated into the cab post, further improving visibility, while large heated electric mirrors and a 210-degree central windscreen wiper are designed to maintain clear sightlines in challenging conditions.

Automatic climate control distributes air through nine vents for even airflow throughout the cab. Meanwhile, Saint-Gobain's Comfort Sky coated glass filters UV rays and can keep the cab up to 6°C cooler than standard glass on hotter days.

COMFORT AND ERGONOMICS

Comfort is equally central to the Smart Cab concept, Landini says. An electrohydraulic suspension system works to absorb shocks and vibrations, helping to provide a smoother ride across both field and road work. Inside, the cab is wider, while the steering wheel and dashboard can be adjusted to suit the individual operator. The new Alcantara premium leather swivel seat is heated and ventilated and features active dynamic air suspension, an automatically height-adjustable headrest and integrated armrests. The ergonomic joystick is incorporated into the armrest, helping operators find a comfortable working position while maintaining a clear view of the rear hitch.

The DSM Plus system combines a 12-inch touchscreen with a 12-inch digital dashboard, while connectivity is built into the cab with features including Bluetooth, USB, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay.

> THE FOUR-POST DESIGN PROVIDES AN ADDITIONAL 14 PER CENT GLAZED AREA, HELPING TO CREATE A MORE OPEN, PANORAMIC VIEW

POWER AND PERFORMANCE

Underneath the Smart Cab, the Serie 7 continues to deliver the performance expected of a high-powered tractor. The range is powered by FPT NEF 67 six-cylinder, 6.7L engines, while the Robo-Six transmission offers six powershift speeds across five robotised ranges. The hydraulic system can deliver up to 160L/min on the Dynamic version, providing the capacity required for demanding implements and applications.

LIGHTING FOR LONG WORKING DAYS

For early starts and late finishes, a full LED lighting package delivers up to 20 lights and 40,000 lumens, providing 360-degree illumination around the tractor. Two customisable lighting presets allow operators to configure the lighting to suit different working conditions, while dedicated long-range lights provide additional illumination for trailing implements. LED side lights and rear tail lamps are complemented by a courtesy lamp illuminating the four wide, well-spaced steps. Landini's signature integrated fender handle also provides safe and easy access to the cab in all conditions.

DESIGNED AROUND THE OPERATOR

Ultimately, the Smart Cab reflects a broader approach to tractor design: recognising that the operator is just as important as the machine's mechanical performance, according to Landini. By combining visibility, suspension, ergonomics, connectivity and control with the power and versatility of the Serie 7, Landini has developed a cab designed around the realities of modern professional farming. Designed around greater visibility, functionality, comfort and control, the new four-post Smart Cab combines a spacious working environment with technology designed to make everyday operation easier.

Kevin Phelan, Argo Ireland general manager, said: "The National Ploughing Championships provided the perfect platform to introduce the Smart Cab to the Irish market. We were delighted to welcome farmers, contractors and machinery enthusiasts to the stand, and the level of interest highlighted the demand for a modern cab that delivers comfort, visibility and practicality without compromising on the performance Landini customers expect."

FTMTA



IRELAND'S LARGEST DEDICATED MACHINERY EVENT!



17th, 18th & 19th NOVEMBER 2026

Punchestown
Event Centre,
Co. Kildare,
W91VCX4.

Tickets
now
on sale

In association
with FBD
Insurance

FBD INSURANCE



KRONE'S BIG ADDITIONS

Krone has completed its sixth-generation BiG Pack large square baler lineup.

Krone has completed its sixth-generation BiG Pack large square baler lineup with the launch of the new BiG Pack Plus and the redesigned BiG Pack Pro. The Plus model is aimed at operators seeking reliable, cost-effective baling, while the Pro is built for high-output professional users who require maximum performance, comfort and flexibility, according to the company.

The Plus and Pro models share numerous components including pick-up technology, knotter systems, user interfaces, and a wide range of service, accessory, and retrofit solutions. Additional features such as moisture measurement, work lights and silage additive systems are also standardised across the range. This approach simplifies machine selection, servicing and spare parts supply, while maintaining clear differences between the Plus and Pro models to suit different customer needs.

The BiG Pack Plus range is designed for farmers and contractors looking for dependable performance at an attractive price point. The Plus models incorporate many of the key innovations introduced with Generation 6, including the new Liebherr main gearbox, the durable and easy-to-maintain EasyFlow pick-up, and improved hydraulic and electrical routing for easier servicing and reduced build-up of dirt.

For customers requiring chopping capability, the machines can be equipped with the XCut cutting unit with 26 blades and blade group control or the VariCut cutting unit with 51 blades. This allows the machine to be adapted to different operating requirements.

The proven mechanical variable filling system (VFS) delivers consistent bale formation and reliable operation, while a number of components have been further optimised to increase durability and help reduce operating costs. Operational reliability is enhanced by Krone's PowerClean Plus system, which helps keep the knotter area and upper bale chamber clean, reducing contamination and minimising downtime. Sharing software, accessories and retrofit options with other Generation 6 models also simplifies maintenance, training and parts availability, making the BiG Pack Plus an ideal choice for customers seeking straightforward technology and strong value for money.

The BiG Pack Pro range, comprising the BP 1270 (VC), BP 1290 (VC), and BP HDP 1290 (VC), is designed for contractors and professional operators who demand maximum output, comfort and flexibility. Built for high bale volumes and challenging crop conditions, the Pro delivers high performance while minimising wear and downtime.



PICS FROM THE PLOUGHING

THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS HAVE COME AND GONE FOR ANOTHER YEAR! WONDERFUL MEMORIES REMAIN, HOWEVER, OF THE 95TH EDITION WHICH ATTRACTED 243,000 PEOPLE TO SCREGGAN IN TULLAMORE. *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY* MACHINERY EDITOR, NOEL DUNNE WAS THERE FOR IT ALL AND HE SHARES SOME OF HIS FAVOURITE MOMENTS CAUGHT ON CAMERA



The Manitou MLT 625 e, battery-powered, compact telehandler was selected as the winner of the 2026 Machine of the Year. Peter Smyth, Chloe Tapp and Garth Bryson from Manitou are presented with the award by National Ploughing Association managing director, Anna May McHugh.



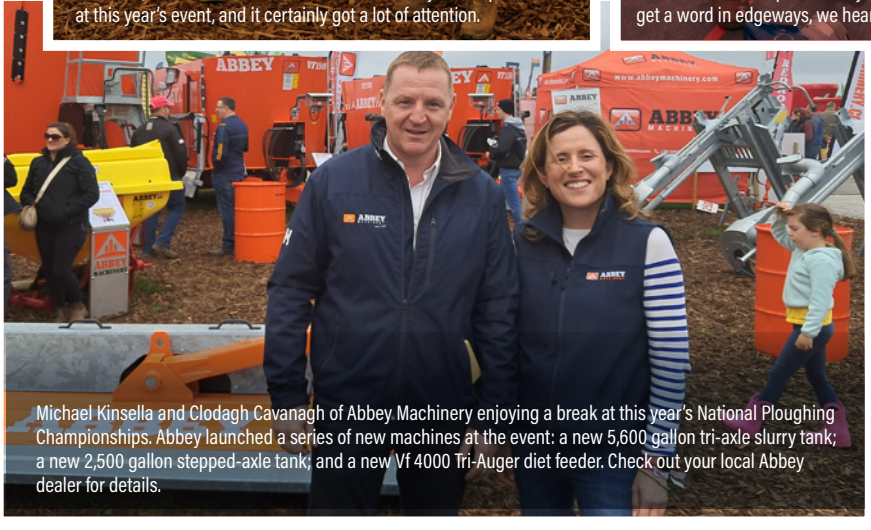
Bláthnaid Ní Chofaigh of RTÉ's Nationwide with Noel Dunne, *Irish Farmers Monthly* machinery editor, at the Argo Tractors Ireland stand at this year's National Ploughing Championships as they were just about to launch on to the Irish market the new Landini Smart Cab which featured on the new Landini Serie 7 that was on display.



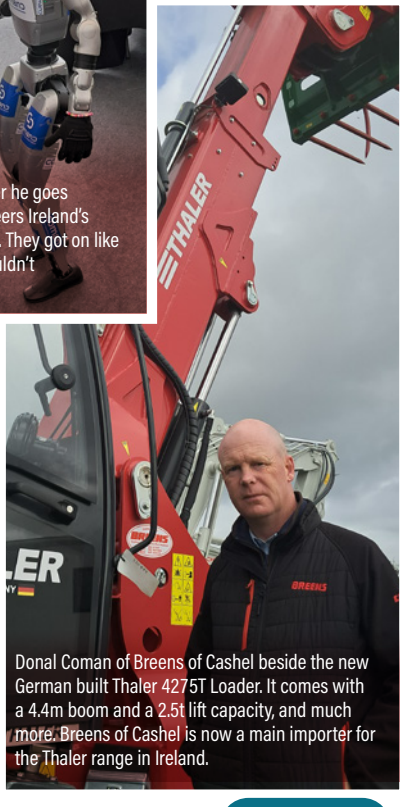
Under the shadow of the Krone Big M on the Farmhand stand are: Adrian Leech, Farmhand; Robert Murray, First Citizen Finance; Noel Dunne, *Irish Farmers Monthly* machinery editor; and Stephen Scrivener, Farmhand. Krone BIG M celebrated 30 years in production at this year's event, and it certainly got a lot of attention.



Noel Dunne makes friends wherever he goes and here he is pictured with Engineers Ireland's interactive humanoid robot, Harvey. They got on like a house on fire but poor Harvey couldn't get a word in edgeways, we hear!



Michael Kinsella and Clodagh Cavanagh of Abbey Machinery enjoying a break at this year's National Ploughing Championships. Abbey launched a series of new machines at the event: a new 5,600 gallon tri-axle slurry tank; a new 2,500 gallon stepped-axle tank; and a new Vf 4000 Tri-Auger diet feeder. Check out your local Abbey dealer for details.



Donal Coman of Breens of Cashel beside the new German built Thaler 4275T Loader. It comes with a 4.4m boom and a 2.5t lift capacity, and much more. Breens of Cashel is now a main importer for the Thaler range in Ireland.



More than 50,000 machinery models will be on display at EIMA International 2026.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO BOLOGNA FOR EIMA 2026

THE 47TH EDITION OF EIMA INTERNATIONAL, THE WORLD EXHIBITION OF AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY, TAKES PLACE IN BOLOGNA NEXT MONTH, NOVEMBER 10-14. THERE IS AN EXTENSIVE AND EXCITING LINE-UP OF EVENTS, FORUMS, MACHINERY DISPLAYS, DEMOS, ROBOTICS, LAUNCHES, AND MUCH MORE

More than 50,000 machinery models will be on display across one of the broadest product ranges on the exhibition scene, according to organisers who say that EIMA will follow the traditional format with 14 product specialisation sectors and seven thematic 'salons'. In addition to the established EIMA salons representing the likes of energy, components, digital, and green sectors, there will be new salons dedicated to organisations representing the global agricultural and agro-mechanical supply chain, and to the world of universities, research and training.

Among the other new features are Pavilion 35, constructed to the highest architectural and functional standards, organisers say, and the redesign of the outdoor areas where dynamic demonstrations take place for EIMA Energy, Tractor of the Year, Garden E-motion, Contoterzista Driver Trophy, as well as REAL, the arena dedicated to robots and highly automated machines.

There will be 650 international (foreign) exhibiting companies at EIMA 2026 – out of a total of 1,800 already confirmed – representing 45 countries. The number of foreign visitors is expected to rise compared with the previous edition (2024), which recorded over 63,000 attendances from 150 countries, out of a total of 350,000 attendances.

GEOGRAPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE

An entire section of the EIMA exhibition – known as Extend – has been designed to host public institutions, professional associations, and the organisations that make up the agri-food and agro-industrial supply chains. The conference programme features many events focusing on the specific situations of individual countries and different geographical areas. Of particular note is the conference on the theme 'Drought in African agriculture: economic and social costs' which aims to describe the current climatic and environmental emergencies facing the African continent and to analyse the repercussions these may have on the economies and social systems of many countries.

Another significant event is the Italian-Indian Day, which includes a conference on the theme 'Europe-India: the agricultural machinery markets within the free trade area.' Also highly topical is the conference on the theme 'Latin America: the trade landscape under the Europe-Mercosur agreement' which will analyse the potential of the Latin American market for the agricultural machinery sector. Other events will tackle the climate emergency, the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

An event presenting a survey on the opportunities and challenges in the use of machinery by women farmers – carried out in collaboration with the women's representatives of professional agricultural organisations – will also be held, and will be of both technical and social interest.

For more information and full details, see the EIMA International website.

MERLO RUNS PRODUCT TRAINING PROGRAMME

Merlo Ireland recently welcomed its dealer network to Naas Racecourse for an intensive two-day product sales training programme, bringing together sales professionals from across Ireland to deepen their knowledge of the latest agricultural and construction equipment.

The event, according to the company, combined classroom-based learning with extensive hands-on machine demonstrations, allowing delegates to explore the features, applications, and customer benefits of the full Merlo range.

Leading the training were Merlo's product support manager, Andy Collier and regional product manager, Fran Cullen, who guided participants through key product developments, model updates and market opportunities. Sessions covered both the agricultural and construction sectors, with practical exercises around the machines helping delegates translate technical specifications into real-world customer solutions.

"There was a huge amount of information to share, but the dealers remained fully engaged throughout the programme," said Andy. "We kept the training fresh and interactive with quizzes, discussions and hands-on demonstrations, which encouraged participation and helped bring the products to life."

For Frank Smyth, managing director of FJS Plant, the training reinforced what makes the Merlo range stand out in an increasingly competitive marketplace. "The biggest takeaway for me was fully understanding the benefits of owning a Merlo and the unique features that set them apart from competitors. There is no product on the market like it," he said.

"There is no substitute for face-to-face training and having the machines there to operate, test and demonstrate during the sessions. It gives the sales team real confidence and first-hand experience that we can pass directly on to customers."

He highlighted strong customer interest across the entire Merlo range. On the agricultural side, mid-range telehandlers continue to be the backbone of many Irish dairy and beef operations, while the MultiFarmer remains a popular choice for mixed farms and contractors thanks to its rear linkage and PTO capabilities. As the most recent addition to the Merlo Ireland dealer network, Martin Kirrane, owner at Kirrane Machinery, of Co. Mayo also saw significant value in the training. "I found the training on the agricultural machines very useful and definitely learned a few things I wasn't aware of regarding the features and specifications," he said. "At the moment we're seeing strong interest in the entry-level models such as the P27.6, and hopefully as the winter-feeding season approaches, we'll see demand spread to the larger models as well."

He added: "Training like this is invaluable, particularly when it gives us the opportunity to see and operate models we don't normally have in stock. It helps us offer customers the right machine with confidence."





Tom Murphy
Professional Agricultural Contractors of Ireland

IT'S WORTH NOTING THAT THE IRISH ROAD HAULAGE ASSOCIATION (IRHA) HAS ALREADY SENT A SHOT ACROSS THE BOWS OF GOVERNMENT WARNING OF FRESH PROTESTS

STORMY TIMES AHEAD

As we head into the winter, agricultural contractors and farmers face an uncertain time. The next Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) budget has not been set and could drag on well into 2027. One thing we can be sure of is that if the CAP budget will, once again, be reduced, it will put more financial strain on farmers with the inevitable knock-on effects for agricultural contractors.

The continuing situation in the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab-al-Mandeb strait means there is no glimmer of hope that fuel prices will stabilise. And in addition, the cost of energy, manufacturing, and transportation, etc. will also increase. It's worth noting that the Irish Road Haulage Association (IRHA) has already sent a shot across the bows of Government warning of fresh protests if plans to phase out temporary fuel support go ahead. Inflation is on the rise bringing higher interest rates, which will weigh heavily on contractors and farmers who operate on overdrafts for many months during the year.

Most worrying, is a potential food shortage, because we as a nation are not in any way self-sufficient. Ireland, according to the Irish Grain Network, imports more than 80 per cent of all its fruit and vegetables. Sources indicate that more than 60 per cent of grain required for animal feed, and around 90 per cent of milling grain flour are also imported. That is a terrible indictment on our policy makers. Now is the time to call a meeting of the National Emergency Coordination Group to work closely with the stakeholders. All cards must be put on the table as to how the Government will deal with any impending crisis. before the irresponsible rabble rousers take to the streets again.

SUSTAINABILITY

In the past, I have raised the issue of food security and sustainability, which seem to have been relegated by Government in the wake of other world crises. You don't need a university degree to see the dangers. Successive Governments have ignored this, playing the short hand that might bring short-term monetary gain and popularity but can damage the economy in the long term. In simple terms, it means the average Joe carries the real cost when politicians kick the problem down the road.

The EU and our Government should be offering incentives to grow the food we need as a nation. That is real sustainability: subsidies to build massive greenhouses, with solar panels to produce our food; support setting up local food markets around the country where fresh food can be bought; giving the farmer a fair price while giving the consumer fresh produce and value for money. And I hear people saying this is not possible? Anyone lucky enough to holiday in Europe will have visited markets, offering an array of fresh fruit, vegetables, meats, cheeses etc. As we travel around, we see vast acres of glasshouses with trucks waiting to transport the produce around the world. Anything is possible. This is possible.

Following World War 2, Britain decided to implement policies for food self-sufficiency and food security with the Agriculture Act of 1947:

- It guaranteed fixed minimum prices to farmers for core products;
- It introduced deficiency payments if prices dropped below the guarantee;
- Under the assured market policy, the Government committed to buying up domestic agricultural output, so the farmer always had a buyer; and
- Intensive modernisation saw the State heavily subsidise modern farm machinery and farming methods to increase productivity.

In the period 1950-1970, self-sufficiency rose greatly, and by the mid-1980s, reached around 80 per cent. After Britain joined the EU, it fell to around 60 per cent. Why do I refer to this? Because it clearly shows that with a determined Government, change can happen.

If Europe is really concerned about climate change and believes that agriculture is a major contributor, it must urgently rethink its agricultural policies and in doing so admit the lunacy of flying agricultural produce all around the world, and admit that doing this is a major contributor to climate change. That's without going into the Mercosur agreement, the deforestation of the Amazon forest, and mining of components for electric cars.

ICMSA



Denis Drennan
President ICMSA

REVENUE CRASH AT FARM LEVEL WILL HIT THE CONOMY

From €145m in Cork to €620,000 in Leitrim for the first six months of 2026, the scale of the collapse in milk prices in 2026 is being felt in every parish in Ireland. In addition, in the second quarter of 2026, a startling €109 million was lost by farmers on prime steers and heifers in this period in 2026 compared to the previous year based on an average of 97c/kg of a loss over this 13-week period. The total loss in milk revenues in the first six months for Ireland stands at €615m which is a massive reduction along with the dramatic drop in beef revenues. The impact of this downturn is being felt in every farming region across the EU but the absence of any response at national and EU level is hugely revealing.

RESPONSE?

What these figures do not show is the impact of the Iranian war on farm input costs, and in particular fuel and fertiliser. What has been the response of national and EU policymakers? The introduction of 'token' schemes that are not delivering meaningful support for farmers, and that border on insulting. Politicians have been saying that they want to support 'people getting up early to work' but they seem to have completely forgotten the farmer who gets up early to feed his/her cattle or sheep, milk their cows, or tend to their crops. What about the farmers who are producing food every day of the year? The response of our politicians at both national and EU level is to keep the head down and hope markets will improve, and this approach by our politicians represents appalling treatment of food-producing farmers. We are heading for a loss of €1bn in revenue on Irish dairy farms alone in 2026, further exacerbated by seriously increased fuel and fertiliser prices as well as weather related costs. The losses are absolutely massive, they are EU wide, and food producing farmers are being left in an unsustainable position that simply cannot be allowed to continue. As an example, our own Government wouldn't even consider a transport subsidy to allow farmers secure sufficient fodder for the winter, simply to take one problem away from the kitchen table. The wait-and-see policy continues and many farm families are left suffer in silence.

> THE TOTAL LOSS IN MILK REVENUES IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS FOR IRELAND STANDS AT €615M WHICH IS A MASSIVE REDUCTION

FAILED POLICY

The level of anger at farm level is growing, and from discussions at the European Milk Board (EMB) recently, this sense of anger is being felt across the EU. Put simply, the EU and our own Government cannot continue to load more regulations and costs on us and leave us to the vagaries of the marketplace. The policy of the last 20 years has failed. We need immediate policies in place to support farmers and we need a properly funded Common Agricultural Policy to support farmers going forward. People should not be surprised in relation to the generational renewal issue. Farmers, as price takers, have been left to the vagaries, loaded with regulation and the next generation are making decisions on this basis. Change is needed and simply tokenism and sound bites won't resolve this issue.

Milk revenue losses Jan-Jun 2026 relative to Jan-Jun 2025. Source: ICMSA.

County	€m
Cork	145.15
Tipperary	71.34
Limerick	46.13
Kilkenny	39.98
Kerry	37.52
Waterford	34.44
Wexford	32.60
Meath	25.83
Laois	22.14
Galway	17.84
Cavan	17.22
Offaly	16.61
Monaghan	15.99
Westmeath	13.53
Clare	12.92
Wicklow	10.46
Donegal	9.23
Kildare	8.61
Louth	8.00
Carlow	7.38
Mayo	6.77
Longford	4.92
Roscommon	4.92
Sligo	3.69
Dublin	1.23
Leitrim	0.62
Total	615.03



Sphagnum moss trials at the Palus Demos paludiculture trial site in Ballaghurt, Co. Offaly. Photo: FH Media Consulting Ltd.

THE CASE FOR PALUDICULTURE

IN THIS MONTH'S RURAL LIFE, WE HIGHLIGHT THE GROWING EVIDENCE THAT PALUDICULTURE, OR FARMING ON WET OR REWETTED PEATLANDS, MAY OFFER A DUAL SOLUTION FOR PRESERVING CARBON AND CREATING FARMING INCOME

This is the finding of a new study from Palus Demos, the €10m Horizon Europe large-scale paludiculture trial project, with farms in the UK, Ireland, and the Netherlands. The paper, *Transitioning from Degraded Peat to Paludiculture: Evidence-Based Roadmap for Research and Practice*, published recently in the journal, *Land*, is led by Lisa Jessen and Dr Florence Renou-Wilson of University College Dublin (UCD), with co authors from across the Palus Demos multistate consortium including Liverpool John Moores University, Manchester Metropolitan University, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, University of Galway and University of Amsterdam.

WHAT IS PALUDICULTURE?
Paludiculture is the sustainable productive use of wet and rewetted peat soils.

DUAL SOLUTION

'Paludiculture offers a dual solution for preserving soil carbon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions whilst offering a form of income for landowners/farmers,' the authors conclude. 'Despite paludiculture being in its infancy, it has demonstrated potential as a viable option for land managers to remain productive while maintaining important carbon, biodiversity and climate goals.' This major academic review sets out a clear path to take paludiculture from small pilots to mainstream practice, calling for largescale, multiyear field trials, specialised lowimpact harvesting equipment and functioning markets.

PALUDICULTURE 101

The authors find that most current evidence comes from short-term, small-scale sites, heavily concentrated in Germany and the Netherlands, making it hard to transfer results to other regions. The way forward, say the report's authors, is now well-defined; long-term demonstrations that follow crops from planting through several harvests,

PALUDICULTURE OFFERS A DUAL SOLUTION FOR PRESERVING SOIL CARBON AND REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

alongside targeted investment in machinery for soft peat soils and coordinated market and supplychain development.

As part of the research, the team has produced a downloadable database of information sources relevant to paludiculture activities in temperate peatlands. "This database is a valuable starting point for anyone interested in paludiculture," says Dr Renou-Wilson. "It provides the links to, and publication details of, all the published resources we found under the term 'paludiculture' and allied terms. The information is categorised under themes such as cultivation, climate, and crop species. It's a novel, labour-saving resource that provides a 'paludiculture 101' guide for any researchers and practitioners investigating this important and growing field of study and practice."

DEMO SITES

The €10m Horizon Europe Palus Demos project, led by the University of Galway, has large-scale demonstration sites in Offaly, Manchester, and the Netherlands. Researchers and practitioners across 26 partners are working together to run multiyear trials from establishment to repeated harvests, testing lowimpact harvesting approaches on peat, and codeveloping markets for paludiculture products with partners.

Palus Demos project coordinator Niall Ó Brolcháin from the University of Galway congratulated the team on this critical contribution to paludiculture research in Europe. "This research is the work of 26 partners across Europe, including soil and climate scientists, farming practitioners and conservation bodies. It's timely synthesis of the published knowledge on paludiculture at a time when we are under pressure to find and implement creative climate solutions that offer sustainable incomes from working farms."

CROP TRIALS

Paludiculture crops in the trials include sphagnum moss as a growing medium for the horticulture sector, typha reed as biomass for the construction and textile sectors and food crops such as berries and vegetables. The Palus Demos project is tracking these crops from planting through several years of harvests, working with partners to adapt harvesting equipment for wet peat soils and developing market pathways for the biomass produced. The aim is to generate the realworld data, practical solutions and commercial models needed to move paludiculture beyond pilots. Other partners on the project include Peatland Finance Ireland, Forum Connemara and Growing Media Ireland.

'Without large-scale, long-term demonstration sites that follow crops over multiple harvests, alongside targeted investment in machinery and market development, paludiculture will remain a niche option rather than a scalable climate and biodiversity solution', the authors caution. 'Further investigations into the viability of wet pastures for grazing is needed, especially for regions with a strong history of livestock farming where a transition to crop-based paludiculture may be unpopular. Ultimately the success of transitioning to wet agriculture on peat soils will hinge on the establishment of appropriate incentive frameworks that provide clear operational procedures that deliver sustainable outcomes, supporting long-term environmental benefits,' say the authors. Peatlands store one third of global soil carbon, more than the all the world's forests combined. Wet peatlands play a critical role in water regulation, flood mitigation and wildfire prevention. When drained and converted to other land uses such as agriculture, peatlands can shift from carbon sinks to major sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

UNIQUE PALUDICULTURE FAIR IN MAYO

This month (October) The Rivers Trust and South Kerry Development Partnership CLG host a PaludiFair at Killasser Community Centre, Listernan, Co. Mayo (F12 HH97), showcasing paludiculture as a new source of income for farmers and industry while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Open from 11:00 to 16:00, the free event will bring together farmers, businesses, researchers, and policymakers from Ireland and across Europe to demonstrate how wet bogs and grasslands can support crops, biomass and other products alongside climate and biodiversity goals. Paludiculture is already expanding across Europe, with pilots showing potential for diversified farm income from species such as sphagnum moss, typha, berries and food crops, carbon credits and adapted grazing systems. The PaludiFair will highlight Irish and European examples. The PaludiFair is part of the Interreg NWE BUFFER+ project, which encourages landscape-based solutions for climate adaptation by restoring the natural buffering abilities of peatlands. The project involves 21 partners and seven associated organisations from Germany, Ireland, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, representing a wide range of peatland types across North-West Europe.

The Rivers Trust is a leading environmental charity dedicated to restoring and protecting rivers across the UK and Ireland through evidence-based conservation and community-led action. Drawing on extensive scientific expertise, catchment-scale data and a network of local member trusts, The Rivers Trust works to create wild, healthy, natural rivers that are valued by everyone. Within the INTERREG BUFFER+ project, this includes trialling paludiculture, a sustainable land management approach for highly degraded peatlands, helping peat soils store more water and carbon while reducing erosion and nutrient runoff that can pollute rivers and downstream habitats. Activities undertaken by The Rivers Trust as part of BUFFER+ are co-financed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and supported by the Inishowen Rivers Trust and the River Moy Trust.

The event takes place on Thursday October 8, 2026.





MATT O'KEEFFE
EDITOR

IS DAN IN DENIAL?

Dan O'Brien, the renowned economist, insists that there is no cost-of-living crisis. He is not arguing against the reality that the cost of living has gone up and is likely to keep doing so in the months ahead. His argument is that this does not constitute a crisis.

If enough people say there is a cost-of-living crisis and no one pushes back against this mantra, then most people accept it as a fact, whatever the economic reality. Dan's contrary attitude does merit some objective reflection. It is undeniable that there are cohorts in Irish society who find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Low-income families and individuals, especially, are under economic pressure. That, however, is not a new phenomenon and does not necessarily justify the claims that we are in a cost-of-living crisis. Unlike the situation four years ago, when, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, prices and living costs increased by up to 25 per cent in some cases, annualised Irish inflation to July 2026 was 3.4 per cent. Similarly, the CSO's Consumer Price Index calculated an annualised increase up to last July of 3.4 per cent. These increases are challenging for consumers, but they hardly constitute a crisis, certainly compared to an inflation rate in 1981 in excess of 20 per cent!

EXTREME DIFFICULTY?

Presumably, if the general population were experiencing extreme difficulty meeting their day-to-day living expenses, those millions upon millions of savings in individual bank deposits would be decreasing. The opposite is the case. Savings are continuing to increase annually.



> IF ENOUGH PEOPLE SAY THERE IS A COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS AND NO ONE PUSHES BACK AGAINST THIS MANTRA, THEN MOST PEOPLE ACCEPT IT AS A FACT

Likewise, if a majority of people were experiencing severe economic pressures, discretionary spending would be falling off a cliff. The numbers of Irish people taking international leisure flights would be down. They are not. Croke Park would not have sold out in a few minutes for the Katie Taylor fight. Electric Picnic would have seen far reduced attendance numbers, or, at least, given those tickets were purchased 12 months ago, there would be a slow uptake of tickets for next year's gig in Laois. Likewise, the planned Slane Castle concert for June 2027 would not have sold out within an hour of going on sale. In fact, such was the demand for the standing-room-only tickets, costing more than €100 a pop, that a second concert with the Fontaines DC headliners was immediately organised for the following day. Hardly concrete evidence of a cost-of-living crisis?

BANDWAGONING

While Dan O'Brien uses far more sophisticated methodologies to argue against this cost-of-living crisis, these mundane, everyday-spending trends among many thousands of Irish people do seem to corroborate Dan's insistence that we are not in the midst of a crisis. Even the tánaiste has leapt on the crisis bandwagon. We are, he insists, in the middle of the worst fuel crisis the world has ever seen. He is obviously too young to remember the oil crisis of 1973-74. Now, that was a crisis. Oil prices quadrupled, and there were long queues and fuel rationing at petrol stations as the OPEC members reduced supply to squeeze consumers into coughing up more for their petrol and diesel. Yes, fuel prices have risen, but not at stratospheric levels of historically unseen proportions. Language such as that used by the tánaiste is unhelpful and only fuels the cost-of-living crisis fallacy. As a footnote to the aforementioned crisis, the Government of the day attempted to soften the impact on Irish consumers through subsidies and increased public spending. That ultimately led to the Irish economy suffering a decades-long recession, with mass unemployment, unsustainable public debt, high-double-digit interest rates and a collapse in public expenditure. History never repeats itself, so nothing to worry about!

VEHICLE RECOVERY OPERATORS

At Your Assistance Day/Night, 24/7





SIMI VRO

VEHICLE RECOVERY OPERATOR MEMBER

simi.ie

Brought to you by the
Society of the Irish Motor Industry



Let's Talk Trees

Adding value to your farm

Join us at our FREE information events
No need to register

Tuesday November 3	Thursday November 5	Tuesday November 10	Thursday November 12
7pm -10.30pm	7pm -10.30pm	7pm -10.30pm	7pm-10.30pm
The Devon Inn Templeglantine Village, Co. Limerick. **V94 H489**	Mullingar Park Hotel Dublin Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. **N91 A4EP**	Lawlor's of Naas Poplar Square, Naas, Co. Kildare. **W91 Y65N**	The Landmark Hotel Carrick-on-Shannon Co. Leitrim. **N41 N9W4**

gov.ie/ForestryForYou

teagasc
Agriculture and Food Development Authority

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine