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SEPTEMBER 2026

IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY



FOCUS
PLOUGHING
2026

INTERVIEW
GER O'BRIEN
CHAIR, TIRLÁN

BLUETONGUE
THE CASE FOR A PROACTIVE VACCINATION STRATEGY

AGRI-ECONOMICS
WHAT IS AGRICULTURE'S FUTURE DIRECTION?

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SEPTEMBER 2026

EDITORIAL



Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

FODDER PLANNING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

Not for the first time, Irish livestock farming has been placed under immense physical and financial pressures by nature.

The extended drought conditions across much of the country, which began with an absence of rain from late June in many regions, cost farmers dearly in terms of output reductions and increased input costs. While the strong grass growth in April, May, and June delivered higher fodder stocks, these have been literally eaten into in the intervening months. By mid-August the need for accurate statistics around fodder stocks was clear, with Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon requesting cooperation from farmers in compiling data around fodder reserves, generally, and estimations of fodder resilience on individual farms for next winter. Only with accurate data could actions and strategies be implemented.

While there are comparisons with previous drought impacts, most recently the 2018 experience, there are also differences. Output prices, especially on dairy farms, were higher in 2018, allowing farmers, as far as possible, to 'buy' their way through the crisis. This time around, because of low milk prices, the necessary cashflow is absent on many farms for this strategy, putting significant financial pressures on individual farms.

That's where timely financial and fodder planning is paramount. Yes, that may include short-term borrowing to secure additional fodder stocks for anticipated winter-feeding shortfalls. The co-ops have been proactive in providing extended credit terms, as well as reducing prices of concentrate feeds. While an element of this is to ensure that processing facilities continue to have strong milk flows into the autumn, there is a strong altruistic commitment as one would expect and appreciate, from farmer-owned cooperative ventures. Nevertheless, additional fodder bills have built up on farms and must be repaid over time.

The straw incorporation measure (SIM) continues to be fully subscribed. The agronomic benefits are clear and measurable. Soil fertility is improved, and carbon is stored. As has been highlighted in these pages previously, the case for a more integrated approach should be considered. Incorporated straw is a potential base fodder material for livestock when a deficit in winter feed stocks is anticipated. The challenge is in accurately predicting fodder deficits in time to redirect surplus straw production. More broadly, and putting the current fodder stresses to one side, should there be a formal mechanism put in place to allow a virtuous circle to be created where straw residues in the form of used bedding material or excreted manure can be reincorporated onto tillage lands? This already happens in an ad hoc manner where farms have both tillage and livestock enterprises and where localised arrangements are in place between livestock and tillage farmers. A broader and more formalised system would benefit everyone involved in livestock and tillage farming. The SIM is already in place. Tillage farmers are rightly vocal in protecting this funding. There should be a process to allow them to continue to benefit financially while also addressing the bigger picture.

Meanwhile, many farmers were proactive in securing additional straw stocks to buffer higher nutrition silage stocks. That, again, reflects the absolute necessity for farmers to measure and monitor their livestock feed requirements. There was some misguided criticism of Minister Heydon's insistence on developing an accurate data bank on fodder stocks in the middle of a drought before any interventions or actions were considered. It was the correct strategy and one that was mirrored by individual farmers calculating their short- and longer-term fodder requirements, the totality of stocks in place, and addressing any identified fodder deficits. Fodder security is not an occasional practice to be addressed in times of weather extremes. It is a constant requirement to ensure that our livestock sector remains sustainable across all possible challenges.

4 Upfront

6 News
Including Letter From Brussels

12 Interview: A 'Butter' Dispute
Ger O'Brien, Tirlán

14 Animal Nutrition
Resilient Dairy Systems

16 What Does The Vet Say?
Interview: Mike Burke
Vets Without Borders Ireland

18 Farm Safety
Ciaran Roche, FBD Risk Manager

20 Agri-Economics
Ciaran Fitzgerald

22 Feature
Post-drought Planning

57 Machinery

70 Animal Health
Bluetongue Vaccine

71 Management Hints

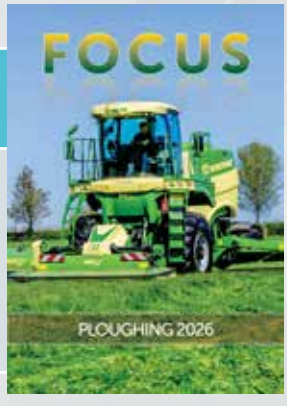
75 Opinion: ICMSA
Denis Drennan, President

76 Rural Life
The Work of Self Help Africa

78 Opinion: A Word In Your Ear
Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

29 NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026



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TRACTOR OF THE YEAR TOTY
JURY MEMBER FOR IRELAND

CARROT GROWERS SEE RED OVER PRICES

The closure of Julian Hughes's carrot production enterprise in Kilkenny earlier this year means that there are only nine commercial carrot growers left in the country, and they are warning that the economics of producing the vegetable are becoming increasingly unsustainable. Production costs have risen by almost 100 per cent since 2020 while retail carrot prices have increased by just 40 per cent over the same period. Faced with rising production costs, unsustainable market returns and increasing climate-related challenges, including recent drought conditions, growers are warning that urgent action is needed to ensure that a native supply of the vegetable is maintained.

A one-kilogramme (kg) bag of carrots currently retails for around €1.39. With an average bag containing around 10 carrots, this works out at less than 14 cent per carrot. Growers estimate that a retail price of €1.98/kg would be needed to track the cost against the Consumer Price Index (CPI) alone, which equates to 20c per carrot. The pressure has intensified as growers experience one of the driest summers in recent years. Drought conditions have increased the need for irrigation, adding significantly to fuel, labour, and operational costs. According to Teagasc, input costs for field vegetable production increased by 77 per cent between 2020 and January 2026, while drought-related pressures have added a further 13 per cent increase to input costs in the current season.



John Dockrell, vice-chair of the Irish Carrot Growers' Group and Tom Murray, from O'Shea Farms, chair of the Irish Carrot Growers' Group. Photo: Finbarr O'Rourke.

Carrots remain Ireland's most purchased vegetable, with retail sales of almost 52,000 tonnes annually and a retail market value of €66m. Irish growers currently produce up to 62,000 tonnes of carrots annually on 891 hectares.

GALLAGHER DUBLIN HORSE SHOW

The RDS opened its new Laya Arena last month, coinciding with the 151st Gallagher Dublin Horse Show. The Laya Arena is the result of a reported €59m redevelopment programme, primarily of the Anglesea Stand and Grandstand, and now boasts a capacity in excess of 20,000. Another milestone was reached in the RDS Main Arena last month with the 100th edition of the Nations' Cup, for the award of the Aga Khan trophy, one of the most celebrated competitions in international showjumping. This year, the US horses and riders pipped the Irish team for the ultimate accolade. After three clear rounds, we went into a jump off with the US team, but they emerged victorious, winning their first Aga Khan trophy since 1948.



Action at the 2026 Gallagher Dublin Horse Show as horse and rider make their way around the course in the recently opened Laya Arena. Photo: Antonio Lopes.

On a minor sidenote, it was somewhat disappointing to see multiple empty seats in the Laya Arena during the thrilling event. The empty seats must have struck a chord with thousands of attendees who could not gain access to this incredible event. Presumably, these seats were allocated to sponsors and guests? What a pity many apparently did not take up their full allocation. Perhaps the RDS should introduce a 'use it or leave it' policy to allow the arena to be jampacked as it has always been when the Irish showjumpers compete for Ireland.

The weather was amazing for the week, and Irish-bred horses were, again, a major feature with the horse show continuing its long-standing role as a showcase for Irish-bred showjumping horses. While the glamour of the main arena takes centre stage in TV coverage, especially for the Nations' Cup and the Grand Prix, much of the horse trading, networking, and showcasing of Irish-bred equines is carried out in the ancillary rings and arenas at the Ballsbridge HQ of the Royal Dublin Society.



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PUB TALK OR IRREFUTABLE LOGIC?

Much of what is discussed along the bar counter can be classified as idle banter, gossip, or hearsay. Occasionally, however, there is a comment that merits closer scrutiny. One such recent comment was dismissed when uttered but reconsidered in the course of conversation. A proposal to cull a portion of the Irish cattle herd to offset the effects of the prolonged drought, was considered by the livestock producers present. The debate, or argument, broadened as the evening went on when another 'hydrated' contributor suggested a refinement of the proposition by advocating for a global cattle cull to be considered rather than a unilateral Irish cow cull. The basis for this suggestion was that, since there is only one universal environment, only a worldwide cull would have any impact on reducing greenhouse gases. At one level, at least, there is an irrefutable logic to this line of thinking. Achieving this goal, however, would, it was generally agreed, be practically impossible, given the lack of cooperation at even the most basic level in achieving global carbon reductions and the fact that individual countries tend to think exclusively in terms of preserving their own agricultural sectors. The Devil's Advocate was not, however, to be dismissed easily and further suggested that with global cattle numbers halved, the price of beef would rise significantly, with fewer cattle delivering a more viable outcome for hard-pressed producers. Production deficits usually, though not always, deliver higher prices. Whether enough consumers would continue to buy beef at elevated prices is another consideration altogether. Beef would be a premium-priced indulgence which only well-off consumers could afford. Idle pub talk, indeed.

WHAT'S IN A TITLE?

The news that FBD Insurance is to be the title sponsor of the National Dairy Show at Millstreet next month is not a surprise. The insurance company has been the main sponsor for several years of the National Livestock Show, held as the centrepiece of the annual Tullamore Show each August. The title sponsorship has additional commercial advantages over and above the positive PR to be gleaned from associating with these key agricultural events. It allows FBD to ensure that other insurers do not encroach on its turf. In addition, it allows FBD to meet and greet existing and potential customers in a relaxed atmosphere and, while solid business may not always be completed, the contacts and leads gained are hugely important.

Meanwhile, FBD Trust, the philanthropic wing, if you like, of the FBD family, continues to dispense financial support to a range of worthy causes. The latest initiative by the charitable trust is to support an awards programme for the Irish pig sector. An often-underappreciated enterprise in the overall Irish livestock sector, pig production and processing delivers upwards of €475m in exports, coming in behind milk and bovine meat in terms of export value. The total economic impact is estimated at €1.5bn, when account is taken of jobs, feed supply and other service sectors dependent on Irish pig production. The FBD Pig Farming Awards will culminate in a special event to be held in late November, while the closing date for applications is October 15. The individual awards include categories across herd productivity, animal health and welfare, and pig unit environmental sustainability. The ultimate accolade of pig farmer of the year recognises overall excellence across performance, management, innovation and leadership. In addition to the awards, FBD Trust is also supporting the establishment of a special innovation bursary worth €10,000. The bursary will support individuals who can deliver meaningful and practical benefits to the Irish pig industry. It's designed to encourage innovation and new thinking, applied research and development and knowledge transfer and industry advancement. The bursary is open to individuals working in or contributing to the Irish pig industry, including farmers and managers, veterinarians, researchers and academics, and industry professionals involved in nutrition, genetics and animal health. Selected candidates are invited to submit a proposal outlining how they would use the funding to deliver measurable impact within the sector. The successful bursary recipient will be required to report on the outcomes of their project within nine months. Entries for the FBD Pig Farming Awards and applications for the bursary are open currently.



THE PROBLEM WITH PROVENANCE

The Irish Grain Growers' Group (IGGG) continues its campaign to promote the Irish tillage sector. As well as encouraging livestock producers to give higher consideration to Irish-produced grain in their cattle-feed profiles, especially as ongoing buffering with concentrates will be necessary right through to next spring on foot of the prolonged drought, the group also encouraged cattle farmers to make use of the high-quality straw which came off combines in the excellent harvest conditions as a fodder buffer.

The IGGG had a straightforward input to the public consultation on the Irish Whiskey Product Specification (technical file), which was scheduled to close in early September. The use of Irish grain in the Irish distilling sector has long been advocated by grain growers. Irish grain, the IGGG insists, should be treated the same as Irish milk. Imported milk would not be used to produce Irish butter or cheese, or Irish cream liquors or any other dairy product with Irish provenance. Yet, we continue to facilitate large tonnages of imported grain to be used in the distillation of Irish spirits. Nothing is ever entirely straightforward, however. The provenance of ingredients to produce Irish cream liquors, for instance, is somewhat complex if not contradictory. While there is an imperative to use Irish-sourced cream in their composition, that stricture does not extend to the exclusive use of Irish grain ingredients in the distillation of the whiskey used in their manufacture. Yes, Irish whiskey is a key ingredient in Irish cream liquors but dig a little deeper and you find there is no necessity to use solely Irish ingredients in the manufacture of the Irish whiskey itself. Of course, that observation can be carried to any length. Irish milk and beef production is supported by imported grains. Likewise, Irish grass and grain crops are supported by imported chemical fertilisers. Where would it stop in terms of defining food provenance as exclusively Irish if all aspects of production were taken into account? Perhaps it's best not to delve too deeply or become too rigid in our definitions of Irish food provenance.



Damien O'Reilly
EU Affairs and Communications Manager, ICOS

LETTER FROM BRUSSELS

On Friday June 26 last, I closed my office door after a long and busy week. The Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) national council had been in town along with other Irish visitors and we had busy COPA & COGECA presidency meetings. What is notable about that day is that it's arguably the hottest day I can ever remember, and that is coming from somebody who has been to Singapore, Vietnam, and Saudi Arabia among other countries. Feeling lazy, I decided to go for something to eat only to discover that bars and restaurants had closed their outdoor dining areas and their kitchens due to the extreme heat. It was touching 38 degrees at 7pm!

Europe has been on fire this summer and, in the claustrophobic concrete streets of Brussels throughout late June, July, and early August, it was quite unbearable at times and a stark reminder that climate change is very much part of our lives. Belgium, like Ireland, is not prepared for such heat insofar as there are few homes or apartments with air conditioning, which are commonplace in hotter countries. The EU quarter in Brussels is virtually deserted anyway during the month of August. Some of the aforementioned bars and restaurants close for two or three weeks as regular customers working in the 'bubble' head off on holiday. It can be quite eerie.

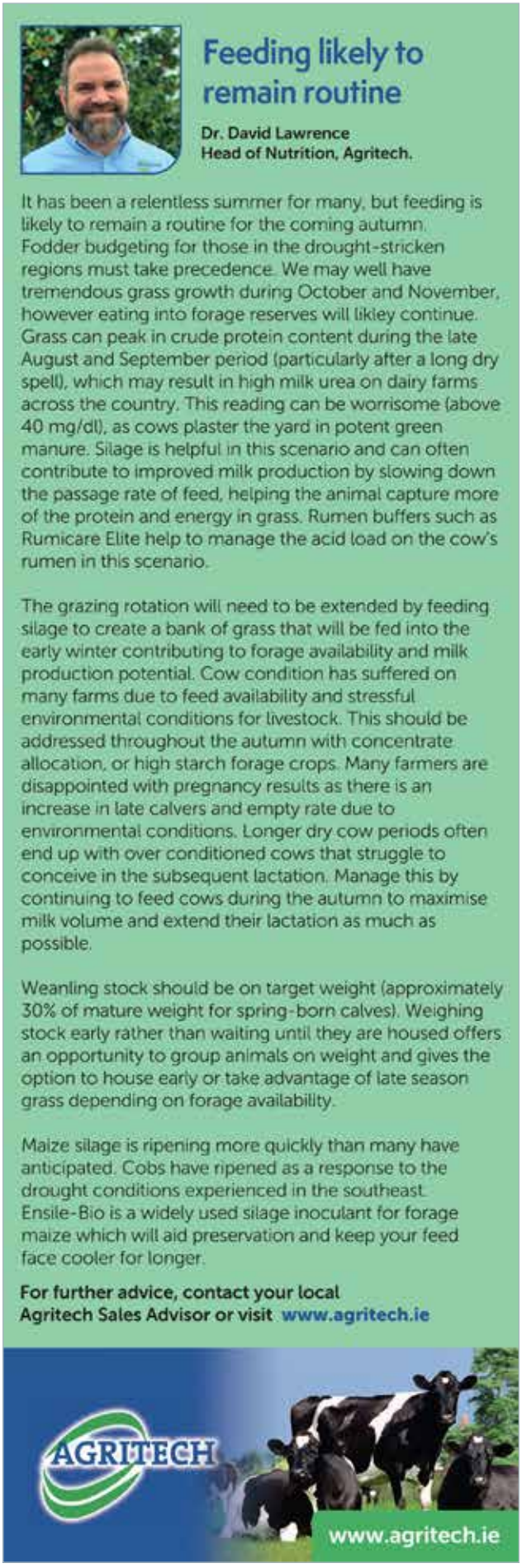
For the Irish presidency of the EU, it means that the six-month term is, in reality, a five-month term with little by way of meetings or events happening.

But now we are into September, and the engines of power are cranking up again. It is going to be a hectic and important few months. EU agriculture ministers are in Ireland for a three-day informal summit during which we will begin hearing more debate and discussion in earnest about the future direction of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post-2027. There are plenty of controversial proposals for the shape of the next CAP, not least the funding of it. That will be determined, of course, by what the overall EU budget 2027 will look like. And, at prime-ministerial level, Micheál Martin will find himself chairing critical and tense meetings of his fellow heads of government across the table from the EU Commission regarding the Multiannual Financial Framework.

As pointed out many times in this column recently, security and defence are going to be front and centre in any discussion about where EU funds will be channelled over the next eight or nine years; and this is going to eat into the CAP budget. But farmers and MEPs have not given up the ghost and are holding firm for a CAP package that is well funded with the argument being that food security is vital in any discussion about resilience and defence.

Fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a rocky ride.

icos
Irish Cooperative Organisation Society







InTouch

CATHAL BOHANE
HEAD OF INTOUCH NUTRITION

MANAGING FORAGE SHORTFALLS AFTER DROUGHT

The recent weather has been extremely challenging. Drought conditions stopped grass growth across much of the country, forcing many farms into winter-feeding mode earlier than planned. The once reliable temperate climate, with a little of everything, now seems to be giving way to sharper extremes of heat, cold, and moisture. Climate reports suggest this may become more common, with summer rainfall reducing by 8 per cent and autumn/winter rainfall increasing by 10 per cent.

Even in the regions that have received rain, the following growth rates of 30kg to 40kg DM/ha/day will take several weeks to build meaningful covers. This is a double-edged position, as August and September are normally the months when farms build grass covers to extend rotations later into the season.

SILAGE STOCKS

Silage stocks are also a concern heading into the real winter period. Some farms that expected a third cut will not achieve it and may already have used part of their second cut. The immediate priority should be to complete a realistic feed budget based on animal numbers, expected feeding days, and actual forage available. It will not be exact, but it will give a useful ballpark figure. Acting now gives more options and should be more cost-effective than waiting until later in the year. Some solutions to possible shortfalls, in no specific order, are outlined as follows:

- Silage is the obvious replacement, but price and quality must be checked carefully. It may be simple and straightforward to source, but it can become the most expensive option.
- Alternative forages such as maize, beet, and whole crop can work well on price and quality, especially for finishing cattle or where extra feed is needed for winter or spring milk.
- Moist feeds can be useful in a balanced diet. Price them on dry matter and protein value and manage storage carefully to avoid significant wastage and animal health issues.
- Extra concentrate can reduce forage demand and support performance. In some cases, it may be cheaper and easier to feed than other replacements.
- Straw provides fill, with each kilogramme replacing roughly 4kg of forage, but it is low quality and needs to be balanced with concentrates.
- Fibre straights such as soya hulls or palm kernel can help, but after 2kg to 3kg their fill value drops, and extra bulk may still be required.

In many situations if you have a shortfall of less than 100t, focus on straw and concentrates. If your shortfall is greater than this, look towards a forage/forage replacement.

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NATIONAL RETAILERS COMMIT TO SUPPORTING IRISH GROWERS

Aldi, Dunnes Stores, Lidl, Marks & Spencer, SuperValu/ Centra and Tesco have committed to the principles of a new horticulture retail charter. Developed as part of the National Strategy for Horticulture 2023-2027, it marks an industry-wide effort to support the long-term sustainability of Irish horticulture growers and the continued availability of locally grown produce for Irish consumers. The National Strategy for Horticulture 2023-2027 committed to the development of a written charter between growers and retailers. The Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) has led on the effort to identify the key principles that underpin the charter. Steered by the Horticultural Industry Forum (HIF) sub-committee comprising of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc, Bord Bia and the IFA, and chaired by grower representative Orla McManus, the horticulture grower retail charter seeks to strengthen relationships across the horticulture supply chain and create a more resilient future for Irish growers, retailers and consumers.

In 2025, the Irish horticulture sector contributed an estimated €652m in farm gate value and supported more than 18,000 families through employment in primary production and the wider supply chain. The Charter aims to encourage a trading environment that supports the long-term production and availability of Irish-grown fruit, vegetables and horticultural produce in response to the challenges faced by the sector including climate change, increasing costs, and major geopolitical disruption.

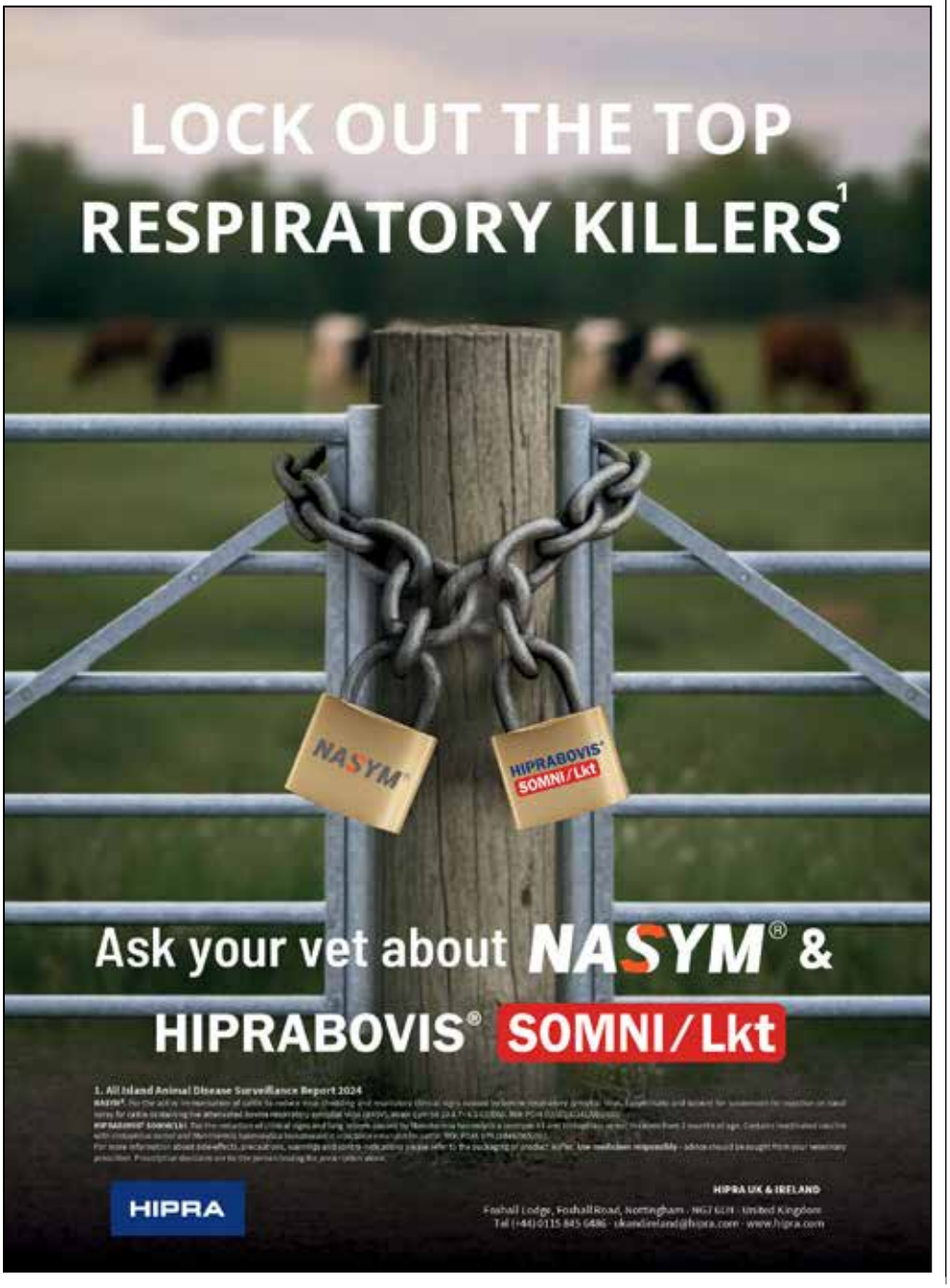
Recent Bord Bia research into fresh produce found that the retail environment has the biggest potential for impact on growth with 36 per cent of consumers saying that promotions and loyalty incentives motivate their fresh produce shopping habits, underlining the important role retailers play in supporting and promoting fresh produce.

The retail charter establishes five key principles intended to support a stronger and more sustainable horticulture sector:

- Fair and consistent engagement between retailers and growers;
- Fair and unambiguous promotion of Irish produce;
- Greater focus on long-term relationships across the supply chain;
- Sustainable approaches to cost inputs that reflect the realities and challenges of production; and
- Collaboration to reduce food loss and waste.

By committing to these principles, retailers, growers and industry stakeholders aim to strengthen confidence across the sector, encourage long-term planning and investment, and help ensure consumers continue to have access to high-quality Irish-grown produce.

Following agreement of the principles, the charter has been submitted to and is subject to review by the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) for its consideration.



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Tirlán FarmLife



A 'BUTTER' DISPUTE

GER O'BRIEN, THE RECENTLY ELECTED CHAIR OF TIRLÁN, DISCUSSED HIS AMBITIONS FOR THE CO-OP WITH MATT O'KEEFFE, INCLUDING THE CONTROVERSIAL DECISION TO SUPPLY OWN-BRAND BUTTER TO US SUPERMARKET GIANT, COSTCO

Ger O'Brien, chair, Tirlán.

Three months after his appointment as chair of Tirlán, Ger O'Brien found himself at the helm of a co-op in a 'butter' dispute with Ornua. The former reserves its right to supply own-brand butter to US supermarket giant, Costco. The latter, parent of the €1bn Kerrygold butter brand, is less than enamoured by the decision made by a co-op that, ironically, not only supplies milk to Ornua to make Kerrygold, but is its biggest shareholder. Farming organisations have weighed in on the matter with their key concern being the farmers who supply both Tirlán and Ornua, and the returns that they get for doing so. The worry is that Tirlán's partnership with Costco will, ultimately, weaken the Kerrygold brand, with the term 'race to the bottom' being used by Irish Farmers' Association president, Francie Gorman. Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association president, Denis Drennan, claimed that the move would lead to the 'potential self-destruction at marketing level' of Irish butter in the US market.

But Ger's take on this is that the US market is big enough for a greater spread of grass-fed Irish butter without negatively impacting Kerrygold's status. "The US is a huge market," he says. "Tirlán launched Truly Grass Fed in the US in 2019 to respond to growing consumer demand for high-quality grassfed butter and to create new value-added routes to market for our milk. Since Truly Grass Fed's US retail launch, Kerrygold has continued to grow strongly in both volume and value terms. As Ornua's largest shareholder, Tirlán remains highly supportive of the organisation and continues to engage constructively," Ger adds. And he is unapologetic about Tirlán's responsibility to its suppliers: "Our farmers have grown milk volumes by over 90 per cent since 2015. When opportunities arise that create additional value from our grass-fed milk, and complement existing routes to market, Tirlán has a responsibility to evaluate them on behalf of our members. That's why we have agreed a multi-year contract to supply grass-fed butter from Ballyragget for sale through Costco's private-label Kirkland Signature brand."

Ger disagrees that price is the primary differentiator and insists the grassfed standard is the key differential and primary driver: "If Tirlán were to decline this opportunity, it is likely that Costco would source those grass-fed volumes elsewhere, either in Ireland or most likely from New Zealand. Tirlán is now one of a number of suppliers of grass-fed butter for the Kirkland brand. As consumer demand for grass-fed dairy grows, retailers are increasingly

> **DO IRISH CO-OPS NEED TO BE AMONG THE TOP-20 GLOBAL MILK PROCESSORS, AS SOME OF OUR EUROPEAN COUNTERPARTS ASPIRE TO? I DON'T THINK SO**

DAIRY FARM PARTNERSHIP
Hailing from Camphire, Cappoquin, Co. Waterford, Ger is a dairy farmer in partnership with his wife, Alice. "We have 150 acres there with 140 cows. There's one full-time employee and we've a young woman that comes in on the weekends," he explains.

investing in premium private-label grass-fed offerings. Private label US butter now has 33 per cent market share."

Ger's progress through the Tirlán representative structures provided him with a strong base for his current role. He joined the board in June 2018 and served as vice-chair from May 2024 to May 2025. He says: "I have always been interested in the co-op movement and I enjoy representing members and advancing their issues. I joined our local advisory committee 24 years ago. A vacancy for a council seat came up in 2016 and the following year, an opportunity arose to sit on the board and I've been there since."

His involvement has coincided with quite seismic changes in the structure and role of the co-op, as he explains: "I was farming through the period of evolution from Avonmore/ Waterford to Glanbia, and finally the transition to Tirlán, where the co-op took over the Irish dairy assets of Glanbia Plc. A lot of change but change for the better.

"Our milk-processing assets are top class. We've invested almost €800m in the past decade without the need for a member contribution. Right now, we are 'maxed' out in processing capacity. At peak, we process 98 million litres and that's up from 54 million litres in 2015. We're trying to manage the shoulders now to get more milk off-peak, extending our production and processing season."

Commenting on the low profit margin on which the co-op operates, he says: "It takes a margin of 1.6 per cent. Everything else goes back out to the farmer. When the drought developed, we introduced a scheme to support our producers and we extended that last month."

In June, Tirlán committed to three-month milk price indicators to provide some assurance to producers, explains Ger: "We added another half cent per litre to top up the March to June price when markets improved marginally. But the way it's looking at the moment, 38c/L is the very top of the market. We thought a couple of months ago that milk supply would tail off, but it doesn't seem to be happening. Droughts have affected European supply, but not enough to move prices. US production is driving on, up 2 per cent this year. In terms of the general commodities, it is all about protein. Butter and cheese are under pressure, and you must remember, they account for 50 per cent of our volume. But there are opportunities in proteins and a new investment in protein production at Ballyragget will help. Ultimately, the protein element, including WPI, currently makes up 20,000 tonnes, out of a total production of 400,000 tonnes. Our expansion will double our protein output to 40,000 tonnes. That puts things in perspective."

> **WE'VE INVESTED ALMOST €800M IN THE PAST DECADE WITHOUT THE NEED FOR A MEMBER CONTRIBUTION**

DIVERSIFICATION

Tirlán has a dedicated fund to invest in non-core opportunities. Ger is pragmatic in regard to the 'what, when, and where' of investing the fund: "We sold Glanbia Plc shares to create the fund. The money gained is earning about the same as Plc share dividends at the moment and its liquid so available at short notice if an opportunity arises. It's about spreading the risk, taking our shareholding in the Plc down from 17 per cent down to 13.2 per cent. James McCarthy, our chief information officer, regularly brings projects to the board. Two proposals, in particular, came close to being pursued, but to date, nothing has materialised as a definite investment.

"We have identified opportunities within the business as well over the last few years. The knowledge built up in looking at potential investment options led to the project for more high value WPI. So, we're not sitting doing nothing. We're not being complacent."

COOPERATION OR CONSOLIDATION

The case for improving Irish milk-processing efficiencies, generally, was addressed by the Tirlán chair: "We work collaboratively to make savings and find synergies with other co-ops. We work closely with Dairygold, processing some milk for them and they do the same for us from time to time. There can be further synergies, but it's about a meeting of minds, really. Do Irish co-ops need to be among the top-20 global milk processors, as some of our European counterparts aspire to? I don't think so. We're the biggest processor in the country. We have a good relationship with most of the co-ops around Ireland. it's really about making the best use of assets at the production shoulders. That's where savings are to be made. We have been talking to other processors around that."

GENERATIONAL RENEWAL

Ger is personally well aware of the need to encourage new milk producers: "We have four adult children, none of whom are involved, or likely to be involved in farming. Tirlán put €15m into a generational renewal fund last year. We've got 42 new entrants in from that in less than a year. The average age of a Tirlán supplier is 57. That has to come down. We're removing obstacles and putting as many supports as possible in place to encourage generational renewal. We're open for business for the young generation, looking at options including partnerships, or whatever, in the future. The model for production can vary. A fair amount of our suppliers have no successor identified. When they want to step back there should be options to keep the business operating. There are definitely opportunities there. The Land Mobility Agency has a big role to play here, and we have to look outside the box a bit. Labour availability for larger herds is an issue. There are ways and means around it including adopting available technologies to reduce workload and time involved in producing milk. Collars and automated drafting are obvious examples."

> **WHEN OPPORTUNITIES ARISE THAT CREATE ADDITIONAL VALUE FROM OUR GRASS-FED MILK [...] TIRLÁN HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO EVALUATE THEM ON BEHALF OF OUR MEMBERS**

FLEXIBILITY: THE FOUNDATION OF A RESILIENT DAIRY SYSTEM

AGAINST A BACKDROP OF CHALLENGING DROUGHT CONDITIONS, ADAM HANRATTY, KEENAN IRELAND SALES MANAGER, DISCUSSES THE ROLE OF THE KEENAN FEEDING SYSTEM IN MAINTAINING MILK YIELD WHILE EXTENDING GRASS ROTATION LENGTHS

The last number of seasons have highlighted one important lesson for Irish dairy farmers; every grazing system needs flexibility.
While grass remains the cheapest and most valuable feed on Irish farms, increasingly unpredictable weather means there will be periods when cows simply cannot get enough grass, whether it's due to saturated ground conditions in early spring or prolonged drought during the summer.
After a challenging summer marked by prolonged drought and declining grass growth, farmers who turned to the Keenan feeding system to incorporate greater levels of silage, straw, and targeted energy sources like Irish grains into their animals' diets, were not disappointed. This balanced approach has helped maintain milk yield while extending grass rotation lengths, allowing farmers to make the most of limited grazing without compromising herd performance.

MILK YIELD

As the year goes on, maintaining milk yield is of the utmost importance as we head into late lactation. Losing milk yield at this time of the year is not alone a loss of income but may also be a sign that cows are not being fed properly. Work carried out in UCD Lyons Estate has shown that cows that are supplemented in late lactation (versus pasture only) had better milk production, body condition, and are more feed efficient.
It's equally important to begin planning for the dry-cow period. Developing a feed budget early allows farmers to assess silage stocks, identify potential shortfalls and put a practical feeding strategy in place, ensuring dry cows are managed efficiently while preserving valuable forage for the milking herd. With this year's challenging growing conditions, silage stocks may come under pressure. Stretching forage during the dry cow period has become more important than ever. Incorporating straw into a balanced mixed ration is an effective way to conserve valuable high-quality silage for the milking herd, while still meeting the nutritional requirements of dry cows. The inclusion of 1kg of straw in a dry cow diet can replace 4kg of silage in the diet, therefore allowing us to stretch fodder stocks.

FIRST-TIME CUSTOMER
First-time Keenan customer, Damien Moore from Co. Kildare praised the flexibility of the machine in his first year of using it: "Meeting our cows' needs allowed us to stretch our silage stocks for an additional six weeks."

The mechanics of the Keenan machine has allowed the incorporation of high quantities of straw or long material to the mix in a consistent manner. Earlier research of these diets on up to 25,000 cows in several countries has shown major health benefits in the avoidance of metabolic issues by as much as 50 per cent to 80 per cent, resulting in an average benefit per cow of €51.
The results speak for themselves. Analysis of Keenan/InTouch grass-based customers during 2025 showed an average production of 548kg of milk solids per cow. In comparison, national Irish Cattle Breeding Federation figures averaged 443kg of milk solids per cow between 2022 and 2024, a difference



Developing a feed budget early allows farmers to assess silage stocks and identify potential shortfalls.

of 105kg of milk solids per cow. Based on an average milk value of €5.33 per kilogramme of milk solids in today's market, that equates to an additional €560 per cow every year. These figures compare a specific group of Keenan/InTouch customers with national averages and do not, by themselves, prove cause and effect. They demonstrate the level of performance being achieved on many well-managed farms using the system while also maintaining low levels of concentrates.

TARGETS

A significant proportion of this advantage is created during the first weeks of lactation. Freshly calved cows experience a rapid increase in nutrient demand, and their ability to achieve high dry matter intakes early has a major influence on peak milk yield. A consistent, highly palatable mixed ration helps cows reach target intakes more quickly, supporting rumen function during this critical transition period. By reaching peak production sooner and maintaining that peak for longer, cows produce more milk solids across the entire lactation, rather than simply chasing production later in the season.

This early lactation advantage becomes even more valuable in Irish grass-based systems where weather often dictates management decisions. During wet springs, grazing opportunities can be limited and grass intakes reduced. Rather than allowing cows to lose momentum, a Keenan mixed ration bridges the nutritional gap, helping maintain intakes until grazing conditions improve. Later in the year, if grass growth slows due to drought, the same flexibility allows farmers to introduce silage, straw and additional energy sources while extending grazing rotations and protecting valuable grass covers.

WINTER READY

Before winter feeding begins, it's important to ensure your Keenan is ready for the season ahead. A pre-winter service helps maximise reliability during the busiest feeding period of the year, reducing the risk of costly breakdowns when the machine is needed most. Checking wear items such as paddle rubbers and blades is equally important, as these components play a vital role in producing the correct MechFiber mix. Worn parts can reduce mix quality, affecting ration consistency, cow intakes and ultimately herd performance and health.

As weather patterns become increasingly unpredictable, successful dairy farms will be those that can adapt rather than react. Having the flexibility to adjust diets quickly, utilise home-grown forage efficiently and maintain production through challenging periods provides peace of mind and protects profitability.

KEENAN AT THE PLOUGHING

Farmers attending this year's National Ploughing Championships are encouraged to visit the Keenan stand where the team will be showcasing the latest MechFiber Plus range and the new InTouch 4th Generation Controller, demonstrating how precision feeding technology continues to help farmers improve efficiency, consistency and herd performance. The Keenan and Alltech teams are always available to work with farmers to assess forage stocks, discuss feeding options, and develop a strategy that delivers the best performance from the feeds available.



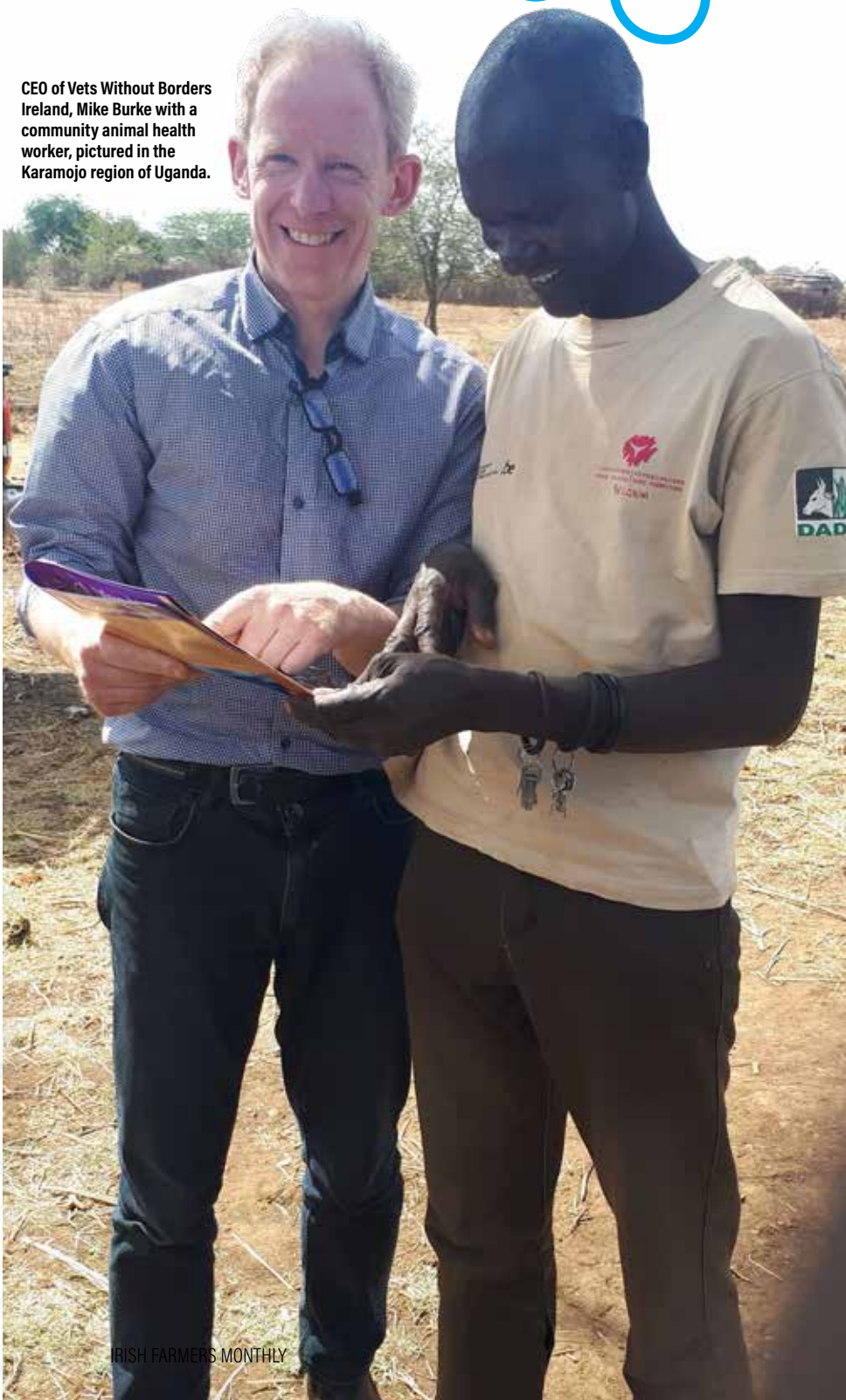
'OUR PROJECTS ALWAYS HAVE GENDER EQUITY AS A FOCUS'

IN PART ONE 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, AND HOW HE GOT INVOLVED IN THIS VOLUNTARY VETERINARY WORK MORE THAN 20 YEARS AGO

Mike has been involved with Vets Without Borders Ireland since 2004 and it has taken him on some wonderful adventures where he has put his professional experience and pig-health expertise to important use in various parts of the world. But his story begins in west Limerick where his upbringing was partly influential in the direction his professional life would take – that, and a particular TV show. He explains: "I grew up on a dairy farm in west Limerick, so it was an interest in animals, seeing our local vets at work, and watching All Creatures Great and Small, which was huge at the time, that initially sparked my curiosity." Later, he says, the variety of work, meeting farmers and the problem-solving element cemented his attraction to the job.

Mike started working with pigs, he says, in 1997 and it led to his introduction to Vets Without Borders when its founder, the late Brendan Mimnagh, reached out to him. "Brendan asked me to travel with him to Malawi to deliver a pig-husbandry course to new pig farmers on a livestock project there," Mike says. He continues: "This was my first time in Africa, so it was incredibly interesting and as we were working in very rural areas, I was seeing a side of the continent that tourists never see.

"Visiting these projects, what I found inspiring was how the gift of a cow or pig to a rural family could transform their lives. A cow provided not only milk for the household but fertiliser for the vegetable patch, a calf for sale that generated income and, in some cases, farmers had mini-biogas plants which provided gas for basic lighting and cooking. As a vet, seeing how important it was that these livestock were healthy and how challenging this was in these regions made me more determined to get more involved, so here I am more than 20 years later."



CEO of Vets Without Borders Ireland, Mike Burke with a community animal health worker, pictured in the Karamojo region of Uganda.

GOAT FARMS IN NEPAL

More recently, Vets Without Borders Ireland has been working with goat farmers in Nepal's Kaski District. Mike tells us a little about that: "Due to the very small size of their holdings – they have, on average, four goats per farm – and socio-economic constraints, there are deficiencies in how these goats are bred, fed, and housed. They have poor market access, often selling their surplus goats to middlemen at low prices. Veterinary services in these rural areas are almost non-existent."

> **AS A VET, SEEING HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS THAT THESE LIVESTOCK WERE HEALTHY AND HOW CHALLENGING THIS WAS IN THESE REGIONS MADE ME MORE DETERMINED TO GET MORE INVOLVED**

Vets Without Borders Ireland partnered with the Animal Health Training and Consultancy Service (AHTCS), which is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation established to enhance the living conditions of marginalised communities there. Together, both organisations are working to empower farmers there to be more self-reliant. Mike explains what that means: "Self-reliance looks like a farmer who has a working knowledge of the good husbandry practices of goat keeping, who is aware of the nutritional and welfare requirements of his animals, and who has a community animal health worker, or 'village vet' as they are often called, available locally for advice and essential veterinary care."

EMPOWERING WOMEN

The organisation is also involved in empowering women through goat farming in Bangladesh "Earlier this year we collaborated with Vets Without Borders Sweden in training 20 marginalised and unemployed women in basic goat keeping practices to enable them to create a backyard goat enterprise that would generate an income. At the end of the course they were each provided with a female goat and the group shared two buck goats for breeding," Mike explains.

This year has been designated International Year of the Woman Farmer by the United Nations, and it is this type of project that really champions the role of women in farming and helps to break down the significant challenges they face. Mike explains: "Women produce 60-80 per cent of the food consumed locally, in low-to-middle-income countries, but own less than 20 per cent of the world's agricultural land and have limited access to irrigation, tools, credit, and other services. Our projects, like the intervention in Bangladesh, always have gender equity as a focus to try to address this imbalance. In addition, many studies have shown that when women's incomes rise, a very large share is reinvested in their families' health, nutrition, and education so targeting women in these countries gives a better return in development terms."

VÉTÉRINAIRES SANS FRONTIÈRES

Vets Without Borders Ireland is a member of Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF) International, which enables it to collaborate, share expertise, and extend the scope of its good work.

Mike comments: "We are a small organisation compared to some of the other members of the network so being part of this alliance allows us to access their experience and expertise to help us grow. It also allows us to collaborate on projects with other members of the network and this sharing of our resources allows us to make a more effective use of our funds. At present, we are working with VSF Sweden in Bangladesh and VSF Netherlands in Malawi and we hope to develop these relationships over the coming years."

Vets Without Borders Ireland was established by the late Brendan Mimnagh (1948-2024) in 1999 as Volunteers in Irish Veterinary Assistance (VIVA) and has been recently renamed Vets Without Borders Ireland to align with Vétérinaires Sans Frontières International/Vets Without Borders International. Vets Without Borders Ireland is an Irish non-profit organisation working to improve the health and lives of livestock farmers and their communities in the developing world. Since 1999, it has raised and donated over €1 million and 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.

Part two of this interview will feature in the October issue of *Irish Farmers Monthly*.





BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE WORK: PUTTING SAFETY FIRST

SOME OF THE LARGEST LIABILITY CLAIMS RECEIVED BY FBD ARISE FROM ACCIDENTS DURING FARM CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE WORK. CIARAN ROCHE, FBD RISK MANAGER, HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF A SAFETY-FIRST APPROACH TO SUCH PROJECTS

One of the most effective ways to reduce risk is to engage experienced, competent, and fully insured contractors. Professional contractors have the skills, equipment, and safety knowledge needed to complete work safely and efficiently. Farmers must appoint, in writing, designated project supervisors for the design process (PSDP) and project supervisors for the construction stage (PSCS) in cases where:

1. More than one contractor is involved;
2. There is a particular risk; and
3. The project will take longer than 30 days or require more than 500-person days.

Jobs that might require project supervisors include those that pose a higher risk, such as:

- Working on a fragile roof or repairing an asbestos roof (risk of falling from a height);
- Tank excavations (risk of being buried);
- Works near high-voltage power lines, for example, building a shed on a site which has existing power lines;
- The setting up or taking down of heavy parts, for example, in the construction of slatted tanks, or assembly of slatted floors or steel structures; and
- The removal of asbestos.

WORKING AT HEIGHT – A SERIOUS RISK

Falls from height remain one of the leading causes of serious injuries and fatalities in agriculture. Common incidents include falls from ladders through fragile roof sheets, skylights, and other unprotected openings. Before any work at height begins, the risks should be carefully assessed and appropriate controls put in place. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Regulations promote a clear hierarchy of control:

- Avoid working at height wherever possible;
- Prevent falls by using suitable access equipment and safety measures; and
- Minimise the consequences of a fall through the use of fall-arrest systems and other protective equipment.

Good planning and preparation can significantly reduce the likelihood of an accident. Key safety measures include:

- **Planning and supervising the work**
  Ensure all work is properly planned, organised, and supervised from start to finish.
- **Creating a safe working environment**
  Work areas should be stable, secure, and free from hazards.
- **Monitoring weather conditions**
  Rain, wind, ice, and poor visibility can make construction and maintenance tasks significantly more dangerous, particularly when working at height.
- **Ensuring proper training**
  Anyone involved in the work should be trained and competent to carry out tasks assigned to them.
- **Inspecting equipment regularly**
  Ladders, scaffolding, access platforms, harnesses, and lifting equipment should be maintained and inspected regularly.
- **Protect people below**
  Put measures in place to prevent tools, materials or debris from falling and causing injury below.

DON'T OVERLOOK INSURANCE

Before construction or maintenance work starts, it is important to ensure that the appropriate insurance cover is in place. This can provide protection against legal liability if an accident occurs involving:

- Farm employees;
- Contractors and their employees;
- Delivery drivers;
- Visitors; and
- Members of the public.

Remember, hiring an insured contractor does not automatically mean you are protected against all potential claims. Liability can still arise in certain circumstances, so understanding your own insurance cover is essential.

FINAL THOUGHT

Careful planning, fully insured and competent contractors, proper supervision, and appropriate insurance cover can help protect everyone on site and reduce the likelihood of costly accidents.

For more farm safety information, scan the code:

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Ciaran Fitzgerald
Agri-food economist

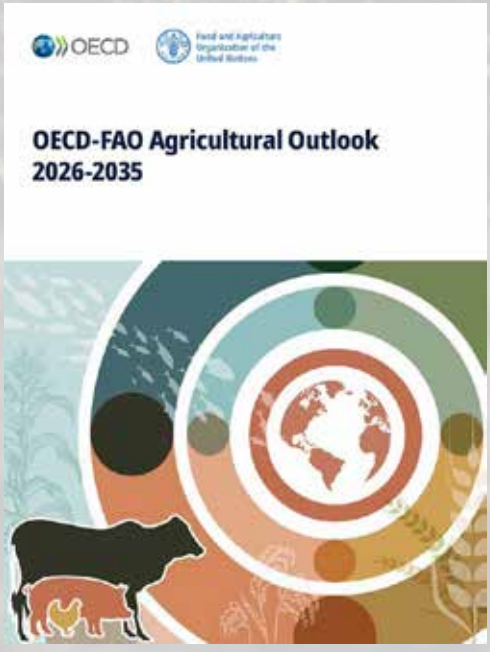
THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF IRISH AGRICULTURE

AGRI-FOOD ECONOMIST, CIARAN FITZGERALD, ASKS WHETHER THE FUTURE OF IRISH AGRICULTURE WILL TAKE THE DIRECTION OF MANAGED TRANSITION, NEGLECTED DECLINE, OR SELF DESTRUCTION

Loss of the nitrates derogation would significantly damage Irish agriculture and the broader Irish economy. Moreover, given the reality of the increasing global demand for grass-fed meat and dairy products, as set out most recently in the *OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2026-2035*, suppression of food production in regulated regions like Ireland/Europe could lead to scarcity of food in the lowest-income regions globally, given price and market volatility due to global conflicts. Food production suppression in the EU would also result in an increase in overall emissions from global agricultural production.

QUANTIFYING THE FINANCIAL LOSS

According to research carried out by Teagasc, the impact on the Irish dairy sector and, ultimately, the Irish economy if full derogation were lost, would be a volume reduction of 1.2 billion litres of milk output, annually. This is the equivalent to an €800m financial loss in Irish dairy industry output value. More information on this can be accessed in Teagasc's report, titled *Environmental and economic modelling of the impact of adjustments in the maximum stocking rates permitted under Ireland's nitrates derogation*. Further analysis by Ernst & Young (EY), commissioned by Dairy Industry Ireland (DII), estimated a cumulative negative impact across the Irish economy of €45bn over 10 years. In addition, with 60 per cent of beef animals coming from the dairy herd, EY quantified the knock-on reduction in beef production alone as a loss of up to €400m per annum.



The OECD-FAO report provides a comprehensive assessment of national, regional, and global agricultural commodity markets over the next 10 years.

> **THE IMPACT ON THE IRISH DAIRY SECTOR IF FULL DEROGATION WERE LOST, WOULD BE A VOLUME REDUCTION OF 1.2BN LITRES OF MILK OUTPUT ANNUALLY**

CATTLE-CLEANSING AGENDA

Moreover, given the seemingly zealous appetite of some environmental groups for judicial reviews, this loss of livestock numbers would unlikely be the last. We need only look at the ongoing decline in beef cow numbers for confirmation of the ongoing incremental reductions in the Irish cattle herd. One peculiar aspect of these judicial reviews in which Government and EU policy and strategy are brought into question, is that the organisations engaged in these legalistic pursuits are, for the most part, funded by the same Government whose policies they are questioning.

And, again, while the pursuit of the abolition of livestock farming seems to be the single biggest issue for many environmental groups, unfortunately their clarion call for suppression of Irish agricultural output is compounded by indifference and ignorance as to the true economic impact of the agri-food sector among many policy makers and economic gurus. This attitude is presumably driven by a belief that Ireland's smart economy doesn't need traditional local industry anymore.

CRITICAL ROLE OF FARMERS

As I have said previously, faced with this combination of prejudice and ignorance, Irish agriculture must dramatically improve the communication of its current and future Irish economic relevance, while also focusing on delivering the compliance parameters required to secure a continuing extension of the nitrates derogation. In that context, the most egregious nail in the Irish agricultural coffin must not come as a result of non compliance with derogation rules. What an own goal that would be, with

livestock producers having only themselves to blame.

Very clearly, making nutrient management a formal part of the purchase contracts for beef and dairy farmers, in addition to completion of the EIP projects, are key measures, not just in terms of underpinning the quid pro quo of derogation extension, but, in all reality, ensuring that those farmers that have invested at considerable cost in extra slurry storage capacity and are diligently complying with spreading constraints and best practice guidance, are not let down by non-compliers.

GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

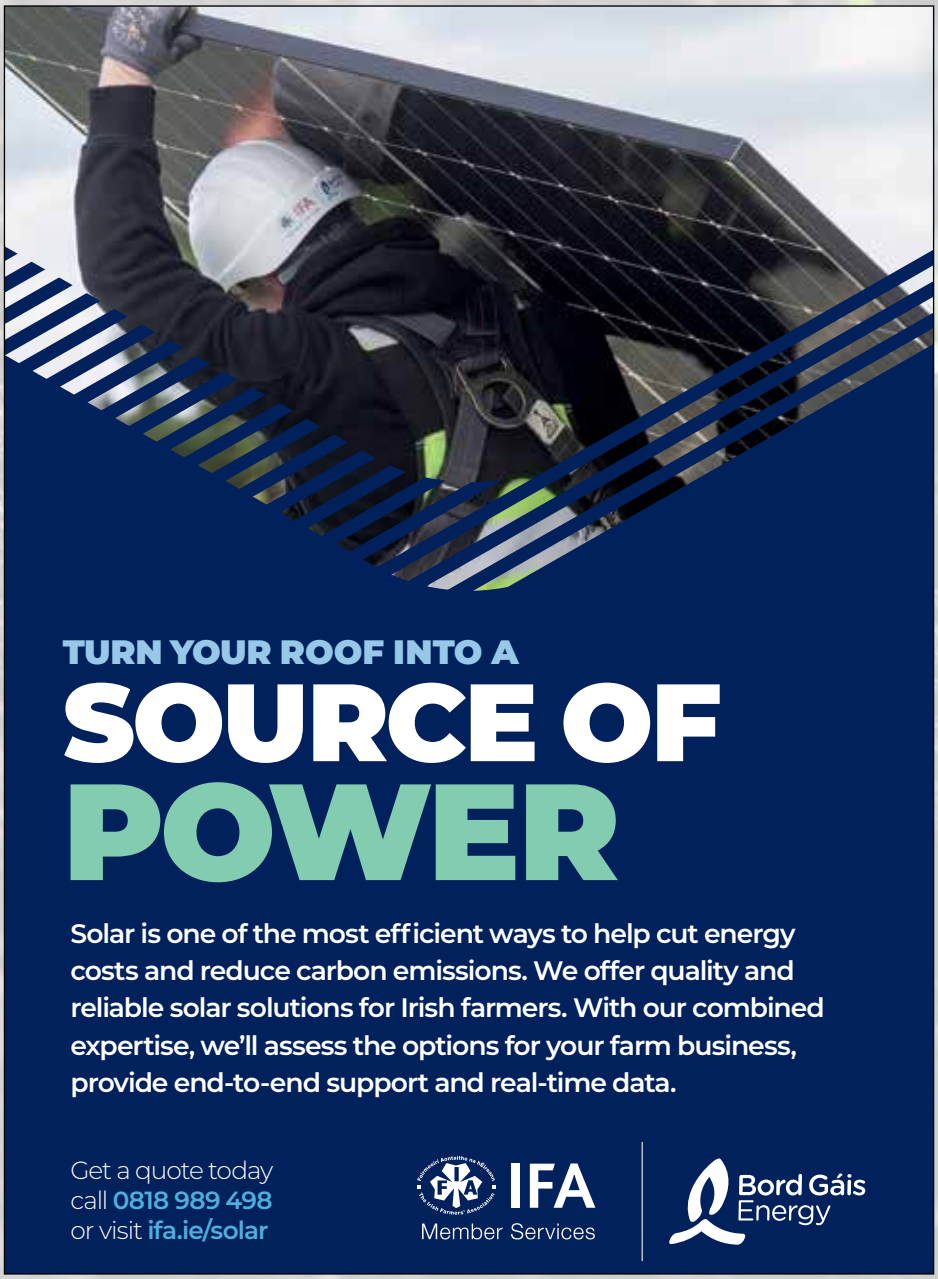
Meanwhile, looking globally, I refer again to the publication of the *OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2026-2035.* The outlook forecasts, against a lot of caveats, that while real food prices out to 2036, across a broad range of food categories, might be at the same level in real terms as current prices, due to increasing global demand there is likely to be increased price volatility. This is both because of increased input costs driven by current wars and disputes as well as production limitations in regulated mature food production areas including Ireland and the greater EU region.

Moreover, according to the report, this diversion of production to non-regulated regions, while not capable of meeting increased global demand, could see emissions from global agricultural production increase significantly. Increased price volatility and uncertainty around food supply will impact mostly, and disproportionately, the people in the poorest regions in the world, according to OECD/FAO.

FOOD PRODUCTION REALITIES

This reality needs to be accepted by our virtue signalling friends in Ireland who wrongly keep positioning suppression of Irish agri-output as being vital for global emissions reduction, and essential to incentivising increased production in low-income countries under a climate justice agenda. The OECD/FAO report specifically suggests that global dairy consumption is expected to continue expanding, mainly supported by population growth and changing dietary preferences associated with economic growth. Given global population growth and increased global demand in emerging economies for meat and dairy products, OECD/FAO emphasise a core focus on the sustainable intensification of agricultural systems.

So, suppression of Irish agricultural output, whether through relentless legalistic ambush or through economic ignorance/negligence, and, last but not least, through non-compliance, would ultimately be a singular act of economic self-harm similar in daftness, I would suggest, to the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Indeed, suppression of Irish food output is, in the end, just a lose-lose for the Irish economy and clearly does not deliver climate justice anywhere.



A COORDINATED APPROACH NEEDED FOR POST-DROUGHT PLANNING

THE EXTREME SOIL MOISTURE DEFICIT IS ABATING, BUT ITS ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS ARE NOT EVEN CLOSE TO BEING SOLVED; CAREFUL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT ARE REQUIRED IN THE MONTHS AHEAD, WRITES EDITOR, MATT O'KEEFFE

The past couple of months have been a tale of two countries within one island. North and west of a line, there has been adequate rainfall all summer to keep grass growth up to annual averages. In eastern and southern regions, however, little or no rainfall since the end of June has caused the disappearance of grass from both fields and livestock diets. On many cattle and sheep farms, as well as dairy, an expensive regime of maintaining production through buffer feeding, for almost two months in some instances, has resulted in considerable cost and the consumption of large tonnages of fodder, originally allocated to winter feed stores. Cashflow on many farms dried up almost as much as the soil and farmers are relying on short-term borrowings and extended merchant and co-op credit to pay for supplementary feeding.



The drought ignited an expensive regime of maintaining production through buffer feeding, resulting in considerable cost.

CHALLENGES

Now, even when we get sufficient rain to reduce soil moisture deficits, another challenge arises. The possibility of replenishing winter fodder stocks, at least to some extent, is still there, assuming grass growth resumes strongly, and before the inevitable fall-off in growth as daylight shortens and soil temperatures reduce into October. Likewise, reintroducing meaningful amounts of grass into the diet will take an extended period, bringing us well into the middle of September, at least. Meanwhile, planning fertiliser use, within the confines of regulatory ceilings and spreading dates, is critical. A national commitment to implement and augment the EU-adopted targeted financial measures to reduce fertiliser costs is another option that can, and must, be pursued to assist in ensuring a positive outcome this autumn from farmer efforts to replenish feed stocks and stretch grazing well into the shoulders of the grass-growing season. Closing dates for slurry spreading are also approaching. Again, apart from the absolute necessity of emptying tanks, optimising the benefits of slurry will require active grass growth, without excessive rainfall. We cannot afford to risk compromising environmental standards or water quality through unsafe practices. There are too many eyes on our sector and too much potential for reputational damage.

> WHATEVER CAN BE DONE MUST BE DONE, IF WE ARE TO AVOID REPUTATIONAL DAMAGE BY NOT BEING CAPABLE OF ADEQUATELY FEEDING OUR LIVESTOCK OVER THE COMING WINTER

FODDER SURVEY

Ultimately, much will depend on the outcome of the ongoing fodder survey, so that overall national fodder supplies can be confirmed, and plans put in place to manage feed stocks. Time is of the essence, whether for sowing short-term forage crops on tillage farms or securing fodder from farms in surplus. While thousands of farms are affected, ultimately, each individual farmer must be proactive in planning their way through the coming months. That requires financial, as well as physical, planning. It must be a cross-sectoral, coordinated approach with farmers, co-ops, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), financial institutions, Teagasc and independent advisors, and feed merchants all involved in ensuring positive outcomes. The DAFM has reacted positively, announcing some degree of forward BISS and other payments to alleviate cashflow pressures, as well as securing a Government commitment to stall planned fuel-price increases. Stalling expected fertiliser-price increases on foot of the introduction of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM is another priority. Whatever can be done must be done, if we are to avoid reputational damage by not being capable of adequately feeding our livestock over the coming winter. Citing a drought as being out of our control will not impress those who continuously criticise our industry and demand permanent reductions in livestock numbers and an end to the nitrates derogation.

'THERE IS STILL TIME'

Speaking at the recent 200th Iverk Show in Co. Kilkenny Minister Martin Heydon said: "There is still time to take corrective action, with farmers working together, and Government supporting those actions, with clear decisions being taken at individual farm level. Farmers in fodder deficit need to take corrective action, and examine all options including buying in fodder, lowering stocking rates, and taking opportunities when growth resumes to maximise grass for grazing or ensiling. We are increasing the advanced payments for BISS and CRISS to 75 per cent to help cashflow and I convened the National Fodder and Food Security Committee to bring forward proposals to alleviate the difficulties farmers are facing."

FBD NATIONAL DAIRY AWARDS

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Farmer Awards

- BIODIVERSITY DAIRY FARMER OF THE YEAR
- ANIMAL HEALTH DAIRY FARMER OF THE YEAR
- DAIRY FARM MANAGER OF THE YEAR
- TECH INNOVATOR DAIRY FARMER OF THE YEAR
- MULLINAHONE CO-OP YOUNG DAIRY FARMER OF THE YEAR
- GERMINAL SUSTAINABLE DAIRY GRASSLAND FARMER OF THE YEAR

Farm Network Awards

- BEST DAIRY ADVISOR
- GREEN ACRE MARKETING DAIRY SOCIAL MEDIA AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR
- CORMAC TAGGING DAIRY DISCUSSION / SUPPORT GROUP OF THE YEAR
- CARBERY CO-OP DAIRY INNOVATION RECOGNITION
- BEST DAIRY RESEARCH PROGRAMME/PROJECT
- DAIRY VET OF THE YEAR

Dairy Produce Awards

- BEST ARTISAN DAIRY PRODUCT 2026
- HERDWATCH BEST DAIRY PRODUCT INNOVATION

Processing Awards

- DAIRY MARKETING CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR
- PTSB BEST DAIRY PRODUCER / CO-OP OF THE YEAR
- CALOR GAS BEST DAIRY SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR
- LOCAL POWER BEST DAIRY SUSTAINABILITY DRIVER

Headline Awards

- FBD DAIRY LEADER OF THE YEAR
- FBD OVERALL NATIONAL DAIRY AWARDS WINNER

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SCREGGAN IN CO. OFFALY IS HOME TO THE 2026 NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS (THE PLOUGHING) – THE 95TH INSTALMENT OF THIS MAMMOTH ANNUAL OUTDOOR AGRICULTURAL SHOW

"It has been a tough year for many farmers, with difficult weather and the pressures of prices and rising costs," said Anna May McHugh, managing director of the National Ploughing Association (NPA) at the recent launch of the event.

The Ploughing has always been a good day out – or three – for farmers, contractors, rural and, indeed, urban dwellers. But against a backdrop of a serious drought and the challenges that it has posed for farmers in the short and long term, this year's event may be a more necessary break away from the farm than usual.

"Hopefully The Ploughing gives people a chance to take a day away from it all enjoy themselves with family and friends, catch up with old faces and maybe meet a few new ones along the way. The Ploughing has always been about bringing people together and celebrating the very best of ploughing, Irish agriculture, enterprise and rural life," Anna May added.



More than 220,000 people attended The Ploughing in 2025.

HIGHLIGHTS

As well as the ploughing competitions and classes, there will be an international dimension this year, as the Five Nations Ploughing Competition takes place over two days.

Machinery is set for a particularly strong showing this year, with an increase in machinery exhibitors and a number of new companies attending for 2026, according to organisers. The motor arena has also grown, with more car companies exhibiting and a wide selection of cars and commercial vehicles on display.

The international appeal of the Championships continues to grow, with particularly strong representation from Northern Ireland, alongside exhibitors travelling from Scotland, England, France, the Czech Republic and New Zealand.

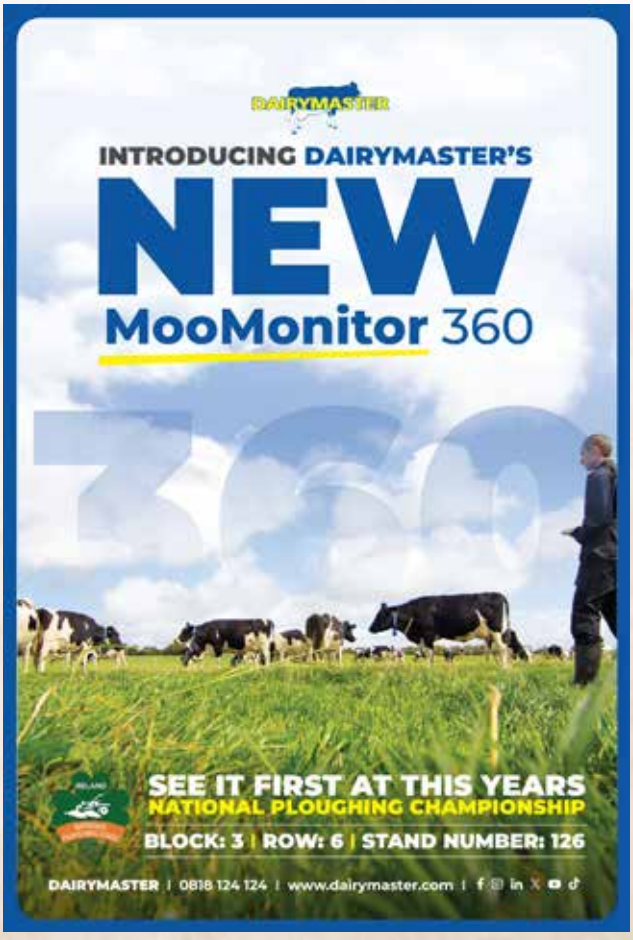
There will be a fantastic variety of livestock across the three days, combining major competitions with an extensive selection of breeds and displays. The Growvite All-Ireland Aberdeen Angus Finals take place on Tuesday, while Wednesday brings the Irish Simmental National Calf Finals and Certified Irish Angus Schools Competition.

The future of farming will be on show at the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena, where Irish agri-tech businesses and innovators will showcase new ideas and solutions. Joining its established awards for 2026 is the new Young Innovator of the Year Award, putting the spotlight on the next generation of agricultural innovation.

BAKING A NAME FOR THEMSELVES

There is a new generation taking part in another Ploughing favourite too. The National Brown Bread Baking Competition, sponsored by Euronics and in association with the NPA and ICA, introduces the junior competition for young bakers aged 12-18. Sixteen finalists – eight junior and eight senior – will bake live during the championships, with both 2026 winners crowned on Thursday.

Irish food will feature right across the site, from traditional favourites to artisan produce and emerging food businesses. Midlands Flavours will showcase producers from across the region, while the wider Championships will offer visitors the opportunity to discover the variety and creativity of Ireland's food and drink sector. There will be hourly demonstrations from the Health and Safety Authority, and much, much more! Here, in our special focus section, we highlight just a sample of the best at The Ploughing 2026.



40,000 WRISTBANDS HELPING TO KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE

The National Ploughing Association (NPA) and FBD Insurance are once again joining forces to deliver the 'Keeping You Safe' child safety wristband initiative at the 95th National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing). Over 40,000 child safety wristbands will be available free of charge at event entrances. The wristbands provide space for a parent or guardian to write a contact phone number, helping children to be reunited with their families should they become separated during the event.

Managing director of the NPA, Anna May McHugh, commented: "Over the years, the 'Keeping You Safe' wristbands have become a trusted part of the National Ploughing Championships, giving parents and guardians extra peace of mind while they enjoy their day.

"With hundreds of thousands of visitors expected over the three days, it's easy for children to become distracted by everything there is to see and do. These wristbands provide a simple but effective way of helping families reunite if they become separated, allowing everyone to relax and make the most of the The Ploughing."



The wristbands provide a simple but effective way of helping families reunite if they become separated. Photo: Alf Harvey.

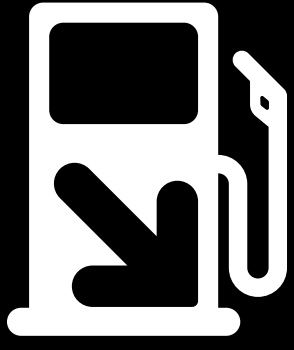
Tomás Ó Midheach, CEO, FBD Insurance said the initiative is a simple but important way of helping families explore and enjoy everything that The Ploughing has to offer with greater peace of mind. "We hope every child visiting The Ploughing wears an FBD wristband and enjoys a fun, memorable, and safe experience," he said.

Children under 12 years of age are admitted free when accompanied by a paying adult. To guarantee a ticket, visitors are encouraged to book tickets online in advance at www.npa.ie.



UP TO **29,964€ SAVED**
ON 5,000 HOURS OF WORK*





MF 8S XTRA
DLG POWERMIX TESTED

MORE ACRES PER TANK.
MORE PROFIT PER SEASON.

15th–17th September 2026
NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS
MACHINERY & LIVESTOCK EXHIBITION
Screggan, Tullamore, Co. Offaly

*Comparison with tractors in the same category, calculated using DLG PowerMix average results from the 12 test cycles conducted with the MF 8S.265 Xtra Dyna E-Power (DLG Test Report 7581). Price fuel: 1.6€/l, Fuel density: 833 g/L; ISO power: 195 kW

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BORN TO **FARM**

THE PLOUGH FACTOR

THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS TAKE PLACE FROM SEPTEMBER 15-17 AT SCREGGAN, TULLAMORE, CO. OFFALY. EUROPE'S LARGEST OUTDOOR AGRICULTURAL EVENT WILL FEATURE TRADE ARENAS, LIVESTOCK, MACHINERY DISPLAYS, AND THE ENTERPRISE IRELAND INNOVATION ARENA, RUNNING DAILY FOR THREE ACTION-PACKED DAYS – OH, AND MUCH MORE BESIDES

WHERE?

BACK TO SCREGGAN, CO. OFFALY

WHEN?

SEPT 15-17 INCL.

95

THIS IS THE 95TH EDITION OF THE CHAMPIONSHIPS

A FINE SPREAD



UPWARDS OF 700 ACRES REQUIRED

KEEP TRACK OF TIME

EXHIBITION ARENA:
9AM - 6PM

PLOUGHING COMPETITIONS:
10.30AM - 2.30PM

ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMME:
10AM - 6PM

FASHION SHOWS:
11.30AM/1.30PM/3.30PM

EXHIBITORS



1,700 APPROX.

AUDIENCE



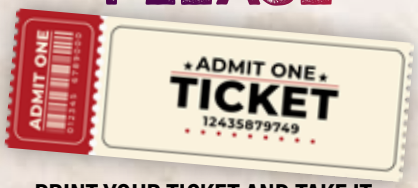
220,000 ATTENDED IN 2025

PLOUGHING ON



PLOUGHING REMAINS AT THE HEART OF THE EVENT AND OVER 350 PARTICIPANTS WILL COMPETE THIS YEAR

TICKETS PLEASE



PRINT YOUR TICKET AND TAKE IT WITH YOU OR TAKE A SCREENSHOT OF THE TICKET AND BARCODE

STAY SAFE



FBD'S 'KEEPING YOU SAFE' WRISTBANDS WILL BE AVAILABLE ONCE AGAIN THIS YEAR FOR ALL THE KIDDOS!

DID YOU KNOW?

THE PLOUGHING HAS AN ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MORE THAN €60M, ACCORDING TO ORGANISERS.

Essential Tractor Safety Checks



Ensure to check for the presence, condition and operation of these items

- Braking and Steering Equipment
- Lighting, Reflectors and Amber Beacon
- Tyres and Wheels
- Visibility, Mirrors and Horn
- Cab Safety, Seatbelt, Bodywork and Steps
- Hydraulics, Lifting Devices, PTO

Ensure tractor is registered, taxed, insured, maintained and in a roadworthy condition at all times

HSA
An tÚdarás Sláinte agus Sábháilteachta
Health and Safety Authority
www.hsa.ie

www.garda.ie

VISION ZERO RSA
www.rsa.ie

A START-UP SHOT FOR BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS

THE LOCAL ENTERPRISE VILLAGE, AS PART OF THIS YEAR'S NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS (THE PLOUGHING) WANTS TO FIND THE NEXT IRISH START-UP SUCCESS STORY

An initiative of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), the village will house 31 Local Enterprise Office-supported small businesses from across the country that showcase the very best of Irish enterprise from clothing craft and artisanal food to bovine genetics and woodwork machinery. This year the Local Enterprise Village will also have a business advice hub for any budding entrepreneurs or existing businesses who want to get advice from the LEO's specialist business advisors. So, for anyone who has a business idea that wants to figure out how to get it off the ground or for someone with an existing business who may want advice on funding, sustainability, or building digital and AI into their business there will be advisors on hand to meet with. The village will again host the Google AI team this year following on from its success in 2025. With close to 300,000 visitors expected across the three days of the event, the Local Enterprise Village provides these small businesses with significant exposure to new audiences and potential new customers. Enterprise Europe Network will also be based in the village for the first time, giving advice to businesses who want to begin looking at new markets across the EU. Here, we highlight just some of the agri-related businesses to look our for this year.

JE ENGINEERING LTD

This is a Cavan-based business specialising in the repair and maintenance of Ford, Fiat and New Holland tractors. It has expanded into product manufacturing, with its mobility lift among its first innovations.

TARGET GENETICS

Target Genetics is an advanced bovine genetics and embryo-production company serving beef and dairy farmers across Ireland and Northern Ireland. Founded by veterinary surgeon, Paddy Buckley, it provides in-vitro embryo production, ovum pick-up, embryo transfer and import-export services to accelerate genetic gain, improve herd performance and maximise the value of elite cattle genetics.



Pictured at the launch of the 2026 Local Enterprise Village, an initiative of the Local Enterprise Office, are: Michael Burke, Woolow; Amy Geoghegan, Woolow; Diarmuid Crowley, Wild Orchard Natural Beverages; Eleanor Forrest, Enterprise Ireland; Mike Cantwell, Local Enterprise Offices (behind standing); Helen Ryan, Local Enterprise Offices; Joe Slattery, National Ploughing Association; Eimear Larkin, SafeShel; Declan Malone and Shannon Forrest, Rivesci; and Linda Chanders, SUNiRE. Photo: Liam Burke/Press 22.

SUNIRE LTD

SUNiRE Ltd is an Irish start-up addressing occupational skin-cancer risk in agriculture. Founded by skin-cancer survivor, Linda Chanders, it combines an Irish-made UPF50+ Face Shield with workshops and its digital safe space hub to promote sun protection, early-detection awareness and support.

RSI LTD

Radon Services Ireland (RSI) is an award-winning Irish company providing radon testing and bespoke mitigation solutions for homes and businesses. Established in 2024, it designs and assembles practical systems that reduce radon levels, improve indoor air quality and help rural households and businesses protect health and building performance.



Amy Geoghegan from Woolow and Linda Chanders from SUNiRE at the launch of of the 2026 Local Enterprise Village. Photo: Liam Burke/Press 22.

A-BARS IRELAND

A Monaghan manufacturer of high-quality stainless-steel vehicle accessories for vans, 4x4s and trucks. Established in 2006, the business produces towbar guards, nudge bars, side bars and custom products while also providing CNC cutting, tube bending and bespoke fabrication services.

LAMBSAFE

Lambsafe is a Sligo-based agricultural business developing practical products that make lambing safer and less physically demanding for farmers and lambs. Its first product, the Lamb Station, is a lightweight, robust support that suspends a lamb securely at waist height during essential tasks.

EQUIBUFF

This is a Wicklow-based equestrian-products company that creates practical solutions for horse owners. Its SaddleDock provides a portable, secure place to hold a saddle at the stable, in a field, beside a car or at a show, while its multipurpose Grooming Sponge reduces the need for a large collection of brushes.



7 tips to help you prepare for your Bord Bia audit

01. **Don't put off doing your audit**
As soon as the auditor contacts you, agree a date and time that suits you.

02. **Completing your audit early won't shorten your certification period**
Your next 18-month cycle will still start from your current certification expiry date.

03. **Know what to expect**
Most of the audit involves walking the farm and talking through how you manage livestock and day-to-day activities.

04. **Check your medicine records**
Medicine records (purchase and usage) are a common area where issues can arise, so make sure they're complete and up to date.

05. **Ask for a printout from your vet or co-op**
Your veterinary practice and feed merchant/co-op can provide account statements showing your medicine or feed purchases. No need to search for dockets.

06. **For dairy audits, check your hygiene**
Make sure the dairy is clean, surfaces are washable, and there are no obvious risks to milk hygiene, for example from dust, dirt or vermin.

07. **Get help if you need it**
Need help getting ready? The Bord Bia Helpdesk can answer your questions and help you prepare for your audit.

BORD BIA
Farmers & Growers

Bord Bia Helpdesk

01 524 0410, 9am-8pm, Monday to Friday.

Or speak to Bord Bia at the **National Ploughing Championship: Block 4, Row 5, Stand 108**

AGRI AWARE MARKS MILESTONE WITH NEW DONATION CAMPAIGN

Agri Aware will mark a major milestone at this year's National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing) as the organisation celebrates 30 years of connecting the Irish public with farming and food, and by launching its first donation campaign to garner further support to build on its growing base of activities. The campaign will enable members of the public to support the organisation's growing and important educational remit and programmes.

Since its establishment in 1996, Agri Aware has worked to improve the understanding of Irish agriculture and the important role it plays in food production, the environment, the economy and communities across the country. This year, visitors to the Agri Aware stand can look back on three decades of agri-food education while also discovering some of the organisation's newest initiatives.

Among the highlights will be a new collaboration with TikTok, featuring the launch of a specially designed jersey aimed at encouraging people to get behind Irish farming and celebrate the people who produce our food that will be available to purchase at the Agri Aware stand and online.



Visitors to the Agri Aware stand can discover programmes including Incredible Edibles, Come Farm With Me, and Safe Farm Futures for primary schools, alongside secondary-level programmes including Intro to Ag, and From Foal to Race.

Visitors will also have the opportunity to meet some of the familiar online faces of Irish farming who are using social media to give the public an insight into life on Irish farms. Through sharing the realities of their working day, these farmers are helping to bring agriculture to new audiences and strengthen the connection between consumers and where their food comes from.

The Ploughing will also see Agri Aware launch a new donation initiative, making it easier for members of the public to directly support the organisation's educational work. Contributions will help Agri Aware continue to provide engaging and accessible agricultural education to students and the wider public across Ireland. Education will remain at the heart of the stand throughout the three-day event. Agri Aware's education officers will be on hand to meet teachers, students and parents and provide information on the organisation's range of free primary and secondary school programmes.



IFAC TO LAUNCH 2026 FOOD & AGRIBUSINESS REPORT

Ifac returns to the National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing) this year where it will launch the *2026 Food & Agribusiness Report*. Now in its ninth year, it remains the only dedicated annual report tracking the state of Ireland's food and agri-business sector. This year's edition looks at whether the sector is actually ready for the pressures it's facing right now, from AI adoption and governance to supply chain resilience, reputation management and succession planning. As always, it includes findings from Ifac's nationwide survey, capturing what Irish food and agri-business leaders are thinking, offering insights that give practical guidance and real benchmarks to help businesses plan with more confidence.

Ifac's presence will be part of the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena, where innovation, expertise, and forward-thinking solutions in the agri-food sector will be on show. Throughout the three days of The Ploughing, members of the Ifac team will also be participating in expert panels, sharing practical advice and thought leadership on topics ranging from financial planning to business strategy. These sessions will be an excellent opportunity to hear first-hand perspectives from industry specialists and gain actionable insights to take back to your business.

"Whether you are seeking clarity on succession planning, considering restructuring, or simply looking to connect with professionals who understand the agri-food sector, the ifac stand will be a valuable stop on your Ploughing itinerary. With our mix of practical resources, fresh research, and expert insights, we aim to help you face the challenges of 2026 with confidence," said a spokesperson. Visitors are invited to drop by the stand to meet the team, pick up your free succession guide, and have a chat about how Ifac can support your business.



Members of the Ifac team will be on hand to share practical advice and answer your questions. Pictured are: Orlaith Brennan, Niamh Hand, and Maria Doyle.

CERTA RETURNS AS SPONSOR AND FUEL PARTNER

Certa returns as sponsor and fuel partner of the National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing), supplying hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) to power the event, including fuelling the site's generators and lighting towers. Managing director of the National Ploughing Association (NPA), Anna May McHugh, commented: "We're delighted to continue our partnership with Certa. Their commitment to supplying HVO renewable fuel supports our efforts to reduce the environmental impact of the event, while providing the reliable energy needed to power the National Ploughing Championships." This is the fifth consecutive year that Certa is official fuel sponsor and Certa managing director, Orla Stevens said: "We are proud to support this landmark event once again and to play our part in helping it become more sustainable. Through the use of HVO, a renewable alternative to diesel that can reduce carbon emissions by up to 90 per cent, we are helping to lower the event's environmental impact while supporting a cleaner energy future." Throughout the event, Certa will showcase its range of energy and fuel solutions, including HVO, agricultural fuels, home heating oil, lubricants, retail fuel services and solar solutions. Certa will also be highlighting its newly signed charity partnership with the RNLI.



Anna May McHugh, managing director of the NPA and Orla Stevens, managing director of Certa Ireland pictured at the launch of Certa as the official fuel supplier of The Ploughing.

GOING GLOBAL, STAYING LOCAL: EASYFIX RETURNS TO THE PLOUGHING

EVERY SEPTEMBER, THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS (THE PLOUGHING) BRINGS IRISH FARMING TOGETHER ON A SCALE UNLIKE ANY OTHER EVENT. FOR EASYFIX, IT'S A CHANCE TO DO WHAT WE'VE ALWAYS DONE BEST: MEET FARMERS, LISTEN TO WHAT'S WORKING AND WHAT ISN'T, AND SHOW HOW OUR PRODUCTS ARE CHANGING TO KEEP UP WITH THE WAY PEOPLE FARM TODAY



Be sure to stop by and chat to the sales team (pictured): Cillian Droney, Enda Corrigan, David Gunn, Chloe Naughton, David Hayes and Sean O'Brien.

From our base in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, Easyfix has grown from an Irish business into a company whose products are now used on farms in more than 60 countries. A lot has changed along the way. Farms are more productive, technology has moved on, and expectations around animal welfare, labour and the environment have all risen. But one thing hasn't changed: farmers need solutions that work in the reality of day-to-day farming. That principle still shapes everything we develop.

FARMING IS CHANGING, AND SOLUTIONS HAVE TO CHANGE WITH IT

The pressures on today's farmer are all tied together. Animal welfare can't be separated from performance. Labour can't be separated from good shed design. And looking after the environment has to make sense for the farm financially, or it won't last.

So the conversation about farm innovation has moved on too. It's less about one product solving one problem, and more about the whole environment the animal lives in – and where a few changes can make the work easier, the animal more comfortable and the farm run better. That thinking runs right through the Easyfix stand this year.

STARTING WITH THE COW

For dairy farmers especially, the best place to start is with the cow herself. She has 24 hours in the day to rest, eat, drink, move, socialise, groom and be milked, and how well the shed lets her do all of that is what matters. A comfortable lying area encourages her to rest. A well-designed cubicle lets her lie down and rise the way she naturally would. Good underfoot grip gives her the confidence to move, a clean water trough keeps drinking easy, and because a cow will groom whether there is a brush there or not, a cow brush like the Easyfix Halo simply gives her a better place to do it.

On their own, these look like small details of shed design. Together, they're the environment she spends almost her whole day in. At The Ploughing, farmers can walk through the full Easyfix range of cow comfort solutions, cubicle systems, mattresses, slat rubber, high-grip flooring, feeding solutions, water troughs and cow brushes, all built around how the animal actually behaves. The aim was never to make a shed look smarter. It's to make it work better, for the cow and for the farmer.

THE BEEF SHED: COMFORT ON THE SLATS

For most beef farmers, winter housing means a slatted floor, and bare concrete slats are hard, cold and slippery underfoot. Cattle become more hesitant to move, they lie down less, and over a long winter that takes a toll on comfort, cleanliness and thrive.

That's where Easyfix slat rubber comes in, the product we're best known for, and still one of the most worthwhile upgrades a beef farmer can make to a slatted shed. It gives the animal a warmer, softer, higher-grip surface to stand and lie on, so cattle move with more confidence and settle more easily. It's a simple change that makes the shed a far better place to spend the winter. Beef farmers can see the slat rubber, and feel the difference underfoot, for themselves at the Easyfix stand.



Farmers can see the slat rubber, and feel the difference underfoot, for themselves at the Easyfix stand.

BEYOND COW COMFORT

The challenges don't stop at the cubicle shed. Managing slurry, cutting emissions and getting more value out of every tank are all moving up the farmer's list, and any technology that promises to help has to be practical and reliable enough to fit a shed that's already busy. That's where we keep investing. Visitors to the stand can find out more about EASYFIX ePulse, developed to improve slurry management and cut emissions, alongside the latest across our wider range. For us, innovation has to earn its place. It has to solve a real problem.

Irish roots, global perspective

One advantage of working internationally is getting to see how farmers in different countries tackle the same basic challenges. A dairy farmer in Ireland works very differently from a large dairy in the US or a family farm in mainland Europe, but the fundamentals of a comfortable animal, a well-run farm and a profitable one are remarkably consistent wherever you go. Working across those markets teaches us a lot, and we bring it all back to where the products are still developed, here in the west of Ireland. That's what 'going global, staying local' means to us. Growing abroad has never meant drifting away from the farmers who shaped Easyfix. If anything, it's made staying close to them matter more.

THE CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

Events like The Ploughing are so important. There's only so much you can learn from data or a spec sheet. Some of the most useful things we hear come from a farmer telling us what's working, what's driving them mad, or what they reckon could simply be done better. Those conversations shape what we build next. So this year's Ploughing is about far more than showing product. It's a chance for our team to meet farmers, hear what's happening on their farms, and talk about where better comfort, housing, slurry management or infrastructure could make a real difference.

Irish farming will keep changing, our approach won't. We listen to farmers, understand the animal, and build practical solutions that deliver where it counts.

We look forward to welcoming farmers, dealers, customers and friends to the Easyfix stand at this year's National Ploughing Championships.



'SCIENCE SUPPORTING FARMING' AT THE TEAGASC STAND



The theme of Teagasc's exhibition is 'science supporting farming,' reflecting the fact that all Teagasc advice is independent and underpinned by research. Photo: Teagasc.

Teagasc will have a comprehensive presence at the 2026 National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing) with its marquee and outdoor exhibit area staffed by Teagasc experts capable of addressing the full range of challenges facing farmers and farm families. Whether you are interested in beef, sheep, tillage, dairy, horticulture, forestry or pig production, there will be a qualified and experienced Teagasc person to provide you with practical answers. If you would like to speak to someone on farm succession/generational renewal, environmental protection, agricultural education, or farm management financial issues, experts on each of those topics will be available too. The theme of Teagasc's exhibition is 'SCIENCE SUPORTING FARMING', reflecting the fact that all Teagasc advice is independent and underpinned by research. Teagasc has a significant role in supporting not only food producers but also food manufacturers and food consumers. Experts at its food exhibit will demonstrate, for example, how to improve your gut health and how their work helps manufacturers reduce food waste through technologies such as plant fractionation (which means getting more value from crops like potato, fava, lupin, oat varieties, etc). They will also explain how Teagasc supports the food industry, generally.

After an exceptionally dry summer, Teagasc's outdoor grassland demonstration will be of great interest to farmers. It will showcase the benefits of including clover and multispecies swards, and how they can help farmers reduce chemical nitrogen fertiliser use while maintaining productive, high-quality swards. Visitors will see practical examples of different sward types and species and learn how clover and other plants can contribute to sward productivity and nutrient use efficiency.

With winter looming, Teagasc beef, dairy and sheep specialists showcase how best to manage various silage qualities and how to balance them with concentrate feeds. Of course they will also address any other livestock-related questions.

Following one of the hottest, dryest summers ever, the need to protect water and the environment is undeniable. Teagasc ASSAP, Signpost, and forestry experts will demonstrate how farmers can play their part.

AGRI-FOOD REGULATOR AT THE PLOUGHING



Niamh Lenehan, CEO of the Agri-Food Regulator.

The Agri-Food Regulator (An Rialálaí Agraibhia) team will be at the National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing) providing an opportunity to meet the staff of the Regulator and learn more about its work to promote fairness and transparency across the agri-food supply chain.

Attendees are invited to complete the Regulator's annual survey of farmers, fishers and growers and learn more about the protections available across the agri-food supply chain. Over the three days, staff will be available to answer questions and hear directly from those working in farming about their experiences on the ground.

Commenting, Niamh Lenehan, CEO of An Rialálaí Agraibhia, said: "The National Ploughing Championships is always a fantastic opportunity to meet people from across Ireland's agri-food sector and hear first-hand about the issues, and experiences that matter to them.

"We are delighted to be returning again this year and would encourage anyone attending to stop by our stand, meet the team and learn more about the work of the Regulator, including the protections offered under unfair trading law and how concerns can be raised."

A key focus at this year's stand will be the Regulator's annual survey, which aims to capture feedback from farmers, fishers and growers on their trading experiences and help inform the Regulator's work. While the survey is already available online, attendees can avail of the opportunity at the Regulator's stand to easily complete it.

ADDITIONAL POWERS

Attendees will also be able to learn more about the Regulator's additional function, which will come into effect from December 31, 2026, enabling the Regulator to compel businesses to provide price and market information where voluntary requests have not been met. The information gathered will be used to prepare price and market reports, providing greater insight into prices paid at different stages of the supply chain. The Agri-Food Regulator's stand will be located in the 'Supporting People, Supporting Business' hub in the Government of Ireland Village.

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[1]Forage Centre of Excellence, Miner Institute (unpublished) [2]Microbiology Open, Volume 10, Issue 1 [3]J Anim Sci. 2020 Oct 1; 98(10)

KVERNELAND TO LAUNCH NEW GRASS KIT

KVERNELAND GROUP IRELAND (KVERNELAND), AN OFFICIAL SPONSOR OF THIS YEAR'S NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS (THE PLOUGHING), WILL LAUNCH TWO NEW GRASS MACHINES ONTO THE IRISH MARKET AS PART OF A BROAD DISPLAY OF KVERNELAND, McCONNEL, AND SILOKING MACHINERY



The Tactus range uses Kverneland's Duo tine system, with curved 9.5mm tines designed to lift and move the crop while reducing soil contamination.

The new Kverneland Tactus twin-rotor rake and Tersus 4000 flail chopper make their Irish debut at the Tullamore event. Alongside the two new arrivals, the stand will feature a broad selection of machinery aimed at Irish farming systems, covering grass, tillage and crop establishment, crop care, feeding and hedgecutting.

NEW TACTUS AND TERSUS

The Tactus range of twin-rotor rakes will take centre stage, with working widths from 6.4m to 7.8m across the Tactus 2072 and 2078 models. These new-generation rakes feature Kverneland's TerraLink Plus ground contour-following system, allowing the rotors to closely follow changing field conditions and helping to maintain a clean rake.

The range also uses Kverneland's Duo tine system, with curved 9.5mm tines designed to lift and move the crop while reducing soil contamination and helping to produce an even, well-shaped swath.

Also making its Irish debut The Ploughing, the new Kverneland Tersus 4000 flail chopper range is designed for work in grass, crop residues and biomass. The Tersus 4000 is available in three working widths from 2.35m to 3.25m, with 500mm of hydraulic side-shift fitted as standard across the range for working along field boundaries, headlands and around obstacles. The two newcomers will be joined by a number of established machines from Kverneland's grass range covering mowing, tedding, and baling.

ON THE TILLAGE SIDE

On the tillage side, there will be a strong showing of 3m machinery, with a range of machines suited to a broad mix of Irish tillage and mixed farming operations. A Kverneland ES plough will feature alongside the 3m Enduro tine cultivator and 3m Qualidisc Farmer disc cultivator, giving growers the opportunity to look over a range of options for cultivation and seedbed preparation. The 3m Saturia will also be on display, offering farmers a one-pass drilling solution that combines seedbed preparation and drilling in a single pass. Crop care will be represented by an Exacta CL Geospread fertiliser spreader and iXter mounted sprayer.

SILOKING AND McCONNEL

As the Irish importer and distributor of Siloking and McConnel machinery, Kverneland will also have machines from both manufacturers on the stand. Dairy and beef farmers will have two Siloking feeder wagons to look over, with the TrailedLine twin and single-tub feeders both making the trip to the Ploughing. On the McConnel side, three models from the Power Arm hedgecutter range will be on display, with the 5045, 5562 and 6572T all set to feature.



The 3m Saturia will also be on display at the Kverneland stand.



The new Kverneland Tersus 4000 flail chopper range makes its debut at The Ploughing.

STAY SAFE, STAY CLEAR: A SAFETY MESSAGE FROM ESB NETWORKS

As thousands of farmers and contractors gather for the National Ploughing Championships, ESB Networks is reminding everyone that electrical safety on the farm is a top priority. Farming continues to be one of Ireland's highest-risk occupations, and incidents involving overhead electricity lines and underground cables can have devastating consequences.

The height of farm equipment has elevated in recent years, increasing the risk of accidental contact with overhead lines. Before starting any job, take time to identify electrical hazards on your farm, know where overhead wires and underground cables are located, and plan work activities accordingly.

DIAL BEFORE YOU DIG

ESB Networks provides a free 'Dial Before You Dig' mapping service to help farmers locate network assets before work begins. Email dig@esb.ie with your farm address, geographic coordinates of the site location, map of the area (a screenshot from Google Maps works), your name and email address. Maps will be received within 10 working days.

Key safety messages are simple: always look up and look out, maintain safe distances from overhead lines, never touch fallen wires, and always assume that electricity equipment is live. When moving machinery, managing high loads, cutting trees or hedges, or carrying out excavation work, ensure everyone involved understands the risks and the controls required. If an emergency occurs, stay clear and call the ESB Networks emergency number 1800 372 999 immediately. By taking a few simple precautions, farmers can help protect themselves, their families, employees and contractors. This harvest season and beyond, ESB Network's safety message is: stay safe, stay clear.

TELEHANDLER SAFETY DEMOS AT HSA STAND

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is back at the National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing) where the safe use of telehandlers will be a feature of the authority's exhibition. Freely available publications will cover a range of diverse topics such as slurry safety, how to make construction appointments on your farm, working with hay bales, and farmer fatigue. The safe operation of tractors and other machinery, quad safety, livestock handling, farmer health and wellbeing, and work at height will also be covered.

Inspectors from the HSA will also be on hand to chat with visitors and answer any questions or discuss safety issues. As usual, there will be a busy external demo zone highlighting the dangers of a range of typical work activities on a farm and advising on the steps to take to avoid a serious incident. The external demos will include the safe handling of bales, tractor blind spots, safe driving of quad bikes and PTO safety. Vistors are encouraged to visit the HSA exhibition area and find out how you can better protect yourself and your loved ones on the farm.



Teagasc
Agriculture and Food Development Authority

15th-17th September 2026
National Ploughing Championships
Machinery & Livestock Exhibition
Screggan, Tullamore, Co. Offaly

Teagasc at the Ploughing Championships

15 - 17 September 2026

Screggan, Tullamore, Co. Offaly

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SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION

KUBOTA DISC SPREADERS SET FOR IRISH DEBUT AT THE PLOUGHING

Kubota is set to expand its implement offering in Ireland with the introduction of its DS twin-disc fertiliser spreader range, with two models making their Irish debut at this year's National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing). The Kubota DSC 700 and DSM 1100 will be the first two models from the range to go on display in Ireland, with both hydraulically controlled machines set to feature on the Kubota stand.

The introduction of the DS range will broaden the choice of Kubota implements available to Irish farmers, with the wider range extending from straightforward hydraulically controlled machines through to weighing and precision spreading models.

The DSC 700 sits at the compact end of the Kubota range. The DSC series is available with hopper capacities from 700 to 1,400 litres and working widths from 9m to 21m. Stepping up in size, the DSM 1100 will also make its Irish debut at The Ploughing. The DSM range offers hopper capacities from 1,100 to 2,000 litres, with spreading widths of up to 28m. Both models use Kubota's twin-disc spreading system, which feeds fertiliser centrally onto the spreading discs before smoothly accelerating it towards the vanes. The system is designed to limit damage to fertiliser granules and maintain their spreading characteristics. The Kubota system uses eight vanes per disc, while the discharge point can be adjusted to suit the physical properties of different fertilisers.



The DSM range offers hopper capacities from 1,100 to 2,000 litres, with spreading widths of up to 28m.

Alongside the new spreaders, Kubota will have a selection of grass implements on display at The Ploughing. The grass line-up will include a DM1022 plain disc mower, a four-rotor tedder and a single-rotor rake, covering mowing, tedding and raking. The machines will sit alongside Kubota's tractor range on the stand, giving farmers an opportunity to take a closer look at the wider range of Kubota implements available in Ireland.



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Order and take delivery of any new Merlo Agricultural or Construction telehandler before 30th September 2026 and receive extended warranty at no extra cost*. We hope to see you at the National Ploughing Championships, on Row 15, Block 3, Stand 300, just look for the green booms. Alternatively, scan the QR code or contact your local Merlo Ireland dealer for more information. Wherever you are in Ireland, Merlo's dedicated dealer network is here to support you.

*Extended Warranty

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MERLO

A NEW COMPACT DIET FEEDER FROM STRAUTMANN

STRAUTMANN'S NEW COMPACT DIET FEEDER IS BEING INTRODUCED JUST IN TIME FOR THE 2026 WINTER-FEEDING SEASON SO BE SURE TO CHECK IT OUT AT THIS YEAR'S NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS (THE PLOUGHING)

Strautmann has expanded its Professional series with the introduction of the new Verti-Mix Double Professional, a compact diet feeder designed to meet the demanding requirements of modern livestock farms, according to the company. Building on the Verti-Mix Expert generation, the new range combines a shortened chassis, precise three-point weighing system and improved fodder discharge to deliver greater flexibility and efficiency during everyday feeding operations. The new Verti-Mix Double Professional is based on the proven Verti-Mix 1501 Double through to Verti-Mix 3101 Double range, with a particular focus on creating a more compact machine without compromising durability, capacity or mixing performance. One of the key features of the new design is the improved fodder discharge, with the lateral discharge doors enlarged by a further 100mm. This allows feed to be discharged efficiently and evenly, helping to ensure a consistent ration across the feed passage.



Strautmann has expanded its Professional series with the introduction of the new Verti-Mix Double Professional.

REDESIGN

The redesign has focused on producing a machine capable of withstanding the daily demands of agricultural operations while offering increased manoeuvrability. The front unit, consisting of the drawbar, hydraulic protective box and front frame section, has been completely revised. As a result, the distance between the drawbar hook and the container has been noticeably reduced compared with the current Expert generation. The new frame concept combines the container and chassis into a single integrated unit, creating a robust and compact overall design. A three-point weighing system, using three load cells, provides precise weighing of feed components to the nearest kilogram. This ensures operators can accurately monitor the quantities of individual ingredients being added to the ration. The three-point weighing system also provides stable and reliable measurements, even when the machine is being operated on uneven terrain.

A newly developed shortened chassis further improves manoeuvrability, making the Verti-Mix Double Professional particularly well suited to farms where space around yards, sheds and feeding areas can be limited, the company says. The compact dimensions give operators greater flexibility in everyday use, while the revised layout contributes to the machine's clean and practical appearance.

DURABILITY

Strautmann has also replaced conventional hydraulic hoses in key areas with rigid hydraulic lines. This change is designed to improve durability while reducing unnecessary hosework around the machine. At the same time, it contributes to the neat and compact design of the new feeder. Like all Strautmann diet feeders, the Verti-Mix Double Professional is equipped with the proven Strautmann IMS mixing auger. The system is designed to provide fast, homogeneous and efficient mixing performance, helping farmers produce a consistent ration in a short period of time. Consistent mixing is an important consideration for livestock producers looking to maintain feed quality and make the most efficient use of feed ingredients.

The new range can also be specified to suit different feeding systems and individual farm requirements. Customers can choose from optimally positioned side doors, rear Dutch doors or an optional rear cross conveyor, allowing the machine to be configured to suit the layout and feeding practices of the individual farm.

The new Strautmann Verti-Mix Double Professional series will comprise four models in total, with capacities ranging from 11.5m^3 to a maximum of 24.5m^3. The machines will also be available with a machine height from just 2.39m, providing an important advantage for farms where access height is a consideration. The new range will be on display at the IAM stand.

A CHANCE TO WIN AT THE ICMSA STAND

The Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA) returns to the National Ploughing Championships, and will be located just a 'decent welly throw' – they say – away from the National Ploughing Association's event headquarters. And this year, courtesy of Inver Energy, the ICMSA will hold a special members' draw, offering a chance to win €1,000. Members are encouraged to stop by the stand for a chat and a cuppa, and get their names entered!





The 3090T will be on show at The Ploughing.

GET A LOAD OF WEIDEMANN'S NEW 90 SERIES

Weidemann Ireland will unveil its new wheel loader portfolio – the 90 Series – at the National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing). The 3090T model will do the heavy lifting as it will be on show at the event, but three other models comprise the series – the 2090, 2090T, and 3090. These are redesigned versions of Weidemann's powerful and high-performance wheel loaders and telescopic wheel loaders in the 4t and 5t classes.

"With the new 90 Series models, we are providing an ideal range of machine sizes and performance for challenging applications," according to Andrew Voigt, commercial director. "Our goal was to develop powerful and technically well-designed work machines for professional users. Practical features and high-quality standard components position the 90 Series in the market for professional application and to serve demanding customer segments. The top-highlights of the 90s series are:

- **Automatic bucket return:** The loading system is automatically returned to a position previously defined by the operator.
- **Tilt-in-assist:** Automatic retraction of the bucket when the loading system is raised.
- **Vibrating function:** Automatic vibrating motion at the push of a touch button leads to efficient emptying of the bucket when handling bulk materials that do not flow easily.
- **Lift height limiter:** The loading system is limited to an adjusted height.
- **Object detection:** When reversing, the operator is warned of obstacles both visually (via imaging in the display) and acoustically (via signal tone sounds). In addition, a clear view of the area behind the machine can be shown on the display by a rear-view camera. sing situations and it enables the operator to work safely without any stress.
- **Active work lighting:** A high-quality lighting package with powerful LED work lights and Coming Home lighting as standard ensures optimum illumination of the work area.
- **Loading system sensitivity (adjustable in 3 levels):** Three sections (namely lifting/lowering, rolling in/out and telescoping in/out), can each be freely adjusted in three speed levels, independent of one another.
- **Spacious premium cabin:** The four-pillar design of the cabin, combined with the panoramic rear window and the sloping engine hood, provides excellent rear view. Visibility of the immediate work area, both to the front and upwards, has also been optimised.
- **The console:** This has an integrated seven-inch display, jog dial and multifunctional joystick, which offers enhanced comfort for the operator. The controls are positioned to be within easy reach.
- **Efficient ventilation and heating system:** Has been designed specifically for the premium cabin. The improved air streams ensure a comfortable working environment.
- **Noise levels in the cabin are kept low:** This enables focussed work and also protects the health of the operators.
- **For the engine versions of the 90s series:** Rehlko engines that conform to emission standard level 5, with a diesel particulate filter (DPF) and a diesel oxidation catalyst (DOC).
- **Speed:** Up to 40km/h can be achieved using variable hydrostatic transmission PowerDrive without the need to change gear or mode in all models.
- **A drum brake with a manual parking brake is installed as standard:** A multi-disc brake with an electric parking brake is available as an option. It is activated when the brake pedal is pressed when the machine is at standstill, or when the operator leaves the seat.
- **Service flap:** Weidemann has installed a service flap on the right side of the machine, behind which all the machine's fuses and the cabin air filter are located together. The battery and the isolating switch are located directly below this. These are also easily accessible from the outside. The lockable toolbox is located on the left side of the machine, right next to the access, so that it is very easy to reach.


The cabin is spacious and visibility has been optimised.

ADDITIONAL COMFORT FEATURES

Pressure release of the auxiliary control circuits, which is located in an easily accessible position. The load arm damping ensures optimum handling of the machine on difficult terrain and at high travel speeds. In the 2090T and 3090T, with the Lowering Assistant, the telescopic arm retracts automatically as it is lowered. When extracting heavy loads, this system gives the machine more stability and reduces the strain on the operator. One advantage here: the thumb wheel on the joystick does not need to be pressed continuously while retracting or lowering the loading system.

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Explore our wide range of machines up close on the stand. We are on Stand: 200 Row: 11 Block: 3



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EXTENSIVE SELECTION OF GRASS MACHINERY AT McHALE'S STAND

McHale Engineering will showcase an extensive selection of its grass machinery range at the National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing).
The McHale Fusion 4 range will feature prominently with the Fusion 4 Plus on display with Film Binding Technology while also incorporating the new hydraulic-driven TerraDrive axle option. Visitors will also be able to see the Fusion Vario Plus, a fully automatic integrated baler wrapper equipped with Film Binding Technology. This versatile machine can produce hay and straw bales ranging from 0.6m to 1.68m, as well as haylage and silage bales from 1m to 1.45m.
Additional innovations on display will include the new generation of McHale variable chamber balers in the form of the V6750-II, the new and largest R80-90 centre delivery rake. Since their release at last year's Ploughing, these new developments have done the brand proud, McHale says, proving popular with contractors and farmers around the world while demonstrating the strong reception to the latest additions to McHale's grass machinery ranges.


McHale's new and largest R80-90 centre delivery rake will be on display.

POPULAR MACHINES

The popular McHale Propel tedder range will also feature on the stand, with both the mounted six-rotor M6-770 and trailed 10-rotor T10-1260 on display. The range offers solutions for farms and contractors of different sizes, highlighting the versatility of McHale's grass machinery offering.
McHale's popular F5 fixed chamber baler range will also be available to view, with the F5-550 featuring a 15-knife chopping unit, while the F5-560 Plus is equipped with a 25-knife chopping unit and Film Binding Technology. Both machines will be showcased at The Ploughing.
A wide selection of McHale's round bale wrapping range will be on display, including the proven 991 Wrapping range and the McHale Orbital, the company's top-of-the-range round bale wrapper.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

A key focus at this year's show will be the latest developments to McHale's C4 straw blower and silage feeder range, ahead of the winter housing season. The updated machines feature heavier-duty slats and U-bolts, along with a new belt slippage detection sensor for optimum performance. These developments follow previous updates to the C4 range, including a Hardox-lined flywheel and wired joystick remote. Together, these updates demonstrate McHale's continued commitment to improving machine performance, durability and reliability for its customers.
Also on the stand will be the newly kitted-out McHale fan shop, offering a wide selection of official McHale clothing, accessories and merchandise. Visitors will have the opportunity to pick up some new McHale gear at special show-discounted prices throughout the event.
A representative from McHale's recruitment team will also be available on the stand to discuss careers and employment opportunities with the company. With a number of vacancies and apprenticeships available, visitors interested in joining the McHale team will have an opportunity to learn more about the roles on offer.
With an extensive line-up of new machinery, updated products and proven favourites, McHale's stand will provide visitors with an opportunity to see the latest developments across the company's grass machinery range showcasing the company's continued focus on developing durable, high-performance machinery designed around the needs of modern farmers and contractors.
McHale's sales and service team will be available throughout the three-day show to discuss the latest products, technologies and solutions.

SHED TALKS RETURN AT AIB STAND

AIB Shed Talks return to Tullamore once again this year, bringing together leading agricultural experts and high-profile guests to discuss a wide range of topics relating to the future of farming in Ireland and much more. A team of dedicated agri advisors will be available at this year's National Ploughing Championships to provide expert guidance on your farm business finance needs. Key discussion areas will include social sustainability, mortgage guidance, the economic contribution of agriculture, advancements in farm-level sustainability, and strategies for generational renewal.



Leading agricultural experts will be on hand to discuss a wide range of topics.

SPECIAL OFFERS AND LIVE DEMOS AT MULLINAHONE CO-OP STAND

At Mullinahone Co-op's stand this year at the National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing) you will find special offers, see live demonstrations, have the chance to chat to experts, and maybe even win some prizes! If fencing is your interest, you will have the chance to see AKO fencing equipment in action, with practical demonstrations covering earthing and getting the most from your electric fence; fencing equipment and set-up; and solar fencer care and maintenance.

The Mullinahone team will also have interactive pet grooming and clipping demonstrations, plus advice on their range of grooming products. You can chat to them about SenseHub, drafting gates, clippers, tags, Farmstation drench guns, and much more. Oh, and there is 10 per cent off all EID readers and 10 per cent off your calf tag order, too!



Sarah Cook and Eva McHugh from Mullinahone Co-op.



NEW-GENERATION ATVs ON SHOW FROM CFMOTO



The new range from CFMoto is designed for agriculture, equestrian businesses, estate management, gamekeeping, commercial users and recreational riders.

CFMOTO UK & IRELAND HAS UNVEILED ITS ALL-NEW GENERATION 4 CFORCE C4 AGRI, CFORCE C4 AND CFORCE C5 ATV RANGE, AND WILL HAVE THESE MACHINES ON DISPLAY AT THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS (THE PLOUGHING)

These ATVs will replace the outgoing CForce 450 Agri, CForce 450 and CForce E 520 models with a completely redesigned platform developed to meet the evolving needs of today's ATV users, according to the company. Designed for agriculture, equestrian businesses, estate management, gamekeeping, commercial users and recreational riders alike, the new range introduces significant advances in performance, comfort, practicality and durability, says the company.

The entry-level CForce C4 Agri has been developed specifically for customers looking for a dependable work-focused ATV at an even more accessible price point. It features the same new-generation platform as the C4 but is equipped with steel wheels and does not feature electronic power steering (EPS). The CForce C4 Agri and CForce C4 are available in Cypress green, while the CForce C5 is offered in 'gedanite grey' and 'magma red'.

A COMPLETELY NEW GENERATION

Since their introduction, the CForce 450 and CForce 520 have become trusted workhorses for more than 400,000 users worldwide. However, increasing customer expectations have driven the development of an entirely new platform designed to offer more than simply improved performance, the company explains. Positioned as 'entry-level, elevated experience', the new CForce C4 and C5 have been engineered as versatile, multi-purpose ATVs capable of daily work while remaining intuitive for recreational riding. The focus is on delivering greater comfort, improved usability, and enhanced capability without unnecessary complexity.

At the heart of the range is CFMoto's all-new 192 engine platform, developed specifically for ATV applications. The 408.8cc engine powering the C4 produces 33hp and 34.5Nm of torque, while the larger 498.6cc unit in the C5 delivers 39hp and 43.5Nm, providing stronger acceleration and improved performance for both work and leisure.

Beyond outright power, the new engines have been designed to improve operator experience. A reverse exhaust layout directs heat away from the rider, reducing perceived leg temperature during operation, while dual balance shafts, hydraulic valve components and a quad-chamber muffler significantly reduce vibration and mechanical noise for a smoother, quieter ride.

BUILT TO WORK HARDER

Whether transporting feed around the farm, carrying equipment across an estate, or towing trailers out in the field, the new range has been engineered with utility firmly in mind. Front and rear racks are constructed from 2mm carbon structural steel, increasing durability and offering payloads of up to 40kg on the front rack and 80kg on the rear. Multiple tie-down points and the latest CF-Connect quick-mount system make fitting accessories quicker and easier, while integrated Molle mounting points provide additional flexibility. Every model offers a 612kg towing capacity together with a standard 2,500lb winch, making the new machines equally at home towing trailers, recovering equipment or tackling demanding day-to-day tasks.

MORE COMFORT, LESS FATIGUE

The Gen 4 platform has been designed to reduce rider fatigue over long working days. The new chassis features a wider stance for improved stability, while the slimmer engine reduces leg width by around one third compared with the previous generation. Combined with a thicker seat cushion, revised riding position and redesigned switchgear, the result is a more comfortable and intuitive riding experience. Suspension travel has also increased to 210mm at the front and 235mm at the rear, helping the new models absorb rough ground more effectively while maintaining stable, predictable handling.

MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Across the range, the new CForce models receive an extensive equipment package designed to improve everyday usability.

Standard features include:

- **Full LED lighting with integrated indicators and reverse light.**
- **5.9-inch LCD display.**
- **12V power outlet.**
- **USB Type-A and USB Type-C charging ports.**
- **Quick-release side panels**
- **Removable front grille for easier servicing.**
- **CF-Connect accessory mounting system.**
- **Multiple storage compartments**
- **High-strength front tow hook.**

CFMOTO

CFORCE C4

CFORCE C5

C PLATFORM

THE NEXT GENERATION CFORCE

All-new from the ground up. The reverse-cylinder engine reduces heat and vibration, while more power, a smoother CVT and improved ergonomics deliver greater comfort and capability for every working day.

Meet the new C PLATFORM range ↓



C4 AGRI

€7,299 inc VAT

BUILT TO GET THE JOB DONE



C4 EPS

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ELECTRONIC POWER STEERING FOR ALL-DAY WORK



C5 EPS

€8,699 inc VAT

MORE POWER
MORE SPEC

DUAL SECURITY PACKAGE ATVTRAC VINCHIP

2 YEAR WARRANTY

SCAN TO FIND YOUR DEALER



The TF30.7 CS is at home in livestock buildings, feed yards and confined working environments

MERLO RETURNS WITH EXPANDED AGRI LINE-UP

MERLO RETURNS TO THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS (THE PLOUGHING) WITH AN IMPRESSIVE RANGE OF AGRICULTURAL TELEHANDLERS

Supported by its growing network of Irish dealers, Merlo will showcase machines designed to meet the demands of modern farming, construction, contracting, and material handling operations across Ireland. Merlo's agricultural display will feature a range of telehandlers suited to everything from livestock and dairy enterprises to arable and mixed farming operations.

TF30.7 CS ▼

Compact, agile and versatile, the TF30.7 CS is ideally suited to everyday farm tasks, according to Merlo. Offering excellent manoeuvrability and visibility, it is at home in livestock buildings, feed yards and confined working environments where efficiency is essential.



TF33.7 ▶

This is a popular choice for Irish farms, according to Merlo. The TF33.7 combines a compact footprint with impressive lifting performance. Delivering a 3.3t lift capacity and 7m lift height, it is equally capable of handling bales, loading feed, or tackling grain and fertiliser movements.

TF42.7 ▼

Designed for larger-scale handling operations, the TF42.7 offers increased lifting capacity and productivity. Whether loading bulk materials, stacking bales or working on intensive livestock units, this machine is engineered to keep pace with demanding workloads, says Merlo.



CONSTRUCTION RANGE

Merlo's construction range continues to grow in popularity across Ireland, providing contractors with innovative solutions for lifting, site logistics and specialist applications.

The P27.6 Plus delivers exceptional manoeuvrability in a compact package. With its small footprint and impressive lifting capability, it is perfectly suited to housebuilding projects, refurbishment work and sites where access is restricted.

The P40.14 Plus combines a 4t lift capacity with a maximum lift height of 14m and features Merlo's advanced safety systems and operator-focused design, the company says.

The Roto 50.26 Plug-in Hybrid combines the versatility of a rotating telehandler with the benefits of hybrid power. Merlo says it offers outstanding reach, lifting performance and operational flexibility, and is suitable for complex construction projects, infrastructure works and specialist lifting applications.

SPECS AND PROMOTIONAL OPPS

At The Ploughing, visitors will be able to speak directly with the Merlo team and representatives from Merlo's Irish dealer network, who will be on hand throughout the event to discuss machine specifications, applications, and the latest promotional offers.

Visitors to the stand will also be able to learn more about Merlo's current extended warranty promotion, available exclusively to customers in the Republic of Ireland.

Customers who order and take delivery of a new Merlo agricultural telehandler by September 30 can benefit from an extended warranty at no additional cost, subject to machine availability and terms and conditions.





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SMARTCAB | THE NEXT DIMENSION OF COMFORT AND FUNCTIONALITY.

You design a cab like this when you have a deep understanding of the needs of those who work in the fields daily, operating high-powered tractors. When you step inside the new "Smart Cab", you instantly recognise that you've entered the true realm of comfort and functionality. The cab's spaciousness is striking, as is its all-round visibility, which is enhanced by the significant increase in glazed area and the sloping design of the bonnet. Every aspect of the "Smart Cab" is designed to ensure you can undertake each task under optimal conditions of efficiency, well-being, and safety. And when you climb out and turn back to look at it, you can't help but think: "this Smart Cab is truly amazing!" **Available on all Serie 7 models.**

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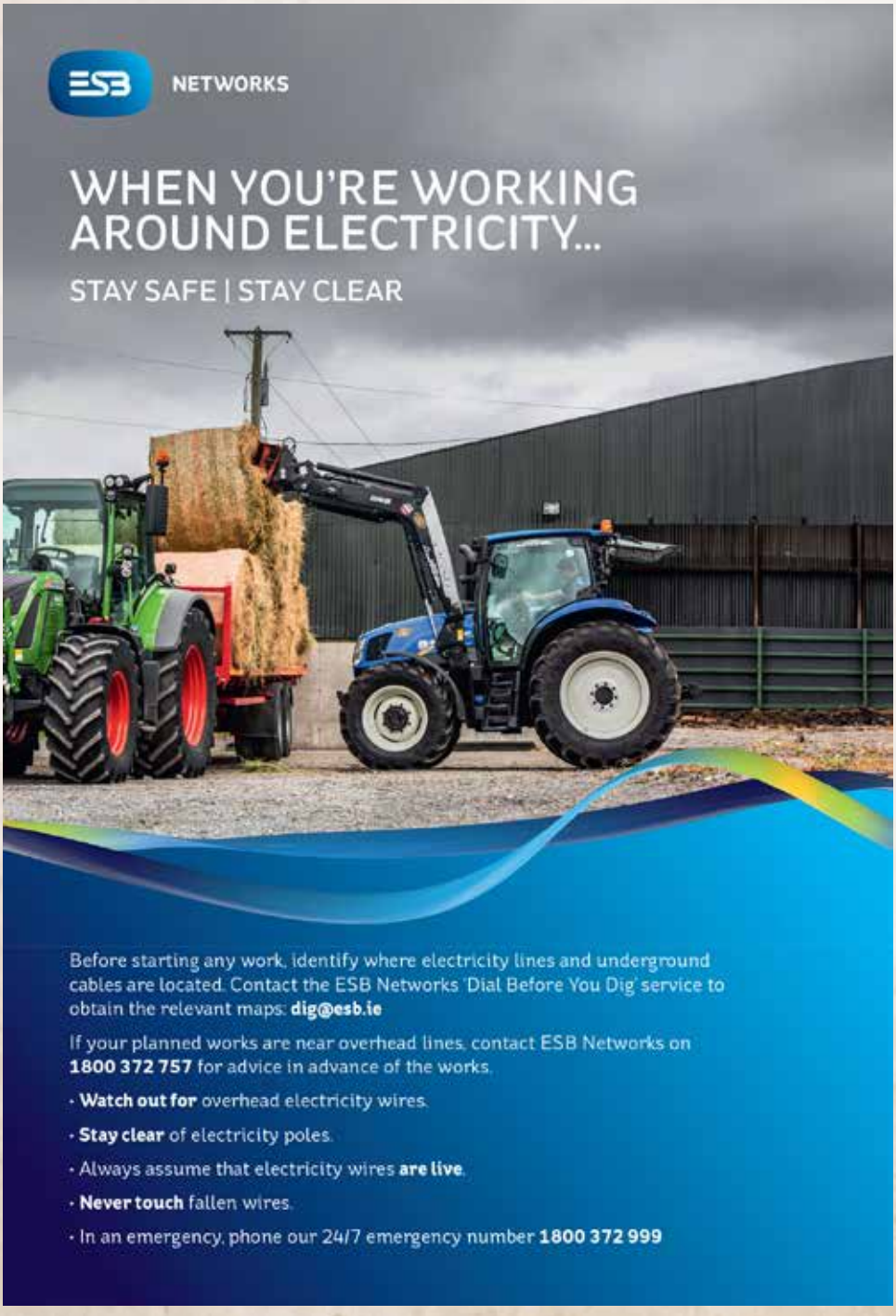
DISCUSS WINTER HERD HEALTH AT THE BENNETSBRIDGE LIMESTONE STAND

With winter housing on the horizon, now is a good time for dairy farmers to start thinking ahead and getting sheds and cubicles prepared for the months to come. And farmers heading to the National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing) in Screggan, Tullamore, can catch up with the team at Bennettsbridge Limestone to discuss their Cubicle Lime range and other lime products for their farm.

As cows spend more time indoors, their body heat, moisture, urine and faecal contamination can create favourable conditions for bacteria to survive and multiply on cubicle beds. Dairy cows are particularly vulnerable during this period, as the teat canal remains open for a period following milking, providing an opportunity for environmental bacteria to enter.



The Cubicle Lime range has been developed specifically for livestock housing.



RISKS

Cows approaching calving are also more susceptible to infection. To reduce these risks, maintaining clean, dry cubicles is an important part of overall herd health and the prevention of mastitis. Regular use of cubicle lime helps by raising the pH of the cubicle bed, creating a less favourable environment for bacterial growth while also helping to absorb moisture.

Bennettsbridge Limestone's Cubicle Lime range has been developed specifically for livestock housing. A number of formulations are available, allowing farmers to select the product that best suits their individual housing system and management routine. "We understand how important it is for farmers to maintain clean, dry and comfortable cubicles throughout the housing period. Our Cubicle Lime range has been developed with this in mind, combining hydrated lime with a superfine limestone powder to provide excellent coverage and moisture absorption," said Eoin O'Carroll of Bennettsbridge Limestone.

"The different blends give farmers flexibility to choose a product that suits their own housing system and management routine. Regular application, alongside good cubicle management, can help maintain a cleaner and drier environment for cows."

AGRI-SPECIALIST ACCESS AT BOI STAND



Eoin Lowry, head of agri at Bank of Ireland.

A team of Bank of Ireland specialists will be on hand at this year's National Ploughing Championships (The Ploughing) to discuss farming, agri-business and rural customers' financial, investment and banking needs.

"Agriculture continues to evolve, with farmers balancing sustainability ambitions, succession planning, and business growth in an increasingly complex environment. Visitors to our stand will have the opportunity to speak directly with experienced agri-specialists about the funding and support options available to help them invest with confidence in their future," said Eoin Lowry, the bank's head of agri.

Bank of Ireland will also showcase its sustainability loan, Enviroflex which is designed to support environmental and on-farm efficiency investments, including renewable energy projects, slurry storage, farm modernisation and other initiatives that enhance sustainability and long-term resilience.

Eoin continued: "We recognise that farming businesses can face periods of financial pressure due to market volatility, weather-related challenges, and rising input costs. Our team will be on hand to discuss practical solutions to help customers manage cashflow, navigate uncertainty and continue investing in their businesses.

"Succession planning remains a key priority for many farming families, and we look forward to discussing how we can support the successful transfer of farms and businesses to the next generation while protecting long-term viability and growth."





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UNDER PRESSURE

Farmers and agricultural contractors have struggled during this difficult summer to bring food to our table and to the export market. From ridiculously high fuel prices (despite the fuel subsidy) and extraordinary weather conditions, it feels like it has been one thing after another. For most of us, as we do our weekly shop, we don't really have a clear and full understanding of the pressures that weigh heavily on both farmers and agricultural contractors. These include financial uncertainty, extreme weather conditions, shortage of labour, long working days, regulatory burdens and red tape, not to mention farmers worrying about getting a fair price for their produce and agricultural contractors, who invest heavily in machinery and technology, getting a sustainable price for their services. When you look at the hours worked against income earned, farmers and contractors must be among the lowest paid workers in Ireland and that doesn't allow for the free the work done by family members. All of the above can take an immense toll leading to stress and mental health concerns. Each of these issues must be addressed, particularly the gate price for farmers. Get that sorted and you go a long way towards dealing with the other issues. I can see no plans to address this problem, however.

UNBALANCED

I find it problematic that profitability within the food chain is balanced in favour of the supermarkets and manufacturers, which is simply wrong. It beggars belief that when the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) provides a direct subsidy to farmers, that supermarkets and manufacturers actually reap the biggest benefit. Lobbying for an increase in CAP payments won't work as these have been reduced by approximately 40 per cent from 2000 to 2026. I believe it's time for the EU and member governments to act, but I won't be holding my breath. The might of all the European farming organisations need to show Brussels that we are being ripped off and action is needed now.

REPAYMENT ARREARS

The PAC Ireland members' helpline has been busy helping to sort out the various problems facing our members. One area is the problem of payment arrears on machinery where negotiations can be a nightmare if not conducted properly. However, most repayment problems can be successfully resolved. The key to success is to take early action, be honest and upfront, and when an agreement is reached don't renege on it. PAC works closely and confidentially with members in their dealings with financial institutions which is appreciated by all involved.

MEDICATION AND DRIVING

Another concern for farmers and contractors, is the risk of driving and working while under the effects of medication, whether prescribed by a doctor or bought over the counter. Medication can affect individuals differently and if you take more than one medication, side effects may increase. Therefore, it is very important to read the information leaflet that comes with your medication and always ask your doctor or pharmacist about side effects. It is an offence to drive while affected by medication that may reduce your ability to drive safely and carry out other work safely. The Road Safety Authority provides a list of medications that could affect driving ability:

- Sleeping tablets;
- Some anti-depressants;
- Some pain killers;
- Some allergy or hay fever medication;
- Sedatives, tranquilisers, or other medicines for anxiety;
- Many cough and cold remedies (can cause drowsiness or poor coordination); and
- Some medicines for high blood pressure and heart conditions.

If you have employees, inform them about your safety policies, including the hazards of driving or carrying out other work while impaired by prescription or over-the-counter drugs. Ensure your company safety statement or driving-for-work policy addresses medication side effects like drowsiness or slowed reaction times.





Claas is replacing the Axion 800 series with three new large tractors from the Axion 8 CMATIC range.

BIGGER AND BETTER: THE NEW AXION 8 CMATIC

CLAAS IS REPLACING THE AXION 800 SERIES WITH THREE NEW LARGE TRACTORS FROM THE AXION 8 CMATIC RANGE. THESE BIGGER AND BETTER SUCCESSORS ARE GETTING OUR 'FROM THE CAB' TREATMENT THIS MONTH

The successors to the Axion 800 large tractors have power output ranging from 240hp to 290 hp (264hp to 313hp with Dynamic Power) and, according to Claas, they combine 'tried-and-tested technology with new, unique features and functions for efficient and economical use in fields, on grassland and on the road.'

Additionally, they feature the new Dynamic Power power-management system, a completely redesigned cab, new electronics infrastructure and new, intelligent driver assistance systems, right through to driver-monitored autonomy. Thanks to new tyre options, CEMOS Auto Powertrain with Dynamic Power, Auto Droop and the innovative, Agritechnica award-winning adaptive driveline management system, the new Axion 8 CMATIC is 'optimally equipped for any task' says Claas.

POWER

All Axion 8 CMATIC models are powered by the latest-generation NEF six-cylinder engine from FPT, with a displacement of 6.7L, a maximum power output of 264hp to 313hp and a maximum torque of 1,132Nm to 1,282Nm. Peak power and maximum torque are available across a wide rev range and even at low engine speeds. The Dynamic Power system fully automatically adapts engine power to every operating situation and distributes it via the gearbox, power take-off shafts, hydraulics, and auxiliary consumers precisely where it is needed at any given moment. The system continuously analyses electrical power requirements, and optimises the settings; this ensures high productivity and low fuel consumption at both full and partial load, thereby reducing operating costs. During idling, the engine speed is reduced to 650rpm, which saves fuel, provides relief to the environment, and lowers the noise level when the tractor is stationary. The electronic drivetrain management system has been completely redeveloped and enables tuning optimised for performance, comfort and efficiency – with an even higher level of automation. This means that even less experienced drivers can operate at the highest levels of performance and efficiency across all areas of application. Depending on the tyres fitted, 40km/h is achieved at an efficient 1,300 engine revolutions per minute, while 50km/h is reached at just 1,400rpm.

Drivers can use the new vehicle drive controller to switch smoothly between driving directions, as well as between pedal mode, joystick mode and PTO mode without any changes in engine speed or vehicle speed.

SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY

The automatic trailer overrun brake, a feature designed to provide even greater safety when driving on roads with trailers and attached implements, is also fitted to the Axion 8 CMATIC. A new feature is the option to have the AXION 8 fitted ex-works with Nokian Soil King VF tyres (rear axle up to 710 70/R42 with a diameter of 2.07m), particularly for applications involving a high proportion of transport work, in order to further optimise efficiency and economy during road journeys.

QUIET, SPACIOUS CAB

The newly developed cab, introduced at



Inside the cab, features such as a driver's seat with a massage function and the high-end multimedia system ensure long, relaxed and fatigue-free working days.

Agritechnica with the Axion 9 CMATIC, is now also featured on the new Axion 8 CMATIC. With a volume of around three cubic metres, it offers a new sense of space and plenty of room for premium driver seats, a passenger seat, and storage compartments, as well as unrestricted legroom even for taller drivers.

Premium driver seats – optionally available with seat ventilation, seat heater and even a massage function – make those longer working days much more comfortable to endure. Thanks to the wide swivel angle of up to 40 degrees to the right (and 10 degrees to the left, to make getting in and out even easier), you can keep an eye on work equipment without straining, while keeping your legs fully extended and resting comfortably on new footrests on the right-hand A pillar.

At just 67 dB(A), the new cab is one of the quietest on the market. New storage compartments also provide non-slip, roll-proof storage space for documents, snacks and drinks, as well as work boots or, for example, lower and upper link balls.

The newly designed mechanical four-point suspension, engineered for durability and featuring angled shock absorbers, reduces vibrations without compromising suspension and damping comfort. It is also optimally tuned to work in conjunction with the revised front axle suspension.

HEADLAND MANAGEMENT

The Auto CSM function of the GPS Pilot steering system in CEBIS connect provides significant relief to the driver by automatically triggering the individually programmable sequences of the CSM headland management system when entering or leaving the headland. This achieves a new level of automation and provides relief to the driver.



NOEL DUNNE
Machinery editor

A WEATHER BATTERING

Well readers, it's September and that means it's 'ploughing' time! The National Ploughing Championships this month signals a short winding down of a busy – and very stressful, at times – farming year. It provides a well-earned break, an occasion to meet friends, neighbours, and farming peers for a day at least!

It has been an eventful year so far. Let's recap. This summer, Ireland has experienced wildfires like never before, likewise in Europe and other parts of the world. Meanwhile, earthquakes and floods have dominated other countries – and still, some people think we don't have a climate problem?

We started out with a mixed spring. Crops were planted and while winter crops performed well, grass grew a bit slower than usual. Our weather was mixed but we worked with it.

Then there was no rainfall worth talking about. First-cut silage happened in record time. The weather started getting finer then came one of the earliest harvests I have seen in my lifetime; forage harvesters lifting silage in one field, combines cutting winter barley in another. It was a case of the grain trailer meeting the grass trailer.

Then, it stopped raining and we had one of the most serious and prolonged droughts ever. As I travelled around the country and took stock of the condition of fields as I passed by them, I couldn't tell the difference between a grass field and a stubble field as they both looked the same.

So what does this mean as we head into autumn and await the winter? Well, silage pits have to be open to feed dairy stock and cattle – more cost! Yields are back and will be back as potato and vegetable crops suffer from the drought. Food prices will rise and consumers will feel the pinch. Long term, I think farmers will have to decide, as our climate changes, what crops will be grown in the future.

On the back of all this, tractor and machinery sales are holding their own. Dealers are finding that farmers and contractors are getting on with things, but they are being cautious and that's to be expected. Some machinery manufacturers are taking a look at their balance sheets and focusing on the markets as they stand, and where they are going across Europe and the world. Maybe some decisions to be made there.

Farming has taken a weather battering on top of low commodity prices; confidence is low in the farming world at the moment, uncertainty is high! We have a growing world population and we still need to feed that population, but there seems to be more and more obstacles getting in the way of doing that. Right now, they are weather and climate-change related.

As mentioned at the start of my column, The Ploughing will be on soon, and there is plenty to see at this year's event, which is shaping up to be a cracker! I think everyone deserves to take a breather and leave the problems at the farm gate for a day. I know I am looking forward to it, as I am sure you all are! See you there, my friends.

Until next month, farm safely, farm wisely.

TFM

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PÖTTINGER INTRODUCES NEW TWIN-ROTOR RAKE

Pöttinger's new Top V 6520 C is a compact twin rotor rake without chassis that delivers 'impressive manoeuvrability' and is ideal for farms with consistently high volumes of forage and complex logistics, according to the company.

Featuring an innovative pivoting headstock, the rake follows the tractor perfectly when cornering and rakes a central swath. The high centring force of the mechanical stabiliser struts on the pivoting headstock allows the machine to run smoothly without swaying from side to side. In addition, the machine is prevented from running forward when driving downhill.

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



The Multitast jockey wheel is available as an option and is mounted directly on the headstock.

At the headland, the machine is lifted by the tractor linkage and gently moved into the centre position. The high ground clearance of the rake makes headland turns easier and prevents disruption of the already-formed swaths. The Top V 6520 C is also compact during transport with its centre of gravity close to the tractor.

The working width can be adjusted mechanically from 5.9m to 6.5m and can be adapted to the geometry of each tractor. This produces swath widths between 1m and 1.6 m. The rake is therefore ideal for handling heavy forage in combination with smaller harvesting machines.



LOOKING FOR SLURRY EQUIPMENT OR DIET FEEDER PARTS?









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SMART AND ACCURATE LOADER WEIGHING FROM QUICKE



The Q-Companion 2.0 can give live weight readings at any loader position.

Quicke has launched the Q-Companion 2.0, which is the latest evolution of its advanced weighing and productivity system. The Q-Companion 2.0, the company says, is designed to minimise driver effort while maximising efficiency and accuracy.

One of the biggest changes in Q-Companion 2.0 is that it no longer needs implement calibration. It automatically sets the correct parameters, cutting setup time and removing a common source of errors.

Q-Companion 2.0 can give live weight readings at any loader position, meaning there is no need to lift through a specific weighing cycle to get an accurate result. This speeds up repetitive loading tasks and allows the operator to stay focused on the job rather than having to constantly readjust the arms to gain a weight reading.

Through Bluetooth connection, Q-Companion 2.0 links data to the Quicke mobile app which allows the driver to see live weights directly on their phone. This is particularly useful when filling buckets while outside the tractor, reducing the need to continuously climb in and out to gain a reading. All recorded activities can be exported as PDF files directly from the app, making it easy to document material handling, feed mixing, or loading tasks. Files can be sent by email or printed via Bluetooth, which can help massively with farm administration tasks.

Q-Companion 2.0 is available as a factory fitted option. A dealer installed retro fit kit is under preparation and will allow for the upgrade of existing Q series loaders. The system is compatible with all Quicke loader control systems and when paired with QE command, extra smart features are available, according to the company.



CLAAS EXPANDS TEDDER RANGE



The five new tedders have working widths ranging from 6.60m to 10.80m.

CLAAS HAS EXPANDED ITS RANGE OF TEDDERS WITH FIVE NEW VOLTO AND VOLTO T MODELS, POSITIONED BELOW THE VOLTO 1500-1300 TS SERIES INTRODUCED IN 2024

In addition to even more user-friendly operation, improved ground contour following, and enhanced working quality, particular attention was paid during the development process to the low-maintenance, oil-filled rotor gearboxes, which have been carried over from the larger models. Tried-and-tested features such as the Max Spread crop flow concept with angled tine arms and the HD tines of equal length for layer-by-layer forage collection have been carried over from the previous models, while the CKL hydraulic power suspension is now fitted as standard on all three-point models.

The five new tedders, with working widths ranging from 6.60m to 10.80m, share many technical features with their larger counterparts. Key new features include a new power train with hermetically sealed rotor gearboxes (similar to the Volto 1300/1500/1300TS/1500TS), a new rotor wheel mounting with a reinforced rotor shaft, and new spreading angle adjustment for spreading angles of up to 18 degrees, as well as reduced hydraulic requirements, a new hydraulic power-flow steering unit (CKL) and Kennfixx couplings for all hydraulic connections.

TECHNOLOGY

When it comes to rotor technology, the new Volto and Volto T models continue to rely on Max Spread technology – tried and tested worldwide under a wide range of conditions of use – featuring tine arms angled 29.3° behind the main axis. This geometry combines high raking performance with clean raking action to ensure an optimal spread pattern, even with heavy, wet crop.

To ensure consistent top performance, the larger Permalink HD drive has been adopted from the larger Volto large-area tedders.

In addition to maximum reliability, the development focused particularly on reducing maintenance effort and costs. The input shaft speed has increased by 50 per cent to reduce the torque on the drive shafts.

A new, compact, trapezoidal support frame keeps the centre of gravity of the three-point-mounted tedders close to the tractor. This reduces the lifting force required, allowing the tedders to be used with smaller tractors, while also providing a better view of the rotors.

On the Volto 1100 T and 1100 models with a 1000rpm PTO drive, the option is available as standard to create night swaths by operating at a reduced speed, ensuring faster drying while the crop lies overnight. For the Volto 900, 800 and 700 models, optional night swath gearboxes are available; by reducing the rotor speed by 33 per cent, the crop is distributed evenly across several smaller swaths.

PRODUCTIVITY

The 18-to-12 method enables increased productivity in grass harvesting while saving time. When mowing with the Disco 9300 Direct Swather (with swath augers) or Auto Swather (with swath belts), the crop from two Disco units (front and rear) is deposited across two mowing widths, so that a Liner four-rotor swather can subsequently combine 18m of mowing width into a single swath in a single pass. This reduces the number of passes by 33 per cent, while 40 per cent more mass is placed into the swath, thereby making better use of the forage harvester's capacity.

No terminal is required to operate the new tedders. Thanks to the headland position integrated into the hydraulic folding mechanism, a single double-acting tractor control unit is sufficient for operation.



A new, compact, trapezoidal support frame keeps the centre of gravity of the three-point mounted tedders close to the tractor.

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MONTHLY FIELD REPORT

AMAZONE'S DISPLAY OF POWER WITH PANTERA 7004

WITH ITS 300HP DEUTZ ENGINE, 7,000L SPRAY TANK, AND A 45M BOOM, TILLAGE FARMER JAMES O'REILLY TELLS US WHY AMAZONE HAS 'REINVENTED THE STEEL' WITH THE PANTERA 7004 SELF-PROPELLED CROP-PROTECTION SPRAYER



The Pantera 7004 self-propelled crop protection sprayer can be equipped with sprayer booms with working widths from 24m to 48m.

Predominantly focused on winter cereal, oilseed rape, and beans on a min-til system, James owns one third of the land and leases the rest. To reach all parcels of land, he could be travelling up to 30km in any direction from the far side of Tullow in Co. Carlow to Cashel in Co. Tipperary.

Before moving to the Pantera, James's operation included two trailed sprayers and two Fendt 240hp tractors. He explains: "There were two 30m sprayers, 6,000L tanks, and they were a fine outfit. But quite often the second trailed sprayer wasn't being utilised for various reasons. Farming in a min-til system, it is important to keep land sprayed in front of the drills and then pre-emerge spray afterwards, James explains: "We're not ploughing here; this land hasn't seen a plough in 25 or 26 years. So if we don't keep on top of our herbicide programmes, we're going to run into difficulty with grass weeds and, to a lesser extent, broadleaf weeds."

But, why switch from a 30m to 45m boom? James explains: "A lot of people have probably scratched their heads at this. We're cruising near 27km here on a headland because I'm confident I'm not going to hit the ditch with my boom, obviously because I have my tramlines in now. Now, headland will be the roughest part of the field. I have better forward speed at 45m than I had with a 30m trailed sprayer. There is exceptionally good boom control in this machine. It is like it's on air, all four wheels are independent on a kind of a bogey system, but the level of comfort, the level of ride the booms are getting to start with is phenomenal."

ECONOMICS

Reclaiming tramlines has paid off, James says: "Tramlines comprise two 700mm tracks on which the tyres drive and no crops grow. Getting corn into those tracks and having one third fewer tracks across the field gave us an increase in yield somewhere north of €20k a year. So that was a massive subsidy to help pay for a machine like this.

If you look at the cost of a modern 240hp tractor, you're probably looking at north of €200k. Put a trailed sprayer on it, and you're looking at another €140k. We were faced with having to change tractors here because I had two 240hp tractors and to upgrade either one of those was going to cost north of €100k, or thereabouts. So, believe it or not, the cheaper option was to go to one self-propelled unit."

Before James made this investment, Farmhand put him in contact with a farmer in Holland who had one of these machines. "We flew out to look at the machine, and they gave us a demo. I saw them driving across harvested potato drills at 20km/hr and then bringing the sprayer to a standing stop. I was expecting the booms to come in around the cab, but they didn't. And once I saw that, I said that's fine, that, that's it for me," James explains. "We got on really well with Farmhand whose commitment to the product meant a lot as well, to be fair. They made a commitment to stock various parts and they have."

FEATURES

"Another thing I liked about this sprayer is that I have a variable track width. This doesn't really concern me much other than when I



James describes the boom control on the Pantera 7004 as 'exceptionally good' and as though it is 'on air'.

put on the wider wheels, I can let out my track width a small bit to accommodate those wider wheels. If I want when I'm on cultivated land before we sow, I can run the front track widths slightly narrower than the back ones to try spread out the risk of compaction.

"There is also no drift out of the sprayer. We're still spraying at 100L/ha here. We're at 2.6 bar, but we have two nozzles, 02 and 04, which is 06. The other thing this sprayer has is curve compensation. So, when your sprayer goes around the bend, the outer sprayer, the outer boom is travelling far faster and the inside is nearly doubling back. So, with the GPS, the machine is switching off nozzles on one side, but putting out a higher rate on the nozzle furthest out. So as your sprayer is whipping around, the out boom that's traveling at a lot more speed is covering more ground than the inner one."

What about tyre size? James says: "Kevin Burke tyres in Galway made the rims and tyres and put on a set of Alliance 710 6042s – like a VF tyre – so they can run on quite low ground pressure which is ideal for me being able to reduce compaction and rutting when I'm out in the back end or even this time of year."

Timing is everything with crops," says James. "I was once told the difference between a good tillage farmer and a bad tillage farmer is a week. I'd say it's a day. I suppose, my average field size is about 27 or 28 acres. I have some fields at 100 acres and some fields at five acres and I can go into those five-acre fields with a 45m sprayer. You drive around it and you go down the middle of it and maybe back up again, and out the gate. I'm in those fields even less than I was before," James explains "This machine has four-wheel steer and crab steer. So I'm going to get myself in and out of most tight spots as needed."

> **MY DAD ALWAYS SAID YOU CAN'T STAND STILL. YOU'RE EITHER GOING FORWARDS OR YOU'RE GOING BACKWARDS**

ADVICE

"Would I advise anybody to put themselves under pressure to buy a Pantera? No. Not unless it stacks up. But if you're looking at a self-propelled sprayer, well then you're already in that market and that's a different scenario," James explains. "If you are in the market for a sprayer, whether it's a really high-spec trailed sprayer, mounted sprayer, or self-propelled, my advice would be to have a chat with the very knowledgeable team at Farmhand and their dealer network around the country. Get in contact with somebody who has one of these machines and get up with them for a day because seeing is believing. I had to go see a 45m one in Holland because there was no 45m in Ireland or the UK at the time." James explains. "Farmhand has a wealth of knowledge and experience on the technology side from selecting nozzles, to what will work and won't work on your system because maybe what I want in my system is not what you want in your system. They're not just trying to sell a machine. They actually understand how it works. My dad always said you can't stand still. You're either going forwards or you're going backwards."



BKT LAUNCHES 'NEXT-GENERATION' TYRE

Ridemax FL 615 in size VF 900/65 R 38 is BKT's next-generation tyre specifically engineered for the heaviest agricultural transport applications, including slurry tankers and grain carts, according to the company. This flotation tyre features a radial construction reinforced with heavy-duty steel belts. One of its key advantages is its ability to ensure an even load distribution across the tyre footprint, minimising soil stress, increasing puncture resistance, and enhancing overall durability.

"Operating with larger footprints and lower inflation pressures allows heavy equipment to distribute loads more evenly, helping preserve soil structure even during the most demanding field operations," according to Willem-Jan Straatman, product manager, agricultural tyres at BKT. "Ridemax FL 615 is the new VF tire designed by BKT to carry more than 10 tonnes per tyre at just one bar in the field at speeds of up to 25km/h. This exceptionally low operating pressure significantly reduces ground pressure, helping maintain optimal soil conditions and supporting healthy crop development after slurry application or during the critical post-harvest period".


This flotation tyre features a radial construction reinforced with heavy-duty steel belts.

The steel-belt construction also delivers the exceptional lateral stability required for high-centre-of-gravity implements such as slurry tankers and grain carts, ensuring safe and reliable performance even at inflation pressures as low as 0.6 bar. However, Ridemax FL 615 extends its performance beyond the field. When it comes to road transport, it can actually carry up to 14t at speeds of 65km/h or up to 18t at 40km/h, combining field protection with outstanding transport efficiency.



TAKING PRECISION SLURRY PLACEMENT A STEP FORWARD

Getting slurry nutrients onto the ground is just one part of spreading. Placing them evenly where the crop can make best use of them is another important part. Vogelsang Ireland says it is taking precision slurry application a step further with its first-of-its-kind DoubleFlow Boot, designed to deliver a narrower and more uniform slurry spread.

The DoubleFlow Boot splits the slurry flow into two outlets, reducing the spacing between applications from 25cm to 12.5cm. This creates a narrower, more evenly distributed slurry belt, helping place nutrients closer to where they are needed and improving nutrient utilisation. The integrated PrecisionFlow spout further optimises slurry positioning, supporting accurate and consistent application across the full working width, the company says.

The technology has also been developed with durability and practicality in mind. A combination of wear-resistant special plastic and a Hardox steel blade provide a robust but lightweight design, while the steel blade can be replaced independently to reduce maintenance costs and extend working life. The DoubleFlow Boot can also be retrofitted to compatible trailing shoe systems, providing contractors and farmers with a straightforward route to improved application precision. The DoubleFlow Boot on Vogelsang's BlackBird Single 12m trailing shoe creates a complete precision slurry spreading system. Weighing just 1,050 kg, the lightweight BlackBird combines a 12m working width with a horizontal folding design, improving stability and reducing soil loading while providing a compact 2.55m transport width. Its streamlined design keeps overall weight to a minimum without compromising strength or performance, making it well suited to Irish slurry conditions and easier to handle and transport, the company says.



The DoubleFlow Boot splits the slurry flow into two outlets, reducing the spacing between applications from 25cm to 12.5cm.



BLUETONGUE VACCINE: GUARDING LIVESTOCK AND LIVELIHOODS



SARAH KEARNEY, FARM AND EQUINE PRODUCT MANAGER WITH VIRBAC, MAKES THE CASE FOR A PROACTIVE, ROBUST BLUETONGUE VACCINATION STRATEGY

As the livestock sector across the UK and Ireland navigates the 2026 season, bluetongue virus serotype 3 (BTV-3) continues to present a critical and evolving threat to farm productivity and animal welfare. Following over 300 confirmed cases in Great Britain during the 2025/2026 season, the virus has demonstrated significant overwintering capabilities, proving that the danger does not simply disappear when temperatures briefly drop. With midges fully active and high summer temperatures providing the perfect conditions for BTV-3 to replicate and transmit, the risk of infection spreading through windblown midges across the Channel and the Irish Sea is a pressing reality. For farmers, facing an outbreak requires more than just reactive measures; it demands a proactive, robust vaccination strategy.

THE TRUE COST OF AN OUTBREAK

The financial and physical toll of a BTV-3 outbreak is devastating. The virus causes severe endothelial damage in infected animals, leading to drastic consequences. In sheep, clinical signs include extreme lameness, facial swelling, drooling, high fever, and rapid loss of body condition. The mortality rates are staggering; data from the Netherlands showed that affected sheep flocks experienced mortality rates 15 times higher than unaffected flocks, with a case fatality rate of approximately 75 per cent. For cattle, the impact on production and fertility is equally alarming. Infected dairy cows have been shown to suffer an average milk drop of 1kg per cow for nine consecutive weeks. They may also exhibit crusting of the muzzle, reddened and swollen eyes, and painful reddening of the teats. Furthermore, BTV-3 transplacental infections are causing tragic losses during calving. A recent UK report conducted on three suckler farms found that five to 17 per cent of calves are born with severe congenital brain lesions, often presenting as blindness, an inability to stand, or other severe neurological signs like 'star gazing'. On one affected farm, the virus left 20 per cent of the breeding stock entirely barren. Beyond the immediate loss of livestock and production, the strict movement restrictions and required testing costs can completely disrupt market access, dealing a heavy blow to a farm's bottom line. The threat of BTV-3 is no longer a distant possibility; it is an active and spreading challenge. Waiting for clinical signs to appear in your herd or flock is too late. Because vaccine-induced antibodies take several weeks to fully develop, establishing immunity ahead of peak disease challenge is the most effective way to safeguard your animals' welfare and your farm's financial stability.

VACCINATION

Vaccination is our best available insurance policy against the devastation of BTV-3. Statistical modelling indicates that vaccinating 60-70 per cent of livestock is critical for effective disease control across the region. Syvazul BTV 3, an inactivated vaccine, is specifically formulated to provide targeted, robust protection against the BTV-3 strain. Administered subcutaneously in sheep, the dose provides active immunisation to reduce viraemia, clinical signs, lesions and mortality, with immunity established just four weeks after the dose. For cattle, the vaccine is administered intramuscularly and it reduces viraemia, offering protection three weeks after the primary course is completed. The vaccine can be administered to both sheep and cattle during pregnancy and lactation, ensuring that you can protect your vulnerable ewes and cows without risking their current reproductive cycles.

MESSAGES

- Do a mini financial budget – essential this month.
- Be positive; aim to extend the grazing season.
- Apply nutrients to soil as required.
- Choose paddocks that must be grazed first, middle, and last now based on spring grazing.
- Is it too late to reseed? Maybe not this year!
- Make sure to do all the animal-care requirements this month.
- Check the quantity of winterfeed you have versus your requirement.



By Matt Ryan

FINANCIAL WORRY

- Dairy-farmer income will decrease by 20-30% this year. This is serious!
  - Therefore, farmers must be careful about how they spend their money.
- What MUST you do now to stay in financial control until April 2027?
  - This is when you will receive your first decent milk cheque in 2027.
- Farmers must now do a mini financial budget from now to December 31, and then forward to mid-April 2027.
  - Record your present bank balance taking account of money owed by you, and money owed to you.
  - Add on income accruing (milk and cattle sales, plus single farm payment, etc.).
  - Estimate and subtract your costs, not forgetting bank payments, tax, living expenses and capital expenditure from cashflow.
  - From this, you will see where you stand financially at the end of 2026.
  - This will be reassuring for you and your family.
- Do the same for the period from January 1 to mid-April 2026.
  - This exercise will give you reassurance that you can get there or it can guide you as to what additional steps you may need to take.
    - Additional working capital may need to be secured.
    - You may need a short-term loan.
    - You may need to postpone capital investments, or avail of a long-term loan if the investment is necessary.
    - An interest-only loan might also be an option.
  - This is really a cost-control measure that must be strictly adhered to.
- You should adhere to the following principle this autumn and next spring:
  - "I will not buy what I want but only what I can't do without."
- Judicious levels of meal feeding are justified, but only feed to animals that are productive and require it:
  - Poor milk yielders, less than 0.7kg MS per cow per day, should not get meal – dry them off. Sell if not in-calf, maybe sell anyway as they are no use if milking so little now.
  - Weanlings on target weights need no meals.
- Only spend what you need on nitrogen; most low-stocked farms need none.
  - Protected urea must be the product of choice and is justified.
- Take veterinary advice before embarking on vaccination and routine dosing programmes.
- Your 'fixed costs' are not really fixed, and they must be reduced downwards.
  - Car, electricity, and phone costs can be reduced.
  - Machinery costs are prohibitive on some farms; only spend the bare minimum.
- It is extremely doubtful if any capital investment can be made this autumn or next spring.

BE POSITIVE, AIM TO EXTEND THE GRAZING SEASON

- The repercussions of the prolonged drought for most farmers, except those in the west and on heavy soils, are that they are way below target grass covers for early September.
- Because farm incomes are going to be greatly reduced this year, we need to make every effort to extend the grazing season, because:
  - Grass is, by far, the cheapest feed cost.
  - Silage reserves have been greatly depleted over the last few months, and we don't want the winter to begin in October because we are short of grass.
  - Every extra day at grass, even small amounts, will result in profits being increased by €2-€2.80 per cow per day.
- To extend the grazing seasons this autumn and have early grass next spring, you must achieve the following target covers (kg DM/cow) and rotation lengths for the different stocking rates.

Table 1: September target grass covers (kg DM/ha) per cow and average farm cover (AFC) and rotation length.

	2.5 cows/ha		3.0 cows/ha		Heavy land	Rotation length (days)	Rotation length (days)
Date	Cover/cow	AFC	Cover/cow	AFC	Cover/cow	AFC	
Sept. 1	300	750	330	990	300	750-850	30
Sept. 15	400-450	1,000-1,100	370	1,100	320	850-900	35
Oct. 1	400	1,000	380	1,150	330	850-950	40*

*Rotation length should be 35 days with pre-grazing covers never more than 2,000kg DM/ha on heavy land.

- Look, it is going to be a challenge to achieve these covers, but you should try doing some or all of the following in early-September:
  - Apply nitrogen as specified further on in this article.
  - Reduce daily demand for grazed grass by:
    - Moving all non-milking cows off the milking platform.
    - Selling off, immediately, high SCC/mastitic cows and cows not in-calf.
    - Feeding 2-4kg meal (soya hulls, palm kernal, pulp or low %P dairy ration).
    - Silage will also have to be fed in early September if only

4-8kg of grass is available per cow per day. This should be discontinued once grass cover nears target covers.
- Some farmers have forage crops available, and this is an opportune time to use them as supplements. With the continued possibility of summer droughts, the growing of forage crops, kale, stubble turnips, fodder-beet etc, will have to be seriously considered for this purpose.
- Do the autumn rotation plan, allocating a 30-35-day rotation in early September. That means on a 60ha milking platform you will be allocating two hectares per day. This should tell you how much supplementation you need to add to the cows' diet per day.
- Measure grass twice-a-week to keep a close eye on grass build-up.

- You will be aiming for highest farm covers in mid-September.
  - But pre-grazing covers (PGC), however unlikely, should not be greater than 2,300kg DM; otherwise, quality will be very poor.
- Use the strip wire to ration grass if covers are greater than 2,000kg DM and/or if cows are remaining in a paddock/field longer than 2.5 grazings; and/or if weather is wet.
- Paddocks must be grazed out tight to 4cm.
  - This encourages winter tillering.
  - Makes it easier to graze out the last rotation.
  - It sets the farm up with less dung-pads for winter (they rot).
- On some farms that are over target cover (table 1) and where grass growth is greater than grass demand, meal-feeding levels must be reduced and quality round bales should be cut, but not later than mid-September.

NUTRIENT APPLICATIONS

- The deadline for slurry application is September 30, but because the response is greater early in September, apply where necessary early in the month.
- Soiled water can continue to be applied into October, so it would probably be best to hold onto it, if possible, until late September or October.
- An application of muriate of potash (50% potassium) should be applied now on low-potassium paddocks and silage ground.
- Nitrogen (N) still is the driver of grass growth, but you must stay within your allowance and the amount available to you at this stage of the year.

Table 2: Recommended rates of N (kg/ha) for different stocking rates and clover content.

% clover in April	September (units/acre)	Kg/ha/year	Units/acre/year
None (all grass)	23 (19)	212	172
5%	20 (16)	175	142
10%	20 (16)	150	122
15%	20 (16)	130	130
20%	15 (12)	105	85

- Because of the drought and tight grazing the % clover in swards seems to be high and it might be opportune to restrict the N being applied so as to increase the clover content on the farm.
  - With nitrogen projected to increase further in price we must significantly increase the clover content of our pasture.

IDENTIFY PADDOCKS TO CLOSE

- On this grazing rotation this is a very important task. Be guided, in planning your sequence of grazing paddocks this autumn, by the suggested dates in table 3.

Table 3: Sequence of paddocks, plus % of paddocks, to be grazed during second-last and last rotations based on the spring grazing sequence.

First rotation next spring	Last autumn rotation	Second-last autumn rotation
% paddocks grazed + timing	% 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 September 10-25 Dry, close to yard, multiple access points, sheltered, quickest growing.
30% grazed from March 1-15 PGCs >1,200kg DM/ha, dry with ok access.	30% grazed from October 5-20 Further from yard, ok access and dry.	30% grazed from September 1-10 Further from yard, ok access and dry.
40% to be grazed from March 15-April 5 Awkward paddocks, furthest from yard, poor grazing structure, old pastures, slow growing, silage ground.	40% to be grazed from November 5-20 Awkward paddocks, furthest from yard, poor grazing structure, old pastures, slow growing, silage ground.	40% to be grazed from September 25-October 25 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 eight to 10 days earlier; while the spring dates should be eight to 10 days later.

- It is vital to get into the correct paddock 'grazing lane' on the September rotations, otherwise, you will be short of grass on some paddocks next rotation with too much on others. Therefore, you must now spend a few hours deciding:
  1. Paddocks (30%) to be grazed from September 10-25 – they will be further from the yard as they will be grazed next spring from March 1-15.
  2. Paddocks (30%) to be grazed from September 1-10 – they will be further from the yard as they will be grazed next spring from let-out to March 1
  3. Paddocks (40%) to be grazed from September 25 to October 10 – they will be further from the yard as they will be grazed next spring from March 15 to April 5.

IS IT TOO LATE TO RESEED?

- Maybe not! Soils are very dry with the possibility of good late-autumn growth.
  - But do it before late August and mid-September and be very aware of future weather conditions/forecasts.
- With plenty of winter feed made this year on some farms and very low grass covers on some fields that may have been over-grazed, it might be an opportune time to reseed underperforming fields.
  - Consult your PastureBase data to identify these fields.
- Reseeding with perennial ryegrass and white clover will pay for itself in two years as it will yield much more quality grass.
- It is important to do the job correctly and the following must be adhered to:
  - Kill off old grasses and weeds, particularly in fields that are earmarked for reseeding, and with very low covers that have

greened up after the rain. These fields won't be fit for grazing for two to three weeks anyway, so the loss of grass will be small.
- Leave for six to seven days before grazing or baling and then ploughing or tilling with one or two pass system, leaving a fine, firm seed bed by rolling prior to sowing (neglected in most situations)
- Apply lime, up to 3t/acre (required pH is 6.3-6.7) if necessary and three to four bags of 10:10:20 (more if Index 1) plus one bag of CAN before sowing.
- Sow the seed, only 1cm deep if clover included, lightly chain harrow in or use a ring roller, but it must be rolled after sowing.
- Watch out for pest attacks in autumn-sown crops, particularly slugs, leatherjackets, fruit fly, and rabbits.
- Spray for weeds, particularly docks with clover-safe spray four to five weeks after sowing when the docks are the size of a 20-cent coin.
- Graze early at 600-700kg DM/ha, and often to promote tillering. It would be a good idea to roll again before this grazing to prevent pulling by stock.

- The next big decision relates to the variety of grass to sow.
  - It is best to take independent, professional advice on this as it is an investment that will influence your profit.
- Consider red clover?
  - Very high production for the three to six years, delivering an annual production of 13-16t DM/ha.
  - It fixes more than 300kg N/ha (240 units/acre)
  - But it has a high requirement for potassium and phosphorous.
  - Very suitable for a four-cut silage system with zero grazing in the autumn, and outside silage blocks.
  - White clovers are more persistent in sward,
- Consider multi-species and learn from the experience on your farm. Many farmers are quite happy with their contribution to farm.

WINTERFEED: ACT IN TIME?

- The first thing to do is estimate the amount of feed you have and the amount you require.
  - I think everyone is able to estimate the amount of silage in a pit and count the number of bales available.
  - However, if silage was dry at cutting, it would be advisable to get it analysed – do that now.
  - Until you do this, and get results, use 25% DM for pit silage and 35-45% DM for bales this year, but best to get it analysed.
  - Therefore, if you have a pit of 300t that is 25% DM, then you have 75,000kg DM (300 x 1,000 x 0.25).
    - If you have 60 bales (600kg each) that are 35% DM, then you have 12,600kg DM (60 x 600 x 0.35).
    - Therefore, there is a total of 87,600kg DM of feed available. Maize, straw, hay, kale, etc. should be added in the same way.
- Then, list out all the cows, weanlings, and in-calf heifers plus other stock that will be wintered, decide on your length of winter, allowing 15-20 days extra to risk manage for a longer winter, as per table 4.

Table 4: Calculating the kg of dry matter required on a farm for winter.

No./Type	Winter (days)	DM/head/day	Planned meal (DM/head/day)	Net roughage (Kg DM/head/day)	Total
50 cows	120	11	0	11	66,000
7 x in-calf heifers	120	9	0.5	8.5	7,140
7 x weanlings	120	5	1.0	4.0	3,360
2 x 1.5-year males	100	9	0	9	1,800
Total					78,300

- If short of feed, several options are available at this point in time:
  - Sell off all beef stock, surplus in-calf heifers, incapacitated cows and bulls.
  - Make sure to shorten the winter by:
    - Extending the grazing season in the autumn and having good opening spring grass covers.
  - Forward-buy meal and straw now for feeding next winter (buy barley off combine).
  - Buy maize or grass silage, being careful not to pay too much.
  - Rent dry grazing fields now and build up grass to 2,500kg DM/ha for feeding from November onwards.
  - As a general principle now, if short of grass for grazing, try to avoid feeding large quantities of pit silage. Use meal, 4-6kg, zero-graze grass from outside farm, or buy from local farmer.
- Silage (grass) could be bought.
  - But get it analysed first.
  - It should not cost more than €45-€60/t (72% DMD).
- Maize and whole crop silage purchased at €85/t and €110/t, respectively represent an option also.

ANIMAL HEALTH CARE!

- Salmonella-related abortions – to prevent abortions, vaccinate now, early in September, but follow instructions. Do R2s twice, two weeks apart.
- It is essential to vaccinate weanling replacement for leptospirosis now.
- Dose for hoose in weanlings if coughing.
- If calves have stomach worms (sticky dung around tail head) they must be dosed.
- Lameness is becoming a very costly issue on farms. Some of the preventable solutions need not cost much:
  - Patience when driving the cows.
  - Removing water from the roadway.
  - Reducing the amount of time cows spend on yards.
  - Reducing the number of times the backing gate moves.
  - Feeding the correct meal type, etc.
  - Footbath every week and make sure there is adequate fibre in the diet.
  - A batch-latch, which automatically opens the paddock entrance, is a very good investment as it allows cows to come and go to the milking parlour at their own pace, being in the collecting yard when you are ready to start milking.
- Mastitis is next to infertility as a main reason for culling cows. Change liners after 2,000 milkings, continue teat dipping at 15-20ml/cow/milking, and cull chronic cows now. Use milk recording data to select these cows for culling



The repercussions of the prolonged drought for most farmers, except those in the west and on heavy soils, are that they are way below target grass covers for early September.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Some important dates to remember this month are as follows:

- September 1: Hedgecutting season opens and runs until February 28.
- September 4: Closing date for TAMS 3 applications (including Tranche 13 for schemes like the Young/Women Farmer and Solar Capital Investment Schemes) and the Nutrient Importation Storage Scheme.
- September 15: Catch crops for ACRES must be planted by this date..
- September 30: Swards sown in the Red Clover Silage Measure and the Multispecies Sward Scheme must be successfully established
- October 1: Prohibited period commences for the application of slurry.

OTHER BITS AND PIECES:

- Castrate or vasectomise male calves now.
- Sell off cull cows now to make more grass available for milkers.
  - Some farmers are going to put them on ad-lib meal now but I'm not sure there will be much profit in that; it also affects your stocking rate.
- As a result of the weather-driven crisis this year, you must assess if your system is robust enough to deal with the same problems next year, and perhaps every year.
- Being over stocked is asking for trouble!
- It will be difficult to graze out high N, low dry-matter grass this month but it will be twice as hard to do so in wet conditions.
  - Therefore, 'on-off' grazing will have to be practised.
  - Feeding silage before cows go to grass will only make it difficult to graze out paddock – don't do this.
- Leaving post-grazing grass after you is wasting feed – no one can afford this!
- In-calf heifers should be 73% of mature cow weight now, or 380kg and 403kg, respectively, for 520kg and 550kg mature cow herd. While the equivalent weanlings should be 172kg and 183kg.
  - Animals under these target weights should be fed 1-2kg meal/day. But no meal to animals above target.
  - Check weights with contract rearer.
- To save on labour costs, consider:
  - Once-a-day milking; or
  - Ten milkings per week. Research has shown that the loss of milk will be small for the convenience and time saving.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Farming is the art of turning sunlight into food."





Denis Drennan
President, ICMSA

BRACE YOURSELF FOR OUTRAGE

There's something very instructive about the way that the summer drought was dealt with in the media in terms of the way it affected farming and, most particularly, the way its likely effects were presented. Without meaning to do an injustice to our media, we can summarise this as: "Yeah, okay, so it's been hard for farmers to grow their crops and volumes are down due to the lack of rain and extreme heat, but (sudden note of urgency and anxiety) what does this mean for us non-farmers in terms of the prices we might have to pay for our food?"

IF PRODUCTION COSTS GO UP...

The ICMSA took a decision some 15 years ago that it would, never again, apologise for announcing – early and often – that if the costs of producing food went up, it would begin lobbying immediately for an increase in farmer price to cover the increased costs of production. It's nearly amusing to note the astonishment in the voices and reactions of politicians and commentators to our quiet insistence that if the costs of producing milk and beef go up, then we farmers must be able to pass those costs directly along – and it is up to others along the supply chain to decide whether they want to absorb the increased costs or pass them along in turn to their customers. It's a choice for the factories, the processors, or the supermarkets. But the days when they didn't have to make that choice because the farmers would simply have to 'take the hit' for everybody else, must be a thing of the past. Forever.

> **AFTER DECADES OF DOING SO, FARMERS ARE NO LONGER WILLING TO FINANCIALLY 'TAKE ONE FOR THE TEAM'**

HERE WE GO AGAIN

I'm saying this again at the end of August because we are already set up for another instalment of Ireland's long-running soap opera, and the big question: 'Will all this farming stuff increase the costs of food at consumer level?' The cost of energy is up. The cost of fuel is up. The cost of fertiliser is up. The cost of labour is up. That means – it has to mean – that the cost of producing food is up, and we (farmers) are not picking up those increased costs anymore. After decades of doing so, farmers are no longer willing to financially 'take one for the team' and as the relative effect of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments declines, farmers are increasingly demanding that they receive the real costs of producing food. They can't go on producing food and getting a price that doesn't even cover the costs of that production – as our members have been doing for almost a year now with milk production.

INCREASE OR DECREASE?

But it's not just milk and it's not just 2026 and it's not just dairy farmers. Everywhere you look in farming and primary food production, whenever successive Irish governments or the EU have been faced with a choice between doing something that will increase the costs of producing food, or lower those costs, they will inevitably choose the former. Every action they take, every strategic objective they set out, and every directive all have one underlying effect: they increase the costs of producing that food. This summer's drought is just going to magnify a problem that has been a very long time in incubation; if we keep on heaping restrictions on the farmers producing our food and if we keep on making it costly and financially unworkable, then the supply of food drops and the price to consumers goes up. There were squeals of panic two and three years ago in the face of what people considered shocking inflation. I'd advise everyone to brace themselves for this winter and into next year – and I'd specifically advise politicians to grasp the fact that there's a conveyor belt running from our farms to consumers' fridges. The farmers are performing the most important actions: producing the food and placing it on the start of the conveyor belt. Everyone else along the conveyor belt is just 'tweaking' or processing slightly the essential food that the farmers have put there. Policy has to start reflecting the importance of who's doing what along the conveyer belt from farm to fridge.

> **POLICY HAS TO START REFLECTING THE IMPORTANCE OF WHO'S DOING WHAT ALONG THE CONVEYER BELT FROM FARM TO FRIDGE**

WORKING WHERE FARMING HAS THE MOST UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

FOR DECADES, SELF HELP AFRICA HAS BEEN DELIVERING AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AS A MEANS OF COMBATTING HUNGER AND EXTREME POVERTY. HERE, NIAMH DE LOUGHRY, REFLECTS ON HER FIRST VISITS TO SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AS THE CEO OF SELF HELP AFRICA, AND WITNESSING THE IMPORTANT WORK THAT IT DOES

As one of Ireland's leading non-government organisations (NGOs), the charity harnesses the potential of Africa's small-holder farmers to drive economic advancement, believing agriculture is the most effective way to lift millions of families out of extreme poverty. In a region of the world where the vast majority of food is produced on small farms, it's a compelling story of promise and potential. Self Help Africa works where poverty is most concentrated, but where farming has the most untapped potential. At least 80 per cent of Africa's 33 million small farms have the potential to produce a lot more than they do at present. With better access to training and information, better quality seed, improved soil health, fertiliser, water and irrigation, and more effective handling of crops after harvest, this 'yield gap' between what is being grown and what is possible can be closed. Self Help Africa's story is about the small-holder farming families who are responding to this challenge. But it's also the story of an organisation that has harnessed the potential of strategic partnerships and mergers to grow into one of Europe's leading agriculture NGOs. I saw both of these elements firsthand when I visited two of Self Help Africa's biggest programme countries, Malawi and Zambia, in the months after I joined the organisation in January this year. Before joining Self Help Africa I had worked in the NGO sector in the Middle and Far East, but had been back in Ireland for a number of years, working with the RDS Foundation and its historical programmes in agriculture and rural affairs, as well as in enterprise, the arts and science for development, when this exciting opportunity arose. I knew the work of Self Help Africa before I applied for the role. I knew that within the overseas charity sector it had carved a niche as a specialist farming development organisation. It was the long-standing charity of choice of the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) and also enjoyed a strong funding relationship with Irish Aid, which has backed the organisation's development programmes in Africa for close to a quarter of a century.



Self Help Africa board member, Sinead Kilkelly (left) and its CEO, Niamh De Loughry at a borehole that has been constructed in Malawi.

ORIGIN

Self Help Africa's largest footprint in 2026 is in both Zambia and Malawi, two neighbouring southern African countries where the ravages of a changing climate have made it increasingly difficult to produce the food that families need to survive. However, the charity's origins can be traced to Ethiopia and the famine that devastated the Horn of Africa in the 1980s. At that time, a Carlow-born priest based in Ethiopia, Father Owen Lambert, spoke about the tragic famine, and began advocating a response that centred on small-scale farmers. I was very fortunate to meet him recently. The Ethiopian famine of 1984-85 was a humanitarian catastrophe that claimed the lives of more than one million people, and was seared into public consciousness by both the BBC news reports of Michael Buerk, and by the subsequent actions of outspoken Dubliner, Bob Geldof, whose Band Aid and Live Aid events broke the mould for both charity fundraising and campaign-awareness-raising in that era. Self Help Development International was born out of that crisis. Its emergence was assisted by Bob Geldof, whose Band Aid Trust provided nearly one million pounds to the newly formed charity to invest in agricultural projects, including an IFA-backed initiative that shipped thousands of tonnes of Cara Irish seed potatoes to famine-affected regions of Ethiopia.

MERGERS

Self Help Africa's subsequent growth was underpinned by a number of mergers and collaborations, several of which were tied to the organisation's work in Zambia and Malawi. In 2008, Self Help Development merged with a small UK-based agricultural charity, Harvest Help, to create Self Help Africa. Harvest Help had been formed in the late 1970s to support some of Zambia's poorest communities, who were living in Gwembe Valley in the country's

far south. One of the country's driest areas, its poverty levels are not an accident of geography. The extreme poverty in Gwembe is linked to the forcible displacement of tens of thousands of people from their land during the 1950s construction of the Kariba Dam, which created the world's largest man-made reservoir, Lake Kariba. I visited several communities where displaced people had been pushed onto marginal land and, generations later, were still struggling to make ends meet. In villages where Self Help Africa works today, I saw how the focus of activities was now on supporting poor rural households to adapt to a newer challenge posed by a changing climate. Recognised to be one of the most drought-prone and climate-vulnerable sub-regions in Southern Africa, Gwembe Valley today records an average yearly rainfall of between 60 and 80 centimetres, which is around half the rainfall experienced by other parts of the country. Self Help Africa is promoting a range of simple but effective activities to improve soil fertility, including the use of natural compost and manure, and is promoting 'climate smart' farming approaches specifically designed to help the soil to retain scarce moisture. These approaches include zero-tillage farming that avoids ploughing fields, which dries the earth, and the retention of stubble and crop residues, to shade the land from the direct rays of the baking sun. On my visit, I saw how climate resilient seed varieties were being made available to farmers, along with alternate crop varieties to maize (corn), such as millet, sorghum, groundnut and cassava. Self Help Africa's head of programmes in Zambia, Danny Lemba, explained that the south of the country had endured successive years of water shortages and that maize, which didn't cope well with hot and dry conditions, had experienced declining yields. In one year the crop had failed entirely, he said. Irrigation and early maturing varieties of maize had been introduced to help production, but in a substantial proportion of cases, maize alternatives were performing better for farmers. "It is the way forward," he told me.

MALAWI

In neighbouring Malawi, I had the opportunity to see the results of Self Help Africa's more recent merger with UK-based charity United Purpose, which took place in 2021. Originally called Concern Universal, United Purpose had been founded in the UK in the mid-1970s by Father Raymond Kennedy as a sister organisation to the well-known Dublin-based, Concern Worldwide, of which Father Kennedy had been a co-founder a decade earlier. Concern Universal/United Purpose, like Self Help Africa, had been working on agriculture and other poverty eradication projects in rural Malawi for close to 30 years. The merger of the two entities united a large portfolio of projects in Malawi. On my visit I saw various different aspects of this work – including solar mini-grids that had been established in a number of villages, fuel-efficient cook-stoves that were being manufactured and sold by women's groups, clean water and sanitation projects, and support being provided to communities affected by destructive weather events that had hit Malawi in recent years. This included tropical cyclone Freddy, which displaced over 600,000 people in 2023, and cyclone Jude, which made tens of thousands homeless in 2025.



Self Help Africa CEO, Niamh De Loughry, meets villagers in Zambia.

GORTA

Self Help Africa's history of unifications runs deeper than just these examples, however. Perhaps the most significant and consequential amalgamation in a long history of mergers came just over a decade ago, when Self Help joined forces with Gorta, Ireland's first overseas development charity. Gorta was created by the Department of Agriculture in 1965 as Ireland's member of the United Nations Freedom from Hunger Council and was also grounded in food and farming. Over several decades, its work reached more than 50 countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas. It forged strong links with Teagasc to send Irish farm advisors on secondment to countries around the world to support the work of local partners.

REFLECTIONS

As I reflect upon my first visits to sub-Saharan Africa as the CEO of Self Help Africa, I think about the value and real-life impact that the work I saw is having on the people I met on my journey. Edith, for example, is making a living and is sending her children to school thanks to the income that she is making from the sale of fuel stoves in Malawi. Daniel and Albert are processing maize and rice at a mill powered by a solar mini-grid in Dedza District, Malawi. And the villagers in Gwembe, Zambia spoke about their increased harvests. Importantly, I saw communities speaking with pride about how they were part of the solution and how they established committees to ensure critical work, such as water management, drying and storing fruit and vegetables helped the whole village to thrive. They are all testimony to the importance of this work. At a time when many governments across the globe – including the US, France, Great Britain, Germany, The Netherlands and Japan – have made huge cuts to their spending on international development aid, the continuing support of the general public in Ireland and of Irish Aid for this work are more important than ever. In 2026, that backing, and the support of others, is allowing Self Help Africa to reach more than six million people and making it possible for some of the most vulnerable people, with whom we share our world, to make real and positive changes to their lives.





MATT O'KEEFFE
EDITOR

BROADBAND ROLLOUT SUCCESS

The implementation of the National Broadband Plan shows that key infrastructure can be developed on time and within budget, even allowing for the fact that the development has been quite an expensive operation. Money well spent? Yes, must be the answer, even if there are a few caveats. At this stage, over half a million premises can access the broadband infrastructure. The main infrastructure rollout is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year bringing high-speed fibre broadband to rural areas even in the most remote parts of the country.

ACCESS

Right now, the take-up of the broadband service is running at 36 per cent of premises that can access the service. It is a slow burn adoption, with figures showing that in areas where the service has been in place for some time, adoption rates rise to 60 per cent. That means that over 183,000 farms, homes and businesses in rural areas are utilising high-speed fibre broadband. Presumably, as contracts with other providers expire, many people are switching over to a broadband provider delivering a service utilising National Broadband Ireland (NBI) fibre cables. In addition, there are thousands of premises that will make their first broadband connection in the coming years, reassured from word-of-mouth as well as objective analysis that the service is worthwhile.

GAMECHANGER

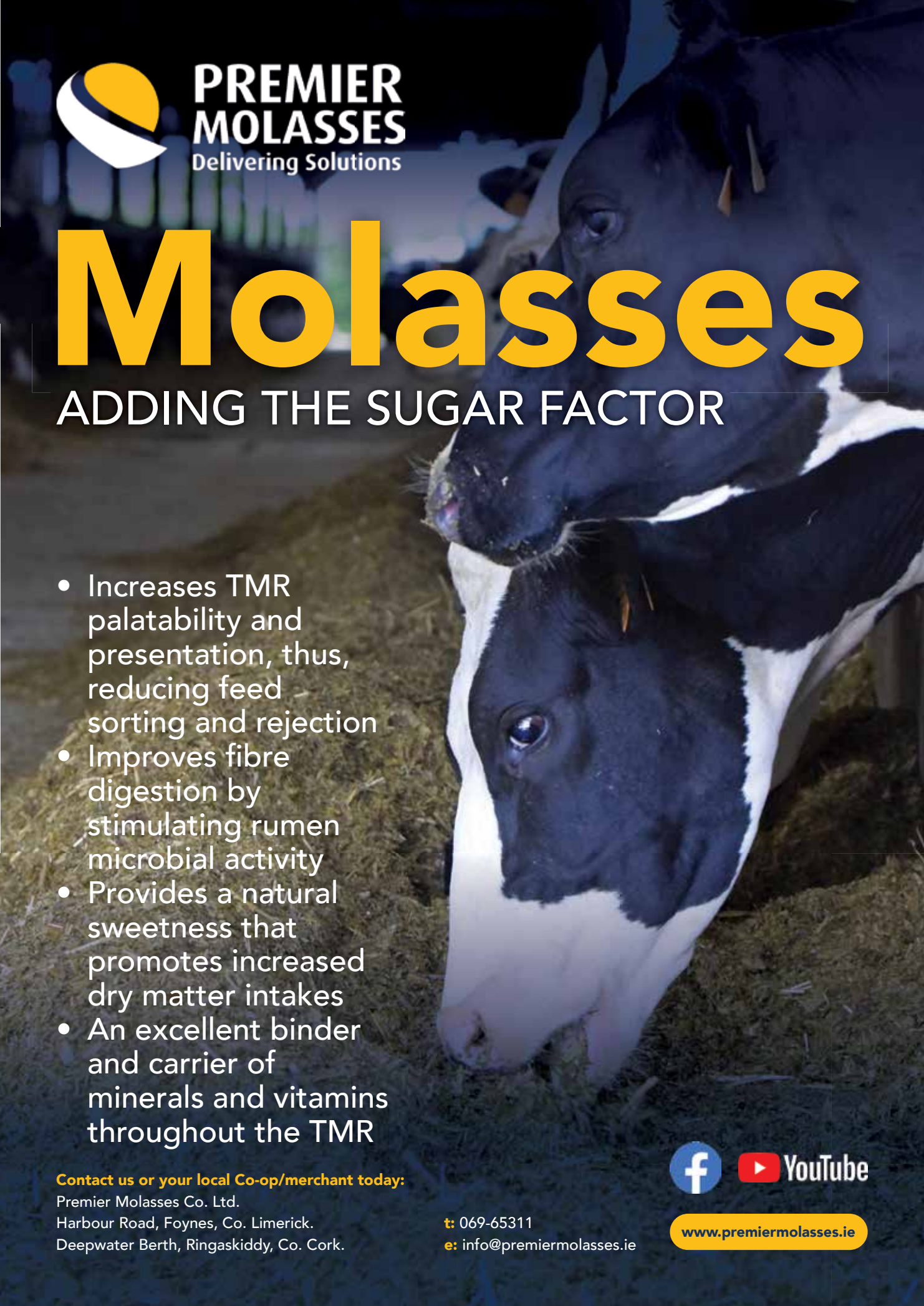
As one who uses the NBI-sourced service, it really has been a gamechanger. It is



competitively priced against other broadband options. It is dependable and efficient, and fast. The NBI service is more weather vulnerable than satellite or mast-sourced alternatives but, outside of storms knocking trees across the fibre lines, there can be little criticism of the service. As adoption of broadband increases, the social and business benefits can only increase. For farmers, especially, the ability to engage online across a range of services is essential. From Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine forms to animal registration, access to dependable and fast broadband is now an essential requirement for operating a farm business. As the world, and our homes and farms, become ever more automated, the necessity for broadband connection can only increase incrementally in the coming years. Continuing promotion of the service by NBI should deliver higher adoption rates with the aim, eventually, to have a broadband service installed in every rural premises, just as electrical connections became ubiquitous in every home and business in the years following the initiation of the Irish Rural Electrification Scheme 80 years ago. That scheme took a considerably longer time to complete, with 80 per cent of homes electrified almost 20 years later.

A NEW ERA OF ALTERNATIVES

We are now in a new era where, increasingly, homes and businesses are adopting alternative electricity sources, most notably solar panel electricity production. Even with generous grant aid, it can be an expensive choice, but it does offer some independence, at least, from the existing, increasingly expensive, electrical-wire-to-the-premises alternative. Apart from minority instances, a degree of dependency on an external electricity source will continue to be a fact of life, but anything that brings an affordable degree of independence to such a critical resource is commendable. Meanwhile, the 'NIMBY' brigade continues to protest and stymy renewable electricity generation. The greatest opposition is against land-based wind-turbine development, though the sea-based alternatives cost more to install and service, resulting in higher electricity costs. Remarkably, the NBI development was not subject to the same degree of opposition, presumably because much of the pole infrastructure was already in place. But surely, poles on every road and laneway across the country are even more intrusive and visible than a few wind turbines in mostly remote regions, which provide a clean, renewable electricity resource compared to finite, expensive and environmentally impactful fossil fuels.


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