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MAY 2020

The future for beef

Market outlook and the priorities for beef farmers

PROFESSOR MICHAEL WALLACE ON THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND HOW IT MAY AFFECT FUTURE TRADE

MEP BILLY KELLEHER STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN MEMBER STATES

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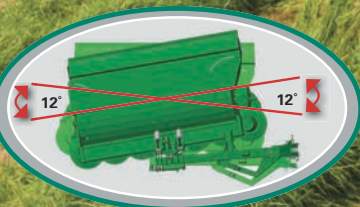
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Editorial

Where to from here?



Difficult as it has been to introduce and maintain restrictions on social interaction, the most challenging aspect of our efforts to curtail the spread of COVID-19 in the general population will be the easing of these restrictions over an extended period. Clearly, there cannot be a 'free-for-all' return to pre-virus activity in the near or even intermediate future. This is where the difficulties begin to arise. To what extent should restrictions be lifted, in which areas of activity and over what time scale? The risks associated with a premature easing of movement restrictions are clear. There could be a resurgence of the virus, resulting in the re-imposition of the severe isolation measures we are currently enduring. From a health perspective, the longer the lockdown, the lower the infection spread and the fewer people getting ill or dying from the disease. Since an exercise of this kind has never been tried before, where almost the entire global economy has been shut down, no one knows for sure how well it will recover or how quickly. We could use the Chinese experience as a model but any comparisons are tenuous as the Chinese political system and societal norms are totally different from western democracies. We do not wish to compromise on people's health or lives. There is another reality, however, which will inevitably involve some degree of compromise. The longer our economy remains in a state of hibernation, the greater the likelihood that a number of dormant businesses will never reopen or will be so badly compromised that their long-term viability will be jeopardised. What we must guard against is any populist approach where actions are taken because people want them to happen. Opening schools, even in a restricted manner, for instance, would be well received. Is it critical to economic recovery? Probably not. Any educational deficit caused by a prolonged school closure can be regained in time. The risks of opening schools in May or June compared to next September are significant compared to the conditional benefits. One argument in favour, is that it facilitates the return to work of many parents. This flies in the face of a reality that many of the school runs are done by grandparents who, for the most part, are indefinitely cocooning. It could be argued that opening selected retail services and factories as soon as possible, under whatever restrictions necessary, is far more critical to ensuring the long-term recovery of the economy. Hardware stores and building sites generate economic activity in the immediate term and that must be a priority. Food production, as I write, has so far avoided major disruption from the coronavirus. The isolated nature of primary production, for the most part, has helped enormously. We must hope that the extraordinary efforts of food processors continues to minimise the disruptive capacity of the virus to curtail or even completely halt food processing facilities. Such is the precarious processing capacity of the dairy sector as output continues to increase, year on year, that even minor disruption could have major implications. The harsh reality of living indefinitely under the threat of COVID-19 is only beginning to dawn on us. We are being drip-fed a scenario where there will be no mass gatherings for the remainder of 2020 and probably well into next year. Opportunities for socialising either in pubs or restaurants will be curtailed or even banned. With the majority of our religious leaders cocooned and at high risk from social interaction, the curtailments on attending religious services may continue indefinitely. Whatever about public prayer we certainly need a stable and dynamic government. Some things cannot be postponed indefinitely.



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Jim Minchin's legacy

Last month saw the passing of former Department of Agriculture stalwart Jim Minchin. He joined the Department of Agriculture in 1969, and was posted to a newly formed unit, Beef Cattle Incentive Scheme, set up to improve quality of the national beef herd. The scheme at the time was available to herd owners who did not produce milk and had a basic herd of three cows. Among many career highlights, Jim received a commendation from Minister Joe Walsh during the Foot & Mouth outbreak in 2001 for his work in controlling border livestock movements as well as implementing F&M disease prevention measures in Dublin Port. A part-time Suckler beef farmer, Jim ran a herd of 20 pedigree Charolais Cows at his home in Carlow. His stock regularly won awards at Tullow and Carlow marts. We offer our condolences to his wife Kathleen, and his children Mary, Ann, William and Pat. May he rest in peace.

Bord Bia dairy executive moves on

Elaine Crosse, Sector Manager of Bord Bia's dairy division, is leaving the food promotion body to join Danone as Corporate Communications Manager. Elaine, who has worked in Bord Bia for the past eight years, made a significant contribution to the organisation, firstly working in the PR department, and over the past 18 months in the dairy division. She is currently Treasurer of the Guild of Agricultural Journalists of Ireland. We wish her well in her new role. Meanwhile, Thomas Ryan, the IFA's sustainability guru, is heading for Glanbia next month where he will continue to provide vital insights into making Irish farms more environmentally and economically sustainable. Credited with driving the IFA's Smart Farming programme, the Carlow based, Tipp man will have a busy time in his new Glanbia job as the EU rolls out its Green Deal in the coming months.

Happy Birthday to Hugh

The elder statesman of Irish farming and agri business – Hugh Ryan – is ninety years of age. Hugh celebrated, his birthday milestone at his home under the Rock of Dunamase in Laois in April. Still active and enthusiastic about all things agricultural, Hugh's last public appearance was at Macra's 75th celebrations in Cork last Autumn. As well as running a successful tillage farm near Portlaoise, Hugh found time to devote his energies to Macra na Feirme, where he was president of the organisation in the mid 1960's, to IFA, where he was a deputy president and, latterly, to FBD as a founder member and long time director. We wish Hugh a continuing enjoyable retirement, even if that word is alien to his vocabulary.



A decade to deliver Climate Action

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the world how vulnerable it is to an invisible, miniscule virus, which has closed down the global economy in a matter of weeks. While the world continues to cope with the health challenges set by the coronavirus, governments must initiate economic recovery programmes while also maintaining their commitment to climate action. For Ireland, Eamon Ryan and his Green Party need to stop playing internal politics and commit to forming a stable government with FF and FG. They have been talking a great game for the past few years and the General Election has given them a strong mandate to play a leading role in driving the climate action agenda. We now face a national and global recession and urgently need a strong government. The Greens can be part of that government or continue to be prophets of doom with no authority to deliver on their green agenda.

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Horse Show latest COVID-19 casualty

The news in late April that the Dublin Horse Show is cancelled for 2020 came as little surprise after the government statements that all large-scale gatherings are being discouraged, at least, for the remainder of the year. This was to be the 147th Dublin Horse Show and the RDS was already in the early planning stages of a major celebration of the 150th Show in three years time. That's now pushed back by another year, hopefully only that. Apart from the sheer spectacle of the Horse Show, it also serves as a major sales opportunity for Irish showjumpers and is eagerly anticipated by horse breeders and owners. Add in the bed-nights, TV rights, catering opportunities and tourism benefit and the economic impact of the cancellation of the Horse Show becomes clear. Almost every agricultural Show in the coming months has been cancelled at this stage. The 'hold-outs' are mostly post August 1st and even these have to be in considerable doubt. Piltown's Joe Malone will be heartbroken if his beloved Iverk is cancelled. As of now, the National Ploughing Championships is set to proceed, as asserted by Anna Mae McHugh. Only a reckless gambler would put money on the major event of the Irish agricultural calendar actually happening this autumn. It could be that the World Ploughing, scheduled for Ireland in 2021, will be the next NPA event.



Who will pick the strawberries?

Bring in foreign workers or let the crops rot in the glasshouses: that's the stark choice for growers as they face criticism for sourcing fruit pickers from south-eastern Europe. Even in the high unemployment period after the 2009 economic crash, fruit and vegetable growers found it difficult to source local Irish labour to work in fields and greenhouses. Despite efforts to recruit locally, the same dilemma has faced growers this year and will continue to face them as the season progresses unless there is a pick-up from the Irish labour force, many of whom are now unemployed, either temporarily or permanently, as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Perhaps the students who would normally seek summer work in the food, leisure and other service sectors, or head to the US on J1 visas, will opt to pick strawberries this year? Fruit and vegetable production and harvesting are labour-intensive sectors. If self-sufficiency really is a priority for our food production sector then labour will have to be found somewhere to do the work. The Department of Employment and Social Protection's horticulture recruitment campaign has yet to bear fruit. In WW2, British workers were directed to work in critical industries. We haven't reached that stage, yet.



Potential milk price free-fall

Dairy Industry Ireland (DII) has looked down the road at milk prices and doesn't like what it sees. A report commissioned by DII and carried out by consultancy group EY suggests possible milk price cuts of up to 20 per cent over the summer unless measures are put in place to protect the sector. The figures are huge for a sector that has invested billions in increased milk production and processing capacity since quota abolition. Output value from the dairy sector could reduce by over €2 billion this year with dairy farm revenues taking a hit in excess of €800 million. A cursory glance at some of the key dairy market outlets shows the gravity of the situation. With much of the European food service sector closed indefinitely, the demand for cheddar and other cheeses has reduced drastically. No burger sales mean no 'quarter-pounder with cheese' so that hits cheddar sales badly. Mozzarella production, in which Glanbia and Carbery have invested heavily, is particularly badly hit by the Corona virus lockdown. Closed restaurants means sales of pizzas to those outlets have ceased. There is still demand for frozen and chilled pizza in supermarkets but that doesn't make up the shortfall. Mozzarella cheese packets are readily available in supermarkets with pizza bases also on sale. It would seem, however, that the 'art' of home pizza making is only slowly being developed by our house-bound consumers. Dairy processors have had to divert production to long shelf-life products including butter and powders. With demand for these commodities also impacted, much of this product will have to be stored for a prolonged period. That not only puts pressure on cold storage capacity, it also squeezes cashflow and the DII Report reckons that the sector could need an extra €550 million in working capital to carry over additional stocks of dairy product.

ICSA strikes positive and negative notes

The Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association (ICSA) recently laid blame on a flour shortage in the shops on “years of under-investment in the tillage industry”. Granted, one of the reasons we do not grow large acreages of milling wheat is because it does not carry a sufficient price premium to compete with the high-yielding winter wheats. However, there is another reason why there is a deficit of indigenous milling flour. While our climate, as the ICSA rightly points out, allows us “to produce some of the best wheat in the world, with our moist, damp climate providing ideal growing conditions”, that same damp climate also means that we cannot consistently harvest high quality milling flour. In 2018 we could have produced the best wheaten flour on the planet but in an average year we would struggle to produce first-class flour for milling. The ICSA is correct that our dependence on the UK and French and Canadian

sources for our flour is a serious weakness in our food supply chain.

On the other hand, the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Association recently highlighted an animal health issue that needs addressing. AHI’s (Animal Health Ireland) BVD eradication programme has been much lauded and rightly so. It set out a clear, time-limited testing strategy that should have concluded with total eradication of the virus from the national herd by now. Yet a small percentage of cattle remain infected. The current infection rate of 0.02 per cent equates to 307 animals, down from 16,000 animals when the programme was initiated. Whatever the reasons for the remaining PIs (Persistently Infected) cohort, their existence is costing farmers money. Total eradication must be concluded or a targeted regime put in place to replace costly mandatory annual testing for the vast majority of clear herds in the country



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**Cathal Bohane,
InTouch Nutrition**

May's arrival brings a unique set of on-farm challenges – from breeding cows and keeping their mouths full of grass, to silage making and preparation for the winter ahead. Weather plays a large role in all of this, and the fine weather during the second half of April has resulted in a lot of jobs being completed on-farm. However, weather can also create a feast or famine on many farms, and being overly cautious now, during a high stocking rate period when silage ground is still out, can result in a major surplus within a few weeks.

Some will say this is all but impossible to predict, and that is true to some degree. But, measurement will go a long way in avoiding this situation. With new rules coming into play for those on a nitrate derogation, grass measuring will allow us to avoid this situation to a large extent. While some will not want to do this, I would encourage everyone to be open-minded and try it. You will soon understand the benefits and begin to appreciate how grass decisions can be made and answer the many questions asked of InTouch over the years:

- ▶ How much grass am I allocating my cows?
- ▶ Do I have too much grass on my farm?
- ▶ Should I take out that paddock?
- ▶ Should I take out more than two paddocks?
- ▶ Why does my milk protein always drop in June?

Knowing your growth rates and average farm cover will allow you to determine your allocation of grass, rotation length and the amount of supplement requirement. Programmes such as Pasture Base will help you calculate these automatically once you walk your farm at least once a week and add in a cover for each paddock to the programme. There are many advisors and nutritionists out there that will help you interpret your grass wedge, which is basically a graph depicting each of your paddocks and the grass cover on each.

Two farms that InTouch has been working with recently began measuring grass, something they never dreamed of doing before. These farms were able to increase output by 1–2 litres of milk per cow per day through increased allocation and utilisation of grass. The first farm is now able to more easily balance surplus and deficits, while the second realised that their paddock size was too small for their expanding herd. Finally, as we continue to work through the COVID-19 pandemic, InTouch, Alltech and KEENAN are here to offer help if you need it. Please continue to social distance and follow the guidelines set out by the HSE in order for all of us to stay safe during this time.



HIPRA offers facilities to health authorities

To help deal with the health crisis, the veterinary pharmaceutical company is giving over its new laboratories to hospitals for the analysis of samples and the manufacture of ventilators with 3D printers. HIPRA, the multinational Animal Health company, which has its headquarters in Amer (Girona), has reached an agreement with the health authorities that will allow the principal hospitals in the province of Girona to make use of its new facilities (nearly 700 m² of laboratories equipped with the latest PCR diagnostic technology), thus helping to streamline the management and production of results of tests for coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.

These are facilities that the company had just finished building at its headquarters as part of its business expansion plan and that it was about to open.

“As an Animal Health company, for us it is a duty and an act of responsibility to make use of all the resources that we have in order to help preserve public health in such exceptional times, hence the need to collaborate by giving over our new diagnostic centres”, the company announced. The samples received will come from different hospitals in the region and will be processed in accordance with international protocols and the strictest biosecurity and biocontainment measures. Staff from the hospitals, and from various local biotechnology startups who are parties to this agreement, will move to HIPRA's facilities and will be responsible for the entire process of analysis, whilst the company's experts will provide support with their knowledge and experience in biotechnology.

HIPRA develops and sells vaccines for animals, and also provides a variety of services for the prevention and control of various animal diseases on livestock farms. It uses the latest PCR analysis technology for the diagnosis of these diseases. “This type of real-time diagnosis allows hundreds of samples to be analysed in a few hours, backed up by the automation of the process, so we are convinced that this will be of great help” explained the company.

HIPRA is also producing components for the manufacture of medical ventilators by 3D printing which will also be supplied to hospitals in the region. This project is being co-ordinated through companies and institutions such as HP, LEITAT Managing Technologies and other public bodies.

LEMKEN reports stable figures

In 2019, LEMKEN, the specialist for professional arable farming, was able to maintain its sales levels at €380 million, with an export share of 77 per cent. As a result, the family business has successfully navigated the economic downturn suffered by the wider German agricultural technology industry, which has shrunk by 3 per cent. Farmers and the agricultural technology industry had a difficult year in 2019. After a very good first two quarters, LEMKEN experienced an unexpectedly steep decline in sales. Many farmers suffered not only extreme weather conditions, but also political insecurity, and trade restrictions which made business with agricultural technology more difficult. Regarding the domestic German market, which at 23 per cent, is the company's most important individual sales market, LEMKEN experienced a decrease of just under 2 percent. Sales in France, LEMKEN's strongest export market, increased markedly by 26 percent and currently accounts for 15 percent of the company's overall sales. Generally, sales grew slightly in Western Europe. In 2019 the product range was extended by fertiliser spreaders. As a result, farmers are now able

to source their full range of machinery from a single manufacturer, from sowing through to harvesting. At Agritechnica, LEMKEN showcased numerous innovations such as the Juwel 10 mounted reversible plough for tractors up to 450 hp and the SeedHub catch crop seed drill for combination with cultivators and compact disc harrows. LEMKEN also introduced the Koralin hybrid cultivator for ultra-shallow tillage, seedbed preparation and weed control. LEMKEN invested a total of just under €9 million in new production facilities and improved factory logistics. This ensures that the company will continue to manufacture according to state-of-the-art technical standards in order to provide customers with optimal technology. By the end of 2019 the number of employees increased to 1,666.

The first few weeks of the current year have been characterised by a solid level of demand, indicating that the prospects for positive development are good. LEMKEN will use 2020 to rationalise production and business processes further, among others, to strengthen the company's competitiveness.



Drone technology on farm

A new mobile phone app, Skippy Scout, has been developed by technology pioneer Drone Ag to pinpoint diseases such as yellow rust and Septoria tritici earlier using drone imagery. "Spotting the signs of common diseases as early as possible has become increasingly important to controlling them promptly," says Drone Ag founder Jack Wrangham. "A drone can scout a field and send images to a farmer's mobile phone five times faster than conventional crop walking." A drone can fly in close proximity to the crop and take high resolution, leaf level images that are sent to the user's phone in real time. These images can be used to identify the extent to which disease is affecting leaves. "This point in the year is crucial for arable farmers to protect crops against a variety of foliar diseases," says Mr Wrangham. "Skippy Scout is a mobile app that farmers can download and use with almost any drone," he adds. "In minutes, a drone can take images of multiple points in a field. The images are detailed enough to identify early signs of many common crop diseases. Skippy Scout offers farmers and agronomists an opportunity to spot diseases faster and reduce the risk of irreparable damage to yield. Preventing yield loss will ultimately help farmers improve crop margins," explains Mr Wrangham. In addition to high resolution images, Drone Ag is also developing artificial intelligence (AI) to interpret drone images. AI will be integrated into Skippy Scout later this year and will use images to help identify and inform users of diseases. This will reduce the need for farmers to interpret images and reduce the time it takes to act accordingly. "This technology can revolutionise how farmers identify disease and has the potential to save acres of crops worldwide," concludes Mr Wrangham.

2020 Balmoral Show cancelled

The Royal Ulster Agricultural Society (RUAS) has announced the cancellation of the 2020 Balmoral Show in partnership with Ulster Bank. Dr Alan Crowe, RUAS Chief Executive said: "It is with deep regret that the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society (RUAS) has taken the decision to cancel the 2020 Balmoral Show, scheduled to take place from Wednesday 18th August to Saturday 22nd August 2020. Please be assured that we did not come to this decision lightly, however after several meetings and the exploration of all alternative options, it became clear that we would have been unable to run the 2020 Show on the rearranged August dates during these unprecedented times.

"We understand that this news will be disappointing to many, however as the global COVID-19 pandemic endures, we believe that as a Society, we have an obligation to protect the health and wellbeing of all our staff, members, competitors, visitors, volunteers, trade exhibitors, sponsors, contractors and suppliers. "As Northern Ireland's largest agri-food event with over 120,000 visitors each year, we are aware of the time, money and hard work put into attending the Show by livestock exhibitors, competitors, sponsors, trade stands and suppliers. With many local farmers, businesses and visitors facing financial uncertainty at present, we feel that everything is stacked against us in trying to run a Show in August. Moving forward, the RUAS will continue to take great pride in supporting and showcasing our local farming community and we plan to return next year with a Balmoral Show stronger than ever." The 152nd Balmoral Show in partnership with Ulster Bank will now take place from Wednesday 12th May to Saturday 15th May 2021 at Balmoral Park, Lisburn.



Co-ordination needed to combat COVID-19

Matt O'Keeffe talks to Billy Kelleher, MEP, about the importance of cooperation between Member States in response to COVID-19

Billy Kelleher, MEP, is critical of the lack of cooperation among Member States in relation to coordinating the European Union's responses to the Covid-19 crisis: "When countries are under pressure they automatically look to their own first and that has been the case in this crisis. Countries like Italy and Spain that have had huge outbreaks, are struggling. Some member states have provided practical assistance. Germany has taken patients from Italy and has transferred protective clothing and equipment. There is limited cooperation, but we need a greater response in place so that the Commission can influence how resources are deployed across the Union. Bear in mind, however, health is a national competence with responsibility retained within Member States."

Financial solidarity

Continuing, he notes that the prognosis so far isn't good and is skeptical of the potential for financial solidarity: "The Union's finance ministers met in mid-April and were slow to come to a final arrangement in terms of recovery bonds or euro bonds or corona bonds to ensure that all Member States have access to bond markets to finance the recessionary period ahead. It will be a global recession and that's going to have profound implications in countries that are already very indebted with high unemployment, increased social welfare payments and loss of productivity. We do need to see a strong leadership role by the big countries, in particular. We need the Commission, led by Ursula von der Leyen, to bring forward a plan to ensure there is access to capital, that there is a stimulus package in place and that we start to grow the economies, otherwise we will have a very, deep and protracted recession in the EU. Unfortunately, countries look inwards, they are unwilling to contribute further to the EU as their own national budgets are under pressure. That limits the amount of money available to the Commission to invest in various countries. The EU Central Bank and the World Bank must have roles to play in ensuring that there is access to capital for countries to invest in their economies."

Further European integration?

"We have an ongoing debate in Europe on whether we want to be a community of nations or a nation of

communities. Right now, the EU can only do what its Member States allow it to do in terms of funding. What we need now is leadership to ensure there is solidarity and a co-ordinated approach towards economic recovery across all EU States. There are already policies that require increased funding including CAP and the Green Deal. Even protecting existing budgets will be very challenging. We need to see more private investment into the Green Deal initiative. It was always going to be funded primarily by incentives to the markets, in other words, encouraging private sector investment. But if you are in the middle of a global downturn with very low oil prices, the incentives are not there to invest in renewable energies and the environment. It really is a change in circumstance in terms of the Green Deal and whether there is enough stimulus in the market to encourage private investment. If there is, then that might at least alleviate some pressure on the CAP budget, but overall the CAP budget is under immense pressure because of all the other circumstances. Bear in mind, on top of that, you have a Polish Agricultural Commissioner at a time when many Eastern European countries want more convergence of payments. So, there are political and financial implications. We can't expect the agricultural sector to play its role in the Green Deal if there isn't support in making that transition. farmers will need financial assistance, otherwise we are going to ask farmers to carry a huge burden without any remuneration."

The environmental test

"Any policy that is being vetted by the European Commission and Parliament must first pass the environmental standards test. In other words, the impact it has on the environment. Only then will it be looked at in the context of the impact on the industry itself. There is going to be huge pressure for farmers to change how they farm. The only way that can be done is if there is a budget available to the Commission and to Member States to allow farmers to make the necessary changes. We can't expect farmers to change without financial support."

Nitrates Derogation in jeopardy

"Other countries such as the Netherlands have had major problems with nitrates and phosphates. If we don't

retain our derogation, it will have a profound impact, particularly on intensive commercial farms and also on our food processing sector and the broader economy. Some countries have a jaundiced view of the Nitrates Directive. It is critically important to Ireland and must be maintained. Beyond that there is certainly going to be more emphasis on environmental standards in the years ahead. In the next CAP, when it comes into being, a lot of the budget spending will be conditional on significant environmental demands being met.”

Can Ireland continue its live export trade?

“I spoke with Commissioner Wojciechowski before Christmas in Strasbourg, because I was very concerned about his views on live exports. It is critically important that the live export trade continues to be available to us. We have to ensure that we have high animal health standards with regular veterinary inspections. Otherwise live exports will come under the spotlight again. The Commissioner assured me that if welfare standards are maintained then he has no reason to remove live exports.”

A call for strong, stable government

The Fianna Fail MEP believes that Michael Martin can become Taoiseach in the coming weeks: “A very historic document was published in April. It’s the first time Fianna Fail and Fianna Gael sat down to discuss a coalition.

This is a fundamental change in Irish politics. The most important issue is the need for a stable government. We need stability and certainty and a program for government that can deliver over the next number of years because they are going to be challenging times. The global economy is facing deep recession and we can’t have a government that doesn’t have the capacity to get legislation through the Dail. I hope other parties will come on board to support a viable programme for government that will deliver economic recovery. That recovery must include opportunities for everyone, creating jobs, making society fairer in health, education, housing, and all those other big challenges including environment issues and the problems facing rural Ireland. If we are still talking about government formation in the middle of May, we will be in difficulty. Every day that drifts on means we don’t have policies in place to cope with the aftermath of the virus. We have to deal with the here and now in terms of the health of the people, but beyond that there has to be a plan in place to counteract the economic downturn, high unemployment and the damage to sectors like retail, tourism, the hospitality sector, construction and transportation. We need a strong government with a positive programme for government to access the markets for funding to invest in the economy, improve our health services, and do all the other things that we need to do.”

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Matt O’Keeffe talks to IFA National Livestock Committee chairman, **Brendan Golden**, about representing livestock farmers across Ireland and hears about how he is running his own farm in Co. Mayo

Livestock- the pressing issues



Brendan Golden runs a suckler farm on the edge of the north Atlantic, near Killala in County Mayo. There are thirty-three hectares owned with more land leased in, bringing the total farmed to almost eighty hectares. The Golden farm contains a mixture of land types as Brendan describes it: “We have good to not so good, wetter soil. We are very weather dependent. In a really dry year we produce a lot of grass, but, in a wet year, we can be under pressure not to damage ground.”

On Bord Bia: “There has been criticism. My view is that Bord Bia promotes Irish meat across the world. We need it now more than ever. When this crisis is over we will need the Bord to promote as many markets for Irish beef as possible. All the links in the chain are crucial and Bord Bia is no exception.”

Split calving

Brendan has a seventy-strong suckler cow herd and splits calving between Autumn and Spring. “The cows are mainly Limousin cross, and we run a Limousin bull. Last year we ran a Charolais bull as well.”

“All replacement heifers are bred with any surplus sold on. The suckler herd can vary up and down as I tend to sell fit cows as the occasion arises. We usually bring all progeny to finish, though that can vary depending on the need for cash-flow in any year. Cash flow is a challenge on all drystock farms. We calve around three quarters of the cows in the Spring with the remainder calving down in the Autumn. That could change, with more calving in the Autumn, because this area is high in Molybdenum and that causes problems with Copper, Iodine and Selenium availability, particularly if the weather results in wetter

silage. The problems arise at the end of winter, around March, so a move away from calving at that time would reduce the trace element problems in the cows. From August on, there are usually fewer problems, so it makes sense to change the calving pattern. The biggest potential problem with cows going dry in the July-August period is that cows can get Summer mastitis.”

Star ratings

Brendan is fully supportive of the Euro-Star rating system being promoted by ICBF: “The system is coming into its own with the need to promote our cattle sector as being environmentally positive. It allows us to prove that our breeding is both cost and carbon efficient. The collection of the data is extremely important. The best starred cows are being shown to come out on top in regard to breeding as well as proving our carbon credentials. We see the effect the EBI has had on dairy breeding improvement. I believe farmers shouldn’t be afraid to take on board research and better breeding. Last year’s figures showed that we are able to slaughter animals at a younger age, and still produce seven or eight kilo heavier carcasses. We need to drive on with the Star system because incomes on suckler farms are severely challenged and if you can breed or produce an animal that’s more efficient from a financial as well as environmental perspective in reducing emissions, it is all positive. As well as the productivity benefits, suckler farmers need the targeted payments in BDGP and BEEP to secure a decent income. Price plus direct payments minus costs equals income. All the payments are crucial to stay in business. The requirements are practical. The weighings, for instance, allow farmers to identify the differences between different cows and calves. What really opened my eyes was the difference between cow weights. You can never have too much information about the efficiency or inefficiency of your animals. This

Taking Care of our Physical and Mental Wellbeing



Coronavirus
COVID-19
National
Programme

COVID-19 is a major public health emergency here in Ireland and around the world and is having a big impact on our lives. Everyone has made a huge effort to stop the spread of the virus and to save lives. Thank You!

To help us all get through this difficult time, it's important that we take care of everyone in our community – and also look after our own physical and mental wellbeing.

That's why National & local Government as well as our voluntary and community sectors have been working together on a wide range of wellbeing initiatives to help you in 3 ways:



To help you look after your mental wellbeing

With day-to-day coping advice from Healthy Ireland, lots of creative things to do like gardening, cooking, play for children, special supports for young people and their parents, and lots more



To help you stay active

With in-home exercise ideas from sporting organisations and athletes, healthy eating advice – and guidance on how to enjoy the outdoors

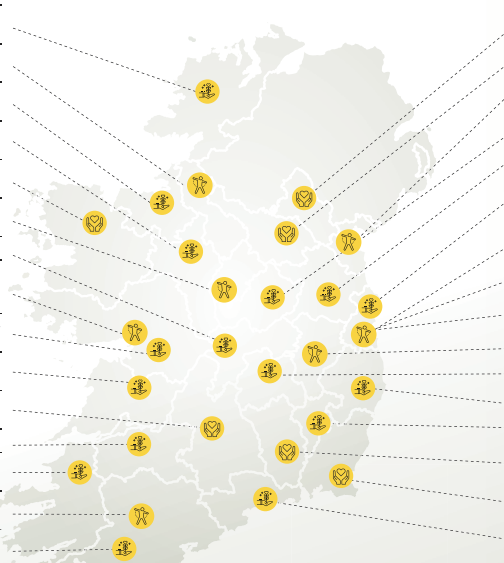


To help you stay connected

With online libraries, cultural tours, galleries and book clubs, tips on helping in your own community, online workshops and online supports for learners of all ages to help us stay connected

There are hundreds of wellbeing activities all around the country being organised by Local Authorities in every county that you can join in with right now. Here are just a few examples:

- Echoes of the Decade from Donegal – an oral history project
- Sports Challenges and Home Exercises from Leitrim
- Toddle Time storytelling sessions live online from Sligo
- Home Schooler Alert in Roscommon – daily arts related links
- Mayo Day – using technology to reach out to communities and the global diaspora
- The 2km walk and photo challenge from Longford
- Webinars and reading tips from Offaly
- Buggy Buddies, Men and Women on the Move, and HIIT in Galway – online exercise programmes
- Galway Beo- is a new digital heritage initiative connecting people in Galway County
- Glór sa bhalle from Clare – weekly online arts performances at glorie
- Good Morning Roscrea – widening the base of Community Call volunteers
- Story and Craft Sessions from Limerick
- Happy Talk Speech and Language packs from Kerry – early literacy and learning for 4 to 8's
- Online sports coaching sessions from Cork County
- Lockdown Soundz in Cork City – using only sounds made from household items



- Heritage Happenings from Monaghan – stimulating curiosity for local places
- Delivering books to nursing homes in Cavan
- Home exercise and keep fit videos from Louth – for everyone
- Stories about the Good from Westmeath – recording the good things happening
- Family Fun Games from Meath
- Holding It Together Apart in Dublin – online classes for physical, spiritual and mental wellbeing
- Fingal DigiFit – is a home workout video series series for all ages
- Grandparents 15 Minute Challenge from Dun Laoghaire
- Dance, home workout, Pilates and athletics from South Dublin
- Sports Star videos from Kildare
- Gardening for Biodiversity from Laois
- Crafts, genealogy tips, creative writing, quizzes, wildlife tutorials from Wicklow
- An Arts and Self-Care drawing project, and a traditional song project, from Carlow
- Community Resilience Resource Packs from Kilkenny – for vulnerable people
- Older adults exercise programme for radio in Wexford
- Call to Chat from Waterford – for older people



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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

On unity across the industry:

"The more fragmented our representation is, the less impact we can have.

We must pull together with one voice. Intentions may have been good but the consequences of the various splits have been negative.

We need a strong, unified voice if we are to be effective in protecting farm incomes."

year BEEP 2 has a few more add-ons, including an animal welfare payment for feeding the weanling around weaning time or completing a vaccination programme. These are very beneficial for health as well as for price when going through the mart or for export. Dung sampling is another add-on that has bigger benefits than just the payment involved."

Price and income pressures

In his role as IFA National Livestock Committee chairman, Brendan is committed to representing livestock farmers: "Long before Covid-19, cattle farms were under price and income pressure. This health crisis has added to the problems we face. It is a devastating blow and we have no idea when we will come out the other side. Prices are at a ten-year low. While the factories have overcooked the price reductions, the fact remains that thirty percent of the business was wiped out

overnight with the loss of the food service sector. On the other hand, retail business is up by thirty five percent in the UK and steak sales have increased by twenty percent.

Irish retail sales also increased in the first month of the crisis. Without some stability, beef finishers are facing total wipe-out.

If you carried stock through the Winter, finishing them at the most expensive time of the year, there was an expectation that prices would rise.

Instead, prices have gone through the floor. There will be an absolute need for support to come through this.

In IFA, we have proposals submitted to the EU Commission for price supports and an APS (Aids to Private Storage) scheme as well to take product off the market and help stabilise prices. We all realise that public health is the most important issue. This crisis could not be foreseen and without support the sector cannot survive. Because of our huge export reliance we are totally exposed to this global health crisis."

Livestock trading difficulties

The restrictions on livestock trading are a problem, as the IFA Livestock representative confirms: "Marts are matching buyers and sellers. However, without the auction ring to set the price it is difficult to know where prices should be. The mart also provides security of payment.

Live online auctions are a help and that might become more popular in future. The auction is the crucial element of establishing a market and a price per kilo for cattle. We knew we were facing big issues with Brexit and CAP reform. They haven't gone away. Covid-19 is now bigger and more immediate than anything else."

2020 Basic Payment Scheme and Beef Energy Efficiency Programme - Suckler

Applications for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), the submission for the Transfer of Entitlements and the Beef Energy Efficiency Programme – Suckler (BEEP-S) applications must be made online via agfood.ie.

Under the BEEP-S, suckler farmers can be eligible for a payment of up to €90 for the first ten suckler cow/calf pairs per herd, and up to €80 per pair thereafter, subject to an overall maximum of 100 pairs per herd.

Farmers who were in BEEP (2019) must apply now for BEEP-S if they wish to be in the new scheme in 2020.

The closing date for submission of BPS and BEEP-S applications remains the **15th May**.

The Department's offices are closed to the public for the present.

Farmers, advisors and consultants can call our helpline at: Direct Payments Helpdesk – Lo-call 0761 064420

Further information at:

www.agriculture.gov.ie/bps/

www.agriculture.gov.ie/beeps/

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SCAN ME

Professor of Agriculture and Food Economics at UCD, Michael Wallace talks to Miriam Atkins about how COVID-19 is creating a new economic and trade landscape for Ireland's agri-food industry

A changing world

A huge shift in consumer behaviour and also in trading conditions, in a very short space of time, has meant that COVID-19 has brought with it a raft of challenges for Ireland's farming community and agri-food sector. As Professor Michael Wallace explains, being agile and responding swiftly to new trends is key. "When we were seeing the emergence of this pandemic in China, I don't think we would have anticipated the scale of potential impacts on Irish agriculture. Things changed very quickly and very dramatically as the lock-downs started in Europe; in the short-term there was this huge surge in retail demand with initial panic buying, which the food system had to respond to very quickly. The nature of demand has also changed, leading to dislocation across the sector. Foodservice channels evaporated overnight with a move away from eating out of home, which is a massive chunk of the market and a very valuable part of the industry. Meanwhile, demand at retail level increased. Responding to this shift in demand has costs and challenges within the food supply chain. The beef sector has seen demand for high value cuts destined for the foodservice market shift downwards, which has had a really detrimental impact on carcase value. Instead, there has been greater demand for convenience meat products such as mince and diced beef for casseroles etc. More than 30% of Irish beef exports to the UK normally go to the foodservice channel; now, we have seen a great ramping up of minced beef and cheaper cuts into the UK, with product being imported from Poland by some British retailers. "The foodservice segment is very important for dairy as well. Processors have responded to the changes taking place there with the likes of portion packs to restaurants and hotels disappearing and a repositioning into other product lines that have expanded."

Prof. Wallace continues that there have also been

operational and logistical challenges: "Processors need to ensure the health and safety of their staff – this can clearly have an impact on operational costs for businesses and the volumes of product that can be processed. Additional costs to do with transport logistics because of additional controls at ports of entry and a shortage of shipping containers are also evident." These costs, he explains, associated with shifting demand and with operational and logistical challenges, tend to get passed back to the producer and have a real impact at farm level.

Showing resilience

The industry he believes however has equipped itself very well: "It has shown tremendous resilience and has adapted quickly to difficult circumstances. We have seen contingency plans being put in place for milk to ensure there is enough staff at peak processing. And a really positive response from the official side with the Department of Agriculture rising to meet the challenges. It is an important time of the year for the cattle trade – people need to buy cattle – and we have seen the livestock marts moving very quickly to online platforms to allow trade to continue, showing immense adaptability. "Given the diversity of product mix in the dairy sector, and the additional processing capacity already built up, this has given a certain level of flexibility and resilience.. We may see more milk going into milk powders in the short-term. In relation to managing imbalances that are there, such as the loss of high value cuts of meat, there are real challenges. There isn't an awful lot the industry can do about some of these demand shifts but – greater promotion of steak and roasting cuts in the retail channel would help. The European Commission has approved some limited assistance to industry to help manage stocks through private storage."

Opportunity

Commenting on where opportunity may lie in the coming months and into next year, Prof. Wallace explains that new consumer behaviour patterns will dictate the direction of the market. “What will be important is how consumer behaviour adapts as we emerge out of the crisis. In some ways we have gone back to basics – there is more cooking in homes, preparing meals from scratch – that that is not necessarily a bad thing for the food industry. Sometimes highly processed prepared foods do not create more value for the farmer; actually a focus on premium fresh product in the retail market may give better returns for the primary producer.

“Also we may see people start to appreciate the importance of resilient food supply chains, and see more positive attitudes about the vital role of the farmers who produce the food we need. . There is opportunity for innovation also; meal kits and home delivery options providing a more direct route to the consumer, which may become important for smaller food businesses that can provide a bespoke service. We have seen already how the industry can adapt very quickly and address demand in the marketplace.” Professor Wallace notes that the longer term impact to the overall economy will affect the agri-food industry but he also stresses that how the farming and food industry respond to these challenges will shape the way we emerge from the fallout of the crisis. “Because we have had such a severe economic contraction, that will continue to have a huge impact on employment and that will, in turn, impact on spending going forward. Consumers will be looking for competitively priced products. Again, beef could struggle more, which is a cause for concern but it could also create opportunity—comfort food for example is very important in recession time. Off-farm employment is also crucial for the agri sector, so, with job losses, how this might impact on farm households is a worry.”

Climate action and policy

Prof. Wallace says that COVID-19 has highlighted the very real importance of CAP and its role in protecting farm incomes and a secure food supply. “It is more important than ever to have a strong agricultural policy that is adequately funded. Discussions on the future CAP reform are currently taking place and this crisis will shape that agenda to some degree. This may include looking at the risk management strategies we have in place – it is crucial that we have right risk management tools in place to support the industry in times of difficulty.

“National policy is very important too – ensuring that there are appropriate supports for farming families. There is strong provision already including advisory and knowledge transfer supports, but we must continue to respond appropriately to new needs and challenges.” .” Concluding, he points to the fact that there is a renewed appreciation right now of what our farming communities and the broader food industry does, and the importance of having a safe, resilient food supply chain. “People were scared when they saw empty shelves – of course, we were not running out of food, it was simply panic-induced shopping patterns – but it opened up people’s minds a bit as regards the importance of having a secure supply of food.” However, climate issues and the food industry’s responsibility here will not disappear and he stresses the need to see this as a further opportunity for the sector. “As we rebuild, environmental sustainability issues will not go away, but we shouldn’t view it as negative. We should look at it as a marketing badge for Ireland, offering a sustainable, natural, high quality food supply that is minimizing our impact on the environment. Operating at a low carbon and low nitrogen footprint will be more important than ever, as we enter a very different international marketplace after COVID-19, and how we position ourselves will be key to re-building those markets and growing them in years ahead.”

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Quality and yield drive grass choices

Matt O’Keeffe looks at the recently released 2020 Pasture Profit Index and chats to Dermot Campion of Germinal about the findings

The 2020 Pasture Profit Index (PPI) has been released by Teagasc and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

Once again, AberGain is the leading late tetraploid and AberChoice is the leading late diploid with AberClyde and AberMagic, the leading intermediate tetraploid and diploid, respectively. AberClyde is also the highest ranked variety overall for 2020, with a total PPI value of €205 per ha/year.

Grass evaluation trials

In Ireland, DAFM conducts the Recommended List trials. For a variety to be published on the Recommended List and the PPI it undergoes a minimum of 4 years of trials. Each variety is evaluated over a minimum of two sowing years and two harvest years per sowing year.

There are five trials sites across the country (Donegal, Galway, Kildare, Kilkenny and Cork), with each variety sown at each site. Only varieties that demonstrate better than average performance are then published on the list. The PPI is an economic index for ranking grass varieties. It uses a model to determine the economic value of each of the key traits in grass production terms – spring, summer and autumn DM yield, quality, silage DM yield (based on 1st and 2nd cut yields) and persistency. The economic value for each trait is applied to measured performance of a variety in the Recommended List trials and the sum of all the values then determines the total PPI value of a variety in € per ha/year.

Germinal to the fore

Dermot Campion of Germinal confirms that the 2020 PPI shows no big changes: “The same varieties are at the top with two new varieties entering and four others dropped. Up to a couple of years ago we didn’t have this list. We were relying on the Department’s Recommended List alone and this new system is a positive development in helping farmers choose the varieties best suited to their needs.”

Variety differentiation

Further differentiation between the important attributes of grass varieties is ongoing as Dermot notes: “The development of PastureBase, which allows information to flow from on-farm experiences with different grass varieties is positive. It looks like ‘grass utilisation’ or ‘grazing-out’ will form part of future selection criteria. That should be an even bigger benefit for farmers who are looking for grasses which they can graze out well with less residue and waste.” Dermot made the observation that we seem to be

more prone to extreme weather conditions in recent times, swinging from extreme drought to extreme wet weather, adding that: “farmers are looking for high quality grasses, because the higher the quality, the higher the graze-out of that sward. The PPI figures confirm this correlation. Keeping cows up out of the soil is problematic in the extreme wet conditions we experienced this Spring. Cows had to be brought in and kept in on a regular basis making consistent grazing impossible.”

Credit to Teagasc

Dermot is quite positive about the advances which have occurred in grass variety breeding in recent times: “There have been massive changes. Twenty years ago, we just picked any available grass-seed mixture with little enough discrimination on individual varieties in the mix. We are lucky in Ireland in that we have Teagasc to provide objective advice and research to assist farmers in making decisions around grass seed selection, for instance. Most other countries don’t have that objective, impartial knowledge base. It takes about fifteen years to get a grass variety on the recommended list. It could be eleven of those years of development before a decision is made to bring a variety through to market. That involves massive cost of up to €250,000 before a variety comes through onto the list.”

The business of grass

Germinal has been based at Horse & Jockey in Tipperary since 1974, with an ancestry in the UK dating back to the 1800’s: “Our sole business is grass and we have concentrated on quality for many years. There were times when we didn’t get varieties on the list because yield might not have matched other varieties on the market. However, when the PPI came into being we climbed to the top of the list for intermediate diploid, and intermediate tetraploid, late diploid, and we are also top of the late tetraploid varieties. Our decision, twenty-five years ago, to go down the quality route instead of concentrating solely on the yield factor has paid off now. We have varieties coming on stream next year which should further enhance our reputation.”

Low level of annual grass reseeded

The reality is that only two to three percent of Irish swards are renewed annually. That equates to 3,000 tonnes of grass seed. Dermot confirms that the main market is for late varieties of diploid and tetraploid: “When farmers look at the top of the PPI list they look at the Lates rather than the Intermediates. The latter head out in May and can re-head

in mid-season. Farmers don't want that. What they require in a variety is minimal topping with maximum utilisation and our aim is to have varieties that meet those customer requirements. It's no use producing a variety that won't sell."

A persistent plant

One of the most amazing qualities of grass grown under Irish conditions is its ability to persist under sometimes extreme conditions as Dermot Campion agrees: "After the drought in 2018, the worst since the mid 1970's, a lot of people thought grass swards were dead. They came bouncing back and even after the torrential rain during early Spring this year, grass showed an ability to survive and thrive. Grass can grow in Ireland almost every day of the year, given any chance at all. Our counterparts in Germany and Switzerland, for instance, talk about three to four months grass growth per year."

Renewal and repair

Sward repair is high on the farm agenda this year, the Germinal representative confirmed: "There was damage done to swards last Autumn apart altogether from the harm to swards that was done earlier this year. Repair jobs are needed in some instances during May and June, if conditions allow." Dermot's best advice in dealing with sward damage is to wait until after a second grazing before making a renewal or repair decision: "Some fields will come back very well. Decisions are then made on the basis of whether the field might need a reseed anyway if it has been lower yielding than the average for the farm. Some fields that are often sacrificed as the 'go-to' paddock in

extreme conditions could be reseeded using a high rate of tetraploid in the mix. That provides more vigour and will recover better if damaged. Clover will be an important aspect of reseeding in future, particularly for farmers operating under the Nitrates Derogation.

The mandatory inclusion of at least 0.6kg of ordinary clover seed or 1kg of pelleted clover will drive that decision on derogation farms. Research is showing that clover can play a very positive role in sward productivity and milk solids production. Beef and sheep farmers are well aware of the potential of clover in a sward."



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Climate Change Roadmap to 2030

Following on from 2019 Ag Climatise Consultation Process, Dale Crammond – the Climate Change and Bioenergy Policy Division Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine – offers an update on issues at hand.

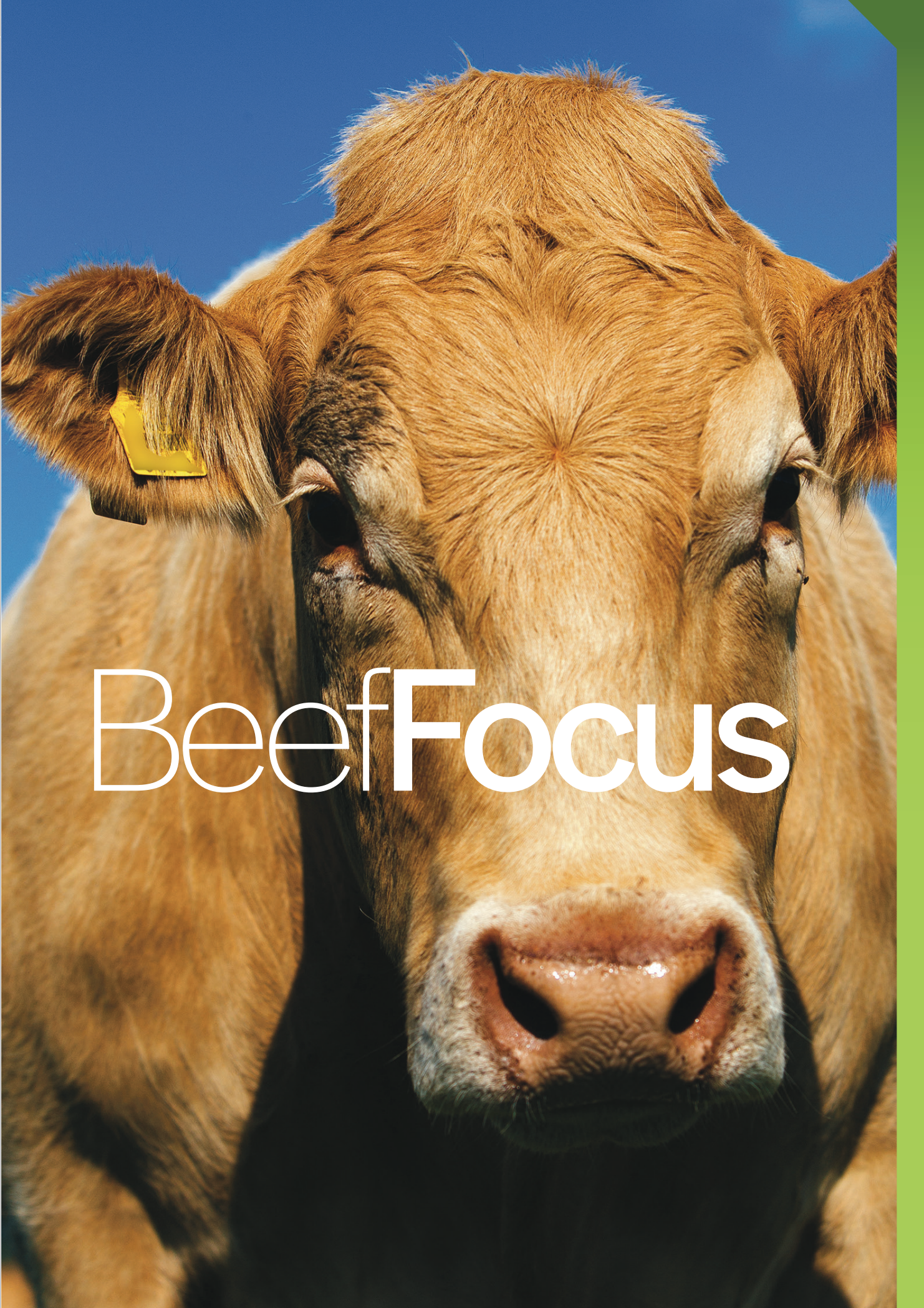
The All-of-Government National Climate Action Plan was published in the summer of 2019, setting out carbon reduction targets for all sectors of Irish economy. The agriculture sector was given a target to reduce carbon emissions by 10-15 per cent, which translates to a reduction in emissions from 20.2 million tonnes CO₂ eq in 2017 to between 17.5 and 19 million tonnes CO₂ eq by 2030. There is also a requirement that the sector enhances CO₂ removals from the landscape by at 26.8 million tonnes CO₂ eq over the same period. While clearly a challenging target, it should be noted that other sectors of our economy had reduction targets of over 50 per cent assigned to them. In November 2019, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) launched an extensive consultation process with the aim of developing a climate action roadmap for the agri-food sector out to 2030. This roadmap will take the national targets, from the All-of-Government Plan, and translate them into a sectoral plan. The consultation process closed in January this year and DAFM held several follow up events including a conference in Tullow, Co. Carlow, in February with industry and farmer stakeholders to discuss the outputs of the process. There was a lot to discuss; DAFM received in excess of 500 responses, made up of 400 online survey responses and over 100 written submissions. DAFM is currently drafting the final roadmap, based on the follow up discussions and the many useful submissions received. It would be impossible to refer to all of the issues raised; however, I have picked out some of the main messages that emerged. As readers of the *Irish Farmers Monthly*, many of issues will not come as a surprise to you. Nitrogen use efficiency was one such issue. We need to find ways to make better use of the nutrients we apply to land. There are a number of ways that we can do this, not least by bringing back a strong tradition of liming soils. Back in the 80s, approximately 1.7 million tonnes of lime was applied to our soils, this has dropped back to approximately 1 million tonnes in recent years. If our soils are not at the appropriate pH, they cannot use the nutrients applied in an efficient manner. Protected urea and protected nitrogen fertilisers are terms many of you will become very familiar with over the coming years. Effectively, a product is applied, as a coating, to the fertiliser granule, which reduces the amount of nitrogen that is lost to the

environment, making more of the nitrogen available to the growing plant at the appropriate time. This is clearly a win-win for the farmer and the environment.

Another issue that featured strongly in the consultation process was land diversification. Increased afforestation rates will be required if we are to reach our carbon removals target as outlined above. Can the number of trees planted on Irish farms be increased without changing the overall main enterprise, be it dairy or beef production? This is where agro-forestry can play a big role with the associated biodiversity benefits for the landscape. Renewable energy also featured strongly and replacing fossil fuel use on farm is something every farmer can aspire to, but particularly those involved with intensive high energy systems of production. The use of solar PV will become much more common on Irish farms over the next decade. Finally, one of the most important issues raised was the importance of an effective advisory strategy and a section of the final roadmap will be dedicated to this issue. There are exciting developments to come, not least the Teagasc 'Sign-Post' farms initiative. Peer-to-peer learning between farmers is ultimately the best way of communicating a positive message of change.

When published, the Roadmap will outline a number of ambitious actions, which will require a step change from the primary producer through to the processor. The challenge is to change the trajectory of emissions from agriculture, so that the absolute emissions reduce over time. However, there will be opportunities for Irish farmers, and DAFM and the wider industry will play an active role in supporting farmers during this transition.

As a country, Ireland exports 90 per cent of the food it produces, selling to 178 countries all over the world, and consumers have never been more conscious of the environmental footprint of the food they consume. Irish agriculture has become one of the most carbon efficient producers of beef and dairy in Europe. This is widely recognised under our Origin Green banner, but we can, and need to do even better. By everybody pulling together, acting in partnership, we can ensure that the agri-food sector will play a valuable part in meeting Ireland's national climate commitments over the next decade and beyond, securing the future of the family farm for generations to come.



BeefFocus



The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine outlines beef sector supports and developments in the context of COVID-19

Supporting the sector

Beef production is an important element of the Irish rural economy and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is very aware of the concerns of Irish farmers in the current pandemic, which has created additional uncertainty in an already volatile market. In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the Department is working to ensure that business and services to farmers can continue, keeping food and other processing facilities operational, ensuring that payments and commercial activities that are necessary to protect farm incomes can continue. There are likely to be significant economic impacts for the beef sector, arising from reduced demand in key markets around the world. The loss of high value food service customers is already of major immediate concern. Up to date information relating to specific supports available and practical flexibilities which have been introduced in Departmental schemes is available on the Department's website. DAFM and its agencies will continue to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 on the agri-food sector as the situation evolves, and to provide appropriate supports to the sector. Senior DAFM officials remain in constant contact with stakeholders right across the sector to share information on emerging issues and contingency planning. In addition to the ongoing supports to the beef sector through the BDGP (€300 Million over the current Rural Development Programme), an additional allocation of €35 million was provided in Budget 2020 to extend support for the suckler beef sector. BEEP-S, which built on the BEEP pilot in 2019, was launched in March 2020 and targets the weaning efficiency of suckler cows and calves - measuring the live weight of the calf at weaning as a percentage of the cow's live weight. There are also additional optional health and welfare measures.

BEEP-S Programme actions are as follows:

1. Mandatory weighing action: €50 per first ten cow/calf weighing per herd (and €40 per cow/calf weighing thereafter), this action measures the ratio of calf weight at weaning to maternal weight, enabling farmers to readily identify their most economic and environmentally efficient suckler cows in their herd.
2. Optional action: €30 for an additional welfare action, with a choice of either a vaccination programme or a pre-weaning meal feeding programme. This action will improve the health and welfare of suckler calves at weaning time.
3. Optional action: €10 for a further option – participation in a faecal egg testing programme. This action is targeted at the control of liver and rumen fluke in adult suckler cows, improving animal health and welfare.

If participants take on the additional measures along with the weight recording measure, they will be eligible for a payment of up to €90 for the first ten suckler cow/calf pairs per herd, and up to €80 per pair thereafter, subject to an overall maximum of 100 pairs per herd.

Examples: A Suckler herd of 20 can avail of up to €1,700 for full participation in the options available while a herd of 40 can avail of up to €3,300. The maximum payment is for 100 Cow/Calf pairs, with a total payment of €8,100 based on participation in the all of the options available.

It is more important now than ever before for suckler farmers to take full advantage of these new financial supports. The programme aims to increase economic and environmental efficiency in the suckler herd through improvement in the quantity and quality of performance data collected, with a view to supporting the adoption of best practice and more informed decision making at farm level. Grants of up to €8,100 are available for Suckler farmers under BEEP-S. This extra funding is available to suckler farmers right now. It is a straightforward scheme, which can deliver a significant cash-flow injection, suckler farmers are encouraged to apply before the deadline of 15 May. Further details on BEEP-S are available at: <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/beef/schemesandprogrammes/>



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Irish beef market update

Padraig Brennan, Meat, Food and Beverages Director at Bord Bia, outlines the current situation in beef markets in the context of COVID-19 to Matt O'Keeffe

"Normally 35-40 per cent of Irish beef exports to the European market goes into food service: restaurants and hotels. Currently, there is no business happening in most European markets in that sector. Another 20 per cent of our beef goes into manufacturing, for example, burgers for McDonalds. Again, because those outlets are closed, the demand isn't there. The shrinking of those two very important outlets has led to European beef prices falling sharply since the middle of March and Irish cattle prices have followed suit. The price fall has been severe, down to €3.40 a kilo for finished steers. Two months ago, the price was at €3.65. The food service channel is the normal outlet for a lot of our steak cuts. With a typical animal, around 15 per cent is made up of steak cuts and you rely on that percentage to deliver up to 40 per cent of the total value of the animal. Retail will not typically sell as many steak cuts. We are really struggling to move the higher value cuts. That is putting more pressure on price."

Continuing, the Bord Bia representative puts the loss of the quick-serve restaurants, in perspective: "That channel would account for between 80 to 90,000 tonnes of Irish beef every year. In addition, when people are buying in the supermarket, they are more inclined at this time of the year to buy mince or stewing cut rather than steak cuts."

Cattle supply

"For most of March, the weekly kill was around 38-39,000 cattle. By early April that figure had reduced to 30,000 and has fallen even further since then. Some of that is because the demand isn't there, so not as many cattle are required. Farmers are finding it harder to sell finished cattle. Having said that, when you come to this time of year, with cattle going to grass, you would see some seasonal tightening in the kill, but there certainly has been a challenge for many winter finishers to slaughter cattle as quickly as they would like." Padraig agrees that the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated an already loss-making situation for beef finishers: "Producer prices have been under pressure for the past eighteen months. Spring prices this year were

gaining a little bit more stability until COVID came. That led to more downward price pressure."

Exports

At an overall industry level in terms of the value of food exports, the sector has been performing strongly. Even within meat, we saw a more stable situation with sheep meat delivering reasonable prices in recent years. Pig meat, after some rough years with high feed costs, got a bounce last year, with producer prices rising by nearly 30 per cent. Beef was the sector that was struggling. Some of the pressure we are seeing now in relation to the steak cut trade has been there to varying degrees for a while. Consumers aren't buying as many steak cuts as they would have traditionally, so it's hard to get the value from that part of the animal. The good news for beef last year was the expansion of Chinese beef purchases from Ireland. They were starting to take volumes, albeit with some volatility attached as is regularly the case with Chinese trade. We had more plants approved to increase supply. The volumes were growing with nearly 12,000 tonnes of beef to China in 2019, most of that in the second half of the year. We were getting a sense that some of the pricing pressures were reducing and cattle supply was tightening for 2020. Unfortunately, what has happened since December/January in China and the last six weeks in Europe, has put beef producers under massive pressure. At farm level the first thing we did was relieve some pressure by postponing audits for a period of two months. We will keep that under review and may develop remote auditing in the months ahead."

Planning ahead

"The first thing we need is some indication of when we are going to be over the worst. The virus has spread from East to West and if you look at Asia, and China in particular, there are positive signs that market demand is rising. Food service outlets in China were reopened in early April. People were back at work and market indicators

showed more interest in importing beef and other products again. We've done extra promotional work with some of the e-commerce companies globally to build volumes of products being sold through them. For example, the e-commerce online channel in China is performing strongly. Sales have doubled or more from what they were this time last year." "More than 90 per cent of our beef stays in Europe. It is in the eye of the COVID storm, with no definite timescale on when we will see any improvement. It is likely to be a gradual recovery in terms of people getting back to normal life. That will impact on food demand, in restaurants and food service outlets, in particular. There are actions Bord Bia will be taking in the meantime. Firstly, we need to stay as close as we can to our customers. Across Europe, there are over eighty retailers that buy beef from Ireland. We must ensure that they keep Ireland on their purchasing list. In every country that we deal with, there is a growing nationalism that has increased over the course of this virus. Irish beef isn't a local product so we have to stay close to our customers. When we see an opportunity to do promotional work with customers, we do that. In Italy we are working with the Butchers Channel. It is open with strong sales going through. Keeping Irish beef very visible is a priority, and we are reaching at least 200,000 consumers with that campaign. In Germany we launched a campaign with a retailer who wanted to do promotional work with us. We are always trying to encourage those outlets to take more of our beef, to relieve pressure on the

system here. In the Irish market we had our first ever steak ad on TV. It's very much built around the idea of home comfort, of looking after yourself when you're cooking and eating at home. The next strategy is that when we do see an improvement, we are ready, we have a plan for each market, for each group of customers to make Irish meat as visible as possible in these markets, and get the volumes up. Getting volumes up directly helps the price going back to the producer. The reality, however, is that many of our customers are not in promotional mode."

Supporting the sector

Bord Bia has support measures in place: "We have a marketing support package, which will make an extra million euro available for companies to help them recover some of the costs they may be facing, especially where companies have been food-service focused and are going online. We are helping them with websites and getting their online sales up and running. Another element is helping companies through a series of webinars, where we share our expertise or bring in experts regarding cashflow management, employee management, financial resilience. The third area is around sharing information and insights, from both market and consumer viewpoints. We keep companies informed as well as future-proofing them for the trends that will change consumer behaviour in a post-COVID-19 world and how we can help companies plan for that now."



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Benefit: Get the most from your forage, the lowest cost feed in the ration
- 2 Improved palatability boosts intakes:** ED&F Man's molasses blends are highly palatable and have been shown to increase Dry Matter Intake (DMI). Encouraging animals to eat more is a key driver of animal production (either milk production or daily live weight gain).
Benefit: Increased production and efficiency
- 3 Low substitution effect:** With high yielding cows, it is difficult to maximise dry matter intake when only using dry feed ingredients. Adding an ED&F Man molasses blend to the ration has been shown to increase dry matter intake due to its unique liquid nature and low substitution effect leading to enhanced animal performance.
Benefit: Better animal production and better feed efficiency
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Benefit: Lower molasses based liquid feeds costs
- 5 Dust free:** Using an ED&F Man molasses based liquid feed can significantly reduce dust in any feeding system. Molasses eliminates dustiness, which can cause health problems to both stock and stockman alike. It can also lead to reduced feed wastage and costs as the dust could contain the expensive mineral and vitamin premix that is added to the ration.
Benefit: Better animal health and improved performance

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Nutrition and first calving

Dr Alan Kelly, School of Agriculture and Food Science, University College Dublin, outlines how nutrition is the underlying driver of puberty onset and age of first calving in beef heifers

Reproductive efficiency is a major determinant of productive and economic performance of suckler beef cow enterprises. In Ireland, 75 per cent of replacement beef heifers are sourced from the beef herd, either homebred (60 per cent) or purchased (40 per cent). Rearing heifers to calve at 36 versus 24 months of age reduces net margin per hectare on suckler beef farms by 20-30 per cent; this largely reflects added costs accrued by maintaining a cohort of 'unproductive' animals within the herd for 12 extra months. Beef heifers that first calve at 24 months of age have greater longevity than those calving later. It has been shown that beef heifers that conceived early during their initial breeding season and calved as two-year-olds have a greater probability of becoming pregnant as primiparous cows, have greater lifetime production reflected in greater weaning weights, and tend to calve earlier in subsequent years compared with females that conceived later in their first breeding season. However, national beef statistics show that only 23 per cent of beef heifers first calve between 22 and 26 months of age. Early onset of puberty is essential to achieving first calving at 24 months of age, but as a trait puberty is extremely difficult to record accurately at farm level. Age at puberty in heifers is influenced by genetics and nutritional management. Traditionally the recommended dogma for rearing replacement beef heifers has been to develop heifers to meet or exceed a predetermined target weight at breeding (65 per cent of

estimated mature cow bodyweight) to ensure puberty had occurred ahead of the breeding season. However, there is some variation in the published literature on the threshold proportion of mature bodyweight which heifers must attain before undergoing puberty. Recent work as part of a DAFM collaborate project between UCD, Teagasc and AFBI actually shows that the nutritional effects in early life during the pre-weaning calf period had a much larger impact on age at puberty than post-weaning gain and puberty onset in beef heifers was not governed solely by hitting the threshold breeding weight per se. Indeed, increased growth rate and nutritional status during critical developmental windows between 3 and 7 months of age was sufficient to advance puberty onset (by 40 days in heifers), mediated through alterations in the heifers reproductive axis.

Ongoing work in this area is examining the direct and interactive effects of nutritional augmentation during key sexual developmental phases in the pre-pubertal heifer. Understanding the precise regulatory mechanisms involved in early sexual development increases our ability to effectively manage replacement heifers for optimal reproductive performance. Optimal nutritional regimens can then be formulated to consistently and cost-effectively ensure that a high proportion of replacement beef heifers reach puberty before the start of the breeding season, a central tenet of seasonal calving grass-based production systems.



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Producing quality silage and nutritional impact

Cathal Cassidy,
InTouch Feeding Specialist,
Alltech Ireland

After grazed grass, silage makes up the most substantial proportion of a ruminant's diet and has a major impact on animal performance, feed costs and supplementation requirement during the winter months. When feeding animals indoors, we can often get hung up looking at different concentrates or feed additives while overlooking the impact forage is having on the diet. While producing grass silage is not cheap, the challenge is to provide enough of a suitable quality for the animals being fed.

Silage quality in diets and costs

Often when dealing with clients, they wonder why the amount of concentrate varies year to year. Generally, it is down to silage quality. A small variation in quality can have a significant effect due to the amount of the diet it makes up. No matter how much concentrate you are willing to feed, it cannot compensate fully for poor quality silage in terms of animal performance.

On average, each 5% increase in DMD will result in a rise of:

- ▶ 0.12 kg/day carcass gain of finishing cattle
- ▶ 1.7 kg/day milk in dairy cows

It is also crucial to bear in mind that the level of protein in younger, leafier grass will be higher than older grasses. Also, with current prices, the return on investment for nitrogen from fertiliser is 3.5 times cheaper than bought-in nitrogen in the form of protein feeds.

What silage quality is required?

First, make sure you have enough feed in the yard for winter — having the best silage in the country is no good if it runs out halfway through. A simple feed budget is a worthwhile exercise, with many simple templates available online. Required quality will depend on the type of animals and production system, as shown below. If feeding growing, finishing or lactating animals, silage needs to be high-quality, whereas if feeding dry cows, a more average-quality silage will suffice. While average-quality silage will make up the majority of winter feeding, there is still usually a requirement for some high-quality silage.

Fresh spring/autumn cows or finishing cattle	Dairy young stock or growing cattle	Dry cows
75+ DMD	72+ DMD	66 DMD

Calculating the cost of silage

Grass silage is about twice the cost of grazed grass, but half the cost of concentrates. Crop yield is the most significant factor determining silage production cost, hence why the challenge is to balance achieving max yield and quality. The table below shows how cutting date affects crop yield and quality, along with approximate costs of silage per tonne

Cutting date	May 20	June 2	June 15	June 28
DMD%	75	70	65	60
Silage tDM/ha	4.6	6	7	7.7
Cost €/tDM	€165	€124	€107	€96

(Teagasc, Quality Grass Silage for Dairy and Beef Production Systems, 2016)

Influencing silage quality

Pre-grazing:

If silage ground is grazed in early spring, it will increase silage DMD by around 6% as it leaves a clean base for fresh growth, but will reduce silage yield by 0.5–1t DM/ha

Cutting date:

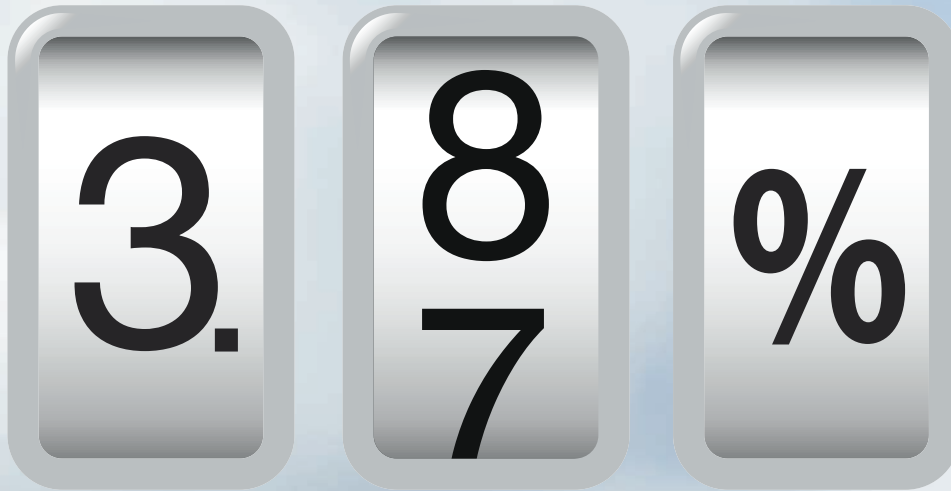
After the heading date, a plant will quickly produce a visible seed head and reduce by 0.5 DMD units per day. Therefore, the cutting date will have a more considerable influence on feeding value than any other factor.

Many grass varieties have a heading date in May, meaning this silage will need to be cut within the month, rather than continuing to June, and fertiliser application and closing date need to suit this.

Fertiliser/Nutrients:

Soil fertility will affect both silage yield and quality, as it will influence cutting date. Fertile soil with the correct pH and NPK levels allows faster growth, reaching the required bulk and quality at an earlier date, as shown below.

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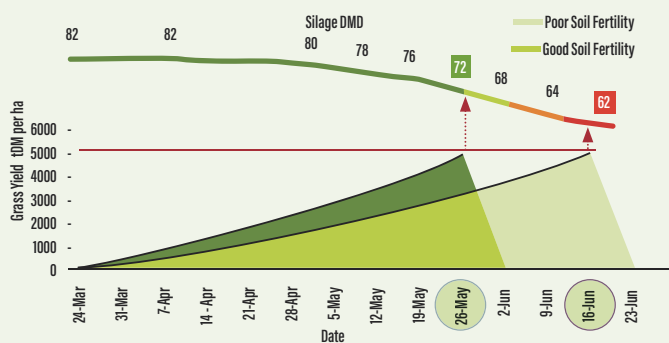


Fig1. The effect of soil fertility on cutting date, silage quality and quantity (adapted from Teagasc)

The first area to look at is pH, as grass will have a poor response to fertiliser if soil pH is not correct. This is why a soil test and lime are so important.

Silage fields will have a higher requirement for phosphorous and potassium, as all grass is harvested and, unlike grazing areas, animals will not return the manure to the ground on a daily basis.

The recommendations for each soil index are shown below. Be aware that high-potassium silage can cause issues with milk fever if fed to dry cows and should have <2% potassium. Letting grass mature for longer and watching potassium application will help, as young, leafy, well-fertilised grass will have high potassium concentrations.

Sulphur deficiency is increasingly common in grassland and is indicated by poor growth and a yellow tinge to the youngest leaves. Be aware that high rates of sulphur can lock up important trace nutrients. It is therefore recommended to be applied at 10% the rate of nitrogen. It has also been linked to the final level of protein in the silage.

Soil index	1	2	3	4
P required kg/ha	40	30	20	0
K required kg/ha	175	155	125	0
N required kg/ha	125			
S required kg/ha	12-14 (10% of N applied)			

(Teagasc, Quality Grass Silage for Dairy and Beef Production Systems, 2016)

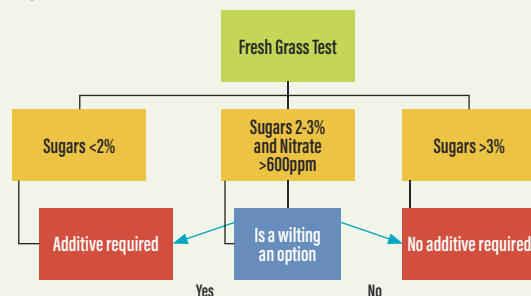
As a guide, a grass crop uses 2.5 kg (2 units) of nitrogen/day, so plan your application and cutting date around this.

Wilting:

Wilting reduces the moisture content of the crop, which should be tedded out after cutting and lifted 24 hours later. This will help get the crop to a DM of 28–30% while increasing the sugar concentration and improving preservation. It is essential to not over-wilt, as excessively dry silage will heat very quickly once re-opened.

Additives:

Additives cannot turn a bad crop into good silage. If conditions are suitable, they are not required but can benefit in certain circumstances. Not all additives are the same, so it is important to select the right one depending on conditions. The diagram below outlines what your decision process should be when deciding on the use of an additive.



Clamp management:

Proper clamp management aims to remove as much air as possible. Pits should be well rolled between each load and have a chop length of 1–2 cm, allowing for greater compaction to give better fermentation. If the pit is left overnight, do not roll the next morning, as this will create a vacuum that will suck in air.

The more air left in the pit after it is sealed, the greater the initial drop in DMD%. Sugars and dry matter play a part, as a crop that is low in sugars will not preserve effectively, due to limited acid production. In wetter crops, a lower pH drop is required, as there is greater dilution from water.

Summary:

- ▶ Silage quality has a major impact on feed costs and animal performance
- ▶ Make a feed budget now to decide quality and quantity required
- ▶ Cutting date has the greatest impact on quality
- ▶ Soil fertility has an important impact on cutting date and yield



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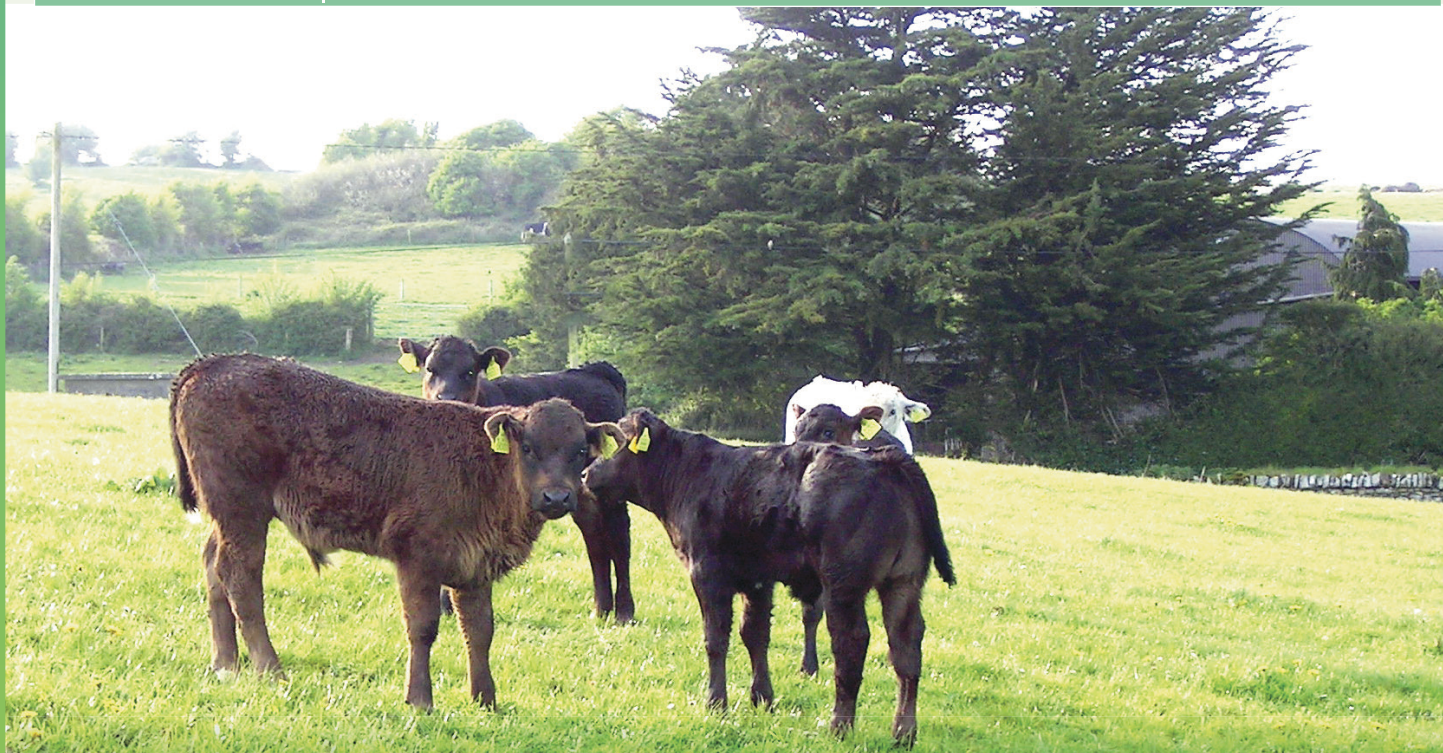


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Cara Sheridan, MVB
MRCVS Cert DHH,
Ruminant technical
vet MSD Animal
Health, discusses
importance of
vaccination for IBR

Do calves need an IBR vaccine?

Turning calves out to grass for the first time is seriously rewarding. Rearing healthy calves in the first place takes great effort and hard work. Minimising the impact of diseases like diarrhoea and pneumonia can be challenging and this year was no exception with the storms of early spring to the warm daily temperatures and cold nights of April. Weaning dairy calves, dealing with coccidiosis threats, pneumonia and clostridial vaccination; the calf 'to do' list can be comprehensive. What about IBR vaccination?

IBR - Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis

Infection with IBR virus is widespread in the cattle population in Ireland, with evidence of exposure in over 70% of herds (both beef and dairy). It is capable of causing disease (both clinical and subclinical) resulting in huge economic losses at farm level through lack of production and treatment costs. The majority of infections are seen in cattle greater than 12 months of age, however all ages are at risk of IBR. Clinical infections usually occur when animals are infected for the first time. Signs such as discharge from the eyes and nose, loud laboured breathing, high

temperatures, resulting depression and reduced appetite may be experienced. Milk yield may be affected, and abortion may also occur. Subclinical infections are those without overt clinical signs and for this reason may go unnoticed for some time in a herd. Subclinical IBR can result in losses of 2.6kg of milk/cow/day.

Those infected for the first time shed high levels of the virus for approximately two weeks. At times of stress (e.g. mixing/housing/breeding/calving) the virus can reactivate, and that animal may shed again. Every time an animal sheds the virus it has the potential to infect more herd mates.

Control of IBR

There are three components to controlling this endemic disease;

- ▶ Biosecurity
- ▶ Culling
- ▶ Vaccination

Biosecurity - Biosecurity can be further divided into bio exclusion and bio containment. Bio exclusion (the process of keeping disease out of a herd) is of particular importance in Ireland as many herds purchase cattle (e.g.



the stock bull), avail of contract rearing for heifers, attend marts or shows (present Covid-19 times excluded). IBR can cross distances of up to five metres so neighbouring cattle during the grazing season can also be a source of infection or vice versa. Bio containment (the process of reducing the threat of infection within a herd) relies mainly on herd management – segregating of age groups for example.

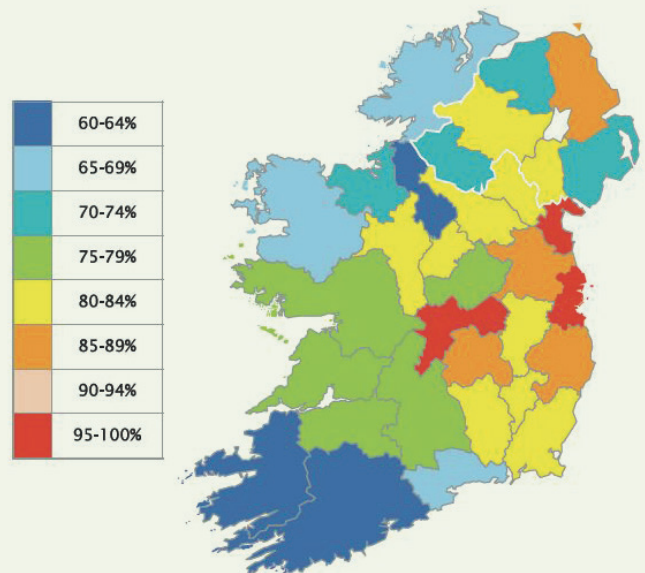
Culling - Culling of animals which have tested positive for IBR is a quick method to reduce herd prevalence. However, in many herds it is not a practical option as there are simply too many animals which are positive (once infected an animal becomes a life-long carrier) and therefore it would not be economically viable.

Vaccination - For effective control of IBR, vaccination must:

- ▶ Reduce the number of new infections - Main cause of virus spreading in a herd
- ▶ Reduce severity of clinical signs - Limit cost of disease impact

The time to start vaccination depends on the particular situation of each farm. In the absence of virus circulation among the young calf group, vaccination is started at the age of three months, revaccination six months later and all subsequent revaccinations within 12 month periods. This will provide protection against IBR virus and minimise the number of animals that become carriers. Herds that have a moderate to high prevalence of IBR, are high-risk and/or have clinical signs are best to remain on a six monthly vaccination programme until IBR is under better control in the herd. For the spring calving herd this will mean calves will receive their first dose of a live IBR vaccine in June/July 2020.

If vaccination needs to be carried out before the age of three months (high prevalence/high-risk herds/disease in calves) then an IBR intranasal vaccination is the recommended route in order to overcome maternally derived antibodies. An intramuscular vaccination programme then commences at three-four months of age as stated above.



Bovilis IBR marker live provides protection by reducing clinical signs and virus excretion. It is the only single dose IBR marker vaccine for use either intranasally or intramuscularly. It is a 2ml dose with a fast onset of immunity (four days after intranasal administration and 14 days after intramuscular administration).

In summary, the majority of herds in Ireland are of medium or high seroprevalence so vaccination with a live IBR marker vaccine combined with biosecurity and monitoring are the most practical and appropriate control methods. Many herds are missing a trick by only vaccinating the cows. This is controlling clinical signs and the impact of IBR on production but not necessarily reducing the spread (to unvaccinated younger cattle) and therefore the number of new infections each year. The aim of whole herd vaccination is to reduce the level of IBR in the herd over time. In answer to the opening question – yes; to IBR vaccination of calves.

Reference: Cowley DJB et al, Aspects of bovine herpesvirus infection in dairy and beef herds in the Republic of Ireland. Acta Veterinaria Scandinavica 2011



Sustainable Parasite control

Sustainable Parasite control is the buzz term of the moment, but what does that mean for farmers? Here, Maura Langan, Norbrook Veterinary Advisor, discusses the various methods of parasite control and discusses why the need for sustainable parasite control has never been so pressing.

Parasites are one of the main limiting factors in the growth and development of cattle, so beef and dairy farmers rely on their control through the use of anthelmintics, otherwise commonly known as wormers. However we have a finite number of wormers for use in cattle at our disposal. It follows if there are no new and emerging molecules that we need to preserve and protect the usefulness of what we have and slow the development of Anthelmintic resistance.

In order to do this and adopt a sustainable approach to parasite control, a basic knowledge of what resistance is and what contributes to the development of resistance is fundamental to avoiding it. Farmers need to have a working knowledge of the classes of drugs they are using and the type of control regime they are adopting.

What is anthelmintic resistance?

Anthelmintic resistance is defined as the loss of sensitivity of parasite populations to a drug that they were previously sensitive to. Essentially, this means that sensitive worms die and those that have some degree of resistance survive. The surviving worms reproduce, and their offspring then increase the percentage of the worm population carrying the resistance genes. Over time a susceptible population may be replaced by a completely resistant one. Treating calves too frequently, dosing and moving, underdosing are all practices that promote the development of resistance.

Notwithstanding this, farmers can do their bit to preserve the efficacy of our available wormers. Only treating cattle when necessary, using the correct dose every time and not moving to fresh grass immediately

after treatment are all tools to slow the development of resistance. Also consider using different active ingredients rather than always relying on the same products and use combination products only when required.

Classes of anthelmintics

There are many different worming products on the market but all fall into three distinct Anthelmintics classes. Products within a group have a similar mode of action.

- ▶ Benzimidazoles commonly known as white wormers
- ▶ Imidathiazoles commonly known as Yellow drenches or Levamisole
- ▶ Macrocytic lactones known as the clear worming products.

White (benzimidazoles) and yellow (levamisole) wormers have no persistence so do not offer protection following the treatment. In a sustainable programme they could be used early in the season to allow for exposure following treatment and thus help immunity to develop. Clear wormers (such as ivermectin, doramectin, eprinomectin and moxidectin) are effective against a broad range of internal and external parasites. They also offer cattle some protection after treatment. This is defined as the persistency of the active ingredient. However persistency varies depending on the product uses and the parasite being treated.

Treatment options

Calves in their first grazing season as completely naive and therefore susceptible to gut and lung worm infection. It follows that treatment of some of these

calves will be justified during the summer months to minimise the negative impacts of worm infection. The control options that can be used to treat calves for Gutworm can be classified as strategic, therapeutic or tactical.

- ▶ **Strategic**
Farmers are likely to be familiar with this type of routine, where stock are treated at predetermined intervals. A strategic regime might be drenching calves with a white wormer at 3-week intervals. This approach is likely to encourage the development of AR due to the frequency of treatment.
- ▶ **Therapeutic**
Therapeutic management involves livestock being monitored for clinical signs of disease such as weight loss or scouring and are only treated when these signs are observed. By waiting until calves are visibly affected by their worm burden, welfare and production performance may be impacted significantly.
- ▶ **Tactical**
This is the most sustainable approach to worm control and is the regime farmers should strive towards. Faecal egg counts and live weight gain are monitored throughout the grazing season to ascertain worm burdens. Based on this knowledge, an informed decision can be made, whether to treat the cohort or groups of calves, delay treatment or even not treat at all.

Lungworm or Hoose Infection

Lungworm infection is less predictable and more difficult to control than stomach worms. The symptoms include a husky cough, especially when calves are being moved. It also causes a reduction in growth rate and makes calves more susceptible to respiratory

viral and bacterial infection due to lung damage. Thus, it is important to treat calves for lungworms at the first signs of coughing, regardless of your worming regime. Choosing the most appropriate product for the targeted parasites, treating at the right time and at the correct dose as well as monitoring parasite infection levels is vital to a sustainable worm control programme. Infection levels can be monitored by weighing calves to determine their growth rates as well as Faecal Egg count tests. In cases where resistance is suspected contact a veterinary surgeon who can advise on the next steps to diagnose resistance through Faecal egg count reduction tests.

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Crop Update: Prevention and cure

The only virus in the national mindset is the COVID-19. Farmers are fully engaged in preventing that virus from infecting themselves, their families, employees and everyone interacting with the farm. However, there are a range of other viruses that farmers must protect against. Some of these afflict their livestock while others can damage crops. Barley Yellow Dwarf Virus (BYVD) is one such virus that tillage farmers try to safeguard against. It is spread by certain aphids and can cause serious yield losses in particularly vulnerable crops. Previous advice would have been for aphicide application across all susceptible crops. There are two reasons why this is no longer the set advice. Firstly, there is the realisation that many insecticides took no regard of other insects in and around crops which are not only harmless to the crops but can have a beneficial effect. Ladybirds, natural predators of aphids, are a prime example. The second reason for a more discriminatory approach to aphicide application, even where the insecticide is specific to aphid control, is that the aphids, in some cases, have developed resistance to the active ingredients in the spray. Spraying

is now more focused and application is advised in areas where there is a high likelihood of infestation and where aphid numbers are high at a critical stage of crop growth and susceptibility. In barley, spraying for BYVD between Growth Stages 13 to 15 is regarded as the optimum time, though positive results can be achieved up to Growth Stage 30. Because of the time and cost of travelling through crops multiple times, an aphicide is often included with a herbicide at appropriate weed growth stage rather than the crop growth three to five leaf stage, which would be the most effective for BYVD control. Timing and targeting are the key elements of cost-effective crop protection management. As the range of protectants available to tillage farmers continues to reduce, crop protection management becomes ever more challenging. On foot of an EU regulation, this year is the last in which Chlorothalonil will be available as a crop protectant. It has been a mainstay in the chemical armoury of crop growers for many years. As wheat crops achieve vigorous growth at this time of year, they are susceptible to a range of diseases including Septoria and



Yellow Rust. By now many crops will have received a curative or protectant spray depending on the disease status in the crop. At least half of the wheat varieties sown here are susceptible or highly susceptible to Yellow Rust and the dry, warm conditions experienced in April were favourable to its spread. While weather conditions to the end of April have not been conducive to the spread of mildew, it is still normal protocol to include a mildewcide when targeting other diseases including Eyespot.

After a late start to the season, the long dry period in late March-April allowed all tillage work to be brought up to date. Planting of cereals was completed and Spring OSR and beans have also been sown.

Early planting of maize must be carefully managed as any severe late frost could cause damage to soft seedlings, though the almost universal use of a cover film should provide some protection. Price outlook for cereals is poor. The all-important US corn (maize) crop is estimated at over thirty-nine million hectares. That's almost ten per cent above the 2019 crop. With oil prices on the floor, demand for corn to feed ethanol plants has fallen, forcing more grain onto an already oversupplied feed market.

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Messages:

- ▶ Act now the facts from 2019 to plan for 2020 breeding season rewards.
- ▶ Act now to achieve the 2021, 6-week calving rate.
- ▶ Understand the signs of heat to make good decisions on mating.
- ▶ Cows must be stocked at 4.5 -4.7 cows. And cattle at 2500kgs/ha.
- ▶ Manage grass as per the grass wedge.
- ▶ Stock cows at 4.5 to 4.9 per hectare on grazing area in May
- ▶ Use grass measurement and the wedge to
- ▶ Be careful not to overspend on capital investment, except reseeding.

By Matt Ryan

FACTS FROM 2019

- ▶ The average milk solids (MS) sold was 410 kgs/cows, compared with Top 10 per cent of farmers who sold 513.
- ▶ The difference between the two in % F & P was 0.26 and 0.15 respectively or 1.9c/l more profit,
- ▶ Why did these difference occur, aside from management ability?
 - ▶ The calving interval was 391 v 365 days; while the 6-week calving rate (a key KPI for dairy farming) was 66 per cent v 87 per cent - this gives more days in milk to a herd and hence more MS/cow.
 - ▶ The replacement heifers entering the herd for the average farmer was 55 per cent (=45% were from stock bulls) while the Top 10% of farmers all their heifers were AI bred.
 - ▶ The EBI for the average farmer was €101 v €142 for the top 10%.
- ▶ We are now in May 2020 and we have what we have by way of cow type and calving pattern for the year, therefore, individually we must act now, by way of good reproductive management practices, to have a good 6-week calving pattern in 2021.

NOW: ADDRESS THE FACTORS THAT DRIVE 6 WEEK CALVING

- ▶ The key factors, at this time, driving the 6 week in calf rate are:
 - i. Herds calving pattern- late calving cows have a negative effect on submission rate – see programme below to change.

- ii. The % cows with low body condition at calving (far too high),
 - iii. The % cows losing more than 0.5 BCS from calving to mating (high)
 - iv. The ability of the AI technician and his care of handling the semen,
 - v. Heat detection efficiency which drives submission rate during the first 3 weeks of breeding and subsequent pregnancy.
 - vi. Bull management post AI, with too few bulls or the bull becoming sick/injured,
 - vii. The individual cow's fertility genetics,
 - viii. Individual cow's % protein relative to the herd, because high protein cows have better conception rates,
 - ix. A cow with mastitis, lame or sickness will not go it calf, therefore, don't waste a straw – keep an eye on SCC levels as a measure of stress.
- ▶ Heat detection aids are essential and any dairy farmer who is using AI has no chance of identifying all bulling cows without them. Use any of the following, making sure to remove loose hair off the area:
 - ▶ Tail paint, 9 inches by 2 inches wide and not any more,
 - ▶ Check Mate or Kaymar
 - ▶ "Scratch cards"
 - ▶ Crayons.
 - ▶ Computerised systems but they must be supplemented with other aids.
 - ▶ Paint works perfectly without doing anything else if you do the following:
 - ▶ If all paint is removed, then there is a 93% chance the cow is bulling.
 - ▶ Even if as little as 25 per cent of the paint is removed there is a 76 per cent chance she is bulling.
 - ▶ Quickly check the other signs to confirm.
 - ▶ You must put thin or late calvers on once a day milking (OAD):
 - ▶ The breeding protocol I recommend is paint cows 10 days before mating start date (MSD) and get the vet to examine non cyclers on day 11 of breeding, having recorded accurate the day each cow come bulling.
 - ▶ Vasectomised Bulls:
 - ▶ They are invaluable if managed correctly with one per 25-30 projected bulling cows and of course a chinball – very important for older bulls as the will mate a cow and move away from her then.
 - ▶ Train the bull with the heifers but take him away when the flush of synchronised heifers come on heat.
 - ▶ Be aware that young bulls 'courting cows' which results in the cows being marked on the side 24 hrs before she actually comes on heat. The standing heat mark is on the top of back.

- ▶ Bull Power required:
 - ▶ One young bull per 10 empty cow and one older per 20-25 empty. They must be rotated every 24 hrs.
 - ▶ Have him vaccinated with whatever your herd is vaccinated for, and footbathe him on arrival and deal with lameness.
 - ▶ Test him for fertility or hand mate him with 2-3 early on heat cows you want to AI – you will know in 3 weeks if he is fertile.
 - ▶ With good recording of heats and PG you could get by without any bull as bulls cost €800-1000/yr to serve 25-30 cows which is pretty expensive. Remember one in 10 bulls are infertile while one in three becomes infertile for periods during the year.
- ▶ Late or non-Cycling calvers: Stephen Butler, Moorepark, suggests the following for cows that are at least 30 days in milk:

Day 0: Inject with Receptol after morning's milking and insert CIDR or PRID

Day 7: Inject with prostaglandin after mornings milking, removing the CIDR or PRID

Day 9: Inject with Receptol after evenings milking. It must be 56hours after. Day 7 actions (needs to be very precise time-wise)

Day 10: Fixed time AI after mornings milking, that is, 16 hrs after Day 9 actions.

- ▶ Some farmers are reusing the CIDR after washing, drying and storing in a container with tight lid. Cow CIDR's could already have been used on heifers if the exercise is co-ordinated.
- ▶ If you are DIY or if you use a technician look back on last year's performance on the ICBF fertility page to confirm if you are 'up to scratch'.
 - ▶ Complain if the technician did poorly and get rid of yourself or go for a refresher course if you to blame.
 - ▶ On the day of service make sure cows aren't stressed and that the service crate is 'fit for purpose'.
- ▶ The best time to AI is 12 -24 hours after the onset of heat. There is generally no benefit in serving cows two day in a row as the semen survives. In fact it might discontinue the

first if egg fertilised.

- ▶ What is the pay for all this planning and work? Every missed heat is a loss of €250 and every delay of 21 days in starting is the same financial loss.
- ▶ "Why wait programme"
 - ▶ This involves moving cows being served in week 3 to week 2 and from week 2 to week 1, but you need very good record.
 - ▶ At this stage, if you interested, we will concentrate on serving week 3 cows in week 2.
 - ▶ You must accurately identify and record cows coming on heat the last 7 days before MSD – mark them with a special colour or marking. If MSD were the 1st May then these cows would not normally be served until the 14-21th May.
 - ▶ On the 7th May (or 7 days after the last of that week's cows were recorded on heat), you should give 2cc PG to those cows. They will come bulling 2-4 days after (rarely do cows come on heat the day after PG). Eleven days of extra mil picked up for 30 per cent of the herd - worth trying!

READING THE SIGNS FOR HEAT

- ▶ Because every heat missed is €150 lost, it is important that everyone on the farm team are trained to 'read the signs' of heat as follows:
- ▶ Cow coming into heat (duration 6-10 hrs):
 - ▶ Will not stand to be mounted,
 - ▶ Will be smelling other cows,
 - ▶ Attempts to ride other cows,
 - ▶ Displays a moist, red and slightly swollen vulva,
 - ▶ She is restless and bellows.
- ▶ Cow is in standing heat (for 2-30 hrs, averaging 15 hrs):
 - ▶ Hair and skin rubbed off the crest of the tail head,
 - ▶ Dirt marks on flank or back,
 - ▶ Nervous, excitable and restless,
 - ▶ May ride other cows,
 - ▶ May stand with back arched and tail in the air,
 - ▶ Spends time than usual grazing,
 - ▶ Displays moist red vulva,



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- ▶ There will be a clear mucus discharge from vulva,
- ▶ May hold the milk,
- ▶ Frequently changes from their usual order in the milking parlour – often leads the way from the paddock or lags behind.
- ▶ Cow after heat signs:
 - ▶ Will not stand to be mounted,
 - ▶ Smells other cows,
 - ▶ Clear mucus discharge from vulva.
- ▶ You, as manager, should train your staff/family by sending them to the cows' paddock the week before MSD to identify cows in all three categories; get them to write them down.
 - ▶ Involve yourself with them; and after 2-3 days you and they will be much better and comfortable with the task.
 - ▶ They must also use that info in the parlour, having made note as he/she brings the cows from the paddock, because, once milking starts there is very little time (10-15 secs or 8 in a rotary) to identify heats.

CHECK SUBMISSION RATE!

- ▶ The target is to submit over 90 per cent of your cows for AI service during the first 3 weeks of the breeding season. Check progress by means of the following chart – many farmers now do a daily check against their expectation.

	Target	Target	Your Herd	
	% Herd Served	100 Cow Herd	Target Numbers	Actual Numbers
End 1st week	30%	30		
End 2nd week	60%	60		
End 3rd week	90%	90		
End 4th week	100%	12 or less Repeats		

- ▶ If you are not meeting weekly the targets and you are practicing good heat detection, then there is something wrong. Spend some time with your advisor and Vet trying to identify the problem.
 - ▶ If you have more than 15 repeats/100 cow in week 4 you must act.
 - ▶ It may be due to:
 - (a) Under feeding (b) Disease (c) Minerals (Iodine, copper or cobalt) (d) Stress. (e) Technician or AI straw management.
 - ▶ After AI put all these cows into a paddock of their own with good grass; don't mix with herd as they will stress them out by mounting.
- ▶ Meal feeding does not improve fertility where cows have adequate quantities of good quality grass and milking less than 27 litres per cow per day.
 - ▶ Where grass intakes are reduced due to wet weather, shortage of grass, poor quality (far too common)

and with high yielders, of course, supplementation is necessary.

- ▶ Cows must be kept on the same plane of nutrition for 2 weeks before and two weeks after service.

11 DAY SYNCHRONIZATION PROGRAMME:

- ▶ We outlined the 6 day programme last month and some people are interested in the 11 day one which may also suit later calving cows.
- ▶ Procedure:
 - ▶ Day 1: Inject with prostaglandin
 - ▶ Day 11: Re-inject with prostaglandin
- ▶ AI: At detected heat or set time at 72 & 96 hours post 2nd injection
- ▶ This reduces heat detection to 2-4 days or eliminates totally.
- ▶ If you don't synchronise heifers you will never ever have compact calving.

COWS MUST BE STOCKED AT 4.5 TO 4.7 COWS/HA:

- ▶ To make enough 1st cut silage – cheapest by 30-40 per cent - you must have grazing cows at a stocking rate of 4.5 to 4.7 cows per ha during May – early June. Stock cattle at 2500kgs per hectare. Otherwise, you won't have 70 per cent (target) of your silage by 10-15 June.
- ▶ Match your N applications to your farm stocking rate but heavily stocked farm should apply 40-50 units/ acre on the grazing area in May.
 - ▶ By the end of May over 64 per cent of the annual N should have been spread on the whole farm..
 - ▶ Urea should be used – best results are when rain expected.
- ▶ On soils deficient in sulphur (all soils?), you will grow 10-50 per cent more grass by applying 20 units/year of sulphur. Each silage cut needs 20 units /acre of sulphur.
- ▶ Silage must be cut for a 70 per cent + DMD target, be well preserved – wilted if Nitrogen high. It is also advisable to take a proportion of your 1st cut early so as to have aftergrass coming into grazing area from 20June onwards,
 - ▶ Post cutting silage fields should get 50 units of N for grazing and 75-80 units/acre for 2nd cut with approx. 2 bags 0:7:30
 - ▶ Slurry should be applied immediately silage is cut and the N 67 days later.

GRASS WEDGE DRIVES DECISIONS:

- ▶ The key to managing grass from April – October is to measure grass weekly (twice if growth very high) and record on PastureBase.
- ▶ A grass plant has 3 leaves and one grows every 7 days, therefore, the maximum yield of grass occurs when the 3rd leaf is fully grown. Hence the need for a 21 day rotation

- ▶ The following specific advice is given. You must establish your Stocking Rate (S.R.) in cows per hectare. Table 1 gives the pre-grazing covers (PGC) and the average farm covers (AFC) for farmers of different stocking rates.

Stocking Rate (Cows/ha)	PGC (SR x 18 x 21 + 50)*	AFC (S.R. x 180)**
3.0	1190	540
3.5	1380	640
4.0	1565	730
4.5	1750	800
4.7	1830	850

TABLE 1: Recommended Pre-grazing (PGC) and Average Farm Covers (AFC) for farms of Different stocking rates on the grazing area

*Stocking rate X allowance (Kgs DM/cow) X rotation length + residual = Kg DM/ha
 ** Stocking rate X recommended cover per LU = Kg DM/ha

- ▶ Interpret the table as follows:
 - ▶ If your pre-grazing covers (PGC) and average farm covers (AFC) are greater than specified above, then cut the heavy paddock.
 - ▶ If PGC are greater than specified above but AFC is below target (some dry farms at present), be careful

before you take out the strong paddocks, as you may run short in a week or so.

- ▶ If both PGC and AFC are below that specified and growth rates are poor, then you will have to introduce supplement by way of meal, baled silage or extra grazing area to slow down the rotation.
- ▶ These PGC look high but are required for these SR's but paddocks must and can be grazed out to 3.5-4.0 cms. The 180 multiplier for AFC may look conservative and there are farmers who have been able to manage on 160kgs DM.
- ▶ PastureBase have an excellent computerised programme that shows the Grass Wedge, which, when the cover for each paddock is entered will show if there is adequate grass or surplus grass arising in the next week or so. An essential tool! But many farmers who are using it are playing safe and going into too high covers.
- ▶ Surplus grass or strong paddocks should be taken out in the form of round baled silage and fertilised with 15units/ac of N above normal applications. Apply 1000 gallons of slurry for every 4 bales of silage removed from a paddock.

RESEED IF CASH AVAILABLE

- ▶ There is still time to reseed – best time early in month if you can afford.

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- ▶ Far too many reseeds are poorly done with the result the perennial grass content is reduced to 70-80 per cent at the end of the 1st year, the remainder being weed grass (not noticed because they are green)
 - ▶ Any field with scutch or docks must be sprayed with roundup, even if ploughing up,
 - ▶ If spraying and not ploughing, the decayed grass must be eaten or baled and the field must get lime to neutralise the acidic effect of the trash.
- ▶ Sow late heading varieties, nearly half-half diploid/tetraploid mixes, that have high PPI's, such as Abergain, Aberclyde and Abermagic with clover
 - ▶ Apply 3 bags 10:10:20 and 1 bag CAN at sowing
 - ▶ Use a ring roller to give a firm seedbed when complete.
- ▶ Most low stocked farms should be using no Nitrogen, except for silage, but rely on clover.
- ▶ And others, based on Clonakilty work should move towards, as follows:
 - ▶ The inclusion of clover in a grass sward can lead to savings in N and 48 kgs MS/cow
 - ▶ May is an ideal month to stitch-in clover to existing swards but they must be open or after a heavy cut of silage – sow seed less than 1cm deep.
- ▶ The seeding rate is 5 Kgs per hectare or 2 kgs per acre of pelleted clover.
- ▶ This is spread with 2.5 bags per hectare or 1 bag per acre of 0:7:30.
- ▶ The following is a simple and effective way of introducing clover into a grass sward.
- ▶ Put half the fertiliser and half the seed into the spreader in the field.
- ▶ Spread the fertiliser and seed up and down the field.
- ▶ When finished the first run, put the remainder of the fertiliser and seed in the spreader as before.
- ▶ Start the second run at the opposite end of the field to where you previously started the first run.
- ▶ Spread the fertiliser and seed back and forth across the field. Ideally ending the second run where you had started the first run.
- ▶ It might be better to attempt no more than around 2.5 hectares at a time because of the risk of seed sorting out of the fertiliser in the hopper.
- ▶ Watery slurry can be applied after sowing.
- ▶ Apply no fertiliser N for the remainder of the year.
- ▶ Graze in July and August – at pasture covers of around 1,000 to 1100 Kg DM per hectare.

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REMINDERS:

- ▶ Tetany is still a big risk - keep using Magnesium.
- ▶ Use iodine in the water if iodine problem confirmed in region:
 - ▶ Put 1.2mls tincture iodine(5%) per cow per day in the water trough,
 - ▶ Or, 80 mg potassium iodide/cow/day.
- ▶ Keep a check on your May peak milk as an indicator of what the cows will yield for the year. Peak yield in kgs MS (milk solids) per cow per day multiplied by 230 (the target is 250) gives us the annual yield.
 - ▶ If your SCC level (Bulk Tank) is over 150,000 you have a problem.
 - ▶ Use all the information available to analyse the problem and arrive at a solution.
 - ▶ We are less than 2 years away from not having any antibiotics available to cure mastitis.
 - ▶ It is worth noting that the average SCC among Co-ops in 2019 was 176,000 – a serious concern as we prepare for an era with reduced antibiotics.
- ▶ Treat lame cows promptly so that it does not cause reduced fertility, increased SCC levels and loss of milk.

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Komatsu launches new compact wheel loader

Ireland's compact-class wheel loader segment has a new challenger in the form of Komatsu's WA80M-8 model, sales of which have commenced here. Pitched at farmers, agricultural and landscape contractors, bulk material providers and waste processors, the WA80M-8 is described by its distributor, John O'Brien, director of McHale Plant Sales as a 'reliable and versatile' all-rounder.

Like its larger siblings, the wheel loader is an item of plant that has been quietly making its way from the quarry to the farmyard. Brother to the larger WA100M-8 version, the new WA80M model is a 6-tonne unit powered by a 72hp EU Stage V engine with a new, increased 40 km/h over-the-ground speed and a variable 'creep speed' option of up to 10km/h. Fully automatic hydrostatic transmission delivers power to all four wheels.

Compact dimensions, excellent visibility and a 1.25 cubic metres bucket capacity are amongst the features that help make this latest Komatsu compact what McHale Plant Sales says is 'everyone's favourite little farmyard helper'.

Powerful, flexible and versatile

Its other attributes include low fuel consumption, high



rim pull, superior breakout power, high lifting and dumping height, and sufficient reserves for even the most difficult ground conditions. In addition, operators can rely on Easy Fork kinematics when transporting loads – with pallet forks running parallel to the ground and without the need to readjust fork tines.

Reduced Operating Costs

Cleaning intervals of up to 6,000hrs duration ensures the DPF remains maintenance-free for up to 10 years. Its easy-to-fill bucket boosts productivity whilst helping to reduce fuel consumption. Equipped with Komatsu's own KOMTRAX system, it uses wireless technology that provides maintenance alerts and facilitates remote



monitoring to protect against theft, record operating hours and fuel consumption.

Comfort & Safety

Its low centre of gravity adds to its stability and operational safety while its new engine hood and compact dimensions help provide exceptional all-round visibility. In-cab features include a multifunctional large widescreen, high-resolution colour monitor and improved ergonomic controls with a PPC multi-function lever for easy operating. Optional air conditioner and electronic controlled suspension system (ECSS) add to comfort.

Easy Maintenance

A tilting cab, wide-opening engine hood and easy-to-clean wide core radiator combine to make maintenance, service and daily inspections easy and quick to perform.



Crops and COVID

Well readers, as I write this column we are still in 'lockdown' and, like many of you I am sure, I have had a chance revisit some old books that I haven't read in many years. One gem I found while clearing out my home office is a book by Colm Flynn - a well known farmer from Athy, Co. Kildare, written in 2009, called A Tie To The Land. This is possibly one of the best books I have ever read when it comes to life on the farm: inventions, farming practices, the growth of alternative crops and the establishment of farm organizations, as well as the birth of the National Ploughing Association. It is a look through the Flynn family's eyes on all things farming and how the county of Kildare and its surroundings contributed to the growth and expansion of agriculture over the last century.

One story that caught my attention was the growing of tobacco in Offaly, Wexford and Kildare back in the earlier thirties. They even had a tobacco handling station in Kilkea. One ton of tobacco was worth £800 at the time and was yielding €100 per acre back in 1937. That was some revenue stream back then. It was a labour intensive crop but there was plenty of labour around to do the job.

The old mantra was "the crop has to be saved at all costs". That is no different to the present day, which brings me on to the debate about migrant fruit pickers. Surely there is sufficient labour available in Ireland to do the job and pick the crops during a global pandemic? It is my opinion that the Government should put in place a plan and an incentive package to enable people who are currently unemployed to do the seasonal work at a fair rate. We have to save our crops and keep the food on the tables.

Now, I am not going to dwell this month on the current state of play in all the key areas of agriculture as it would make for dim reading; we have enough of bad news doing the rounds. The fine weather is very welcome but there are a lot of fields crying out for a drop of rain. Winter barley is performing well with a bit of mildew, rhyngo and yellow rust being reported, but nothing major. Winter wheat is something similar with growth rates around the country being at different stages.

With the pubs being closed I would say this year will see more malting barley going in to the distilling process. The grain markets are turbulent at the moment and growers should look now at opportunity to lock in prices and forward sell grain; I think this would be a safer bet this year. On the machinery front it is time to start giving the mowers, balers, tedders and rakes the once over. And, believe it or not, it is time to pull out the combines and check them over as parts supplies could be slowed up owing to COVID-19 across Europe.

Wheel loader sales are up 50 per cent year on year with a total of 45 units sold this year.

Austria manufacturers Goweil has appointed Cooney Furlong Machinery as the sole Irish importer for their range of balers and equipment.

As we are almost finished with sowing, the busy silage season is only a matter of weeks away so stay supporting your local dealers and stay safe.

Until next month, farm wisely and farm safely.

Amazone FT 1502 front tank for UF 1602 and UF 2002



The FT 1001 front tank has been a favourite from Amazone for several years. Now the choice of front tank has been extended with the introduction of the new FT 1502 to the range. The FT 1502 front tank used in conjunction with the UF 02 gives an increase of 1500l to the tank capacity. The option

FlowControl+ and its compact design make the front tank the ideal extension for a mounted sprayer.

This compact combination is manoeuvrable on its own transport wheels making it easy to store. Its easy handling is proven with increased manoeuvrability in small or awkward shaped fields and when in transport, particularly on narrow country lanes. The ample 350l clean water tank on the UF 02 facilitates the thorough cleaning of the complete sprayer combination.

Another special feature of the FT 1502 is the 100 per cent integration of the front tank into the rear sprayer using the FlowControl+ electronic fill level management via an ISOBUS terminal. The technology behind the FlowControl+ is two electronic fill level sensors in the front and the rear tanks and two high-performance venturis. These venturis are powered by an additional 150 l/min pump mounted on the UF. The transfer rate in each direction is up to 200 l/min. Liquid is continuously transferred between the front and rear tanks ensuring that the spray agent is always optimally mixed. The ISOBUS terminal automatically controls the liquid levels, so that the weight distribution is always kept at the optimum. Any premature reduction of the load on the front axle is prevented and, furthermore, FlowControl+ ensures that both tanks are automatically fully filled during the filling process and emptied during the spraying process. Both tanks are cleaned out at the end.

Manual control also makes it possible to switch off the FlowControl+ automatic function and so use the front tank only for transporting additional rinsing water or usable water for subsequent spraying. The FlowControl+ pump provides additional practical support during the filling process of the UF 02, so that a maximum fill speed of up to 400 l/min is possible with the overall combination. The MX wagon also "has a cam-less pickup which is another huge improvement on these machines, for anyone who has been used to pickups they'll know the cam track in machines tends to wear out over the years and can cause a problem but with this cam-less pickup it is trouble free, its built strongly and is another huge advantage of this machine."

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Hi-Spec introduce new Trailing Shoe

Hi-Spec Engineering has introduced their own design of trailing shoe to complement their vacuum tanker range. The Hi-Spec trailing shoe is available in working widths of 6.0, 7.5 and 9.0 metres. The Hi-Spec trailing shoe features a robust chassis mounted mast. This chassis mounted mast ensures that the tanker and shoe are perfectly balanced and that the shoe is properly supported to the tanker.

The axle is also moved rearwards to support the trailing shoe weight. The Hi-Spec trailing shoe features a number of unique features. The 7.5m and 9.0m trailing shoes feature double folding to reduce the overall height for transportation. This double folding ensures that the trailing shoe will not exceed the height of a standard Hi-Spec

2600 tanker. There is also the ability to use both fill points and splashplate at the rear without any modifications.

The 9.0m trailing shoe also features a unique hydraulic self-levelling system, whereby each arm of the trailing shoe will lift as it passes over a side incline. This ensures that the shoe continues to work perfectly over the incline without excess pressure being applied to the outer boots. The Hi-Spec trailing shoe features hardened trailing shoes that gently part the grass sideways and allows the slurry to be placed onto the ground via a specialised rubber boot. The grass covering will then prevent valuable nutrients from escaping and the placement of the slurry to the roots ensures a reduced grazing turn-around. The Hi-Spec trailing shoe can also be used as a dribble bar if needed without any contact with the ground. Hi-Spec are using the Vogelsang Exacut as a distributor to distribute the slurry evenly to the hoses. A unique stonetrap on the rear of the shoe allows the tanker to be filled tanker manually, or use the splashplate by just changing a spool at the rear of the tractor. The Hi-Spec trailing shoe is galvanised as standard and features an independent LED lighting bar for safe travel on the road between farm and field.





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By Tom Murphy,
Professional Agricultural Contractors of
Ireland

Along with Michael Sheehan, Chairman of PAC Ireland we send good wishes to everyone in the family of agriculture. Thank you for the role you all play in helping keep Ireland fed during the COVID-19 pandemic and we hope that you and your families stay safe and well.

In my opinion the COVID-19 pandemic will change the way countries throughout the world source their food. So many countries that have in the past relied heavily on imported foods will strive, in the future, to be more self sufficient. One of Ireland's biggest markets is the UK, coming in at around €5 billion in exports of food and drink. You may have heard French President Emmanuel Macron threatening to disrupt imports into the UK by closing French ports used to route imports into the UK. That will not be overlooked by the

powers that be in the UK. After World War 2, when food importation was disrupted because merchant ships were targeted and sunk, UK policy directed all its efforts into achieving self sufficiency, which it did with great success. This all changed when the UK joined the European Economic Community (now the European Union) and their food imports have steadily risen to about 60 per cent, even higher if ingredients imported for food processing are included. In this area - our reliance on food imports - Ireland is also vulnerable and this becomes a serious issue at times of crisis such as we are experiencing with COVID-19. The question is: will we learn any lessons for the future in terms of food security? Will the Government and its advisors reassess their strategy and give more support to the farming sector to ensure a higher degree of self sufficiency for the future? On a lighter note, despite the awful news we see on the television, I get a raft of WHATSAPP messages everyday depicting the great Irish humour and character that can lift our spirits in the face of adversity: some I can share, but others, definitely not! But it is great to stay in touch and keep spirits up. To all our agri contractors and farmers, 'thank you' for keeping the wheels of agriculture going. Stay safe and well.

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Fleming Agri offer 2 models of silage trailers- the TR12 and TR14, designed in Northern Ireland and well proven to handle even the heaviest of loads, with an impressive 5mm floor. The chassis and body are manufactured from high tensile steel plate and hollow section to reduce the weight for better towing in wet conditions without compromising on the strength of the trailers. The TR12 and TR14 have a uniquely designed sprung drawbar, working with the multi leaf spring

suspension to give smoother towing. The tapered body and twin heavy-duty tipping rams ensure a fast and clean unload, reducing your time in the pit. Fitted with a front viewing window as standard, allowing the operator to keep track of the load. The silage extension sides and rear door are galvanized as standard for durability. The TR14 comes with a commercial axle as standard. Both models come with 550/45/22.5 wheels are standard, but other options are available. The TR12 and TR14 come with a range of options including grain chutes and hydraulic back doors, making them the ideal multi-purpose trailer. To discuss the options and models please speak to your local Fleming rep who work with you to spec the trailer to meet your needs.

Fleming Agri offer a range of tipping trailers starting at 1.5T capacity, so regardless of the job you have to do, we have the trailer for the job. For moving bales this summer, Fleming Agri offer a range of bale trailers with hydraulic braked axles, rope boxes and rear lights as standard.

Fleming Agri also now offer the heavy duty TR10HD 10T dump trailer to appeal to a wide range of users including farmers, landscapers and civil engineers. Our dump trailers are designed with multi leaf suspension, twin tipping rams for fast and clean unload and hydraulic back door with drop down door for digger loading as standard.

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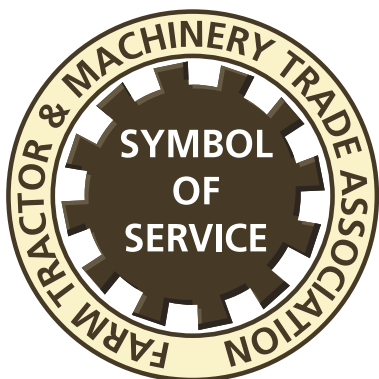
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Farm machinery industry adjusts to the new normal



At the time of writing, it is coming to the end of the third week of the "stay at home" measures announced by An Taoiseach on March 27th and the farm machinery industry, in common with the rest of the country, has had to come to terms with a new reality. Under the continuing restrictions (at time of print) the retail and distribution aspects of the farm machinery trade are allowed to operate as essential services in relation to the supply of parts, service / repairs and installation / delivery of machines in support of our farming customers who are also designated as an essential service. The Irish agricultural machinery manufacturing sector is also allowed to continue to operate as an essential service.

The best way to describe the current operation of the farm machinery sector might be that the business is open but the gates are closed. While all aspects of the business are operational this has to be done within the parameters of physical distancing and public health guidelines that currently exist. While this may make things more difficult than we would like; it is important to remember that the situation we find ourselves is first and foremost a health emergency and strict compliance with the required measures will help to protect our individual health as well as contributing to the wellbeing of the entire country.

As we approach silage season it is understandable that customers may have concerns in relation to parts and service. Rest assured that the agricultural machinery supply chain is functioning and that FTMTA member firms are able to meet your needs.

FTMTA advocate that, where possible, customers should place parts orders by phone or online. In the situation where the customer is not sure what exact part is required that can be dealt with at the counter by arrangement and within the social distancing and hygiene framework. Deliver of parts by courier is an option but collection by the customer is also possible but must be handled within physical distancing with the customer given a time to call.

Service / repair can continue but under distancing requirements. Where service work is to be carried out on farm, the technician should be allowed to work on his own and will contact the customer by phone if needed. Machines being left in for service in workshops will have to be handed over in the yard with distancing and sanitising measures in place; the return must be handled in the same fashion.

Like everything we are dealing with at this time, the operation

of a farm machinery business is now very different but the important thing is that the sector is operating and can support our farming and contracting customers at a busy time. Farming must and will go on and hopefully the public will have a rediscovered sense of respect for local food production after this.

March New Tractor Registrations

The most recent registration figures reported by the Farm Tractor & Machinery Trade Association in relation to registrations of tractors and other types of self-propelled machinery cover the period to end of March. Perhaps unexpectedly, given the ongoing crisis and associated restrictions, March registrations were only down 2 units on the corresponding month of 2019. The month saw 238 new tractors registered bringing the total for the first quarter to 896 units which is exactly the same level as at the end of March 2019. In reality, retail activity at farm machinery dealerships was continuing relatively normally, albeit with precautions in place, until the restrictions announced on Friday, March 27th and the wider situation is unlikely to have had much of a bearing on March registrations of tractors.

Cork, Wexford and Tipperary were the three counties with the highest level of registrations in the first quarter with 133, 63 and 60 units registered respectively. These three counties between them accounted for nearly 29% of all registrations during the period under review with Cork representing some 15% of registrations on its own. Over 90% of registrations were of machines with more than 100hp and 59% were of machines with more than 120hp.

Teleporter registrations possibly saw more of an impact from the wider situation with registrations for March dropping by nearly 50% year on year to 28 units which brought the total for the first quarter to 189 units, a drop of 12.50% on 2019. It is likely that a reduced level of activity in the construction sector later in the month is manifested in these reduced numbers. Wheeled loader registrations dropped by 2 units in March, as against the same month last year, to record 8 units registered. Despite this drop, such machines have seen total registrations in the first quarter increase by 50% on last year to 45 units. Backhoe loaders, after weak registration levels in January and February, enjoyed a good month with 9 units registered in March, up from 1 unit last year, which brought the total for the first quarter to 19 units, down from 24 in 2019.

FTMTA Council

Mr. Jimmy Butler has, in recent weeks, decided to resign as FTMTA President and also as a member of the FTMTA Executive Council.

In his letter of resignation, Jimmy expressed his best wishes to the Association and his thanks to all involved in the FTMTA for their support during his time as President which commenced in January of 2019. Jimmy has served on the FTMTA Executive Council since mid 2012 and the FTMTA thank him for his contribution to the Association over that time.

Following the resignation of Jimmy Butler as President of the Association, it will be necessary for the FTMTA Executive Council to elect a new President from among their number in due course.

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McHale Orbital Bale Wrapper



The McHale Orbital High Speed Round Bale Wrapper is the latest addition to the McHale bale wrapper range. McHale have harnessed the proven vertical wrapping ring technology used in the McHale Fusion to deliver a high output bale wrapper which is capable of keeping up with multiple balers. This wrapper also offers farmers and contractors a high speed wrapping solution which delivers consistent and even overlap and achieves optimum levels of fodder preservation and quality when wrapping bales of fodder from 3 foot 3 inches or 1 metre up to 4 foot 8 or 1.45 metres. Once the operator drives into the bale, the lift arm can

automatically lift the bale onto the machine. The McHale Orbital Bale Wrapper is a unique machine which uses two McHale proven patents; McHale patented high speed transfer system As the lift arm moves the bale towards the wrapping ring, the wrapping roller closest to the tractor pivots out of the way which reduces the height the bale has to travel to get to the wrapper. This movement allows the bale to move from the ground to the wrapping platform in a smooth quick manner which is stress free on the machine. This clever system saves time, as the patented system moves the bale quickly, ensuring the McHale Orbital Bale Wrapper delivers the highest output possible. McHale patented tip roller Through the use of the patented tip roller the McHale Orbital Bale Wrapper can wrap bales from 1 metre up to 1.45 metres with ease. The patented tip roller adjusts its height in line with bale size to ensure that the wrapping

ring always applies the plastic to the centre of the bale, regardless of the bale diameter. This ensures the correct overlap is always achieved. Once the bale is loaded onto the bale wrapper, the high-speed vertical wrapping ring can apply four layers of film to a 1.25 metre bale in approximately 18 seconds or six layers of film in less than 25 seconds. This high speed wrapping performance is delivered by two 750mm dispensers. This wrapping system ensures an even overlap of film even if the machine is working on difficult or bumpy terrain. Commenting, John Biggins, McHale International Sales Manager says: "We have a number of machines already at work around the factory and both farmers and contractors are very happy with them. The Orbital Bale Wrapper provides an unrivalled high speed wrapping solution through the use of the vertical wrapping ring. By harnessing proven Fusion technology the McHale Orbital offers high speed wrapping with low running costs."

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McHale Pro Glide Mower Range



McHale now offers farmers and contractors a combination mower, the Pro Glide B9000, which has a cutting width of 6 metres. The McHale Pro Glide B9000 Combination Mower comes with an optional Hydraulic Width Adjustment. The operator can hydraulically adjust the width position of the rear mowers to eliminate striping on slopes and curves. The hydraulic rams integrated into the mower beams shift the cutter bars sideways either together or independently to allow for up to 400mm overlap on each mower.

James Heanue, Irish Sales Manager for McHale, explains: "To maximise the feed value of forage it is important that grass

crops are cut when the sugar content is highest, and that the mower leaves clean crop stubble and produces quality forage free from impurities. Our design team combined their specialist knowledge of crop harvesting, energy and know-how to develop the McHale Pro Glide range of mowers. I feel these products offer a number of unique features which will deliver better ground following ability and better cut quality."

All Mowers are fitted with 3-metre cutter bars with tine conditioners and benefit from a number of novel features which result in better ground following ability and quicker reaction times to changes in ground conditions.

The McHale Pro Glide combination mower is equipped with a number of common features as standard such as unique patented ground following technology, break-back protection, hydraulic ground pressure control and heavy duty bed design which make the Pro Glide a smart choice for farmers and contractors alike.

For transportation, the McHale Pro Glide B9000 folds vertically to position itself behind the centre point of the tractor for safe transport. The transport height of the machine is reduced thanks to the vertical positioning of the mower bed in transport to measure at a height of 4 metres.

This position allows for the centre of gravity to be close to the tractor which ensures even weight distribution and stability during transport at high speeds on the road or in uneven fields while also providing the driver with a clear view from his rear-view mirrors.



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Pat McCormack
President, ICMSA



Where we are now and where do we need to get to?

There's an old joke about tourists getting lost and stopping to ask for a local man directions. They explain where they want to go and, having considered that, the local replies: "If I was you, I wouldn't start from here at all". Well, nobody really wants to be where we are. Everybody wants to get going towards a more acceptable destination and situation. The question is what route we take and what speed we go. That's the first point to make. The second point is that I believe – and hope – that as our markets re-open and that the food services restart; that we will see a smooth gearing-up of our sectors and exports that must feed back to our prices in beef and milk. There's been a lot of comparison with the 2008/9 economic crash that I'm not entirely sure is accurate: that crash was systemic – the flaw was within the economic system – this crash was external: it was the pandemic's massive impact on what had been considered strong economic fundamentals. As soon as the scale of the challenge was known and the Government asked for solidarity then I naturally offered it on your behalf. I am proud of the role that farmers have played in keeping the food-supply going into our shops and the reassurance offered everybody who might otherwise have panicked. As usual, when Ireland called, Irish farmers answered. It does gall me to see, however, March milk price cut by 2cpl when the retailers are busier than ever and receiving plaudits for keeping their shelves stocked and their doors open. Not too many words of thanks for the farmers who supplied the milk and beef and vegetables and pork and cheese that was going to stock the shelves and the fridges. But we're used to that and we'll get over it. What we're not going to get over, and what we won't allow anyone else to get over, is the undeniable and very harsh lesson that COVID-19 has provided us on the absolute need for food security. The delusion that top quality food somehow 'magically appears' on supermarket shelves and that it always will, no matter what, has been dispelled

for a generation. People know now that we have to have an indigenous farming and food production that can keep the food coming and one that isn't reliant on a global food distribution network that is unbelievably sophisticated but unbelievably fragile as well. I hope and trust everyone has learned that the very definition of 'an essential service' is the one that keeps the food coming to the population. If anyone forgets that then I promise to remind them. At the time of writing, please God, it looks as if we're moving towards a phased re-opening and restarting society and the economy. After some pathetic foot-dragging, the EU looks like it's ready to deploy some policy tools and a frankly derisory budget in support of its farmers and primary food producers. So far it's fair to say that the EU has not covered itself in glory in terms of its response to the challenge – and that is putting it at the mildest. We'll be expecting funds to be made available at zero interest and on the kind of terms and conditions commensurate with the problem and the positive role that farmers played – and are still playing – in helping the general population through what has been the worst trauma in Europe since the War. ICMSA will look at what's available and we will offer advice and encouragement to our Government to secure for farm families as much aid as they can. And that brings me to the question of Government. At the time of writing, there seems a distinct possibility of a FF-FG coalition with third element to be comprised of a smaller party. It is reported that one of the key principles under consideration by such a coalition would be enacting a recommendation made in the Kenny Report where land that the state wants for housing could be purchased by CPO and that the price paid by the state would be agricultural value plus a derisory 'top-up' of 25 per cent. On your behalf, I have gone public and into the media with the response that in the event of this unjust and unfair proposal being acted upon that ICMSA practically guarantees legal challenges. I pointed out that quite aside from the possibly unconstitutional nature of the proposal that it seemed to presume that only the landowner was to have their margin fixed by legislation in the supply of housing to the public. Not the builder. Not the subcontractor. Not the auctioneer. Not the solicitor. They could all charge the 'market rate'. Everyone except the landowner – the farmer, in other words. We're not having that. We've been subsidising the food supply-chain for decades. We're not going to start subsidising the housing supply chain.

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Watch for Warning Signs of Animal Aggressiveness

Ciaran Roche, FBD Risk Manager, discusses the risks of livestock accidents on farm



Sadly over the last 10 years 39 people have been killed in livestock accidents on Irish farms. Accidents involving livestock account for 42% of all on-farm accidents. While most serious and fatal accidents are associated with handling cows at calving and handling of bulls; a significant amount of accidents occur during routine tasks such as herding, loading, drenching, vaccinating and testing. Beef cattle or animals in suckler herds are often flighty and easily agitated due to the fact that they are not handled on a regular basis and sometimes due to their genetics. Farmers should use bulls and cows that produce docile offspring. Cattle are more likely to cause injury when they are in a highly agitated, protective or stressed state. With this in mind particular care and caution needs to be taken during periods such as a calving, testing and loading.

Cattle Handlers

Cattle handlers should be experienced, competent, and sufficiently agile for the class of livestock being handled. Good stockmanship skills will ensure that stress to cattle is minimised, that they are handled safely and this in turn will reduce the risk of injury to the handler. The demeanour of cattle usually gives a hint as to their state of agitation, because of this it is essential that you watch out for danger signs such as an aggressive/agitated head or tail positions, bellowing and pawing the ground. Additionally it should be ensured that there is enough people at hand to carry out the task safely.

Facilities

Well-designed handling facilities are essential for safe handling of cattle. Facilities should include securely fenced fields, good holding pens, suitable cattle crush, sculling gate, calving facilities and bull handling facilities. Good calving facilities will include a calving gate and head restraint for the cow. A well-designed bull pen is

essential for managing a bull when it is away from the herd. The design should allow the stockman to feed and bed the bull without entering the pen. Not only will good facilities make the job safer but it will also make it easier to carry out the work in a more efficient manner. If cattle are located on an out-farm, strongly consider investing in cattle handling facilities for that location.

Cows at Calving

All cows with calf will be protective and potentially dangerous. Always use a calving gate when calving and be careful around cows and heifers with new born calves. It is essential for the farmer to establish an adequate physical barrier between themselves and the cow and never turn their back on a cow following calving.

Bulls

All bulls are dangerous, even the 'quiet' ones. Farmers should not delay in culling aggressive bulls as they pose an immediate and significant threat.

Always treat your bull well, from an early age the bull should learn to associate the presence of people with pleasant things such as feeding, grooming and exercise. It is recommended that all bulls should be ringed when 10 months old. A ring and chain that touches the ground should be fitted to the stock bull when he is out in the field. It is important that you exercise great caution if you need to enter the field with the bull and that you use a tractor or suitable farm vehicle as a mobile sanctuary from the bull.

Golden Rules when Handling Livestock

- ▶ Be always vigilant and aware of the risks.
- ▶ Watch for warning signs of animal aggressiveness, especially in bulls and newly calved cows.
- ▶ Cull fractious and difficult bulls or cows as soon as possible.
- ▶ Always use safe handling facilities.
- ▶ Always have an escape route for emergency situations while working with animals.
- ▶ Disbud calves early to prevent horn growth.

Always think Safety First!



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Helping rural communities face COVID-19 challenge

Leading farming and agri organisations are implementing support initiatives for communities across the country to help them stay positive and deal with the unprecedented challenges presented by COVID-19.

IFA is one of the partner organisations of the Community Call plan being implemented in each local authority area to ensure that all vulnerable members in communities around the country are appropriately supported during the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative is designed to provide support, particularly for those who are ‘cocooning’. Rural Affairs Chairman Paul O’Brien explained: “Each local authority has introduced a dedicated support helpline. Our 29 county executives, 940 branches and 70,000 members are in every parish in the country. We are working with the other partners in this initiative to ensure that anyone who needs help gets it. The IFA’s county and branch network is also keeping in close contact with its members to try to ensure they don’t feel alone at this time.” Paul O’Brien also reminds farmers to ensure they have completed their ‘Plan B’ document, which they can use to arrange for help with the running of the farm, if they have to self-isolate or fall ill because of COVID-19. The ‘Plan B’ document is available to download from IFA’s COVID-19 web hub on ifa.ie/COVID19, which provides information on:

- ▶ Government unemployment and illness schemes;
- ▶ health and safety;
- ▶ banking and taxation;
- ▶ issues posed by restrictions; and,
- ▶ issues relating to farms with employees.

And he encourages all farm families to continue to support the national effort to tackle the pandemic and to keep connected by phone and online with IFA and their wider community.

Macra stays connected

Macra na Feirme is also well-placed to play a positive role in the current challenging circumstances, according to National President Thomas Duffy: “Our organisation is creative enough to adapt rather quickly in this time of crisis. We’ve seen individual clubs and counties engage in charitable endeavours, while the national organisation has found ways to maintain a connection to our members through social media and to continue to provide a service to our members that is needed now more than ever. I’m proud to say that our clubs and counties have been supporting the national effort to fight COVID-19 through following HSE advice.”

At national level, the organisation has launched a series of videos on Facebook and Instagram, called My Farm, Our Food. The idea for these videos came from Macra’s Ag Affairs Committee. Macra says the series aims to highlight the link between food eaten at tables across Ireland and the country’s producers and young farmers who are doing a brilliant job at being environmentally sustainable and producing food that is fully traceable every day. The video series covers the dairy, beef, tillage and many other sectors. The first in the series features Macra’s Young Farmer of the Year 2019, Liam Hanrahan, a dairy farmer from Co. Clare.

To protect its members and reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, Macra na Feirme has suspended all competitions, face-to-face meetings, events and international travel until further notice. Macra na Feirme National Office staff have been advised to work from home until further notice but staff can be reached by email and, where possible, on their mobiles. In regard to club and county activity, instructions have been given to members to suspend all meetings and make use of technology to ensure social distance.

Nonetheless, the organisation has been able to continue to whet the competitive appetite of members, testing their

Farmers availing of ICMSA Sellers List

Hundreds of farmers are availing of the Sellers List that ICMSA sends to live exporters. Commenting, Des Morrison, Chairperson of the ICMSA Livestock Committee, says "We are happy to report that we're continuing to see how a little bit of determination and flexibility can circumvent even something as brutal as the current Covid-19-related restrictions on selling cattle. In the absence of marts ICMSA has collaborated with the Live Exporters Association to connect farmers with exporters. Each week we create a list of the stock that farmers have for sale and send it to the Live Exporters Association and livestock purchasers. This list is distributed to their members and agents can then contact farmers directly to purchase cattle. Several hundred farmers have availed of the service and to date a significant number of cattle have been sold from the list. We are just filling a gap by putting sellers in touch with buyers and doing our best to facilitate trade during these very uncertain times. If farmers think they'd like to avail of the service then they can contact our Dr Aine O'Connell at 087-3109979 and we'll get them up on the list."

general knowledge via a nationwide online quiz streamed on Facebook, which came to a conclusion recently. The overall winner was Adam Burke from Enfield Macra, Meath.

Farmer helpline from Teagasc

Teagasc has set up a telephone helpline to assist farmers with queries in relation to the current COVID-19 challenge. The Teagasc telephone helpline was set up to provide a point of contact in Teagasc for COVID-19 related queries from farmers and the public generally. It was announced by Professor Tom Kelly, Teagasc Director of Knowledge Transfer: "Teagasc have put in place a dedicated helpline for farmers to get advice on the range of issues that they may face as they continue to do their essential work in maintaining the food supply chain. This helpline is open to all farmers for a range of farming issues they face on a day-to-day basis."

The information line phone number is +353 76 1113533 and will be open from 9.30am to 12.30pm and from 2pm to 5pm Monday to Friday.

The helpline has been receiving a wide range of questions, according to Eric Donald, Head of Corporate Communications at Teagasc: "Calls have included queries about income support measures, exemptions from lock down regarding essential building works, movement of livestock, travelling to herd stock, selling cattle and how marts operate, how contractors will operate with silage, dealing with cattle that can't be sold and the considerations relating to age and weight of the animals, burning scrub, compensation packages for cattle and questions about the Basic Payment Scheme."

The Teagasc website, www.teagasc.ie, is also a source of information on the full range of issues facing farm businesses. Teagasc said its clients should continue to use advisors' mobile and office numbers.

Look after your mental health

IFA Farm Family and Social Affairs Chair, Caroline Farrell said that the spread of the coronavirus and restrictions it has imposed and, potentially will impose, is a worry for many farm families. "It is understandable to feel vulnerable or overwhelmed reading or hearing the news, we are in uncharted waters," said Mrs. Farrell. She recommended that if people feel overwhelmed, they should limit their time on social media or listening to the news, and instead go for a walk or just step outside their back door and take a breath. "Even though it might be difficult right now it is important to look after your mental health. Talking through your worries with someone can help lessen the worry or anxiety," she said. "We are all in this together so make the most of your local IFA network to stay in touch and support other farm families in your community." She stressed the importance of keeping a realistic perspective on the situation, based on the facts. "Only use trustworthy and reliable sources of news to get updates on the coronavirus, there is a lot of misinformation out there that is adding to people's anxiety," she said. If you need to talk to someone right now, you can free-call the Samaritans on 116 123. For more information on looking after your mental health, go to www.yourmentalhealth.ie or check out the mental health section on the IFA website.

Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond our control, we are unable to run our books and crossword competition pages that regularly feature in Irish Farmers Monthly. We will be publishing them again as soon as is possible. Please note, our winners for the books competition last month were: John O'Meara, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary; Christina O'Connell, Co. Limerick; Pat Harrington, Co. Cork; Jean Leahy, Cobh, Co. Cork; Bernie Coyle, Naul, Co. Dublin; Michael Shanahan, Bandon, Co. Cork; Molly O'Reilly, Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork; Cathal O'Connor, Cork; Una Quigley, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary



The COVID-19 support checklist

David Leydon, Head of Food and Agribusiness at IFAC, offers a checklist for businesses that are looking for support right now.

Recently, we have had conversations with many business owners who are very challenged by the current circumstances. The speed at which businesses need to adapt to the changed circumstances is causing significant strain. Many have mentioned to us that they're not sure if they are taking advantage of all the supports the State and banks have made available

so along with my colleagues, on our banking and tax teams, we've developed a checklist which you as the CEO or business owner should go through in detail with your team. Some of the supports will apply to you, others will not, but either way this list will help to ensure you are not missing opportunities for help during COVID-19.

Covid-19 Supports: a checklist for Boards/ Owner managers / CEOs / Financial Controllers

Working Capital

Have you applied for the SBCI Covid-19 Working Capital Loan Scheme?

Yes In Progress No Not applicable

Have you availed of the SBCI Credit Guarantee Scheme?

Yes In Progress No Not applicable

Have you applied for a Microfinance Ireland loan (up to €50,000)?

Yes In Progress No Not applicable

Banking

Are you communicating with your bankers?

Yes No, but need to Not applicable

Have you applied for a payment break on your business loans?

Yes No, but need to Not applicable

Have you sought overdraft extension?

Yes No, but need to Not applicable

Have you sought emergency working capital facilities?

Yes No, but need to Not applicable

Employees

Have you applied and accessed the Temporary Covid-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme?

Yes No Not applicable

Have you documentation in place to support your application to avail of this Scheme?

Yes No Not applicable

Are you accessing the Covid-19 Illness Benefit Scheme for employees who have contracted the virus and are self-isolating for 2 weeks (value €350)?

Yes No Not applicable

Have you informed your staff of the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment Scheme if you have laid them off?

Yes No Not applicable

For Enterprise Ireland clients

Have you touched base with your DA?

Yes No

Have you secured the Covid-19 Business Financial Planning Grant of €5,000 for assistance in reviewing your financial situation?

Yes No Not applicable

COVID-19 Online Retail Scheme has been launched by Enterprise Ireland to assist client companies to get online – are you availing of this?

Yes No Not applicable

The Lean Business Continuity Voucher provides funding of up to €2,500 for training or advisory services support related to the continued operation of your business during the current pandemic – have you accessed this funding?

Yes No Not applicable

If your business is now distressed but viable are you speaking to your DA about the EI Rescue and Restructure scheme?

Yes No Not applicable

For Local Enterprise Office clients

Business Continuity Voucher is 100% funded €2,500 grant towards consultancy cost to help you develop a strategy in response to Covid-19- have you applied?

Yes No Not applicable

The Local Enterprise Office have expanded the Trading Online Voucher scheme to support 90% of costs incurred in developing a digital focus for your business – have you applied?

Yes No Not applicable

Revenue

Are you ensuring all returns are filed on time?

Yes No

Are you aware that there is no interest on VAT returns/employers returns filed on time in Jan/Feb – Mar/April?

Yes No

Have you considered a year-end change to help manage cashflow?

Yes No Not applicable

Are you aware that you can pay an employee €3.20 per day tax free for working from home?

Yes No Not applicable

Are you availing of the opportunity to give an additional €500 tax free voucher to staff members for exceptional performance during Covid-19?

Yes No Not applicable

Where there is limited or reduced business travel during Covid-19, ensure you have evidence (e.g. photo of speedometer) of mileage in January for your company car to avoid any BIK challenges?

Yes No Not applicable

Good business management

Have you developed a new cashflow forecasts and budgets to take account of the radically changed circumstances we are now operating in?

Yes Yes but could do more No

Have you reviewed your capital structure and funding needs?

Yes Yes but could do more No

Have you reviewed your debtors list and are actively following up on outstanding invoices?

Yes Yes but could do more No

Have you reviewed your short and long term creditors and put a plan in place to deal with them?

Yes Yes but could do more No

If you have any queries on any of the above including accessing supports for your business then email davidleydon@ifac.ie or call on 0879908227 for further information.



Looking for light at the end of the tunnel

Research from Australia suggests that Ivermectin, the active ingredient in many livestock wormers, could be a game-changing treatment in the efforts to combat COVID-19. The Ivermectin compound was originally developed by an Irish Nobel prize winner, William Campbell, in conjunction with his associates at Merck. Ivermectin treats parasitic infestations and previous research has suggested that it may also be able to fight off some viruses, including HIV-1 and dengue virus. Medical scientists at the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory and Monash University in Melbourne, Australia were involved in the latest research to find drugs that can counteract the worst effects of the Corona virus. The researchers behind the present study have shown, through laboratory experiments in cell cultures, that the drug may combat severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which causes COVID-19. The investigators infected human cell cultures with SARS-CoV-2 isolates, then treated them with 5 micromoles of Ivermectin and found that even a single dose could essentially remove all viral RNA in 48 hours and that even in 24 hours, there was a significant reduction in it.

While these findings seem to prove that Ivermectin can be effective under laboratory conditions, there is a need for caution as to whether it can be used safely and effectively on COVID infected patients. Significant human trialling will be needed to ensure that the levels of dose required would not have serious side-effects including toxicity from large doses. If trials deliver positive results then, because Ivermectin is affordable and readily available, it could be used as a treatment quickly. This would be especially important given the likely delayed timeline before any safe and effective vaccine against

COVID-19 will become available. Medical researchers are usually reticent to publicly declare any ongoing research as potentially ground-breaking, so the fact that the Australian researchers have gone public on their research results is quite positive that they may have found an effective treatment for COVID sufferers.

While the race is on across the world to develop an effective treatment for COVID-19, it could be well into 2021, if even then, before a vaccine is widely available. There is also the underlying potential for the current version of the virus to mutate, making vaccine development even more problematic and protracted. The research certainly sounds more positive than a suggestion from the leader of the USA that ingesting or injecting bleach or some other disinfectant could be an effective antidote to the coronavirus, which has been widely criticized for very good reason.

Irish society has been remarkably cooperative in adhering to the social isolation measures introduced to slow down infection rates, even if there is now evidence of weariness and complacency setting in. That obedience could not and will not last indefinitely. Human nature dictates that freedom of movement is an essential element of normal life. Why else would we place such significance on prison as a punishment for crime? However, the vulnerability of humankind to a viral pandemic is now proven. Both in health and economic terms we are seriously damaged. The recovery plan after our last recession included increased taxation, service cuts and general austerity. The recipe eventually delivered both full employment and a balanced budget. This time the plan seems to be to spend our way out of the economic difficulties facing us. There is a strategic contradiction there that needs to be fully explained.

IRISH FARM MACHINERY & EQUIPMENT YEARBOOK 2020

Irish Farm Machinery & Equipment is an invaluable source of information for farmers, contractors and includes data showing specification and price.

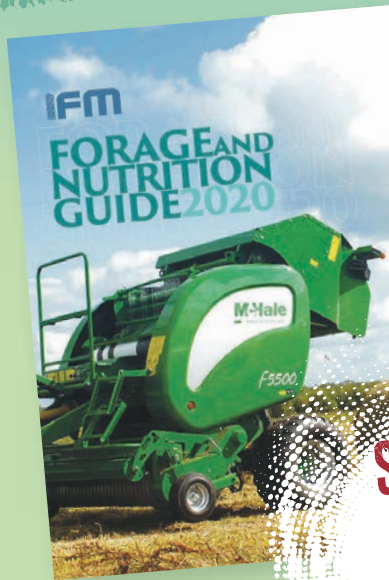
All aspects of the machinery profession including tractors, tillage, grassland, dairy and general machinery are represented. The publication also contains a handy FTMTA membership directory.

A must read for anyone seriously interested in purchasing farm machinery!



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Bovilis IBR Marker Live

BOVILIS
Protect the future

A HERD APPROACH TO IBR PROTECTION

IBR protection starts with the calf*

**3 months
of age***

Live Vaccination
Into the Muscle



IBR protection is continued with the heifer...

**9 months
of age**

Boost Live Vaccination
Into the Muscle



...and then every 12 months thereafter

**21 months
of age**

Boost Live Vaccination
Into the Muscle



Talk to your Vet about the **12 month**
vaccination protocol for **Bovilis IBR Marker Live**



2ml
shot



Injection into
the muscle or
up the nose



Pack contains 2 vials. One vial containing solvent and one vial containing powder (lyophilisate) that are mixed together and shaken well before administration



IE/BOM/0817/0004a October 2018

Bovilis IBR Marker live contains live, attenuated IBR marker vaccine BHV-1 strain GK/D (gE-).
For the active immunisation of cattle against infectious bovine rhinotracheitis virus. Withdrawal period: zero days.
Legal Category: ROI **POM(E)** NI **POM-V**.

Use Medicines Responsibly

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

*When first vaccination is given between 2 weeks and 3 months intranasally, a second vaccination should be given at 3-4 months either intranasally or intramuscularly.

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