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NOVEMBER 2021



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The Big Ask

Irish farmers have been swept along on a tidal wave of climate action. In terms of carbon use reduction on farms anything is achievable. The real question is at what cost? Now that the actual targets for Irish agriculture for the decade to 2030 are being outlined, the harsh realities of economic

cost can be calculated. The models can be segregated into three main groups – economically viable and practically achievable, economically costly if physically achievable and neither economically viable nor practically achievable. We can presume that sanity will prevail and the third scenario, resulting in serious damage to the current viable model of agricultural production will not be mandated. Neither, however, is the first option likely to a sufficient response for those who consider Irish livestock production to be an affront to the environment. Farmers can only rely on science and research as to what is achievable without inflicting serious and irreparable damage to their farm businesses. Teagasc has clearly outlined what is achievable in the medium term with current technologies. More may be achievable over time and that can be accommodated as science and research delivers novel solutions to challenges that are currently intractable.

Meanwhile, it is perfectly reasonable that food producers should expect support for their actions in reducing carbon/methane on their farms. The results will be shared by all of society and the costs should be borne by society as a whole. In only a few months our political leaders have moved from stating that there should not be limits placed on our livestock producers' herds to an acceptance that there will be a ceiling on the national herd and, therefore, ultimately, every individual herd in the country. Farmers and their leaders have been brow-beaten into accepting this as an inevitability even if the option of a unilateral Irish herd reduction makes no economic sense whatsoever. The embraced concept of EU Payments Convergence could yet be adopted for individual herd reductions with larger herds subjected to larger reductions. In any case limiting or reducing the Irish herd will not achieve the stated goal of planetary carbon reduction. The argument appears to have been lost without any rational debate taking place and if the targets set for the next five years are not met then we are well on the road to rolling reductions in our herds. That is why it will be so important in the meantime to adopt at speed all reasonable and cost-effective measures that will deliver verifiable carbon/methane reductions. In an ideal world a global reduction in livestock numbers would be worthy of discussion. Despite their ideological utterances, neither COP26 nor G20 have seen fit to examine this as a viable option, knowing full well that many of the largest livestock producing countries would not countenance such an action. For farmers it would mean an international dairy and beef deficit, resulting in higher farmgate prices, with lower reliance on subsidies and the achievement in one fell swoop of the carbon/methane reductions required of the global agri-economy. Such an agreement would be logical and practical but not at all achievable. Those who speak so authoritatively and without any understanding whatever of economic forces and realities, deny the concept of carbon leakage. Where a deficit develops other producers fill the gap in the market. That has been the case since stone-age people began trading. It will be the case should Irish farmers be forced to curb production. We are not in a doomsday scenario, but farmers will need support and time to achieve reasonable change if they are to maintain productivity and viability in the years ahead.



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Suckler beef

The recent controversial remarks on suckler versus dairy calf to beef enterprises provoked a strong response from former ICOS executive Maurice Colbert. He stated that Gerry Boyle's commentary was completely off the mark and fundamentally flawed. The debate, Maurice insisted, has missed out completely on the reality that the returns from suckling for the capital invested and the labour inputs involved are superior to dairy or dairy beef farming, with gross margins per hectare not providing the full story. Farmers, Maurice Colbert warned, urgently need more balance and considered advice from Teagasc on the economics of suckling. Statistics, he concluded, do not always provide the full picture.

Ministerial stamina



While many farmers may not have been buying the stock, Minister MacConalogue was selling in marts around the country on his CAP Consultation Tour, there was some admiration for his stamina. On one particular Thursday, the Minister started off with a local radio interview, then went into the cauldron of Tullow Mart to address a large crowd of hostile farmers for three hours. He then proceeded to Kilkenny to address more criticism of his proposals for the next iteration of the Common Agricultural Policy. Instead of pressing the pause button en-route from Tullow to Kilkenny to eat a sandwich or gather his thoughts, the Donegal man found time for another interview, live on air on the KCLR Farmshow. The three-hour Q&A in Kilkenny was chaired by Charlie MacConalogue himself, despite the best efforts of the local IFA chairman to muscle in as a co-chair. Minister MacConalogue firmly and politely if firmly, turned down the offer: "Thank you, but I organised these meetings; I have chaired all of them so far and I am going to chair this one too." Whether his recipe for the next CAP is snake oil or a charm offensive depends on how the figures for BISS and CRISS add up for individual farmers. One way or the other this Minister is no push over, however polite his demeanour.



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US climate debate gets personal

As COP 26 convenes in Scotland, with more hot air produced in twelve days than the Irish cattle herd breathes in a lifetime, we hear US President Joe Biden's climate plans stalled when West Virginian Senator Joe Manchin voted against the \$150 billion plan to pay power generators to further cut reliance on fossil fuels. Manchin's family's wealth is directly tied to coal, not to mention the fact that West Virginia is one big coal bunker with much of its economy and thousands of jobs relying on coal mining. Last year almost 100 million tonnes of coal were mined in Virginia, supplying nine-tenths of the State's electricity needs. This is where climate action gets personal, just like peat extraction dependence in Ireland's midlands region.



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Making methane mainstream

Congratulations to New Holland on winning the Sustainable Tractor Toty 2022 award in Bologna last month. The New Holland T6 Methane Power Tractor was acclaimed for its sustainability credentials by the Tractor Of The Year jury on which Ireland is represented by IFM Machinery correspondent Noel Dunne. Since 2006 when New Holland first launched its Clean Energy Leader strategy, followed by the unveiling in 2013 of the first methane fuelled T6 prototype, the company has shown a major commitment to contributing to carbon reduction. For logistical and practical reasons, it will be some time before methane-powered tractors become a common sight on Irish farms. The development of a bio-methane industry in Ireland, as advocated by Project Clover, would go a long way to making methane a fuel of choice in the Irish economy. The Big Picture would be a circular economy with methane produced from grass and manure and then used to power machinery on Irish farms.

IGA Student Photo Competition

After the success of their previous photo competition, the Irish Grassland Association has launched another one. Using the theme 'Grass through a lens', third level students engaged in any agri-food related course are invited to submit a photo/photos on the IGA social media page using the hashtag #igafbdstudent. Entrants are asked to follow the page so that they can be contacted if successful. Full competition details can also be seen on the IGA website. The first prize is €250, courtesy of FBD – money is always a great motivator for cash-strapped students! Closing date for entries is Monday 20th November 2021.

FCI Contractor Day 2021

The Association of Farm & Forestry Contractors in Ireland (FCI) has confirmed the support of FBD Insurance for its biennial Conference and Exhibition, which will take place at Gurteen Agricultural College, Ballingarry, Co Tipperary on Friday, December 3, 2021. The FCI Contractor Day 2021 theme will be 'Facing new contracting challenges' and it will be focussed on providing Irish Farm & Forestry Contractors with a one-day event that will incorporate an information seminar followed by a machinery exhibition with more than twenty-five industry specific stand-holders present.

John Hughes, National Chairman of the Association of Farm & Forestry Contractors in Ireland (FCI) highlighted the important role contractors play in the rural economy, pointing out that turnover in the agri-contractor sector accounts for €700 million, annually. Contractors he added, employ close to 10,000 people and operate more than 20,000 tractors, about one third of the national



Metabolic Diseases: Prevention Beats Cure

Maeve Regan, Head of Ruminant Nutrition

The aim for all compact calving herds is to have a calving period free from metabolic diseases. Therefore, over the next number of weeks, preventative planning must occur on farm to avoid such complications next spring, which will include selecting a high-quality dry cow mineral.

Irish Grasses/Silages Lacking Required Minerals

Most Irish grasses and silages lack the required mineral levels to get the cow through the dry period. The table below highlights that average grasses only supply a fraction of lactating cow requirements for key macro and trace elements, not accounting for the additional effects of antagonists such as excessive potassium (working against magnesium pre-calving, increasing your herd's risk of milk fever incidences), or high rates of molybdenum (working against copper, increasing the risk of deficiencies on farm).

Macro/Trace Element	Percentage of Requirement Supplied by Grass
Phosphorous	85%
Copper	73%
Iodine	52%
Zinc	50%
Selenium	38%

The True Costs Involved

When the costs associated with clinical metabolic cases are assessed (not including the time and labour costs involved), the importance of providing the cow with the correct mineral supplementation is highlighted further.

Research indicates a single case of milk fever is estimated to cost circa €312 when veterinary costs and consequential production losses are accounted for. However, more worryingly, sub-clinical cases that typically go undetected in the herd are estimated to cost > €100 and is often a more prevalent issue. Cows that do suffer from sub-clinical milk fever at calving are predicted to be three times more likely to have a retained afterbirth, eight times more likely to experience ketosis/weight loss, and eight times more likely to pick up early lactation mastitis compared to cows that do not experience sub-clinical milk fever.

Cost of Metabolic Disorders (clinical cases)	
Metabolic Disease	Estimated Cost Per Case
Milk Fever	€312
Clinical Ketosis	€190
Retained Afterbirth	€392
Displaced Abomasum	€515
Mastitis	€262
Acute Lameness	€312



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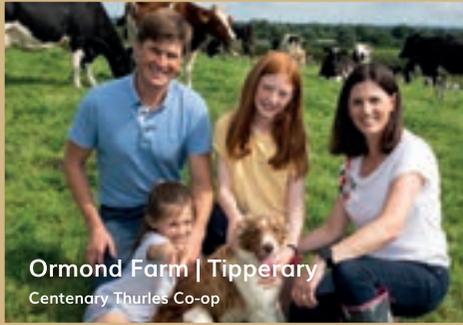
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New global forage role for Dr Mark Leggett at Volac

Leading animal nutrition and forage preservation company Volac has promoted Dr Mark Leggett to the role of Global Technical Manager for Forage. Originally joining Volac in 2014, Dr Leggett was previously a molecular biologist for the company, conducting research and development on silage production methods and the company's Ecosyl range of silage additives.

His new global role will see him continuing with research and development in a more strategic capacity, as well as taking on added responsibility providing technical support to Volac's customers as well as regional technical and sales staff. He will also support the manufacturing side of the business to ensure the company's silage additives meet strict standards, and provide training on Volac forage products.

Commenting on his new role, Dr Leggett said: "As farmers look to increase milk and meat production

re-grown forage as a way of farming more sustainably, there is a real need to make the best silage. As well as techniques such as good clamp management, the use of scientifically-proven products to reduce dry matter losses and protect silage nutritional quality will play an increasingly important role. Volac is a technically-led company. We remain committed to our goal of producing the best products, underpinned by the best research, and to ensuring our customers are supported in their journey."

Prior to joining Volac, Dr Leggett was at Cardiff University where he undertook his PhD in microbial ecology, followed by three years of post-doctoral research developing antimicrobial compounds. Commenting on Mark's new role, Volac Head of R&D and Technical, Sophie Parker-Norman, said: "Dr Leggett's knowledge base is a great asset to our global technical team and his appointment in this role will support Volac strategic aspirations to be technically leading in both product development and support."



Minister McConalogue announces supports to promote gender equality in farming

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue TD, has outlined a range of measures to support women's participation in farming as part of the new CAP Strategic Plan. The package of measures includes: an increased rate of grant aid of 60 per cent for women aged 41-55 years under Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Schemes (TAMS); women-only Knowledge Transfer (KT) Groups; and a call under the European Innovation Partnerships (EIP) initiative for proposals to examine women's participation in agriculture.

The new CAP Regulations place particular focus on promoting the participation of women in the socio-economic development of rural areas, with special attention to farming. The SWOT analysis in preparation for Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan identified gender inequality as a weakness, while the economic benefits of increasing female participation was identified as an opportunity. Minister McConalogue commented: "Gender equality is a priority for my Department, as well as being a cross-cutting objective of the forthcoming CAP. The contribution of women to agriculture is important and my Department has worked to design measures which will increase their participation in farming. Food Vision 2030, the agri-food sector's new ten-year stakeholder strategy, also supports an enhanced role for women in the sector and recommends some further actions, including a national dialogue on women in agriculture. I have asked my officials to prioritise this dialogue for next year."

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Irish consumers back dairy farmers' actions on sustainability

Findings of a research survey of over 1,500 Irish adults, published in advance of the recent European Milk Forum and Glanbia Ireland farm walk, spotlight the challenges and opportunities of a changing climate for Ireland's dairy farmers. The event showcases sustainability initiatives implemented by Kildare dairy farmer Shane O'Loughlin and was followed by a panel discussion with representatives from the European Milk Forum, Glanbia Ireland, Teagasc and Bord Bia, on how dairy farmers are responding to the challenge of climate change and meeting the evolving needs of modern consumers. Zoe Kavanagh, spokesperson for the European Milk Forum in Ireland and Chief Executive of the National Dairy Council said: "Dairy farmers the length and breadth of Ireland are working hard to produce fresh and nutritious products in a sustainable manner. They are adopting new innovations and technologies, for sustainable food production and focusing on ensuring that the land is preserved and cared for properly to leave it in a better state for the next generation. Farmers like Shane O'Loughlin are an excellent demonstration of what embedding sustainability at every step of the milk production process looks like. Consumers feel that dairy is critical to local communities, both from an economic point of view to underpin vibrant rural communities, but from a sustainable food production point of view also; farmers play a key role in creating sustainable futures, for not only our food but so too our local regions. In the context of environmental sustainability Ireland is regarded as the most carbon efficient producer of dairy in the European Union owing to our grass-based system. However, we are not resting on our laurels and are acutely conscious of our role in combatting climate change. The dairy sector is fully committed to being a major part of solutions to meet this challenge.

"It is very clear that consumers are backing Irish dairy farmers from the findings; consumers possess an awareness of the work taking place, and equally, they value the enormous contribution that Irish dairy farmers play, in terms of producing healthy and nutritious food. Seven out of 10 consumers feel that farmers produce products with "low air miles", in essence products produced locally and with very little travel time taken to get to our kitchen tables. What is also clear is the valuable, social and economic contribution dairy farmers make within their local regions. Over 87 per cent of respondents highlighted that for them dairy is both sustainable and economically important for society."

John Murphy, Glanbia Ireland Chairman, said: "Irish farmers are among the best in the world and are determined to adapt to the requirement for science-based climate action. Farm families are proud custodians of the rural environment, and Glanbia Ireland will support our farmers in addressing challenges and building on



Ireland's great natural credentials. Delivery of proposed carbon budgets will be extremely challenging; however, farmers have proven their willingness to adapt and change many times. This event showcases some of the key actions being taken to reduce carbon emissions on an increasing number of family farms.

"Government agencies, Co-ops, farmers and state agencies such as Teagasc are intent on delivering the key measures in Teagasc's climate roadmap or MACC curve as it is known. But achieving our targets and delivering on our promises will require state support in areas such as biomethane and research. As part of our Living Proof sustainability strategy, Glanbia Ireland has signed up to the Science Based Targets initiative. We are focused on reducing carbon on-farm and in our processing sites, reducing by 30 per cent the carbon associated with each litre of milk we produce and also a 30% reduction in the overall emissions from our processing sites. It's about managing our inputs as efficiently as possible. We are committed to the highest animal welfare standards and enhancing water, air quality and biodiversity. Indeed we are proud to be recipients of Gold membership of Origin Green for both 2021 and 2022. This is only being achieved because of the unique whole-hearted commitment of our farm families and employees and a clear focus on meeting customer needs."

The survey data is based on a representative sample of 1,524 Irish respondents aged 18-65 years conducted in April and May 2021 by the European Milk Forum as part of "Dairy in a Healthy and Sustainable European food system", a three-year EU-funded campaign to gain a better understanding of consumers' perceptions of sustainability, health, climate change and the challenges they pose in relation to the dairy sector. Consumer research was also carried out in Northern Ireland, Belgium, Denmark & France.

M IS FOR MORE

Kubota (UK)'s M-series tractor range continues to grow, and the arrival of the three-model M6002 series now provides even more choice for farmers.

Slotting in below the 130-170hp M7003 series and above the utilitarian 95-135hp MGX models, the increased line-up brings 122hp, 132hp and 142hp choices with the M6-122, M6-132 and M6-142 respectively.

Sophistication and power are key attributes for this lightweight tractor range, which is powered by Kubota's four-cylinder 6.1-litre turbocharged diesel engine. EU Stage V emissions compliance is met using a combination of advanced diesel particulate filter (DPF) with diesel oxidation catalyst (DOC) and selective catalytic reduction (SCR).

Like the larger M7003 models, the DPF cleaning interval for M6002 tractors is 6,000 hours, contributing to lower operating costs. Engine oil change intervals are every 500 hours.

An eight-speed powershift transmission with three robotised ranges creates a 24x24 push-button gearbox, with the option of a creeper transmission. Auto-shifting and speed matching allows operators to adjust the responsiveness of gear changes to suit load on the tractor. As a 40kph Eco transmission, maximum road speed is achieved at just 1,640rpm.



The powershift transmission also gets Kubota's Xpress Restart, brake-to-neutral function, simplifying repetitive start-stop tasks such as round baling, and loader work.

The M6002 boasts a Cat III rear linkage with a seven tonne lift capacity, while manoeuvrability comes from Kubota's portal front axle with bevel gear drive. This Bi-speed turn technology gives the M6002 an ultra-tight 4.5m turning circle.

It's been a busy 12 months for the Japanese maker, with these new M6002 models hot on the heels of the more powerful, M7003 models. The flagship M7's can include Xpress restart, Multispeed steering, advanced LED lighting package, and Tractor Implement Management (TIM). Transmission choices for M7-133, M7-153 and

M7-173 continue to include the stepless KVT, or a powershift gearbox that uses six powershift speeds in five synchronised ranges, but models are available in standard or Premium specification – the latter with electronic spools and a swap-valve function, allowing on-screen re-assignment of spools to suit operator preferences. Furthermore, all M-series tractors can now be equipped with MX-built Kubota loaders, which creates the convenience of combining tractor, loader and attachments, in one integrated, high-performance solution from your Kubota dealer. Kubota's M-series tractor range continues to go from strength to strength, and all models can be protected with a choice of comprehensive Kubota Care warranty packages.

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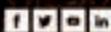
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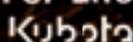


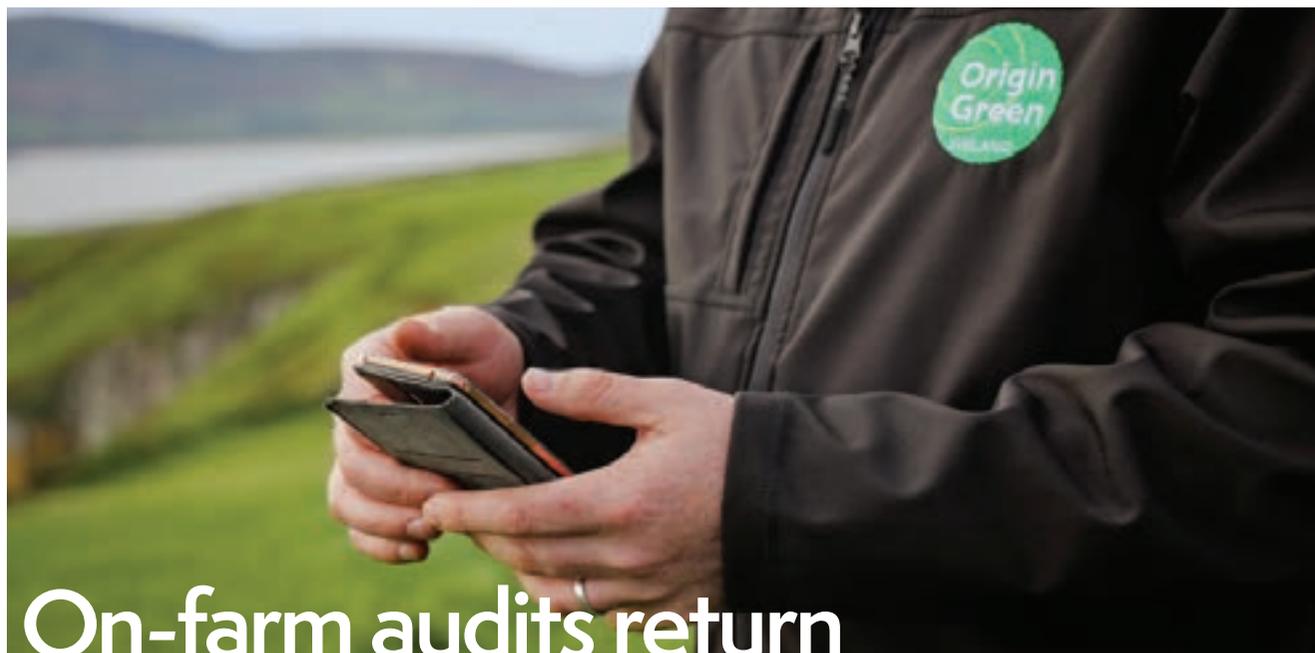
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On-farm audits return

In line with the Government's easing of Covid-19 restrictions, all Bord Bia audits under the Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme (SDAS) and the Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme (SBLAS) scheduled from November 1st onwards, will take place on-farm. Fully

remote audits will only be possible under exceptional circumstances. All farmers who are due audits in the coming weeks have already been notified by Bord Bia. Deirdre Ryan, Director of Origin Green and Sustainable Quality Assurance at Bord Bia explained: "The easing of Covid-19 restrictions means that under the terms of the schemes' own accreditation body, INAB, it is necessary for Bord Bia to return to full farm audits for the next audit cycle. The remote audits have served the programme well for the past 18 months, ensuring the continued certification of eligible farmers; however, it is important to return to farms once again."

Fully on-farm audits will continue provided they are in-line with Government guidelines on Covid-19. Bord Bia is currently examining the feasibility of a blended audit option for beef, lamb, and dairy members. A blended audit is performed in two parts, whereby the farmer uploads supporting evidence (such as remedy usage records) through a secure portal to be audited remotely. This is then followed up with an on-farm audit of the facilities with the overall aim of reducing the amount of time spent on farm to make the audit more efficient. Deirdre Ryan continued: "The majority of farmers adapted well to the remote audit process and the opportunity exists to retain an element of that system. Blended audits have already been trialled under the Pig Quality Assurance Scheme leading to an efficient approach for producers. Until such a system is developed, full on-farm audits will be the norm."

In advance of visiting farms, all auditors must complete a training course that covers Covid-19 safety procedures. Auditors must also follow Bord Bia's Covid-19 Auditor Guidance document, which provides guidelines on hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and physical distancing. It is also recommended that farmers and auditors minimise the amount of time spent indoors.

2022 SCHEME OF INVESTMENT AID FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE SECTOR

This Scheme is intended to assist in the development of the commercial horticulture sector, excluding potatoes, by grant aiding capital investments in specialised horticultural plant and equipment. The Scheme is now open for applications for proposed investments.

As the funds available under the Scheme are limited, investments will be in competition for grant aid.

Grant aid will not be considered for works which commence before the issue of the respective letter of approval by the Department.

Application forms and further information may be obtained from: Horticulture Grants Section, Horticulture and Plant Health Division, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Administration Building, Backweston Campus, Young's Cross, Celbridge, Co. Kildare, W23 X3PH.

Tel: (01) 5058886 or

Email: horticulturegrants@agriculture.gov.ie

Application forms and conditions for the Scheme can be obtained on-line at: www.gov.ie/en/publication/b16bf-horticulture-schemes/

Hard copies of completed applications must be received at the above address not later than **5pm Friday 17th December 2021.**

gov.ie/agriculture



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

New online training course on farmland biodiversity for farmer members

Origin Green, in conjunction with the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC), is continuing to provide targeted supports for business and farmer members to develop sustainable biodiversity practices, as the issue of biodiversity becomes increasingly important for food security and global trade buyers. According to the latest Origin Green Progress Update Report, to date Origin Green business members have committed to over 105 biodiversity targets and over 500 initiatives, and the number of member companies setting biodiversity targets has been increasingly steadily since 2017. The majority were focused on biodiversity enhancements, while a smaller number of targets were related to invasive species control and general biodiversity initiatives. Speaking at a recent 'Pathways to Biodiversity' webinar, Director of Origin Green Deirdre Ryan commented: "Biodiversity is a crucial issue element of food security and protecting farmland biodiversity is an important priority of the Origin Green programme. Bord Bia's recent Global Sustainability Study found that 68 per cent of trade buyers globally say "protecting and preserving biodiversity in nature" is important when choosing a supplier, and we were delighted to report in the latest Origin Green Progress Update Report that, to date, Origin Green business members have committed to over 105 biodiversity targets and over 500 initiatives. I'd like to thank the speakers today for providing an overview of the European Innovation Partnership Project 'Protecting Farmland Pollinators', and the new Bord Bia online training course on Biodiversity for Origin Green farm members, as Origin Green continues to strive to support our members to develop sustainable biodiversity business plans and impact positively on biodiversity at farm level." Una FitzPatrick, Senior Ecologist at National Biodiversity Data Centre, added: "The 'Protecting Farmland Pollinators' project, aims to develop a flexible mechanism that encourages all farmers to make their farm more pollinator friendly in a way that will not impact on productivity. Biodiversity is complex, but taking small actions to preserve farmland pollinators is an effective way of protecting the environment. Through pursuing evidence-based actions to protect pollinators and enhance farmland biodiversity, Origin Green members can continue to impact positively on the environment and their communities." In July this year, Bord Bia announced a new partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Centre to support companies in identifying and implementing smart biodiversity targets in line with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025. As part of the partnership, Bord Bia are funding a dedicated Biodiversity Officer at the National Biodiversity Data Centre to provide expertise and guidance on Origin Green member companies' biodiversity plans.

InTouch

Condition scoring: a pillar for success

Cathal Bohane, Head of InTouch Nutrition

Winter has arrived, and any final grazing event will now depend on the weather. The particularly mild and dry autumn has been a welcome reprieve to a long winter. Young stock has been housed in many areas to avoid unnecessary damage to fields and to maintain performance.

When it comes to the body condition score (BCS) of cows, now is the next milestone. There are approximately six weeks to cows being dried off, and now is time that they are most efficient at gaining condition, as opposed to during the dry period. There is also an added benefit of supporting high-value/high-solids milk production as well if extra feeding is required.

The first step is assessment, and treating this as an essential task rather than a passing glance is important. Often, we have farmers that view cows from the front, look at them in the field or below them in the milking parlour, where the assessment can be flawed. Fast forward to around Christmas time, when they are in the crush getting dosed or vaccinated, and we become worried that, in fact, the cows are too thin or fat. We now must go against the grain when designing a plan for these animals.

A quick assessment can be based on the pictures below to evaluate the shape between the pin and hook bone. If it is V-shaped (picture on the left), then the cow has a BCS of 3 or below. If it is U-shaped (picture on the right), the cow has a BCS above 3. Further assessment will determine how far away this cow is from the magic target of 3–3.25. The link below leads to a great video of how to accurately score your cows on a scale of 1–5.

<https://extension.psu.edu/learn-to-score-body-condition>



Source: Penn State University

Body condition score will be one of the key pillars determining success and failure in a spring calving system over the next 5–6 months. It will have a high bearing on whether you will have an easy calving, metabolic issues, good milk solids and good subsequent fertility. With this in mind, it is crucial that we now take time to assess it properly.



A new climate

Ministerial statements and comments are being closely scrutinised by farmers these days as they realise that both the next CAP and Climate Action proposals will impact on their businesses for years to come. Two of the most important Ministers in this regard are Eamon Ryan and Charlie McConalogue. **Matt O’Keeffe** has been listening to their comments and analysing what they may mean for farmers.

Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConalogue continued his consultation tour last month in the aftermath of announcing a general outline of how the next CAP would operate for Irish farming. The proposals drew critical responses from several quarters, most especially those farmers who believe the new system will impact negatively on their incomes and EU payments.

Speaking to Matt O’Keeffe, the Agriculture Minister insisted that the proposed package was not the definitive structure: “It is challenging because there have been so many ideas among farmers as to what we should do. The consultation process has allowed me to hear all views. On foot of the publication of the latest framework, people can come forward with suggestions and proposals. I want to make sure that the reformed CAP is one that is informed by farmers voices so that it can serve farmers and their families well. Rather than listening to various views and then coming out with a final package, I have deepened the consultation by putting a proposal on the table to allow people to respond. The ultimate objective is to get to a final point by the end of this year so that a proposal can be brought to Government and submitted to the European Commission in the New Year.”

Divergence on convergence

Convergence is one of the most contentious issues for farmers with above average historic payments. The Minister was clear on the rationale: “In relation to 85 per cent Convergence, that is a mandatory requirement on the part of the European Commission. The real question is whether we go to 100 per cent or not at this time as nineteen of the member states have done. The proposal I put on the table is to stay at the 85 per cent mark for the next CAP. That is the absolute minimum possible. One of the most important aspects of my proposals is the fifty percent increase in Government co-funding and that provides a starting point for supporting farmers in the next CAP. The additional funding allows us to do much more across a range of schemes.”

Reflecting on eco-schemes

On the proposed eco-schemes, and the question of whether the choices are too narrow and risk low levels of

farmer involvement, the Minister had this to say: “We are still considering the eco-schemes. I am still reflecting on the views I have received from farmers. My key objective in relation to the eco-schemes is to ensure that there are options available to every farmer of every farming type to take up. I want to ensure that the money does get back to farmers.”

Carbon storage ownership

On the vexed question of who owns the carbon that is sequestered and stored on Irish farms, Minister McConalogue gave a firm commitment: “It is absolutely my objective that, as we go forward and develop a structure, farmers can play an active role in carbon sequestration and can benefit from that role in financial terms. We have funded Teagasc to advance the science and practicalities around carbon storage with a view towards allowing farmers to secure an income stream from storing carbon.”

Environment Minister backs CCAC Report

Minister for the Environment Eamon Ryan, in an RTE radio interview, fully embraced the Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) Report in his immediate reaction to its publication in late October.

The Minister justified the actions and carbon budgets proposed in the report on the basis that they follow science and protect the people of Ireland. The new economy, he insisted, will be decarbonised. Jobs and opportunities will come, he promised. In addressing the setting of sectoral ceilings, the Minister said that it will be an evolving process and that we would learn by doing. As an observation on the Minister’s approach, there is either a Grand Plan which he is not sharing, or there is a lot of wishful thinking, which would not necessarily be the best approach to embarking on one of the most complex economic readjustments ever attempted anywhere.

A new generation of farmers

Referring specifically to agriculture, the Environment Minister said that it will not have as high an emissions target as other sectors, at least during the first decade of actions. It takes time to adjust a farm or plant a forest and make the necessary changes, he observed. Minister Ryan

insisted that the current system is not working for the vast majority of Irish farmers saying that income is very low and that there is a potential opportunity to pay a whole new generation of farmers for protection of nature, for the restoration of biodiversity, for the removal of pollution, as well as the storage of carbon and the production of high-quality food. All of these aspirations have merit, but they are still only aspirational. How such a complex agricultural readjustment would be achieved, how it would be financed and how much it would cost are not clear.

New CAP will change Irish farming

Referencing the Common Agricultural Policy, Eamon Ryan said that it is on new trajectory that is needed to reverse the 'massive pollution of our rivers' and turn around the destruction of nature that has taken place over the last six decades. There is no benefit in blaming people, the Minister said. He insists that the future of farming is in providing a whole range of services, presumably demoting the role of food production from its current primary focus for farmers. Most of our cattle production, Minister Ryan informed listeners, is exported, adding that if we are not truly Origin Green those markets will shut down. Consumers around the world, he believes, will not want to buy into a production system that is destroying nature, adding that we have a family farm structure that is less intensive than

factory farms abroad and that farmers should be getting a premium price for a grass-fed livestock production system. Another fine aspiration, though again, how this is to be achieved is far from clear. Minister Ryan's reference to Origin Green could imply that he does not fully subscribe to the Bord Bia programme; it is to be hoped that he does not believe, as some critics suggest, that Origin Green is a greenwashing exercise.

Fewer cattle and more income

On the question of cattle numbers, Eamon Ryan was somewhat circumspect. We will be unlikely, he said, to have the same number of cattle in the future and that a reduction will occur in a natural manner rather than a cull basis, as diversification takes place, providing other uses for land. The Environment Minister believes if we switch to organic farming, for instance, there will be fewer cows with a premium for the produce. There are also lower costs, he insisted. He rejected the proposition of viewing carbon reduction actions solely in terms of cost/benefit, insisting that there is also opportunity through system change. Minister Ryan concluded by saying that as our farming system changes, a whole new generation of farmers will be paid for their skills in soil management and understanding how to restore nature. That, he concluded, is all for the good.

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Letting science lead the way

The Systems Herd at UCD Lyons Farm is providing Irish farmers and the wider dairy industry with up-to-date research into sustainable, efficient farming methods. The research informs and supports the farming community in achieving ambitious targets around climate action. Here, **Dr Karina Pierce** discusses the importance of science-led solutions and outlines latest results.



“Putting climate action and sustainability to the fore is critical for the future viability of the dairy sector and that is well accepted by our farmers and the wider industry. I would be confident in saying that we are well on the road to achieving a more sustainable dairy system – we have many great initiatives on the farm and lots of funding going into really good research at the likes of UCD Lyons Farm and Teagasc, as well industry programmes which are doing fantastic work. We have multi-species sward research at UCD Lyons Farm which is ongoing for ten years; Teagasc’s Signpost programme; and Origin Green – all contributing to this goal.”

However, Karina believes we are at a critical juncture at the moment where there is immense pressure on the industry and it is not clear if the industry will be afforded the time that is needed to achieve the targets that have been set. “In terms of addressing biodiversity, water quality, solutions for methane – it is going to take time for these areas to show real change. There is a lot of work already done but it will take time for change to be apparent. We have well funded research programmes but we need to be better at joining the dots and avoiding duplication, looking at how we can pull all of that great work together and build on the knowledge we acquire.”

Efficiencies on farm

AT UCD Lyons farm, higher output per cow is the focus, looking specifically at grassland management, nutrition, fertility and genetics. “We started the herd in 2015/2016 post quota at a time when everyone was looking at expansion. Our aim was to develop a milk production system based on higher output per cow, in response to a number of factors, including: environmental concerns in terms of the increase in cow numbers; limited land availability and fragmented farmland; a lack of available skilled labour; and higher costs associated with additional infrastructure. Our key objective was to develop a sustainable and profitable high output dairy production system.” Key findings to date, Karina explains, show that high levels of milk production per cow are possible using high EBI animals, and excellent fertility is also achievable. Also, a Life Cycle Analysis has shown that the system can be efficient because even though higher feed input you also have a higher milk output. “Obviously, the more you use native feeds, low protein diets, Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS) and protected urea – and all the other advances and technologies that are available today – you will continue to improve the environmental impact of your herd. There is no silver bullet – all of these measures contribute to make a farm more efficient and more profitable – if farmers implement more of these measures they will see incremental improvements on farm.”

Dairy Business Programme

Alongside having responsibility for the Systems Herd at UCD Lyons Farm, Karina is also the Programme Director for the Dairy Business programme at UCD – a programme, she says, offers students a wide choice of career options on completion and one that is contributing to adding to Ireland’s pool of expertise in dairy business management. “The programme was developed in conjunction with industry, which reflects the demand for skilled graduates in this area.” Students move from basic modules in Year 1 to more applied content (for example moving from science to soil science; from biology to dairy cow reproduction). In Year 3, students spend half a year working on a dairy farm (pre-Covid, most students travelled to New Zealand) and the second half of the year at Teagasc Moorepark, where they can get involved in really practical learning and research. “Our students from this programme have gone on to many different career paths – from working on dairy farms, to careers in Co-ops, to farm advisors with Teagasc, research posts at university, private industry roles or agri-banking or insurance. There is a strong demand across a wide range of areas for these skills.”

KEY FINDINGS TO DATE AT LYONS FARM

- High levels of milk output per cow and per ha are possible in high EBI cows in grazing systems.
- Excellent fertility is achievable with this high output grazing herd.
- Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) conducted has shown that the system is as efficient per kg CO₂/kg milk solids as benchmark low-concentrate grazing systems.
- Financial simulations using data from the Systems Herd have shown that the higher-input and higher-output system compares favourably to efficiently run low concentrate systems.

SYSTEM TARGETS AND RESULTS TO DATE

The herd (57 cows) is in the top 1% of herds nationally with an EBI of €204 (milk sub-index of €69 and a fertility sub-index of €81 - January 2021, evaluation). The performance target is 625 kg of milk solids per cow with a target stocking rate on the milking platform of 3.25 LU/ha and a whole farm stocking rate of 2.33 LU/ha. The performance achieved in 2020 (606 kg of MS per cow) is approximately 42% higher than the national average figure of 427 kg milk solids per cow. Fertility results for the herd are excellent with 79 to 87% of the herd in calf in the first six weeks in the past three years (Teagasc target 75%). The diet consists of grazed grass, grass silage and 1500kg of concentrates which is necessary to support the high energy demands of these high producing cows.



MOVING FORWARD WITH ELECTRONIC TAGS



From July next year all new-born calves will be required to be tagged with Electronic Identification (EID) tags. All new orders for tags from next January will be supplied with EID tags. Rickey Barrett is a milk producer and pedigree Holstein breeder based in Ballinhassig in Cork. Four years ago, he automated his calf feeding system and began a very fruitful journey into Electronic Identification of his calves using the Allflex tags from Mullinahone. In recent years, MSD Animal Health has acquired the Allflex brand and will continue to work with Mullinahone for the service and supply of ID tags. The first action MSD Animal Health implemented since the acquisition is a change to the tag being offered by Mullinahone. According to John Heslin, MSD Animal Health: "The tag previously sold in Mullinahone was designed according to specific specifications for the Irish market. We made the conscious decision to improve our portfolio offered to Irish farmers. With that, the tag now available through Mullinahone is our Classic Ultra tag, which has market leading retention rates globally. This is a very important move for us and Irish farmers as we enter the era of mandatory EID."

That is something Rickey Barrett has found very reassuring: "Mullinahone have provided great assistance and back up and the fact that MSD Animal Health is now involved gives me even greater reassurance. I have the height of praise

for the MSD Animal Health team and James Manley of Mullinahone. They couldn't do more for me in ensuring that the whole EID system works well."

IT'S MORE THAN JUST A TAG

Rickey acknowledges the huge benefits of the tags and also notes that they are not a substitute for good management: "The tags and data coming from them don't replace husbandry, but they do eliminate a lot of unnecessary labour. We know the calves are taking in milk, that there are no calves sick or calves that are shy to come to the feeder. The combination of the automated feed system and the Allflex tag technology has cut out moving milk to the calf shed, eliminated individual calf feeding and improved the thrive of the calves."

THE NEXT STEPS WITH ALLFLEX TECHNOLOGY

At this stage all of the Barrett pedigree herd have EID tags. Any of the older ones had their original tags replaced with the new technology, as Ricky explains: "That has allowed us to feed all concentrates in the parlour, through the use of an automated system, with individual cows fed to yield and body condition needs. The next stage will be to incorporate heat detection with an automated drafting system. The Allflex tags (SenseHub) will allow us to do all that. The tag

is the essential element of adopting new ways of managing the herd and individual animals.

Everyone knows at this stage that animal health is all about prevention where possible. These new technologies allow us to identify health problems almost before they happen. If an animal is off its feed, I will be immediately notified by the system. Likewise, with mastitis or identifying dry cow issues early which is where we want to act before it has a significant impact on the cow. For heat detection and compact calving, the ability to remotely identify cows in heat and automatically draft them will transform cow management for farmers. The cows are coming through the parlour to be milked anyway, so it makes sense to get as many jobs done as possible when they are passing through."

RECORDING HIS APPRECIATION FOR SERVICES RENDERED

Rickey Barrett is full of praise for the service he receives from MSD Animal Health and was also insistent on name-calling individuals and organisations who provide a range of services for the farm business: "The work that people in the industry generally do and the services they provide, including the likes of Barry Murphy in FDC, ICBF, Teagasc and IHFA often goes unnoticed. Without them, farming couldn't function properly. That needs to be said," he concluded.

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MORE THAN JUST A TAG - THE FUTURE OF HERD MANAGEMENT



Precise maize technology

With the maize harvesting season concluded it is timely to examine the role of the crop and its cost efficiency in the diet of our livestock. Planting under plastic has become the norm in recent years, though there are still many crops performing well without plastic cover, writes **Matt O'Keeffe**.

Lemken, the machinery manufacturer, has been conducting field-based research on these islands as well as on continental European farms on the relative productivity and cost effectiveness of precision sowing of maize as against using plastic cover.

Derek Delahunty of Lemken brought me on a field tour of maize crops during October as they reached maturity and were being harvested. Derek explained the rationale for the research: "Five years ago Lemken brought a precision drill to the market, called the Azure 9. The drill is specifically designed for maize and soya drilling. Maize is a very important crop on both the European and global markets. After witnessing very good results in the UK, I decided we should look at its potential role for the Irish maize crop. Starch content was being measured as well as yield and dry matter across in the UK and the results were impressive so last year we brought in an eight-row Azure machine. We sowed several experimental plots across the country with mixed results. We were at the initial stages and trying a number of sowing methodologies, sites, soils and seed varieties. One of the main points is that we can sow the maize seed with fertiliser. At the centre of each row, fertiliser is placed between the maize plants. Instead of putting the maize plants directly in line as with a conventional drill, we stagger them in a

triangle-style shape so that each one is separated at an average of 12.5 cms apart. It's called a delta formation, hence delta-row machine. That gives each plant increased light and more opportunity to have its own soil space and reduces competition with other plants. That delivers, we believe, greater stalk and cob size consistency. The plant then matures very evenly. This is our second year to use the machine in Ireland, with five hundred acres in total planted in various locations and soil types. The crops have performed well for us after a difficult start for all maize crops with a very dry May, followed by a wet, cold June. When crops got going, they did well both in the open and under plastic."

Harvesting

For the crop harvesting sites we visited, a John Deere 97 harvester was being used. The added benefit of this machine was the Harvest Lab attached to the chute, providing real-time crop analysis as it was being harvested. Starch, yield and dry matter are all available as the crop is being blown into the trailer. Derek outlined the immediate benefits: "When the field is harvested we can get a yield map showing the variations in yield, starch and moisture across the crop. The purpose of our precision drilling technology is to provide options for

growers, where maize can be grown successfully without necessarily using plastic. The cost/benefit of precision sowing in comparison to under plastic maize will be the ultimate decision maker.”

Twenty years a growing

Contractor and farmer Edward Delahunty has been growing maize for twenty years: “We started out with the Accord drill. It worked well until 2009 when the crop was pretty near a disaster across the country due to weather conditions. We went to plastic after using a range of methods. We still sow maize in the open for customers and if the site is suitable we can get good results. With the newer harvesters, such as the John Deere we operate, because it is possible to measure all the crop variables, including yield, starch and dry matter, it is easier to compare and contrast. Even if the open-drilled crop has reduced yield, there is also a reduction in production costs so it can be competitive across yield and quality.”

An important crop

Edward highlights the importance of the maize crop: “It really took off in recent years after the big drought in 2018. Farmers realised they needed an alternative feed. The fact that many dairy farmers milk through the winter, means they need a high-quality forage as an alternative or combined with grass silage. The John Deere 97 was bought this year. The Harvest Lab is the big difference between it and other comparable harvesters. Tonnes of dry matter, wet tonnes, starch are all available immediately on a field map. Crop throughput depends on field size, the length of the draw back to the pit and the delays in moving to different sites. We would expect to harvest around around fifty acres a day if there wasn't too much moving between fields. We try to organise so that we harvest for a number of farmers in an area at a time to maximise productivity.” “The maize harvest window is tight enough. Harvest too early and the crop is not mature, so the cob is not fully developed, yield is back and dry matter is lower. The weather in early to mid-October has been perfect for harvesting this year. Thirty per cent dry matter is the base-line.”

Precision crop analysis

It is important to factor in crop establishment costs when deciding on the economics of various maize sowing options. Plastic cover provides benefits ranging from



Pictured (from left): Derek Delahunty Lemken and Edward Delahunty Farmer/Contractor.

earlier emergence to earlier harvesting in most seasons. Open sowing lowers establishment costs but can lead to later harvesting to optimise yield and quality. The risk of frost damage post emergence could also be a factor with the plastic providing some protection at the early emergence stage. With plastic costs rising there is increased interest in open sowing, provided yields and quality can compete. A lower yield can be accepted if it is negated by a cost saving. Some sites are more suitable for open sowing than others. There are sites and geographic locations where plastic will probably remain a prerequisite to decent yields and quality.

Field results

The Lemken precision drilled crops analysed by the JD Harvest Lab showed respectable results. The accompanying field map indicates a dry matter yield of almost 14 tonnes per hectare – respectable considering there was significant bird damage on the headlands. Starch was analysed at over 30 per cent and dry matter was also tipping 30 per cent. Another week might have increased dry matter, tonnage and starch but that runs a considerable risk of deteriorating field conditions. These factors all have to be taken into account by growers in choosing their sites, soils and preferred sowing option. If establishment costs for plastic covered crops continues to rise then growers will inevitably focus on other cost-efficient options. Precision sowing offers one such alternative.



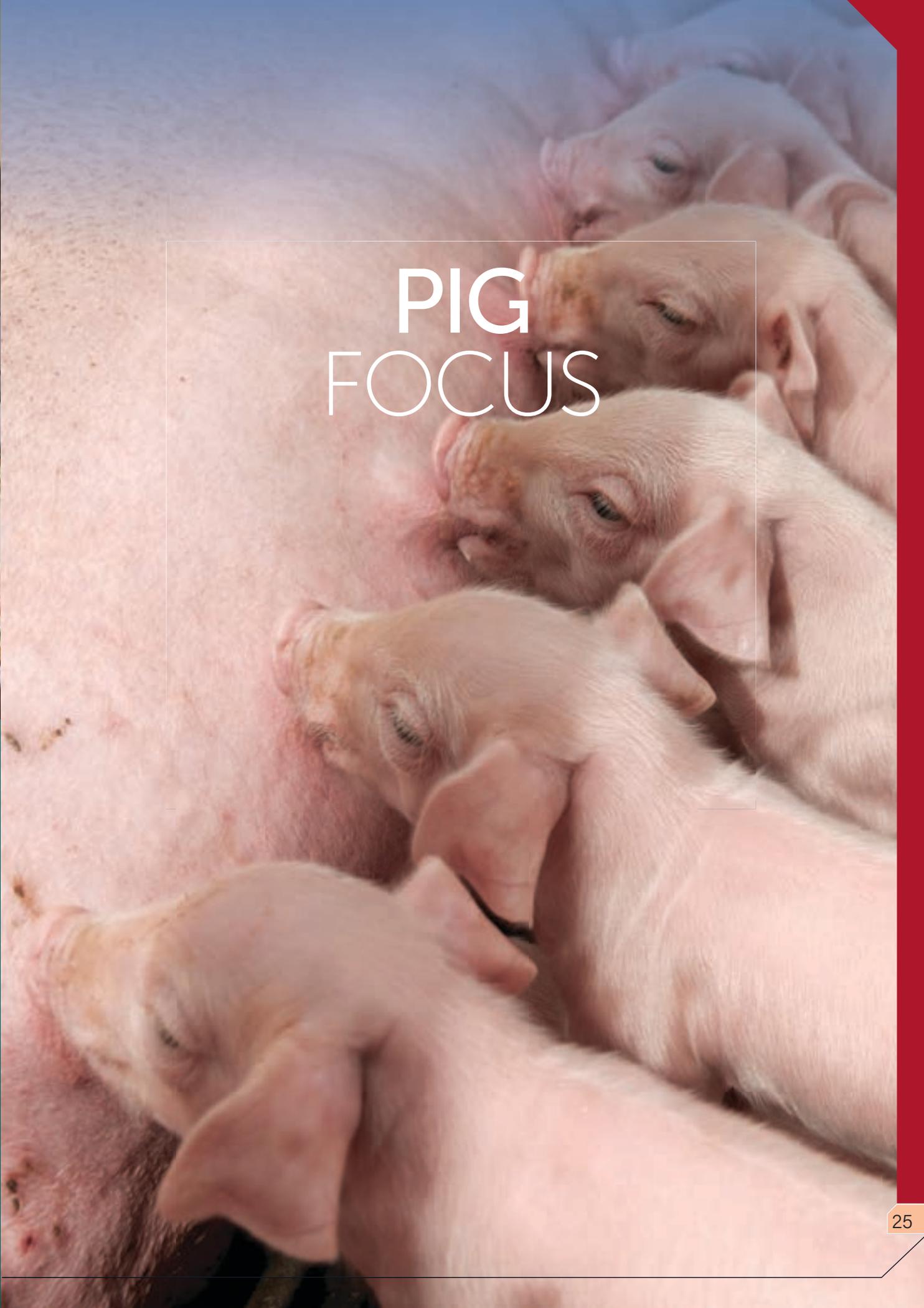
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PIG FOCUS

Creeping towards improved piglet performance



Dr. Hazel Rooney, Pig Technical Coordinator, Alltech Ireland, examines the issue of improved piglet performance.

Giving sows a helping hand to rear their litters

Litter size at birth and the number of piglets weaned per sow per year remain key performance indicators in commercial pig production. As a result of continued genetic selection for hyper-prolific sows (i.e., sows with an average litter size of 16 piglets or greater), the number of piglets born alive, and the number of piglets reared to weaning have significantly increased. For example, the average number of piglets born alive per litter has increased from 10.9 in 2000 to 14.3 in 2020 on Irish commercial herds, according to the latest Teagasc National Pig Herd Performance Report. During the same period, the number of piglets weaned per litter has risen from 9.9 to 12.7 on Irish units (Teagasc; see Figure 1).

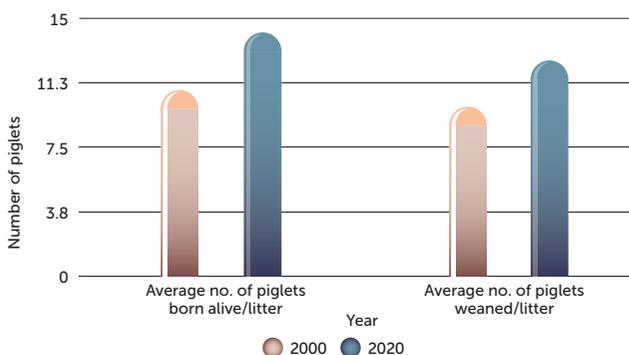


Figure 1: Sow litter size at birth and at weaning in 2000 and 2020, on Irish commercial herds

The observed increase in litter size over the last two decades has unfortunately been linked with a higher proportion of lightweight piglets at birth and more litter variation in piglet birth weight. These larger litters are challenging the rearing ability of the sow because sows are now required to produce greater volumes of milk to sustain a higher number of suckling piglets. However, the milk yield of sows has not increased relative to the larger litter size and, as a result, sow milk yield has become a limiting factor for the growth of suckling piglets. Therefore, providing highly digestible creep feed to suckling piglets is increasingly important to give sows a 'helping hand' during lactation.

Feeding the suckling piglet

Creep feeding is not a new concept by any means, but not all pig producers think it is worthwhile due to the small amount of creep feed eaten before weaning (typically 200–250 g per piglet). However, the goal of creep feeding is to:

1. Increase the percentage of 'eaters' in the litter because the pigs that actually eat creep feed during lactation have greater feed intakes and growth rates in the first seven days post-weaning.
2. Achieve the recognition effect of solid feed once weaned — this will help ease the weaning transition and reduce the dip in feed intake that is typically seen during the first week post-weaning.
3. To support the weaning transition by preparing the piglets gut to digest solid feed — the digestive enzymes necessary for protein and carbohydrate digestion are stimulated earlier with the introduction of creep feed.

Because creep feed consumption can benefit piglets through increased feed intake and weight gain during the first few days after weaning, methods to increase creep intake and the proportion of piglets in the litter eating creep feed (i.e., eaters) have gained considerable interest. For example, one study investigating the effect of varying the durations of creep feeding on the proportion of piglets consuming creep feed demonstrated that longer durations of creep feeding (13 days vs. 2 or 6 days) increased the proportion of eaters in whole litters by 10%. Other studies have highlighted the importance of creep feed presentation. The use of creep feeders that facilitate increased feeding space and accessibility (e.g., a high accessibility shallow tray vs. a conventional commercial creep hopper) can increase creep intake during lactation. Similarly, rotary feeders with a hopper result in a more significant percentage of creep feed eaters than those without a hopper or pan feeders. The use of round feeders with hoppers will reduce feed wastage as well. It is also surprising to note that suckling piglets appear to prefer creep feed with a larger pellet diameter (10–12 mm) above feed with a smaller pellet diameter (2 mm or smaller).

The importance of gut health

Another focus of creep feeding must be the healthy development of the piglet's gut. A healthy gut digests and absorbs feed efficiently, has a stable and suitable microbial population, is free from disease, has an effective intestinal immune system established and provides a protective and functional gut barrier. If the gut is not healthy and functioning optimally, the piglet's overall performance, health and welfare will deteriorate, and, eventually, the producer's profitability will suffer. The supplementation of feed materials in creep diets, such as Actigen® (Alltech), have been shown to maintain a healthy gut and support the normalising of gut microflora. Recent data from studies focussing on improving gut health in piglets demonstrated that Actigen supplementation can significantly elevate the intestinal structure of piglets and reduce the attachment of *E. coli* to porcine intestinal cells, resulting in increased nutrient absorption and utilisation. By supporting gut morphology and reducing the pathogen load through natural nutritional solutions, the negative impacts of weaning on pig health, growth performance and profitability can be reduced.

Tips for successful creep feeding

To obtain the above benefits of creep feeding, optimal management practices must be used. Here are some tips for successful creep feeding:

- When to start: The earlier that creep feed is offered, the greater the proportion of piglets that will be eating solid feed by weaning, so begin creep feeding from as early as day 7–10 of age.
- How much to feed: Begin by offering roughly 80 g of creep feed (half a cup) to each litter, 2–3 times per day, and feed to appetite thereafter.
- When to fill feeders: Offering creep to litters while the sow is eating has been shown to increase creep feed intake. Creep dishes should also be refilled at least twice per day so that creep stays fresh and palatable.
- What type of diet to feed: Creep feed for piglets must be a highly digestible and palatable diet and contain a high proportion of milk products. The same diet should be used as the initial nursery diet to stimulate feed intake in

the early post-weaning period.

- Feeder type: Rotary feeders with a hopper are preferable over rotary feeders without a hopper or pan feeders and will have less feed wastage.
- Feeder placement: Placing the creep feeder near the sow's head rather than in the middle or bottom of the pen results in significantly increased feed intake and less spoilage of feed. Also, avoid placing feeders near heat lamps to prevent feed quality from deteriorating.
- Pellet diameter: Increasing pellet diameter is worth exploring because piglets appear to favour larger pellets (10–12 mm) than smaller pellets (2 mm or smaller).
- Feeder hygiene: When offering creep feed, hygiene is critical, so remove stale and dirty feed daily and clean feeders regularly.
- Availability: Ensure that creep feed is always available to piglets to maximise intakes, so keep an eye out for any empty dishes when walking the farrowing rooms. This is particularly important during the last week before weaning when 60–80% of the creep feed is consumed.

Summary

Due to continued genetic selection for increased sow prolificacy, litter size at birth and the proportion of low birth-weight piglets within the litter have significantly increased. As a result, the rearing ability of our modern sows is a major challenge, so they need to be given a 'helping hand' in raising their piglets. The beneficial effects of providing suckling piglets with additional nutrient sources in the form of creep feed include increased piglet growth before and after weaning and a greater proportion of 'eaters,' as well as an improvement in gut function and the earlier stimulation of digestive enzymes; all of which should help to reduce the severity of the weaning transition. The recommendations are to begin creep feeding at day 7–10 of age, use round feeders with hoppers, place the feeders up near the sow's head, remove stale and dirty feed each day to keep feed fresh and palatable and consider larger pellet sizes. By following these management recommendations, the benefits of creep feeding should be achieved.

**References available upon request*



Half a century butchering

Matt O’Keeffe talks to pork butcher John Joe Cullen about his trade and the changing nature of the business

John Joe Cullen has been in the pork butchering trade for over 50 years. He started out as a 14-year old in a supermarket in Kilkenny that doesn’t exist anymore. After seven years learning all about butchering from the ground up he was recruited by the legendary Billy O’Sullivan to join his long established butchers stall in John Street in Kilkenny City in the area known as ‘The Continent’. That is where John Joe has plied his trade ever since, eventually taking over the business from Billy on his retirement. John Joe continues the story: “I initially started working part time after school and in school holidays and was then offered a full-time job in the VG Supermarket. It was a great training or apprenticeship. I had to be well dressed, and there was a great emphasis on hygiene and quality standards. I ended up managing the bacon counter and there were always opportunities to progress in the business. After seven years I moved on to Billy O’Sullivans. That was in 1970. He had opened the shop in 1964 and had built up a very strong and loyal customer base. About 25 years ago, Billy decided to step back so I took over the business.”

A changed business

There have been many changes in the pork butchery business over the years as John Joe confirmed: “Back in the day we bought the bacon as a side of bacon and then cut it to suit customer requirements. You then worked out the price for each cut based on the general margin expected in the trade at the time. It was all hand-cut, including the rashers. There would be a pile of streaky bacon, or collar bacon, to be sold and these cuts were very popular because they were the economy cuts and were more affordable for many people who didn’t have a lot of disposable income. Back bacon was solely used for rashers. Because it was too expensive to be sold in individual cuts. As we came into the new century and living standards rose, demand increased for a wider choice of cuts, back bacon, streaky bacon, a whole range of cuts and options were becoming popular and were all available to suit a customers needs. We were able to buy the individual cuts from our suppliers and that meant less waste and less time consumed in actually preparing the meat cuts. Back bacon, for some reason, became very popular and is now one of the best sellers in the shop. Previously, few customers could afford that cut.”



A reassuring butcher

“Most people know how to cook the various cuts but they do like reassurance and that’s a major element of the personal touch in a butchers shop. We can advise on cooking times, temperatures and rest periods before slicing so that customers get the best value, flavour and taste from their purchase. For instance, there is a generally accepted ‘20 minutes to the pound’ rule that I don’t totally agree with. It depends on the size of the cut and I often advise customers to bring the piece of meat to the boil for half an hour and then cook for an hour. That’s just an example; it varies according to the cut. Overcooking is as bad as undercooking.”

“The choice of cuts now is almost unbelievable compared to when I started in the business. Not only were the choices limited by what was available, choice was also limited by the budget of the customer. As living standards rose and the percentage of income spent on food went down, people are willing to spend more on what they buy and that’s as true of pork and bacon as any other food product.”



The personal touch

John Joe Cullen highlights the personal touch that independent butchers bring to the consumer: "It's probably the core of what the independent butcher offers in terms of consumer appeal. We develop a rapport with our customers over many years. They are more friends than customers. You tend to get personally involved in chatting about family and local events. As well as that, local shops are comparable to community centres, where neighbours meet, issues are discussed and problems in the community are highlighted and addressed. Local shops are also part of the physical fabric of the locality. They give life to streets and towns. The local shop is often the first place a group or club will go to for help or sponsorship or advice or information."

The question of Christmas

Christmas is still some weeks away. Nevertheless, it is concentrating the Kilkenny butcher's mind: "Every Christmas I can remember there were always rumours of a potential shortage of hams. That shortage never materialised. This year, however, I would be a little more concerned. Not overly so, but a little worried given the

disruption of Brexit and the logistical issues that are arising. If Covid takes hold again, that will add to supply and delivery challenges. On a personal basis, I put in my orders in mid-October and sought guarantees as far as possible that my requirements would be met. Most of my colleagues in the trade would all be doing likewise. There may be a bigger risk to turkey supplies as I hear that turkey numbers in general are back on previous years. A little more planning on everyone's part, including the customer, may be the cautious approach. We don't want to see anyone disappointed if they come in at the last minute."

All in the curing and cooking

John Joe has some basic advice for the cook: "Years ago, most hams were bought on the bone, or a full ham was boned and rolled. Now the reverse is the case. I don't believe there is that much difference in the flavour, it's more down to the cooking. The first thing is that the meat must match the pot or the oven. Don't buy a ham or turkey that won't fit. When I started out, families were much bigger so larger cuts were needed. Now that families have become, on average, much smaller, we have changed our offering to match that fact. Hams are available now in any shape or form to fit the customer's needs. What is really important is the curing process. Ham is pork before it is cured. If the ham is cured properly it will taste well, on or off the bone, provided it is cooked properly."

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Virtual Pig Week

Following on from the success of last year and with Covid restrictions still a challenge to physical attendance at conferences, Teagasc again resorted to a series of virtual pig events last month, termed Virtual Pig Week.

Head of Pig Transfer at Teagasc Ciarán Carroll outlined the content: "In the first of a series of four one-hour episodes we covered developments in our Pig Research Facility at Moorepark, focusing specifically on farrowing rates, highlighting the factors that contribute to a consistently high farrowing rate in the facility of 91-92 per cent. By comparison the national average is 87 per cent. Weaning weights were also discussed and the circumstances that contribute to our high weaning weight of 8.3 kgs at the research centre. That's 1.3kgs above the national average weaning weight. The importance of data recording was also highlighted and how the vast amount of data produced on the unit is utilised to improve efficiency across a range of performance parameters. Decisions on the management of the unit are, ultimately decided by interpretation and analysis of that data."

Wet feeding

Day two of the Teagasc Virtual Pig Week saw Ger McCutcheon Teagasc specialist in pig production at Oakpark chair a session that included several international pig experts discussing wet feeding among a range of other pertinent topics. The majority of Irish pigs are fed on a wet diet and in Moorepark the researchers have produced a large and impressive body of work on wet feeding of pigs. Key areas in the discussion included feed quality control, potential deficiencies arising on individual farms, quality control in terms of wet feeding systems and system delivery challenges and problems. Identification of particular problems, how to resolve them and the impacts these issues can have on pig performance over the course of the production year were highlighted.

Developing milk supplementation systems

Milk supplementation in the farrowing unit was the theme of the third day of the Virtual Pig Week as Ciarán Carroll confirmed: "Last year's webinar provoked a lot of questions and interest in the topic hence the return to the same issue this year."

Many pig producers either have milk supplementation units installed or are considering installing them as a viable option for improving performance at a critical time in the life of a pig. Louise Clarke is a specialist pig advisor with Teagasc and she led that discussion and was joined by researcher Peadar Lalor. He shared his knowledge on the evolution of milk supplementation systems and discussed the research at Moorepark since

supplementation systems were installed there earlier this year. The technical details around usage of these systems were outlined and that was followed by the on-farm experiences of two pig producers and how they use the systems to best effect on their farms."

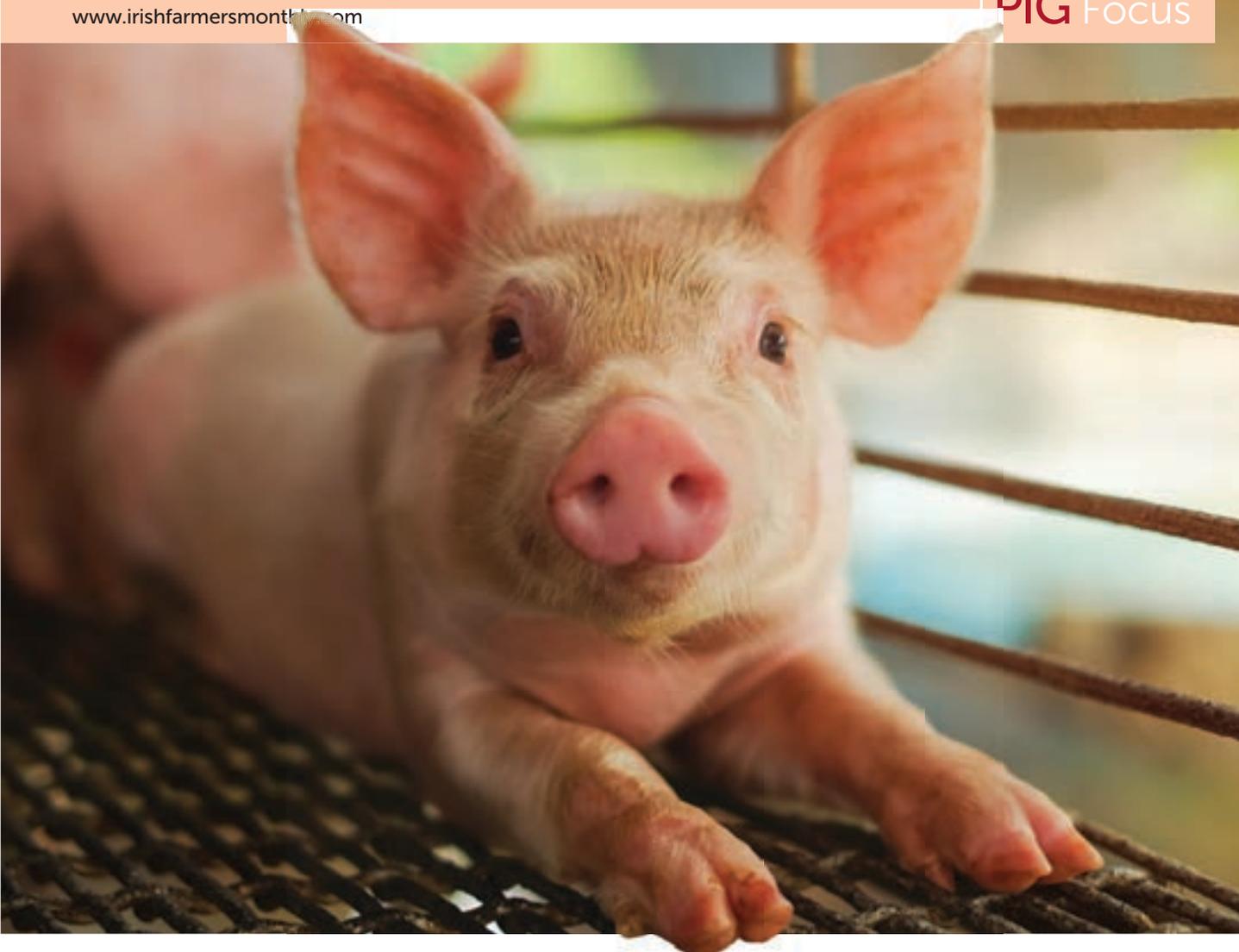
Discussion on hot pig topics

The final webinar in the Virtual Pig Week series of webinars was chaired by Ciarán Carroll and consisted of a broad-based panel discussion with producers, Teagasc personnel and industry experts looking at topical issues of importance in the national and international pig industry. The forthcoming ban on zinc oxide, previously highlighted in an IFM Pig Focus, was one particularly important topic covered. Peter Duggan of Bord Bia gave an update on markets. An in-depth interview with Peter is included elsewhere in this Pig Focus. There was also intensive discussion around slaughtering and related issues of concern to the industry. Cormac Healy of Meat Industry Ireland was on hand for this particular discussion. Roy Gallie, chairman of the IFA Pig Committee was another panel member, providing a producer perspective. The panel format allowed Q&A interaction between participants and viewers online. As Ciarán noted, one of the priorities of the webinars in general and the final panel discussion in particular, was to provide as much clarity as possible across a range of issues for the attendees. Pig prices have fallen in recent months and pig feed prices have risen considerably. There is a lot of hearsay out there which needed to be confirmed or rejected and the Teagasc Virtual Pig Week organisers brought in a diverse group of experts to provide the facts. Ultimately, producers need a roadmap into the future on which they can base their management decisions.

Impressive research Expo

An Expo on the webinar platform provided the opportunity to display the work of research post-graduate students in Teagasc. Nutrition, pig health and welfare, developing market opportunities for pigmeat and antibiotic usage and reduction were among the topics being researched and publicised by the post-graduate students and that were on virtual display as part of the Teagasc Pig Week.

It really was an impressive display of cross-topic research and well worth a review in the aftermath of the webinar series.



Overview of Irish pig production

Matt O’Keeffe examines the current status of Ireland’s pig production sector.

The Irish pig production sector makes a valuable contribution to the Irish economy and Irish exports. For the 290 Irish commercial pig producers, the continuing adoption of best practices in terms of efficiency and productivity is the only strategy for future viability. It is a sector that has contracted in terms of producers since Ireland joined the EU. However, productivity and scale have increased enormously over the same period. Irish pig herds are bigger, and animals more productive, than ever before. Back in the mid 1970’s there were 23,000 farms with pigs as an enterprise, though many would have been of a very small scale consisting in many cases of fewer than five sows. By the start of the 1990’s producer numbers had reduced to 3,000 with greatly increased sow numbers per pig unit and a trend towards pig production being the main or only enterprise on the farms. Further producer contraction continued in the following thirty years to the extent that today,

there are fewer than three hundred production units with pig herds averaging 700 sows. From an output of almost four million pigs per annum, the value of pig meat to our export figures is around €1 billion. Add in the supply figures for domestic consumption and the sector’s ongoing value to the national economy becomes obvious. In international terms the Irish pig production sector is not as significant, though the fact that we export such a large proportion of our production does alter the impact somewhat.

Most popular meat

Pigmeat in its various forms, is the most consumed meat on the planet. The latest pig numbers for the EU give an indication of the importance of the sector. Last year the estimated total EU herd numbered almost 150 million pigs with twelve States accounting for about 130 million of the total EU pig population. Pigs represent, by

far, the largest livestock category in the EU, exceeding cattle numbers by 60 million head. Analysing those pig figures in greater detail, almost three quarters of the EU's pigs are produced in six EU Member States, with Spain recently eclipsing Germany as the major EU producer. One further dive into the EU pig population statistics sees Spain, Germany and France accounting for half of the EU total. Denmark, the Netherlands and Poland are some distance behind with high single figure percentages of the total contribution to EU pig production. However, given their smaller land masses, Denmark and the Netherlands are the amongst the most intensive and large-scale pig producers both in the EU and globally. The number of pigs per 100 inhabitants in Denmark is 215. The pig:human ratio in the Netherlands is 70:100. Spain comes next with a pig to human population ration of 63:100. By comparison, the UK (no longer a member of the EU) has a pig to human ratio of only 7:100. Ireland's relatively low human population of 5 million people at last count, means that the Irish pig to human population is a respectable 32 pigs for every 100 human beings. This is despite the fact that our pig sector is very small by EU standards and not very intensive if measured on a national level. There are fewer than 150,000 sows in the national pig herd. Compare that figure to the Netherlands which has six times as many sows in a more confined area equal to the size of Munster.

Production models

Pig production models vary across the EU. Denmark has, for the most part, a closed production system with most pig enterprises owned by the farmer and bringing all pigs from birth to slaughter. In contrast, Spain has an entirely different ownership structure with production mostly controlled by companies providing the feed, pigs and production standards, while farmers are contracted to breed and fatten the animals. Most Irish pig farms could be described as integrated production units with farmer ownership the norm, with some notable exceptions. Irish pig farms, in general, bring pigs all the way through the production cycle with many have milling units to provide in-house feed production.

Pig population shifts

To appreciate the importance of pig production in Europe, we need to realise that in 2019 over half of the EU's meat production was accounted for by pig meat with volume hitting almost 23 million tonnes. Poultry accounted for 13.4 million tonnes in the same year. On a global scale the EU is the world's second highest producer of pork after China and the biggest exporter of pork and pork products. There have been notable shifts in recent years in both pig populations and overall output in the EU and globally. A severe outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) in China decimated its pig herd and the country is only now beginning a rebuilding process with the introduction of advanced housing and production technologies. In the meantime, EU production after a period of reducing output, ramped up production to meet the increased demand from China. That surge has been dampened by lower prices, higher production costs (mainly high cereal prices accounting for over 70 per cent of total feed costs) and increasingly burdensome regulatory pressures. The latter factor has had a particularly negative effect on the German herd where pig production reduced by almost 2 per cent in the year to June 2020.

Regulatory scrutiny

Larger production units in Ireland and across the EU are subjected to the most intensive regulation. These regulatory standards require an environmental permit under an EU Directive covering industrial emissions. The permit is required for intensive pig units with more than 2,000 places for production pigs or with more than 750 sow places. The permit covers all areas of farm management, including feed and manure production and use, and focuses particularly on emissions and standards around soil, air and water quality. The numbers of pig production units coming under the EU Directive continues to increase with consolidation and continuous increases in scale, driven by margin and efficiencies, and the overall numbers of farmers involved in pig production shrinks further, as they have done over the past half century.



Market concerns

Peter Duggan, Bord Bia, discusses the current market concerns for Irish pig farmers and processors and highlights the importance of a stable labour force.

In terms of the current market situation, Peter states that Irish pig price is well back on last year levels; the average price last year was €1.70 a kilo; currently, price to date this year is around €1.58 per kilo. Market conditions, he notes, are weak in response to subdued international demand. "There has been a significant slowdown in trade, particularly in China as they have increased their output due to ASF outbreaks that occurred from the start of Q2. Those holding on to pigs also decided to liquidate and this caused huge disruption in the marketplace, with Chinese production around 36% higher for the 1st half of the year. In terms of Irish exports into the Chinese market, in the first quarter of this year we were sending 10-12,000 tonnes; that figure has halved to 6,000 tonnes over the past few months. Normally during the end of Summer we would be putting in a lot of product to cater for the Chinese New Year, but the demand just wasn't there this Summer."

Price

"Current price at the moment is at €1.47 a kilo, which is well below year-to-date price and there is real pressure there. In comparison to European prices, Ireland is not performing as badly – Europe is at €1.30 a kilo, in response to a lot more production in Europe and less market demand, with Germany being suspended from supplying due to ASF. This is well below the cost of production, but the Irish price is also below cost, and it will continue to be a difficult period for the next few months."

Cost

Being in constant direct communication with pig farmers, Peter explains that they are experiencing huge stress right now. "Feed costs are going up at an alarming rate. Inputs in terms of both feed and energy are rising – feed accounts for 70-75 per cent of the cost of production – and with the way gas prices are behaving at the moment, there is a knock-on effect on fertiliser production. That will have an impact on what cereal producers will do throughout the world if fertiliser output remains restricted and priced at elevated levels. On grain prices for the foreseeable future, farmers are really worried about this. And in terms of getting pigs away, we are producing about 70-75,000 pigs a week and are getting close to our limit of capability in terms of throughput at meat processor plant level."



Labour

Looking at the Northern Ireland and UK pig crisis, Peter says that it serves to highlight the importance of have a stable work-force: "We need enough labour to support rising numbers also because genetics will continue to improve in Ireland. Producers are getting more pigs from the same amount of sows that we would have had five years ago, so we need a reliable labour force that can handle the pigs coming through the system. "In terms of NI production, this has also increased and that is also part of the issue as well. They are also close to capacity and not having a stable work force makes things a lot more challenging. This is part of the reason why the number of pigs that they handle from the south of Ireland has eased in recent months." Labour, he adds, is a very big challenge across all sectors, noting that it is one of the biggest challenges for agriculture in general.

Glimmer of hope

Looking for a silver lining, Peter concludes that 2022 may hold more positivity than 2021: "The reality is that China isn't going to produce the same level as they did this year. Production of is expected to fall by around 5 per cent to 43m tonnes in 2022. This should help to underpin demand for EU product. European pig supplies will start to tighten up given that the breeding herd is under pressure with the way prices have behaved over recent months across the EU. To illustrate the impact of lower prices in one of the main EU pig producing member states, Germany have lost about 150,000 breeding sows in the last year alone; putting that into context, it is roughly the size of the Irish breeding herd so that is a pretty significant challenge that Germany is facing."



Protecting costs and productivity through vaccinating

The importance of vaccination for *Lawsonia intracellularis* is highlighted by farmer Gareth Marry from Co. Meath

"In these financially lean times for pig farming, it's a smart decision to vaccinate against ileitis. You don't want to be wasting your feed in an invisible way. Vaccination saves money in that you have fewer truckloads of feed coming through your gate."

Gareth Marry from Co. Meath started vaccinating all the piglets on his 500+ sow farm after his vet positively identified the presence of *Lawsonia intracellularis* on the farm through post-mortem and laboratory testing. *Lawsonia intracellularis* is the bacteria known to cause ileitis in growing pigs and here in Ireland it is most usually seen in pigs between 10 and 16 weeks of age, often beginning to spread in the second stage weaners. Gareth's farm is not unusual, a recent study showed ileitis to be present in 90-100 per cent of farms tested across six European countries, while a previous report showed 95 per cent of pig farms from the UK and Ireland were infected.

Maureen Prendergast, Technical Manager at MSD Animal Health explains further: "The bacteria are easily transmitted through modern pig units, even with 'all-in-all-out' systems, disinfection and biosecurity. Many experts agree that it is virtually impossible to eradicate *Lawsonia intracellularis* and ileitis from commercial pig farms, as studies have shown it can return following

eradication. The disease is currently managed with a combination of hygiene, antibiotics and vaccination." *Lawsonia* infection causes inflammation and thickening of the gut wall, even in the absence of diarrhoea. Unlike short-term bacterial gut infections, part of the ileum becomes permanently damaged, causing long-term reduction in food absorption and digestive efficiency. Even subclinical infection can affect performance indicators such as FCR and ADWG for the rest of the pig's life.

"Since I took over the farm in 2015, we've constantly measured feed conversion and growth rates, so I've been able to prove without any doubt that we've made huge improvements in performance as a result of vaccinating against ileitis," continues Gareth.

Gareth has succeeded in reducing FCR to under 2.4:1 and has seen a huge improvement across a wide range of production metrics since he began vaccinating. "We're producing more pigs, to a heavier weight, in less time and with more uniformity and as a result we're able to finish all the pigs on our own farm. Because we measure performance we can prove without any doubt the huge improvements."

There have been multiple studies on the effect of *Lawsonia intracellularis* on pig production. It has been

shown to cause a direct reduction in average daily gain of between 9 per cent and 32 per cent, and an increased feed conversion ratio ranging from 6 per cent to 25 per cent. At a time when feed costs are on the rise, this can have a significant impact on profitability. Even a 6 per cent reduction in weaning-to-sale FCR represents a saving in feed costs of €7.50 per finished pig (based on 2020 Teagasc National Weaning to Sale FCE of 2.4). Gareth has also noticed other benefits from the reduction in ileitis on the farm, including a reduction in behavioural vices such as tail-biting and aggression between pigs. Staff labour hasn't been affected as the piglets are being vaccinated for Lawsonia at 28 days, at the same time as receiving vaccines for PCV2 and Mycoplasma hyopneumoniae.

MSD Animal Health markets an injectable inactivated vaccine that the company states has been proven to reduce diarrhoea, loss of daily weight gain, intestinal lesions, bacterial shedding and mortality caused by Lawsonia intracellularis infection. The vaccine can be given by intramuscular injection from 3 weeks of age and offers 21 weeks' duration of immunity. The intradermal version has recently been launched for use with the IDAL device.

Maureen Prendergast adds: "European legislation is being introduced early in 2022 that will affect the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals. We're also seeing a ban on the use of therapeutic use of zinc oxide coming in from June of next year. So controlling scour in weaned piglets is going to present a real challenge for farmers. Thankfully, vaccines against bacterial challenges like Lawsonia intracellularis not only play a role in managing disease but research studies in both the US and Denmark have shown that they can reduce the use of antibiotics and antimicrobial products." Even a 6% reduction in weaning-to-sale FCR represents a saving in feed costs of €7.50 per finished pig (based on 2020 Teagasc National Weaning to Sale FCE of 2.4). Concluding, Gareth says: "We've been very impressed with the new injectable vaccine since we started using it shortly after it launched about 18 months ago. I certainly wouldn't want to stop now. Every single pig every week gets the vaccine because we believe in it and the truth is in the results. We're getting better performance with substantially reduced feed. The way I see it the cost of the vaccine is actually a saving when you look at how much less feed is consumed by the pig over time."



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Supporting the industry

Alltech Ireland recently announced the appointment of **Dr. Hazel Rooney** as technical pig coordinator. Here, we chat to Hazel about the new position and the challenges for the pig sector in Ireland.



Hazel Rooney grew up in Ashford, Co. Wicklow, and, although she is not from a farming background, her love for the countryside and animals led her to a career in ag science. "I had always dreamed of becoming a vet growing up. I ended up doing Animal Science in UCD and, after spending time on a pig farm during a placement in my third year, I was hooked! I worked on a piggery in Co. Wexford and was so impressed by how efficiently pig farms are run."

After completing her degree, Hazel undertook a Ph.D. in swine nutrition from UCD and the Teagasc Pig Development Department in 2016. Her doctoral research focused on maternal feeding strategies during gestation and lactation to optimise annual sow output and to promote the growth and development of progeny from large litters. She then spent a year working as a post-doctoral researcher in the Teagasc Pig Development Department in Ireland. "After completing all of this research, I really wanted to get some commercial experience, so I was delighted to be appointed to this new role in Alltech, which will allow me to apply my research experience and deliver solutions for pig farmers in Ireland and across the EU."



Challenges

Touching on the challenges that pig farmers are facing today, Hazel admits that things are very tough for the industry at the moment. "Pig farmers are facing into a tough 4–6 months — pig price has taken another cut and, coupled with extremely high feed prices, it is a really difficult time for them. All we can do is recognise that these things come in waves and farmers need to hang in there and be as efficient as possible inside the farm — we can't control forces outside the farm gate, but we can focus on our own efficiencies. Small improvements can make a big difference, and hopefully, next year will bring some opportunities.

"We also need to support our pig farmers and promote a positive image of the industry. Supermarkets and delis need to support Irish and give consumers the choice to

buy Irish pork products and give our farmers a boost."

Alltech's services

Discussing the technical support and services Alltech offers, Hazel notes that the company provides on-farm visits and technical support, pioneering assessments at farm and feed mill level to identify opportunities and areas for improvement (e.g., benchmarking pig performance, antibiotic usage, carbon footprint, etc.). "Alltech nutritionists and independent consultants work on tailored nutritional plans for our customers, and our own research laboratory and peer-reviewed research publications back up and demonstrate our claims, products and programmes. We have also developed pig programmes to address specific industry challenges, which include a mycotoxin control programme, which is a 3-step programme designed for feed mills and farmers. Step 1 is awareness: We can actually help our customers to identify if there is an issue or not at feed mill/farm level and where that issue is coming from. Step 2 is to quantify the issue: We then demonstrate to our customers the level of mycotoxin risk present using the Alltech 37+@ mycotoxin analysis lab and the physical and financial impact of that risk. Finally, step 3 is mitigation: We work with our customers to interpret the analysis reports so that they understand the physical and financial impact of mycotoxins and offer recommendations and advice on how to design and implement a mycotoxin control plan that best suits their farm.

"Another key programme is our antibiotic reduction and zinc oxide-free programme. This programme is focused on the gut health of the sow and piglet and incorporates our Seed, Feed, Weed piglet programme. We work together with pig producers to implement the Seed, Feed, Weed programme to give piglets the best possible start in life by:

1. Promoting favourable microbial communities in the gut
2. Optimising gut structures to ensure effective nutrient absorption
3. Supporting the immune system

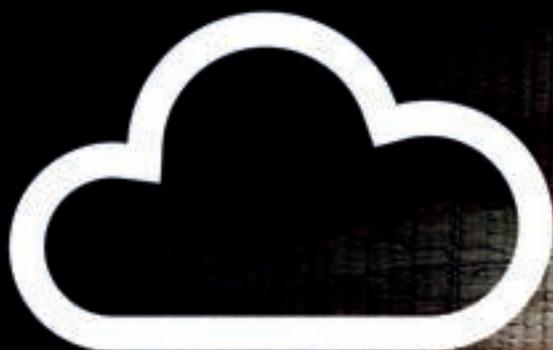
Concluding, Hazel highlights a piece of advice that she often gives to students: "Whether you're from a farming background or not, if you have a genuine passion for agriculture and are willing to work hard, you can pave a fantastic and very rewarding career path within the ag industry. And the people that you meet along the way will often become friends for life!"

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Champions for Change

As part of the FBD Champions for Change initiative with UCD, three students from the School of Agriculture and Food Science each year are awarded the title of Health and Safety Ambassadors. During the last 12 months, these three students have championed health and safety through various initiatives including developing infographics, interviewing farmers, setting up an Instagram page, and presenting to their fellow students.

Dr Sinéad Flannery who is an Assistant Professor in Behavioural Science in Agriculture, and coordinator of the Health, Welfare and Safety module in the School of Agriculture and Food Science at UCD explains: "This initiative was set up four years ago to support students in championing health and safety in agriculture, food, and nutrition by demonstrating best practice and striving for excellence in this area. Three students are selected every year – all students of agri-science, human nutrition and food sciences have to complete a Health, Welfare & Safety module in the second year of their degree programme. The top students from this module go forward for an interview to be selected as the ambassadors." Those selected spend the following year focusing on communicating their messages to students in the school, including presenting to the year below them who are participating in the Health, Welfare & Safety module. With Covid-19 restrictions this year, the ambassadors were somewhat curtailed regarding the type of work they undertook, so they utilized social media to reach out to their peers and also to the wider public on the key

messages that they wished to convey. They took over a dedicated Instagram page and populated it with regular content around the important topic of health and safety in the agri-food sector. Infographics on issues such as keeping children safe on farm and livestock safety were developed by the students and posted to the Instagram account.

"This initiative is extremely important. Agriculture is considered one of the most dangerous sectors to work in in Ireland and this must be given continued attention. Two of our most vulnerable groups – the elderly and the young – are very much at risk. We have seen increased injury and fatalities among these groups on the farm. There needs to be a behavioural change and getting positive cultural messages out there is crucial. Our ambassadors, with the support of FBD, are helping to promote awareness of the risk and hazards and contribute to the conversation here. The FBD Trust funds this ambassadorship programme on an annual basis, as part of their efforts to champion health and safety and striving for excellence in these areas."

ROBYNNE SHORTEN

Robynne is in her fourth year of Food and Agri Business Management in UCD. She grew up on a dairy farm in west Cork with her parents and four brothers. "Having grown up on a farm I always had an interest in agriculture but I also was interested in business so this course offered the best of both worlds. In fourth year in school I entered the BT Young Scientist competition and worked on a project that focused on farm safety for primary school children, which won an award, so it is a topic that is important to me.

As an FBD Health & Safety ambassador, ideally we have to do three main tasks in the year. The first task was to present to the year below about our role and the key issues of health and safety in the sector. For our second task we developed an Instagram page, posting infographics and regular stories to inform our peers and others about the hazards and risks on farms. And finally, for our third task we each chose someone who is involved in farm safety to interview. I linked in with a farmer I know – Peter Hynes – who focused on mental health and I created a video of our discussion."

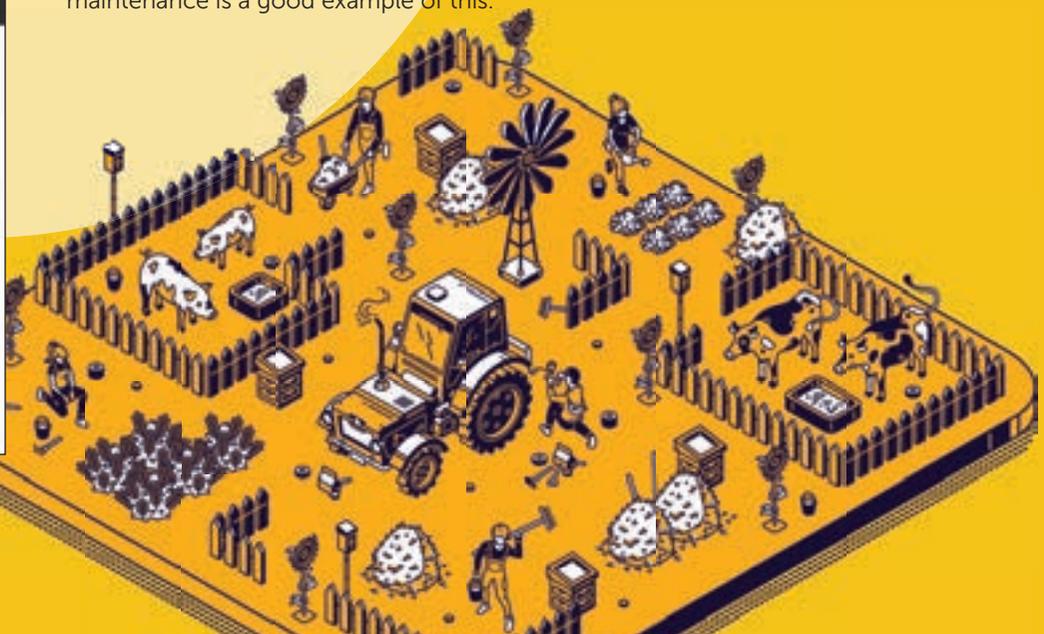
The importance of discussing health and safety on the farm is something Robynne is keen to stress: "There are a lot of near misses on farms and we don't always realise how serious these can be and the stark reality of what can happen. If the work we do as ambassadors helps one person to avoid an injury it is worth it."





MARC BRADY

Marc Brady, who is in his final year in Food & Agribusiness in UCD, is from a beef and tillage farm in Wicklow. When choosing which course to apply for when leaving school, he said he was undecided between accountancy and ag science. "Most weekends and after school I was helping out on the farm but I also had an interest in economics. The Food & Agribusiness degree offered a mix of both subjects. Commenting on the work he has undertaken as a Health and Safety Ambassador, Marc says: "It was different this year with Covid; most of our work had to be done online through Zoom and social media rather than face-to-face. Therefore, the Instagram account was important. It was also great to interview people involved in farm safety – I talked to an inspector from the HSA who went through her tips and experience that she has gained having worked in the area for the past 20 years and witnessed so many pitfalls." Highlighting the key messages that Marc and the other ambassadors focused on he explains: "Having a plan in place is crucial. Simple things can end up being the deadliest things – in your everyday routine you can become complacent. Planning and being aware of the dangers is key. Tractor maintenance is a good example of this."

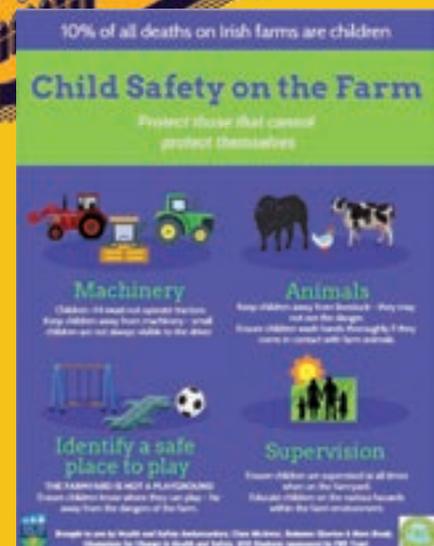


CIARA MCATEER

Ciara is from Newry in Co. Down and is studying Human Nutrition in UCD; she has a strong interest in the topic of public health and promoting health through nutrition to the general population.

Discussing the work she has undertaken as a Health and Safety Ambassador she says: "The standout message we need to promote is around awareness – to make more people aware of dangers on the farm; if you are aware of them you are more likely to identify them. Complacency is a problem as there are so many dangers on a farm.

"I was really shocked when I learned of the statistics around injuries and fatalities on Irish farms, particularly those involving children. With Covid restrictions children were spending more time on farms as well so these messages around health and safety are so important. The hope is that the work we have done will help drive awareness."



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FARM SAFETY

FBD's Top Tips

Ciaran Roche, FBD Risk Manager, outlines his top tips to ensure safety comes first on the farm.

It is a well acknowledged fact that farms are dangerous environments, especially if safety is not well managed. Sadly, every year there are many people that are either seriously or fatally injured in preventable farm accidents. There were 208 work related fatalities in Agriculture from 2011-2020, which represents 42 per cent of all workplace fatalities during the same period. With this in mind, it is imperative that farmers farm think safety first and manage safety on their farm.

1. Manage Safety on the Farm

Safety must not be left to chance, it is essential that farmers manage health and safety and safely plan work activities on their farm. This planning process should start with a risk assessment, which involves the identification of hazards, risks and the appropriate control measures. Safe systems of work should be put in place for all work being carried out, such as operation of tractors and machinery, handling of livestock and work at height. It is imperative that all safety control measures and safe systems of work are implemented. Additionally safety maintenance on farm machinery, equipment and facilities should be planned. For example, ensure that the PTO shaft on the slurry spreader is safely covered prior to the day you plan to spread slurry.

2. Make Tractor, Vehicle and Machinery Safety a Priority

Tractors and machinery can help you save time, money and increase productivity but they are also very dangerous if not operated in a safe manner. 53 per cent of all fatalities in the farming sector involve tractors, vehicles and machinery. The majority of tractor and vehicle accidents are caused by inexperienced operators, poor mechanical condition, excessive speed, lack of concentration and environmental factors such as steep

gradients. Most machinery accidents are the result of human error - the operator forgot something, took a shortcut or a risk, ignored a warning, was not paying close attention, failed to follow safety rules or did not maintain the machine and its guarding in a safe condition. Most accidents involving tractors and machinery could be prevented by putting a few basic safety measures in place. All tractors, vehicles and machinery should be maintained in good condition, adequately guarded and only operated in a safe manner by competent persons. Special attention must be given to ensure that all brakes are serviced on tractors and trailed implements, as there have been a significant number of fatalities due to brakes not working adequately.

3. Livestock Safety

There were 37 work-related fatalities involving cattle during the period 2011-2020. Most were caused by attacks by cows with calves (13), by the victim being knocked over by cattle without aggression (nine), or attacks by bulls (six). Most victims of work-related fatalities involving cattle were older people, with 70 per cent occurring to those aged 65 years or older. With this in mind it is important that cattle handlers are experienced, competent, and sufficiently agile for the class of livestock being handled.

Well-designed handling facilities are essential for safe handling of all cattle. Facilities should include securely fenced fields, good holding pens, suitable cattle crush, sculling gate, calving facilities and bull handling facilities. 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.

Particular care should be taken when handling cows at calving time as they can be nervous, agitated, excited and aggressive, even animals that are normally very docile. A

well-designed calving pen should be used to minimise the direct physical contact between the cow/heifer and the farmer.

4. Working Safely at Heights

Falls from heights are the main cause of serious and fatal injury associated with maintenance and repair work of farm buildings. Therefore, it is essential that every precaution is taken to ensure the safety of all persons working at height. It must be ensured that:

- All work at height is properly planned, organised, supervised and carried out safely;
- All work at height takes account of weather conditions;
- Equipment for work at height is carefully selected and appropriately inspected; Give collective protection measures (e.g. guard rails) priority over personal protection measures (e.g. safety harnesses);
- The risks associated with falling through fragile surfaces such as perspex sheeting or asbestos sheeting are voided by putting appropriate control measures in place.

For extensive work at height the use of scaffold or a MEWP (Mobile Elevated Work Platform) may be more appropriate than a ladder. Complex and extensive work should be left to specialist contractors.

5. Safety of Older Farms & Children

Older Farmers

47 per cent of the 208 people who died in work-related incidents in the Agricultural sector from 2011-2020 were aged 65 years or older. The physical capabilities of older farmers vary by individual, while some maintain good strength, flexibility, eyesight, and hearing well beyond age 65, others do not. Older farmers can continue to be safe and productive members of agricultural operations. The key is the ability of them and their families to recognise age-related risk factors, as well as the willingness to modify expectations and physical activity accordingly.

Children

Heartbreakingly, 21 of the 208 fatalities in the past decade occurred to victims aged under 18. It is important that children are kept away from working vehicles and machinery, dangerous livestock, dangerous activities/ areas (including slurry facilities, chemicals stores, stacks of bales, etc...). Children must be adequately supervised when they are on the farm. Remember, a farm is a great place to be and there are lots of ways children can get involved but it is not a playground. Children should play in a safe, supervised play area, away from all the hazards of a working farm.

Always Think, Safety First.

All statistics: Health & Safety Authority's A Review of Work-Related Fatalities in Agriculture in Ireland 2011-2020



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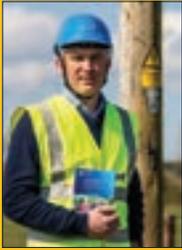
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Stay safe with electricity this winter

We can never let our guard down with electricity and we need to be particularly careful during the winter season as storms approach. ESB public safety manager **Michael Murray** is asking all farmers to remain vigilant around the farm.

There has certainly been a marked change in weather in recent weeks. This, along with shorter days, is no doubt increasing the pressure to get field work completed and ensure the performance of livestock is not compromised. This extra pressure brings its own safety risks, and I am asking farmers to also be mindful of the dangers of working near electricity wires. All I can ask is that you always take a few minutes and make sure it is safe. With electricity, the most important precaution is to keep a safe distance from overhead wires and poles. When it comes to the wiring on your farm, the advice is to always get the work done by a registered electrical contractor.

Safety tips for outdoors

Please remember that at this time of year storms and strong winds can cause damage to electricity wires and poles, so always be alert and keep a safe distance. Remember fallen electricity wires are live and therefore dangerous to approach. Report any damage immediately by contacting the ESB Networks' emergency number: phone 1800 372 999 (24/7 line).

Always watch out for electricity wires and cables. Ask yourself the question: "Are you sure it's safe?"

1. Electricity wires are always live; never approach them. Always keep a safe distance because electricity is very powerful and can jump gaps.
2. Wires can become low or fall to the ground when damaged by timber or wind, so always know where wires and poles are on your land, and anticipate dangers, especially when dark.
3. If you see fallen or low wires, keep clear and phone ESB Networks immediately.
4. Never use ESB poles or wires to attach things to.
5. Do not work near overhead wires and contact ESB Networks.
6. If cutting hedges be mindful of the presence of electricity wires and poles. Always 'Look Out and Look

Up' for wires and poles and contact ESB Networks before carrying out work near the electricity network.

Electrical safety tips this winter

There is greater demand on electricity use during the winter months. Around your home, farm and workplace ensure that all electrical fittings and equipment are in good condition. Make sure outdoor lights and portable/temporary electrical equipment is properly rated for outdoor use and plug them into a portable residual current device (RCD, sometimes called a trip switch) for extra safety.

- A** Only use electrical equipment that is fit for purpose and in good condition; this includes wiring, light fittings, and sockets.
- B** Check for damaged or frayed wires, loose connections, damaged or cracked plugs, any signs of discoloration.
- C** With damaged equipment, disconnect from the electricity supply immediately – it is always safer to disconnect remotely at your electrical distribution board. Replace faulty equipment when safe to do so.
- D** Electrical equipment generates heat, always switch off when not in use and keep any combustible materials clear.

The 'Always' list

- Always unwind extension leads completely to avoid overheating and don't overload sockets with adaptors or extension blocks.
- Always check that the RCD (trip switch) works by pushing the test button. This is located at your electrical distribution board.
- Always test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to ensure they are working.
- Always get advice from a registered electrical contractor when carrying out electrical repairs. Information www.safeelectric.ie



NETWORKS



ARE YOU SURE IT'S SAFE?

Always ask yourself the question, are you sure it's safe?

When working on the farm, remember to always look up and look out for overhead electricity wires.

Plan ahead when moving high loads or operating farm machinery and stay clear of electricity poles, stays and overhead wires.

Always stay safe and stay clear of electricity wires.

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Alert the ESB

There were two serious incidents in recent weeks involving farm machinery. These involved a maize harvester and a tractor in one case and plough in another, where a stay was damaged and a pole knocked, resulting in lines falling, in one case across a main road. The disturbing aspect was that it was a member of the public that alerted us, not the people directly involved. At all times

I would urge that the person or people directly involved in an incident immediately make the alert call. That's how we can minimise the risk to life or property. Weather is often a factor in electrical outages and fallen or damaged lines. Farmers can be a main point of contact because they are often out and about at all hours. I appreciate their cooperation in reporting incidents so that we can

all stay safe. If a tree falls across a line or something look dangerous after strong winds, then report it, even if the system is still operating. Under no circumstances approach or handle electricity wires. They may still be live even if current to houses or farmyards is cut off. Always assume the wires are live and keep livestock away from damaged electrical infrastructure. Livestock losses from electrocution are,

unfortunately, a regular occurrence.

Generator installation

Mobile generators, if not installed correctly can cause serious difficulties and risks. Change-over switches are a mandatory requirement and must be installed by an electrician. If not installed correctly we have lots of examples in our safety management systems of back-feeding current into the network. That creates risks for our employees as well as members of the public if lines are down.

Summary

At all times be aware of overhead lines. Do not store items or park machinery under wires. Under no circumstances go near fallen wires even if there are livestock affected or in close proximity. Make immediate contact with ESB Networks if there is any issue causing you concern in relation to electrical installations running across your farm. For farmyard or household electrical installations, go to your electrical distribution board and press the test button or RCB (trip-switch) to ensure that it is working. That's a very good safety device that will keep everyone working on the farm and in the house safe. Watch out for frayed wires, rodent damage or water leakage onto an installation. Check all connections visually and replace anything that needs replacing using an electrician to do the work to the highest safety standard. We depend on electricity. It is a wonderful product. It must, however, be treated with respect and care at all times.

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Majella Philpott
& Peter Gohery



The reality of a farm accident

It is 12 years since Galway farmer Peter Gohery suffered an horrendous farm accident that changed his life for ever. Here, Matt O’Keeffe talks to Peter about the event and the consequences for him and his family.

“It was a Saturday and I was working on the farm. My 10-year-old son, Ryan, who had originally planned to go to the Fair in Ballinasloe, decide to stay and give me a hand with the farm work. I had a range of jobs lined up, including dosing and castrating cattle and some machinery work, so I put on a pair of waterproof overalls and a pair of steel-toe-capped wellingtons. My knee came out through the waterproof overalls just before we went in to eat dinner so, before I went back to work, I cut off most of the waterproof material that had been ripped, leaving just a small 100mm long shred that I paid no notice to. We then went back to the farmyard and continued working until 5pm when we took out the diet feeder to load some ration for cattle. I noticed a knocking noise in the feeder when I ran it so, leaving it turning slowly, I went around the back to climb up and have a look inside. On my way, I decided to change around the four hydraulic pipes as they were in the wrong sequence.

The drive shaft was still running and had no cover on it. When I stood back after changing the pipes, I couldn’t feel the ground under my left leg. I thought that was odd, I looked down and saw that my leg was gone, clean off below the knee. As I reached to press the PTO off-button I was thrown across to the other side of the power take-off. By then I had broken the two bones in my left arm and shattered the ankle of my right leg. Skin and muscle were also stripped from my right shin. So, I was very close to having been double amputated that evening. I was lucky, in one way, that I was still alive; unlucky in that it happened at all. My son turned off the PTO and brought my wife Jean, Ryan’s mother, down to the yard. She put tourniquets on my limbs and called the paramedics.”

The aftermath

A long series of operations followed and a challenging period of recuperation. Peter found it very difficult to get

back into farming in the manner he had been involved previously: "We had 50 sucklers and sometimes held over the weanlings to sell as stores depending on autumn prices. We also finished store lambs bought in during the autumn. There was plenty of farm work in addition to some construction work I was involved in. Just the mundane things were difficult, like getting into and operating the loader-digger. Then, just turning around in the seat to operate the controls was a problem because the prosthetic leg was hitting off the steering and controls. I ended up getting out of the sucklers and moving towards tillage because I could operate the tractor. Still, it wasn't easy, just hitching onto implements was difficult. Something as simple as hooking up to a trailer was a huge challenge because I didn't have my left leg to control the clutch. My son Ryan helped me a lot at that time. We were conscious of not taking him out of school as education is important and we wanted him to have choices later on."

Getting the safety message across

Peter's entire life has been impacted by the accident and health and safety became a real focus for him: "For me, life changed enormously. I went back to college and took a degree in health and safety. It could be said that I left it late to consider safety since my own lack of safety resulted in my accident. I speak regularly about safety issues and often I roll up my trouser leg and show



Peter Gohery speaking with Vincent Nally & his wife Anette

people the reality of what happened to me. I have even rotated the prosthesis one hundred and eighty degrees and thrown it across a power shaft to highlight what is involved in a real-life accident. That's when the message hits home and people begin to pay attention."

An advertisement for HiSPEC agricultural machinery. The top section features the HiSPEC logo, the website HISPEC.NET, and the phone number 059 9721929. Below this is a red vertical auger feeder in a farm setting, with text indicating a capacity of 7m³ to 32m³ and the slogan "Mix all ingredients into a complete ration". The bottom section shows a red mix-max diet feeder, with text indicating a capacity of 10m³ to 24m³ and the slogan "Creates exceptionally even mix".

The power of positivity

"I was always aware of the need to show positivity even when I was in hospital recovering. If I let the situation get the better of me and stopped talking, for instance, then people would have stopped visiting and encouraging me. Even when I came home, we had lots of visitors and that helped me enormously. Talking is great therapy. I know not everyone can handle their circumstances in the same way but through Embrace Farm, we try to show positivity to survivors, whether the individuals who suffer accidents or their families and friends who also need help and encouragement. People feel inadequate, they are no longer able to work as they did before, perhaps no longer to be the breadwinner they were previously. I take comfort from the fact that it wasn't my son who volunteered to change the hydraulic pipes and suffered catastrophic injuries. That would have been so much harder to endure than my own injuries. Would I have been able to handle that? I don't think I would. I can look back and say: 'it happened to me but it could have been worse. It could have been my son'."

"The accident was entirely my own fault. I always ensured that the people who worked with me on building sites were safety conscious but when I got home to the farm all that went out the window. I believed that something like that couldn't happen to me. I thought I knew it all in terms of safety measures and advice. Because I didn't have a simple guard on the power shaft at a cost of no more than €100, my family and I have to live with the consequences for ever more. My first prosthetic leg was free from the health service. My second leg cost €10,000 and the current one cost €40,000. An initial cost of €100 would have saved a lot of hardship and expense."

MESSAGES:

- ▶ Plan now for 2022.
- ▶ Appropriate clover care now will ensure good clover next year
- ▶ Body condition score all cows and R2's now and act
- ▶ To buy or not to buy expensive nitrogen
- ▶ Closing farm cover drives spring grass
- ▶ Plan your dry cow strategy
- ▶ Dose for parasites
- ▶ Good winter management of replacements essential

By Matt Ryan

PLAN NOW FOR 2022

- ▶ With the likely increased pressures from Brexit, reduced Nitrogen, environmental demands, increased costs of farm inputs and labour shortages on the horizon, now more than ever, you need to plan your way forward. November is key month.
- ▶ Planning, starting now, will be essential to successfully negotiate these challenges next year and beyond.
- ▶ The essential driver of any dairy farm is stocking rate; overall and on milking platform (MP).
 - ▶ If you want to keep the system simple and close to environmental expectations while at the same time being very profitable, then you should target an overall stocking rate of 2.5 cows/ha and 2.8 – 3.3 cows/ha on MP – research back this up.
 - ▶ Most farmers are overstocked by up to 20 per cent with poor performing/bad cows. How logical is that? Therefore, use all the information you have to identify and rid yourself of the bottom 10-20 per cent of your herd for next year.
- ▶ Financial planning, which most farmers are very neglectful of, starts now:
 - ▶ The high price for milk this year could make farmers complacent but our 'long-memory' tells us that it never lasts.
 - ▶ The essentials are: dry cow treatment, cow BCS, replacement heifer weight targets, investment in lime, P & K, staff for spring, pay essential creditors, adequate land area for the livestock planned for next year.
 - ▶ To do a financial plan now you must update your 2021, current year, financial accounts. This is possible because very few financial transactions take place in December –

you will be 95 -98 per cent accurate. This gives you a lead into the 2022 plan – where you can reduce cost and where you can expect to make more sales.

- ▶ From this you will know the quantities of: fertiliser (€450/ha), meal (500-600kgs/cow), veterinary products and medicine, dairy products, insurance, etc.
- ▶ With this information you should get three quotations/tenders from different merchants for each individual input.
- ▶ A lot of thought needs to be put into your labour/staff requirement for 2022, both in terms of quantity and type.
 - ▶ One labour unit should, in an efficient set up, be able to manage 130-160 cows with extra help during the calving season and weekend relief with significant contractor service back-up. Some large cow farmers get in a “night time calver”, which is a great idea! The idea should be considered by 2-3 medium sized farmers who might share one such person, operating to strict hygiene protocols.
 - ▶ How and where can I source this “help”? You must be proactive through all public media.
- ▶ Associated with labour is the need to “Contract rear calves”. This is determined by the acreage available to “carry planned livestock” in 2022 and not by spring labour availability.

CLOVER MANAGEMENT NOW:

- ▶ Because of the expected high price for Nitrogen next year and reduced levels of N use on farm proposed, it is essential to manage clover swards now so that they maximise their potential in 2022. One of the few ways to reduce your N bills and reduce N losses to the atmosphere and waterways.
- ▶ 2021 reseeds with clover and oversown clover swards should be grazed last in the last rotation. This will free up the clover from competition from grass which will facilitate stolon development.
- ▶ Old established low clover content swards should get the same management as outlined for new reseeds above.
- ▶ Very good clover swards should be closed as normal, that is, leave the usual covers over the winter. These swards must be grazed early in spring so that the clover content isn't reduce.
- ▶ Excessively high content clover swards should be closed with the highest covers. The high grass cover will allow competition so that the clover content is reduced to acceptable levels next year.
- ▶ High potash (K) levels, index 3 -4, are essential to encourage stolon development this autumn – an absolute must do task.



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Management Hints

- ▶ Phosphate is required for tap root development and while not as essential at this time, it must be at index 3-4.
- ▶ Lime is the other essential so that the pH is greater than 6.3.
- ▶ Farmers are spending all this money on clover and reseed, which is a waste of money if these soil fertility criteria are not met.
- ▶ If you are going to sow clover next year it might be a good idea to buy a clover safe spray, such as Clovermax or Underclear, now as the availability of such sprays is likely to be in short supply next year.

COW CONDITION NOW DRIVES PROFIT IN 2022

- ▶ Many farmers are careless about managing cows based on their body condition.
 - ▶ Every extra 50 kg body weight (one condition score) will deliver 450 to 600 litres of extra milk next year, as long as cows remain under BS 3.5 at calving.

Table 1: Recommendations for dry cow feeding based on body condition score and silage quality

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

- ▶ Table 1 outlines the feeding regime for cows this winter. Based on this there are 3 analytical facts (if you do not know them get them done) that you must be aware of:
 1. BCS,

2. Silage analysed DMD and minerals status,
 3. Cows' calving dates.
- ▶ This means feeding cows in batches appropriate to their BCS.
 - ▶ Some farmers frown on this advice but it will result in 3-4 more cows per 100 being incalf, less calving problems and more milk per cow next year.

It will also save feed in that no cow will get over fat due to over-feeding.

- ▶ Before making feed adjustment decisions it is important to realise:
 - ▶ That no body weight is laid down in the last month of pregnancy.
 - ▶ For Feb calvers we now only have 60 days to bring cow to BCS of 3.3+.
 - ▶ That for every half BCS (30-36kgs) that has to be 'put on' the cow will require 160 – 200kgs of extra meal over and above her daily requirement of 10-12 kgs DM.
 - ▶ Therefore, over the next 60 days, if a cow is half a score short she will have to get an extra 2-3kgs meal/day.
 - ▶ More efficient BC is laid down while the cow is milking; therefore, put cow with BCS less than 2.75 on OAD milking while continuing to feed the appropriate feed levels (12-14% P).
 - ▶ It requires 72 mj of energy during the dry period compared with 50mj during milking to put on one kg of weight gain.
 - ▶ Palm kernel/barley/soya hulls will be good enough to achieve weight gain.



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- ✓ Improved reproductive performance





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MANAGE HIGH PROFIT

- ▶ With the very price for milk and the not-too-high cost of inputs plus the reasonable weather year, dairy farmers are predicted to have a good profit year. Therefore, more tax to be paid.
- ▶ Nobody likes paying excessive amounts of tax, particularly when you know next year or the year after could be a poor profit year.
- ▶ You must help your tax accountant to be able to advise you by having all costs and sales documentation with him in early November.
- ▶ Generally, that will mean spending this year what you will be purchasing next year.
 - ▶ Most fertiliser and meal bills are accrued in the first 6 months of the following year. Calculate these requirements and purchase now if you think they are value for money,
 - ▶ Veterinary medicines, teat dips (30-40 cc/cow/day), minerals, could now be forward bought by getting 2-3 quotations.
 - ▶ Contractors, vets, local handy-man and anyone owed money should be paid now.
 - ▶ Pay off all credit card bills also.
- ▶ As we learned from the Greenfield Project, you should put aside a “rainy day fund” so as to ‘risk manage’ a possible a bad farming year in the near future.
- ▶ Assemble your Dairy Profit Monitor now so as to competently plan your way through 2022, but leave out forward purchased goods.

UREA €400 V €700/TON: TO BUY OR NOT?

- ▶ There is a lot of depressing news around about next year’s fertiliser costs. The latter figure may not be the cost next year but it important to debate a ‘what if’ scenario.
- ▶ I quote from a discussion group debate in
- ▶ At the price of €700/ton for Urea (seems outlandish, but it has been mentioned), and if a farmer was trying to make up his mind, then he would be €57.23/cow worse off.
 - ▶ It would increase the cost of grazed grass by €63 per ton DM or 6.3 c/kg. If meal doesn’t increase in price, then it is likely that there would be increased meal fed.
 - ▶ Some say that if this occurs it will speed up the move to lower N inputs!
- ▶ This exercise may help you make up your own mind.

GRASS AVAILABILITY DECIDES HOUSING DATE!

- ▶ The days of housing animals when all the grass is eaten are long gone because:
 - ▶ A very large proportion of the available grass in spring is

Table 2: Comparing Urea outcomes at two costs. (Source: Members Navan Group)

	2022		2021
Urea (cost/ton)	€700		€400
Kg N/ton	460		460
Cost/kg N	€1.52		€0.87
Kg N/ha	250		250
Cost/ha	€380		€217
Grass Grown	14 tons DM/ha		14 tons DM/ha
Cost/ton for N	€27.17		€15.53
DM/cow/yr.	5 tons		5 tons
Cost/cow for N	€136		€78
Extra cost N	€58.23/cow/yr.		
No N applied		6 ton DM/ha	
+ 250kg N	Cost = €380	14 ton DM/ha	
Extra Cost N	€63/ton DM		

grass that has grown the previous October/November.

- ▶ Every day at grass in spring is worth €2.80 per cow more profit,
- ▶ Each day’s delay in closing after 1st Nov will result in there being 12 Kgs DM per hectare less grass on the paddock in March next year.
- ▶ Grass yield next spring will be increased by 0.6 Kgs DM per hectare for every 1 Kg DM per hectare left on the paddocks in early November.
- ▶ Therefore, we need the last rotation to begin in early Oct and finish in late Nov (earlier depending on soil type etc.) and this can be done with good planning,
- ▶ More than 60-70 per cent of the last rotation must be completed by the first week of November.
- ▶ From 20 Oct to closing date you will be grazing 40 per cent of the grazing area and this will be grazed from 17th March until the end of the first rotation. These last paddocks will be awkward in size, furthest from yard, with poorer grazing infra-structures, older pastures, slower growing, silage ground etc.
- ▶ The target average farm cover (AFC) at closing depends on your stocking rates, calving date and land type and are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Autumn Average Farm Closing covers (kg DM/Ha)

2.5 Cows/ha	3.0 Cows/ha	3.5 Cows/ha
650	700	750

- ▶ Table 3 lists out the targets which are recommended for a mid-November closing date. If earlier it should be less and more if later.



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- ▶ If aiming to have 30-40 per cent of milking platform grazed by 1st March, then these targets should be increased by 50kg DM/ha.
- ▶ No matter where the cows are or how much is on the next paddock, you must obey this rule.

Otherwise, you will not have enough grass for early let out in 2022.

- ▶ On-off grazing is the rule for grazing management in November:
 - ▶ You must never do anything to cause poaching damage,
 - ▶ Only graze cows for 2-3 hours /day and then bring them in.
 - ▶ Never, ever let out cows when it is raining – wait until afternoon.
 - ▶ Unfortunately, it is poorly done on many farms!

PLAN YOUR DRY COW STRATEGY

- ▶ From a mastitis point of view when should you dry off cows? It must be based on:

Expected calving date and yield: you must leave at least 56 days to calving so as to enhance the cure rate (10 weeks best of all).

- ▶ SCC levels in individual cows: cows over 300,000 cells/ml should be dried off early.
- ▶ First calvers should be dried off when they have 270 days milked to let the udder develop/heal and allow time for the heifer to grow.
- ▶ Prepare for drying off by having a policy on the following:
 - ▶ Decide which antibiotic to use by consulting your vet but always follow the manufacturer's instructions,
 - ▶ Dry off cows milking less than 7 litres per day,
 - ▶ If the herd SCC level is high get a sensitivity test done (talk to your Vet),
 - ▶ Change the dry cow tube (active ingredient) every 3 to 4 years and do not use a dry cow tube with the same antibiotic as the lactating tube used during the season, particularly if the cure rate was low.
 - ▶ Dry off cows abruptly - no once-a-day milking,
 - ▶ Have a culling policy; sell off cow that had 3 or more clinical cases during the current lactation and/or three or

more readings over 300,000 cells/ml, especially if the cow is old,

- ▶ As younger cows are generally not chronic you should CMT test (a cheap, simple do-it-yourself job) them, prior to drying off, to identify the problem quarter/s. Then treat this quarter with two lactating tubes + dry cow tube + sealer. If there are two or more problem quarters, a course of injectable antibiotic may be required, under veterinary supervision,
 - ▶ Seven days before expected drying off, withdraw meal feeding and reduce grass availability.
 - ▶ With veterinary advice, seriously consider using no antibiotic on cows with SCC's below 100,000 – use a teat seal very carefully.
 - ▶ On the day – choose a good time, say 11.00 am-, adhere to the following routine:
 - ▶ Milk out quarters fully,
 - ▶ Disinfect the teat end, starting with the furthest away teats, vigorously rubbing the teat end for 10-15 seconds with cotton wool soaked in methylated spirits,
 - ▶ Avoid contamination of nozzle,
 - ▶ Infuse the contents into the nearest quarters, to avoid contamination, and massage the into the udder to disperse the antibiotic,
 - ▶ Infuse sealer if being used – do not massage teat after sealer is infused,
 - ▶ Teat spray (20 mls) all quarters thoroughly,
 - ▶ Record cow number, date, and product detail (withdrawal time) for each cow,
- As the cow is most at risk of infection during the first 21 days after treatment, it is essential to keep her in a clean environment or on bare pastures, keeping a vigilant eye on her for new infection,
- ▶ Keep dry cows separate from milkers, if possible.
 - ▶ Teat sealers are non-antibiotic substances used to prevent new infection during the dry period. They are particularly useful for:
 - ▶ Cows with extended dry periods,
 - ▶ Where there have been new infections in the dry period during the previous years,

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- ▶ They may be better than an antibiotic product at preventing E.coli at calving where the risk is high or where there is a history of the problem,
- ▶ Some farmers use teat seal only on cows where the cell count is less than 100,000/ml and no history of clinical mastitis. This is the future – antibiotic free!
- ▶ There is a lot of detail to be adhered to in administering dry cow drugs correctly.

PARASITE CONTROL:

- ▶ Fluke, as well as rumen fluke, seems to be a problem this year on almost all farms:
 - ▶ Dose at housing for Liver and Rumen Fluke with a product that kills all stages of fluke. But if the product only kills immature fluke you must give a second dose 2-3 weeks after the 1st dose.
 - ▶ Go to www.animalhealthireland.ie for specific advice on all parasite prevention/control information.
- ▶ Weanlings (all) must be dosed for stomach worms (Type 11) and hoose at housing. Hoose or stomach worms generally should not concent cows and older stock but recently they have become a problem, therefore, a dung or milk sample could confirm the exact status.
- ▶ All stock should be treated for lice in November.
- ▶ Lameness has become a problem on many Irish farms, resulting in severe condition loss:
 - ▶ Use the Farm Relief Service to examine, and act on advice (money well spent).
 - ▶ Footbath cows on 3 consecutive days every month during winter.
 - ▶ Use bluestone at 4-5 Kgs in 100 litres water.
 - ▶ Dung must not be allowed build up on yards.

WINTER MANAGEMENT OF REPLACEMENTS

- ▶ In calf heifers should now be 80 per cent of their mature weight - 450kgs for Holsteins and 430kgs for Jersey X's.
 - ▶ Animals that are 25-30 kgs underweight will milk 200-300 litres less next year and will be slower to go back in calf,
 - ▶ For every kg a heifer is under target she requires 5-6 kgs of extra meal to get 1 kg of weight gain.
 - ▶ Remember the last month before calving does not count for weight gain as the animal's intake is way below normal.
 - ▶ Divide up heifers by weight/BCS group because of the different levels of management required - it will pay!
- ▶ Weanling replacement heifers should now weigh 40 per cent of their mature weight - 225 kgs for Holsteins & 215kgs for Jersey X's.
 - ▶ As the conversion rate is 4:1 for weanlings (4kgs meal required to give 1kg weight gain), then an animal that is 30 kgs underweight will require 120kgs of meal. With a letting out date of 15 Feb and no meals for last 2 weeks indoors that leaves 90 days of meal feeding. Therefore, 1.3kgs/day of meal must be fed from 1st Nov to weanlings that are 30 kgs underweight.
 - ▶ Follow the recommendations in Table 4.
- ▶ It is obvious from this that it will pay to feed light incalf heifers and weanlings meals.
- ▶ In-calf heifers should NOW be mixed in with 2nd calvers or thin cows so that they are 'used to' animals from the main herd and will suffer less from bullying if not mixed until after

calving.

- ▶ In a trial in NZ they mixed heifers (A) with cows on 1st November and (B) with cows after calving in early Feb. How did this affect heifer weight?
- ▶ The B's were heavier than the A's on the 1st Feb but the A's were heaviest on the 1st May. What is the message? Remember this story – stress has a big effect!
- ▶ It is obvious that a weighing scale is essential to manage heifer targets, therefore, discussion groups should buy one between each 3-4 members.

Table 4: Meal requirements for Weanling Heifers on Silage

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

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Experience the new G Series

The Valtra G Series was launched last August and immediately after the G135 Versu was awarded the title Tractor of the Year 2021 Best Utility at the TOTY 2021 awards. Since then the awards have kept coming and the G135 also received the Red Dot Design Award 2021 in the Red Dot: Product Design award series and most recently was the only tractor to be awarded in this year's Design Award competition.

The Valtra G Series is a small giant, a compact multipurpose tractor that can be operated comfortably while performing tasks effortlessly. The Valtra G Series was the first of the new 5th generation of Valtra tractors and neatly fits between the popular A and N Series. It is a compact but powerful multi-purpose tractor for everyday farming needs and combines a compact size with agility and a modern design.

The G Series has a modern and spacious cab with 5.7 square metres of glass, including 0.35 square metres in the panoramic roof. Cab suspension further enhances comfort along with heated mirrors, air conditioning, a lower cab heater and USB charging plugs that are available with the auxiliary power pack.

It is designed to be the ideal tractor for front-loader tasks. It

comes with an integrated heavy duty subframe, a lock-and-go loader attachment and a modern clean beam design with enclosed pipework. The visibility is excellent, including a high visibility roof. Curved parallel lift rods follow the tractor bonnet line. The fully tailored loader portfolio has electronic controls in all versions.

The G Series is also the first tractor in the 100–145 hp range to offer SmartTouch controls as well as full precision farming capabilities. All smart functions can be controlled from the unique SmartTouch armrest with just a couple of taps or swipes. In case you opt for an Active, you can have the SmartFarming features and control them through the SmartTouch Extend screen. Valtra Guide helps to improve efficiency, reduce overlap and enhance operator comfort, whatever the farm size. Valtra's famous easy-to-use Smart Farming solutions are available in Versu and Active models. Valtra Connect telemetry, that records tractor activity and GPS movements all the time, is standard on Versu models of the G Series, while powerful load-sensing hydraulics are standard on Active and Versu models.

The G Series comes equipped with unbeatable Valtra transmission automatics. All models have integrated park position and AutoTraction to help you get a smooth



start. The new 6 speed Powershift gives you better work speed possibilities than before. The revolutionary Valtra automatics include features like automatic shifting – AUTO1 offers a speed pedal function and adjustable engine braking while AUTO2 gives the operator freedom to select shift limits. There's even a hill hold function integrated to all G Series models, and in addition, our top-of-the-range Versu model offers a CVT-like lever driving function.

Underneath the G Series an AGCO Power compact engines offer great power and torque feature. The compact 4.4 l engine with small dimensions enables a low bonnet with great visibility. The all-in-one engine after-treatment system cleans the exhaust according to stage V standards. The compact unit is located wholly on the right side of the tractor, under the cab, where it keeps not only the exhaust gas clean but also the visibility field open. High air intake as well as a solution with no need for exhaust recirculation keeps the air fresh and clean for the engine. A great feature is available on the fuel-efficient G125 EcoPower model. Simply pushing a button remaps the engine so that peak torque is produced as just 1100rpm. This reduces the engine speed without impacting the forward speed of the tractor. Valtra introduced option packages a year ago in connection with the launch of the G Series. The G Series comes with a number of cost-effective options to meet your needs and it is quick and easy to select the features you need and want. The Option Packages range from improved comfort features and easier applications handling all the way to advanced precision farming technologies. In addition, you can complete your working machine with the Front loader package and finish it with Valtra Unlimited customisation options.



Climate concerns

In the last few months, my column has examined issues of climate change – in some ways I was straying away from my chosen subject, which is machinery – however the issues are inextricably linked

as changing farming practices going forward means changes in machinery requirements in the future. The main topic on the news as I sit to write this column is COP 26, where 200 global leaders have gathered to discuss how they are going to tackle environmental concerns. But with the two of the biggest offenders in green house gas emissions – China and Russia – absent, what does that say regarding their commitment in this area?

The one-liners are flying out from the podiums of Glasgow already – 'The last hope to avert climate disaster', 'if Glasgow fails, it will all fail', and so on... From an Irish perspective, agriculture in this country accounts for one third of green house gas emissions and I personally have no doubt that the agri-industry will do their part to achieve our targets: farmers are not slow to change and adapt. Agricultural is part of the problem but it is also part of the solution. Take a look at New Zealand who are developing methane vaccines to tackle emissions: they are producing a vaccine from red seaweed and incorporating it with animal feeds to help reduce CO2 emissions. Globally, there are 1.5 billion cows on the planet putting out 100kg of methane each and this is one solution on the table. We have been quick in the past to run after New Zealand practices in farming; why not adapt this practice? We have 625 different species of seaweed around our coast; why not look at this process, adding potential employment in coastal areas using natural raw materials and it would be a big boost to aquaculture industry?

Getting back to tractors, recently I travelled to Bologna in Italy to the Tractor of the Year Awards (Toty), which was held at the EIMA International Agricultural Machinery Show. It was my first business trip in 18 months and it was good to be back. This is one of the main shows in Europe, which ran over five days. There were 1,350 companies exhibiting from over 40 countries. Over 270,000 people attended the event, allowing for Covid restrictions and organisers were very pleased with the event and turnout from across Europe.

Meanwhile, every year Mayo-based Genfitt, who are importers and distributors of spare parts, produce their annual Knowledge Report. Those surveyed included manufacturers, dealers and agri-traders. The research shows that nearly half (47 per cent) of companies surveyed stated that Covid had a positive effect on their business, with only 22 per cent stating it had a negative effect. 50 per cent of companies surveyed rated 2021 as a better business year than 2020. The main concerns highlighted were Brexit, price increases, raw materials and getting stock. More than 60 per cent of the companies surveyed stated that Brexit is a major cause for concern, citing that increased costs, more paperwork and uncertainty are key issues. I will be featuring more on this report in later editions.

So, until next month, farm wisely and farm safely.

Shallow soil tillage with the AMAZONE C-Mix duckfoot share

Due to increasing requirements for field hygiene and more attention to ground water conservation, shallow soil tillage is becoming increasingly important. Weed seeds and volunteer grains need to be kept near the soil surface, whilst germinated plants are completely cut off at the root. Full-surface, light soil movement not only fights weeds, but also disrupts negative water capillary action near the surface. This allows valuable ground water to be preserved for the subsequent crop. New soil tillage tools are constantly being developed to meet this need. When it comes to cultivators, the most suitable tool for shallow, full-surface soil tillage is the duckfoot share. Compared with a wing share, the duckfoot achieves significantly shallower working. For cultivators in the Cenio and Genius product ranges, AMAZONE offers the C-Mix duckfoot share with a width of 320 mm. With a maximum tine spacing of 30 cm, there is a 2-cm overlap between the shares. This ensures uniform, full-surface



movement, whatever the conditions. In addition, the C-Mix duckfoot share is extremely flat along its entire width, so that it remains parallel to the ground surface and ensures a uniform, shallow cut. Germinated weeds and volunteers are cleanly cut, so they can dry out. For optimal results, the wear condition of the share is extremely

important. For a longer lifespan, AMAZONE now offers the duckfoot share in a highly wear-resistant HD variant. This features additional hard metal plates that are soldered into place and continually self-sharpen during the soil tillage process. This extends the service life of the share considerably and ensures consistent, clean results

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Thanks to the successful integration of precision seed drilling technology into a standard pneumatic seed drill, the Pöttinger AEROSEM offers the highest operational flexibility and is in continuous operation during the spring planting season. Working with maize today, soya tomorrow and cereals on day three - the Pöttinger AEROSEM makes it possible. This is something that is much appreciated and brings a great deal of satisfaction to the professionals using this machine. Arable farmers are impressed at how well and how easily the system works and in addition to the advantages of being able to handle such a wide range of crops, can also confirm perfect seed germination.

The drill is fitted with up to ten precision coulters for a row spacing of 37.5 cm or 75 cm, or only 12.5 cm on the AEROSEM ADD. Using the standard metering system with a distributor head add-on, fertilizer can be applied between the seed rows. Grass seed can also be drilled simultaneously, combined with individual seed drilling, to provide optimum erosion protection. With DUPLEX SEED, silage and corn maize is planted in double rows. In addition to increasing yield, it also increases output during drilling thanks to the higher driving speed. As a result, DUPLEX SEED is a real economical alternative to conventional precision seed drilling. Intelligent Distributor System (IDS) is a unique system worldwide that guarantees a consistent flow of seed to each row, saving seed material usage. The unique distributor head with integrated double-wall tube system for internal grain



return on tramlines is a guarantee that with cereals and small seeds the cross distribution values can be precisely measured - especially in the rows next to the tramlines - to ensure that seed density stays constant.

A great number of perfect coulters systems guarantee exact placement of the seed. The machine is available with 3 rows of Suffolk coulters, a single row or with DUAL DISC double-disc coulters. The Suffolk coulters are suitable for light soil with low levels of organic matter. A coulters pressure of up to 55 lbs / 25 kg can be applied to Suffolk coulters and single-disc coulters. The large DUAL DISC coulters cut right through surface trash to form a uniform, tidy furrow. Depending on the type of seed, the metering wheels can be exchanged quickly and easily.



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Latest updates from Claas

New equipment features for Claas JAGUAR 900 forage harvesters have been developed; and a new 4.20m wide rear-mounted mower, the DISCO 4400 CONTOUR, has been added to the CLAAS DISCO range.

The forage harvesters of the JAGUAR 900 model series now benefit from a raft of new features associated with the feeder unit, the corncracker, and the silage additive dosing system. Further new developments are also available for the ORBIS and PICK UP front attachments.

The most significant new development for the JAGUAR 900 model series is the expansion of the options for the front attachment drive. In addition to the all-mechanical drive and the variable drive for the PICK UP grass and ORBIS maize headers, it is now possible for customers to specify a twin hydraulic drive which offers particular benefits when working with the PICK UP.

With this option, the intake auger continues to be driven via the quick-release coupler and can adjust its speed in accordance with the length of cut; the pick-up reel, however, is provided with an all-new hydraulic drive which allows it to be driven with variable speed adjustment independently of the intake auger. The principal objective of enabling the pick-up reel speed to be varied is to allow it to be adjusted automatically to the forager's ground speed, so the faster the forward speed the faster the pick up reel speed.

Important advantages associated with this functionality include efficient raking action at all ground speeds with extremely low wear; if the ground speed or the set length of cut is changed, the rotational speeds of the auger and reel are adjusted automatically to the prevailing conditions. If necessary, both speeds can be adjusted to the requirements of the harvesting situation manually by the operator from the cab. It is therefore possible to respond to changing harvesting conditions either automatically or manually from the cab. The result says Claas, especially in changing conditions, is even more accurate crop feeding and a more consistent crop flow overall.

Studies of large swaths of whole crop silage harvested using the PICK UP conducted in California with a JAGUAR 990 have shown increased throughput levels of up to 13.7% in extreme conditions compared with an all-mechanical constant drive. These major advantages always come into their own when very high yields are harvested at low ground

speeds or low yields are harvested at very high ground speeds.

Silage additive app for precision dosing

Farmers and contractors are increasingly relying on silage additives when confronted with high dry matter levels in the grass harvest. In order to simplify dosage preparation for the factory fitted silage additive system, CLAAS has developed a practical app. This helps the operator to find the appropriate dosage and the correct set-up on the basis of the crop, the yield, and the information provided by the silage additive manufacturer. In this way, both underdosage and excess dosage of valuable silage additive can be avoided.

The following key data are entered in the app to allow the correct dosage to be calculated for a given job: Expected yield per hectare; Size of area to be harvested; Working width; Expected working speed; Recommended dosage specified by silage additive manufacturer; Size of silage additive container. Once the data have been entered, the operator can implement the recommended settings using the CEBIS terminal. The first decision in the course of this process is whether the silage additive should be dosed from the ACTISILER 37 tank or from the large 375 l water tank. The operator can also decide whether the dosing is to be performed in l/t or in l/h. The key data can be adjusted at any point while chopping is underway, for example if the machine is operating faster or slower than originally anticipated. The app is available for Android and Apple via CLAAS connect. With a second, optional dosing pump, silage additive injection can now be doubled, taking it to quantities of up to 800 l/h. Control of the system is integrated in the corresponding menu in CEBIS. This will help high capacity forage harvesters apply additive in excess of 2 l/tonne if required.

New 4.20m wide DISCO 4400 CONTOUR

A new 4.20m wide rear-mounted mower, the DISCO 4400 CONTOUR, has been added to the CLAAS DISCO range. It features central pivoting and ACTIVE FLOAT, plus an innovative vector folding system. Rear-mounted mowers

with large working widths used in front-rear combinations can be an effective alternative to triple combinations, depending on the application. CLAAS has responded to customer demand for a rear mower with a working width of more than 4.0 m with the launch of the new DISCO 4400 CONTOUR. The mower features innovative diagonal 120° folding for safe, vertical road transport at a height of less than 4.00m and a space-saving storage position combined with powerful performance.

With its 4.2m working width, the new DISCO 4400 CONTOUR becomes the flagship model in the DISCO range. As with other mowers in the DISCO range it features the well proven MAX CUT mower bed for which there is a double-swath laying option. This is achieved by placing two swath drums on the 4th and 5th disc (from the inside) to create one narrower and one wider single swath. This is especially useful on wet or soft ground as it avoids driving on the forage.

The mower bed on the DISCO 4400 is pivot-mounted at its centre of gravity. An adjustable spiral spring ensures that the mower bed comes down evenly during lowering while two vibration dampers stabilise it as it is raised. Two pivot points on the arm at right angles to the direction of travel ensure optimum ground-contour following on uneven ground and when mowing banks.

ACTIVE FLOAT suspension, tried and tested over many



years, allows the ground pressure of the mower bed to be adjusted from the cab by spool valve while on the move. A gauge on the headstock shows the currently set pressure. In parked position a mechanical latch disables the suspension system so that pressure is maintained in the circuit. Alternatively, the pressure can be reduced so that the mechanical lock is not required.

The DISCO 4400 CONTOUR is equipped with the unique hydraulic non-stop collision protection as standard. In the event of a collision, the mower bar swings back and over the obstacle thanks to a rotating pin inclined at an angle of 15 degrees. Oil from the collision protection system is forced into the suspension ram to further depressurise the mower bed. This provides effective protection from serious damage. Once past the obstacle, the mower bed automatically swings back to its working position due to the oil pressure.

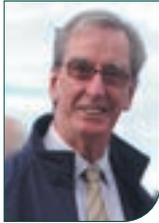
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- Central 600 l seed hopper for quick filling

Putting safety first



Tom Murphy
Professional
Agricultural
Contractors of Ireland



For decades the question of hedge cutting has been the cause of dispute between conservationists and farmers.

There can be no doubt that there is

a need to cut back hedgerow and vegetation that borders the public highway in order to keep signage visible and for safety of egress from fields and houses and of course in the majority of cases it is the farmer who has to pay the cost.

There is no doubt overgrown hedges have caused road accidents and fatalities and we need to address this issue by having a clear National Policy, agreed to by farmers, agricultural contractors, local authorities, hauliers, all relevant statutory bodies and of course the biodiversity groups.

The presence of nesting birds and wildlife in road side hedges and vegetation is often used to justify not cutting back during the closed season. However, in the majority of cases there is little evidence that this is the case.

When cutting hedgerows, be it in or out of the cutting dates, agricultural contractors often get considerable aggravation from the public and local authorities and can be prosecuted if cutting takes place during the closed season. If there is not

a clear reason of safety for road users, being engaged to do it by the farmer or landowner is no excuse in law.

Landowners and farmers have a responsibility under the Roads Act 1993 to ensure that trees, hedges and vegetation growing on their land is not a danger to those using or working on a public road or public footpath. Liability for damage or injury occurring from such hazards is with the farmer or landowner.

Local authorities should be well aware of roads where uncut hedges, trees and vegetation present a danger and need to work closely with farmers and landowners to ensure cutting takes place throughout the whole year. Whilst all Wildlife Acts since 1976 prohibit normal hedge management from March to end of August, there has always been provision to allow for cutting throughout the year where there is a danger to road users.

Slurry gas

Recent incidents of near fatalities whilst slurry was being agitated occurred when fumes seeped and became trapped in an adjoining building where there was no ventilation. This presented a very real danger to the persons entering that building. Luckily those affected survived. This is the first time a situation where slurry gas has been captured in a nearby building has been reported and has prompted the Health and Safety Authority to review guidelines for farmers both during and after slurry agitation.

It would be a wise move for farmers to carry out an assessment on their farms to establish any potential risk.







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Toty 2022

On the opening day of Eima International - on October 19th - the Awarding Ceremony of Tractor of the Year 2022 Awards took place, in Bologna Italy. This year 14 tractors from 11 different brands competed in the different categories and all the 14 finalists were also in competition for the special award Sustainable TOTY 2022.

Winner Tractor of the Year 2022

JOHN DEERE 7R 350 AUTOPOWR



This tractor wins in the open field category thanks to its on-board technology; the automation package; the wide room, the quality and comfortable level of the cabin, the excellent performance on field. Sustainability is also taken into consideration in the form of a fuel guarantee -program. Active Command Steering is an example on how the driver can widely adjust the operation to its preferences and needs. EZballast, makes it possible to automatically install and uninstall 1700 kg of ballast weight, revolutionizes the way farmers and contractors can manage ballasting, with no useless effort and time spending, to adjust the tractor to each individual task, preventing soil compaction and improving traction when it is needed.

Winner Best Utility 2022

JOHN DEERE 6120M AUTOPOWR



With a continuous variable transmission, a short wheelbase of 2400 mm, a maximum operating weight of 10.450 kg, and the latest technology for precision farming, this model is versatile enough to perform a wide range of different tasks, from front loader works to soil cultivation and transport.

Winner Best of Specialized 2022

REFORM H75 PRO



Specialized farming applications requires specialized tractors. With low center of gravity, hydrostatic transmission and the possibility to manage two implements at a time, this model is designed to perform with safety and comfort in hilly lands. The Reform impresses with its capabilities on slopes, making it ideal for buffer zones and marginal lands.

Winner Sustainable TOTY 2022

NEW HOLLAND T6.180 METHANE POWER



The first commercially produced tractor of this kind. New Holland T6 Methane Power represents a step forward to a more sustainable farming. The Fpt, 6 cylinders CNG powered engine, ensures the same performances as the diesel equivalent. It reduces fuel costs together with a significant drop of pollution and CO2 emissions, there is no SCR system, AD Blue it is not needed reducing complexity and running costs.

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Scott Hamilton, Lanarkshire,
TRION 530 MONTANA, August 2021



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Landini launch new 5 and 7 Series tractors

Last month ARGO Tractors UK held a Irish dealer open day on Paul Flynn & Sons farm in Co Dublin. On view was the new 7 Series Landini aimed at the contractor and large scale tillage farmer, along with the tractor of the year finalist – the all new Landini 5. This was its first Irish viewing by dealers and they were impressed with the new design and extended horse power ranges. Landini's plans in Ireland are to expand their dealer network to offer wider service sales and back-up to their new and existing customer base. Order books are now open, with stocks being made available in early 2022. Dealers will be able to offer the Landini Flexi finance plan, which is tailored to suit your farm practices along with 5 years 5000 hours factory warranty on all models. For more information visit your local Landini dealer.



The new LANDINI 5 stage V5 series comes in three models 5-100, 5-110 and the 5-120. The range delivers horse power from 95hp to 115hp. They are powered by FPT engines equipped with the latest technologies to meet the current emissions regulations along with ZF transmissions. There are eight transmission configurations available in this range starting with the four speed 12 forward +12 reverse with mechanical reverse shuttle to the T-Tronic48 forward+26 reverse with Hi medium low creeper. Up to six spool valves are available - three mechanical one electrical and options for two mid mounted for loader and front hitch operations. Cab options are rigid or mechanical alone with front axis.



The new spacious cab in the 5 series is impressive. The larger door makes getting in and out easier. The all-round visibility from the new cab will make this a very popular loader tractor and the easy-to-follow bright control panels will certainly appeal to the dairy livestock farmers that want a no-nonsense tractor. The new models come with the new custom pack BLUEICON finish which includes metallic blue body panels, led lights black wheel rims and much more besides.



The new LANDINI 7 series brings Landini to the next level, ready to compete with the big brands in the high horse power market. Starting with 3 models covering a horse power range from 190hp plus up to 240hp plus. Aimed at the contractor and large scale tillage farmer, this tractor range is well equipped fitted out with once again the reliable FPT engines and ZF transmissions with CVT option available. Externally the tractor has a complete new design and look. Inside the cab it is spacious the instrument panels are clearly laid out and functions are not complicated. We will see more of this tractor range over the next few months. I think Landini's aim with this tractor is to produce a 'turn key' tractor, easy to use workhorse that is easy to access for daily checks, competitively priced with a good dealer back up.

Dealer	Address
Brogan Tractors (Duncormick)	Duncormick, Co. Wexford
Byrne Tractor and Machinery Sales	The Grange, Templemore road Roscrea, Co. Tipperary E53 VR44
Gary Brogan Tractors	Shanagarry Newcastle West, Co. Limerick
Irwin Brothers	Annaghilly Farm, Magheraveely, BT92 6PG
Kevin Moore Tractors	Sion Hill Killucan, Co. Westmeath N91 ND92
Kilmeaden Tractors	Ardeenloun Kilmeaden, Co. Waterford X91 H925
Maher Tractors	Growtown, Co. Meath
McMullan Tractors	68 Moneysallin Road, Kilrea, Co. Derry
O Shea Plant Hire & Sales	Kilkenny Road, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny
O'Brien Tractors	Rathrowan, Bohola, Co. Mayo
Pat Brogan Tractors Ltd	Church Streert, Strokestown, Co. Roscommon
Ryall's Farm and Industrial Equipment Ltd	Watergrasshill, Mitchellsfort, Co. Cork T56 Y897
W J Carroll Ltd	Coolanga Upper Rossmore, Cashel, Co. Tipperary, E25 YY99



Pictured at the Irish dealer event day was Ben Agar, business development director; Naomi Bell, marketing coordinator; and Thomas McMullan, service manager for (Ireland) ARGO Tractors UK and Ireland. Ben and his team are backed up by a nationwide dealer network both North and South.

Selling the dairy message

Rory O’Keeffe, a final year student of Philosophy, Politics and Economics at University College Dublin, has a refreshing viewpoint on dairy promotion.

As someone who has milked cows, watching recent ad campaigns for Irish dairy leaves me thinking there is even more to the dairy story. I can identify personally with the shots of smiling farmers strolling amongst their black and white cows amidst the backdrop of rolling fields of endless green. As an industry, we are clearly encouraging the domestic consumer to appreciate the work and dedication that goes into producing such high-quality food and drink and those picturesque shots of cows in fields are both accurate and clever in their portrayal of the reality of Irish pasture-based milk production. Not just aesthetically pleasing, the image of the grazing cow has the ability to resonate with an increasingly environmentally aware consumer.

Unique system

Because of the ubiquity of grass on this island, consumers can almost take the concept for granted. This is why the dairy campaigns around grass-based milk production are so important. It must be continuously highlighted that this is an almost unique system of production and something to be aware of and proud of in global terms.

Worldwide, where grass is much less associated in the consumer’s mind with milk production, the grass message is even more valuable as a marketing and promotion strategy. Just ask Ornu, which has built a €1 billion butter brand on the natural production assets of Kerrygold.

Seizing the dairy narrative

The consumer is being provided with an ever-increasing choice in terms of alternatives to Irish dairy produce. The winning formula used by those advertising Irish dairy in the domestic market must be constantly reinforced and developed, to attract the attention and favour of the young domestic consumer.

While a recent study revealed only 13 per cent of 25-34 year olds say they adhere to a non-dairy diet, this figure is still a worrying one as it is likely to grow in the coming years if the connection weakens between the young, questioning consumer and the story of the primary producer. The connection can be strengthened by highlighting how modern Irish dairy farms work. We cannot

allow the narrative to be seized by forces antagonistic to Irish dairy. Those who market Irish dairy products in Ireland must continue to own the narrative by bringing young consumers into the heart of Irish dairy farming with real insights and authentic, memorable content.

All to play for

What has been particularly noticeable and positive over the last few years is the National Dairy Council’s adaption to the era of the influencer by getting the likes of Greg O’Shea and Doireann Garrihy onboard to help promote Irish dairy to the younger domestic cohort of consumers, of which I myself am a part. Now is the time for the NDC, who also have Ireland’s Olympic heroine Kellie Harrington as an ambassador, to get even more bang for their buck with the likes of O’Shea, Garrihy and Harrington. I believe there is a massive opportunity for those marketing Irish dairy to tap into the growing need of young consumers to feel that when they purchase a particular product, they are contributing to a wider community with genuine, hard-working people at its core.

If only they knew

There are now so many consumers with no personal connection to a dairy farm or the dairy industry; if only they knew. If only they knew about all the fascinating hardworking people involved, all the different moving parts needed 365 days a year to provide the finest quality produce in a manner that is sensitive to the animals, the land and the environment. If only they knew about the cutting-edge science and technology being implemented on farms across the country. If only they knew about the business acumen needed to run a farm and both the physical and mental strength required. If only they knew about all the different people and families that rely on the Irish dairy industry, not just farming people and farming families, but the builders, the accountants, the salespeople, the contractors for whom Irish dairy provides a living. The consumer is as crucial to Irish dairy as the cows converting the grass to milk. Irish dairy is a community on an ever-evolving journey, so let’s make sure the consumer stays onboard and enjoys the journey as much as we do.

Safety Culture and Behaviour is Key to Farm Safety

Ciaran Roche FBD Risk Manager on the need for a positive change in unsafe culture and behaviour on farms.



The agriculture sector continues to be the sector with the highest number of fatal accidents. As a farming community we must refocus our efforts to change this dreadful statistic. We know that the fatal statistics are only the tip of the iceberg effect in relation to farming accidents, as thousands more are injured in farming accident every year. The pain, human suffering and economic loss that accompanies serious and fatal accidents is immense and I would like to extend my sympathy to all farm families and communities that have been affected in this way.

While farmer's attitudes to health and safety are generally very positive, a change in unsafe culture and behaviour is critical if we are to achieve a reduction in farm accidents. Most farmers understand the hazards on their farms and the associated risks, but they often take chances when they are in a hurry, under stress or when there is a financial cost. Recent research has identified that farmers are more likely to take chances if it is seen as a perceived norm within the industry. For example some farmers may operate a tractor with brakes in poor condition as long as the tractor is not used on a public road. Many farmers also allow children under the age of 14 to operate tractors and other hazardous machinery. The acceptability of these unsafe working behaviours is a culture that we must change. "Unsafe working practices are never acceptable"; this is the attitude that we need to see in the farming sector. If we can create a positive safety culture on farms, behavioural change and safer farming practices will follow. Making a lasting change in behaviour is very challenging, and usually involves a substantial commitment of time and effort, and may also involve investment in training, equipment and facilities. Many unsafe practices on Irish farms are learned behaviours which have been passed down for generations, but is it fair to pass these on the

next generation? With this in mind it is imperative that we target the farmers of the future as well as the farmers of today. Behavioural change is rarely easy and often requires a gradual progression of small steps toward a larger goal. Changing behaviour is a slow process, but it is imperative if progress is to be made.

A combination of cultural based and behaviour based safety approaches works best. Cultural based approaches serve to shape the perceptions held by individuals regarding the importance of safety. It puts a high value on safety. The behaviour based safety approach focuses on the identification and modification of critical safety behaviours. For example, ensuring the PTO is only operated when it is guarded, ensuring that only safe means of access to areas at heights are used, ensuring tractors are driven in a safe manner, etc. Farmers also need to look at issues that negatively affect their safety behaviour when working such as distractions, stress and time constraints. Safety must not be left to chance, farmers need to manage health and safety on their farm and effectively plan work activities. This planning must include planned safety maintenance on farm machinery, equipment and facilities.

There are 3 key steps involved in farming safely. The first step is realizing that an accident can happen on your farm and having a positive attitude towards health and safety.

The second step is to carry out a risk assessment. A risk assessment involves identifying every hazard on your farm, the associated risks and appropriate safety control measures.

The third and most important step is implementing the safety control measures and ensuring that safe behavioural work practices are carried out at all times.

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We need flexibility on emissions reductions programmes



Pat McCormack
President, ICMSA

It's no exaggeration to say that farmers are almost 'punch drunk' at this stage as they try to come to terms and understand the deluge of regulation and 'targets' they are expected to understand and engage with. Literally, each new day bring a new report all with a slightly different emphasis but with one over-riding focus: the fixing in the public mind of our farming and agri-food sector as chief culprits in Ireland's transgressions against the climate. It is insidious and grossly unfair, but it has been effective. As soon as any debate on lowering emissions begins in the Irish media mere seconds will elapse before one of the participating 'commentators' or- even worse – 'activists' takes aim at the farming communities and identifies us as the main problem and obstacle to environmental progress. I suppose it makes for more entertaining radio and television and you'll come up with snappier 'soundbites, but as a recipe for actually working out where we go and at what pace, it's worse than useless. I am always particularly amused by the stress placed upon the word 'feasible' where that refers exclusively to environmental progress. Almost entirely absent from the debate is the reality that without economic feasibility nothing else is possible. If we don't have economic feasibility than we just can't have social or demographic feasibility either and those parts of Ireland where farming is not just an aspect of the economy, but, actually, the whole of the economy will just stop and revert to some form of subsistence land-stewardship. Perhaps that is what some of these commentators or 'activists' want, I don't know. I'm absolutely certain it's not what rural communities themselves want. It's no harm to be reminded of the fact that what is at stake in this current debate is nothing less than the economic viability of Ireland outside the cities and largest towns and the social, cultural and demographic viability of those rural communities all of which depended on commercial farming.

None of this is to deny the realities or the extent of the challenge, but it is unfair, unworkable and itself unfeasible to expect the hundreds of thousands who depend on commercial farming and food production

for their living to agree to fixed emissions reduction targets that will inevitably fatally wound their prospects and their communities. We also have a right to a degree of consistency. It is premature for anyone to anticipate that the national herd will have to be reduced. The Government itself does not believe that to be the case – as the Taoiseach confirmed in a colourful exchange in the Dail

just weeks ago. It's not the Government's position and, just on practical grounds, this is precisely the kind of rigid, pre-ordained solution that we should be avoiding. We already know that we can expect double-digit falls in agri emissions through the MACC system devised by Tegasc and other research and innovation in coming onstream all the time. What we need is the flexibility and room to see where we can go harder or switch focus. That means a degree of elasticity that gives us the room to see what's working and adjust accordingly. Farming and agri-food is already making the transition and we demand the right to check our progress before anyone announces that our farms and our communities are effectively finished.

Even as I write this, I anticipate the media commentators and environmental activists warning the public that ICMSA is just another lobbying group. Well, I'd like to ask those same commentators when we can expect to hear them or the politicians break the news to the Irish public that the only absolutely indisputable fact about this transition that we are now embarked upon is that it will force upwards the price of food. Years after I first pointed it out we have still not heard a single Irish politician of any seniority tell the Irish public that this transition is going to mean – and much faster than people think – the end of the 'Cheap Food' system that was operated in Ireland and across the EU for decades. That system was predicated on low prices for farmers that forced them into producing higher volumes. That will now work in reverse. People need to understand that and they need to be told it. Wait and see if you can hear anyone saying that... but don't hold your breath.

Farmers have a lot to be proud of

Milk output has increased by 40 per cent since the abolition of quotas. Food Harvest 2020 set ambitious expansion targets and milk producers met and exceeded those targets. Their processor coops built the capacity to process that 3.358 billion litres of extra milk and exported every litre and kilo across the globe. What's not to be impressed with by those facts? What's not to be proud of?

Ten years ago, the fertility status of the Irish dairy herd was at its lowest in over three decades. The Economic Breeding Index (EBI) was introduced and within two generations of cows, less than a decade, our dairy herd fertility is back to being one of the most impressive in the world. What's not to be proud of?

There are hundreds of thousands of acres of sub optimal soils across Ireland. Land that is unsuited to tillage, dairy, horticulture or even forestry in many cases. Irish farmers have used that land to build and sustain a suckler beef production system delivering 850,000 calves for beef production every year. That suckler beef contributes to over €2 billion in Irish exports. What's not to be proud of? Irish farmers turn an inedible carbohydrate – grass - into valuable, highly nutritious, human-edible beef and dairy protein products, consumed in Ireland and exported into 150 other countries. What's not to be proud of?

Irish farms have one of the longest and most biodiverse hedgerow infrastructures on the planet. Those hedgerows provide natural field and farm boundaries, attract admiration from visitors to rural island, provide diverse habitats for multitudes of species of flora and fauna and sequester thousands of tonnes of carbon annually. What's not to be proud of?

Irish livestock breeding farms have the lowest calf mortality figures in the European Union. The Irish figure at 28 days of life is 3.6 per cent, compared to 6 percent on our nearest neighbours' farms across the Irish Sea and

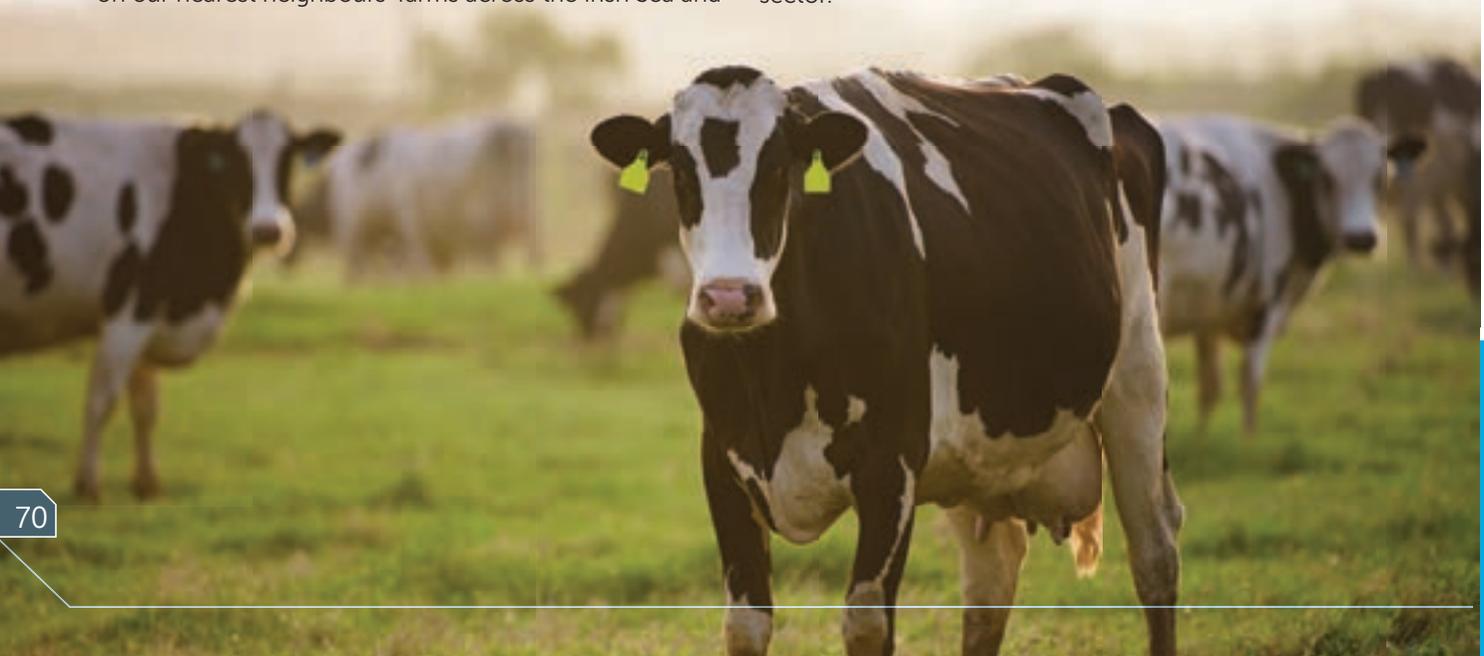
7.8 per cent in the Netherlands. What's not to be proud of?

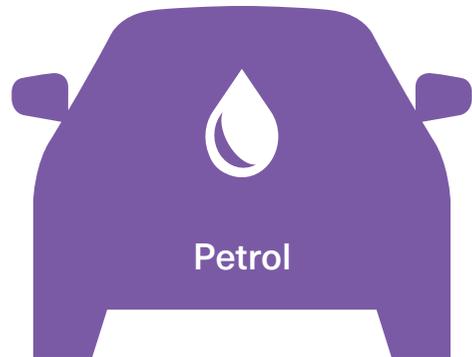
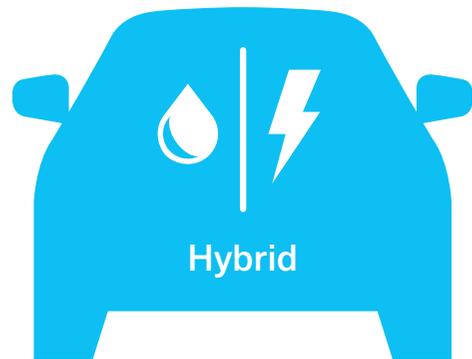
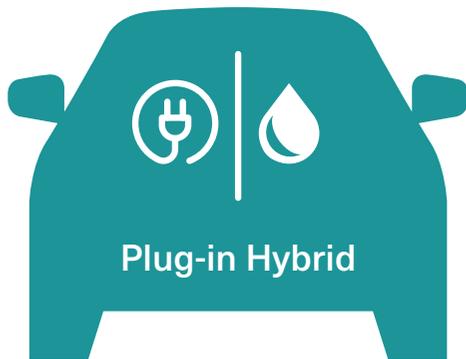
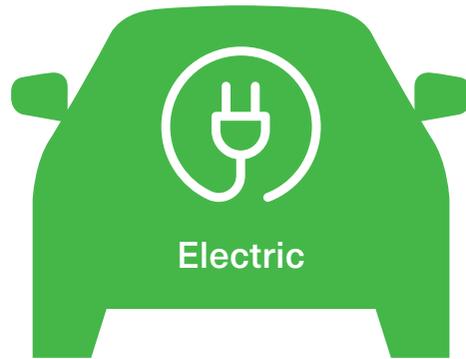
With huge investment in on-farm manure and silage storage facilities, improved fertiliser and livestock management, as well as, it should be noted, significant investment in waste-water treatment facilities by public authorities, since 1990, the percentage of our waterways described as poor quality has fallen from 3.6 per cent to 0.08 percent last year. What's not to be proud of?

Irish wheat yields are, on average, the highest in the world. Driven by higher rainfall, mild winters and long cool summer days that help grain filling, we produce more tonnes of wheat per hectare than any other country. Yields over a 10-year period are nearly 10% higher than the UK and well above those of New Zealand, which boasts the world wheat yield record. What's not to be proud of?

Irish food and drink exports increased by 67 per cent since 2010, increasing in value to €124.3 billion and supporting thousands of jobs across Ireland. Irish whiskey and cream -based alcohol product exports, with ingredients supplied by Irish dairy and tillage farmers, were worth €510 million last year. What's not to be proud of?

Origin Green is the Bord Bia Sustainability Programme. It is the only sustainability programme on planet Earth which operates at a national level and which includes farmers and primary producers, processors and retailers working together and leading the way to create a better future for all involved. The programme collaborates with 55,000 Irish food producers and 300 Irish food and drinks companies. With independent verification procedures, Origin Green members account for 90 per cent of Irish food and drink exports. Just another example of why we should take pride in our Irish food sector.





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