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APRIL 2022

Dairy Focus

Climate, cost and food security

PAT MURPHY, KERRY, ON THE COMPANY'S
DAIRY GROWTH STORY

THE THREAT TO FARMERS'
SOCIAL LICENCE TO PRODUCE



NETWORKS



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The economics of food production



Even as war has been waged close to the eastern frontiers of the European Union and the Covid virus refuses to be consigned to medical history, there is an absolute necessity for farmers to continue to concentrate on their critical role in the economy. Farmers are food producers and even though production costs have risen enormously in recent months, food production and food security are of paramount importance. Food production, however, is an economic, not an altruistic pursuit. In the short-term, foodstuffs are still in abundance. However, looking further out there is an obvious danger that supply of some foodstuffs will be in critically short supply. While the war in Ukraine has interrupted the planting of grain and other crops in that agriculturally well-endowed country, there are other reasons why we can expect food shortages to loom by next winter. Production input costs are now so high, allied to severe scarcity of both fuel and fertiliser, that food production is bound to be impacted. Whether farmgate food price increases have been, or will be, sufficient to counteract the increased production costs is neither here nor there. The fact is that production is almost certainly going to be lower because of reticence, financial inability or input scarcity to invest optimally in crop production and the risk that adequate production input investment will not be sufficiently rewarded further down the road. Ultimately, this is a personal decision for producers to take. There is always risk attached to food production. Weather events can decimate returns. An abundance of produce can drive prices down and, even when there is a deficit, there is the risk that extraordinarily high production costs will not be rewarded in the marketplace. Farmers must, as a primary aim, protect their businesses. At the recent Fine Tuning Dairy conference, Philip O'Connor, Head of Farm Support at IFAC, detailed the rational approach for farmers to take in protecting their businesses. Regular fodder, financial and fertiliser budgeting is the only logical approach to securing the economic safety of farm businesses, especially at this precarious time. Most of the higher market prices for cattle and sheep have already been eroded by higher production costs. There is little likelihood that those costs will substantially reduce in the medium term. Similarly, the mathematics of grain production must be well calculated. Good yields and further potential grain price increases would suggest that a viable margin is attainable for this year's crops. Careful budgeting will help ensure that outcome for individual producers. Milk production must also come with a health warning. Dairy prices are well up on last year and the indications, as confirmed by Kerry Dairy Ireland CEO Pat Murphy in these pages, are that there is further milk price improvement possible over the coming months. The imponderable, which can only be confirmed through careful budgeting, is whether increased output will be rewarded in the marketplace, given the higher costs of marginal production. Budgeting for other enterprises is even more critical. Pig and poultry production is suffering from higher grain input costs. Time will tell as to whether those two foods will become so critically scarce as to force up farmgate prices sufficiently to justify those high production costs. Vegetable production has always been beset by an inability to secure the high product prices justified by high input costs. That too may change in the months ahead as both food security and availability force a fundamental change in retailer and consumer attitudes to the price and value of food. If farming has again become a critical industry, then that fact must be reflected in adequate returns for food producers.



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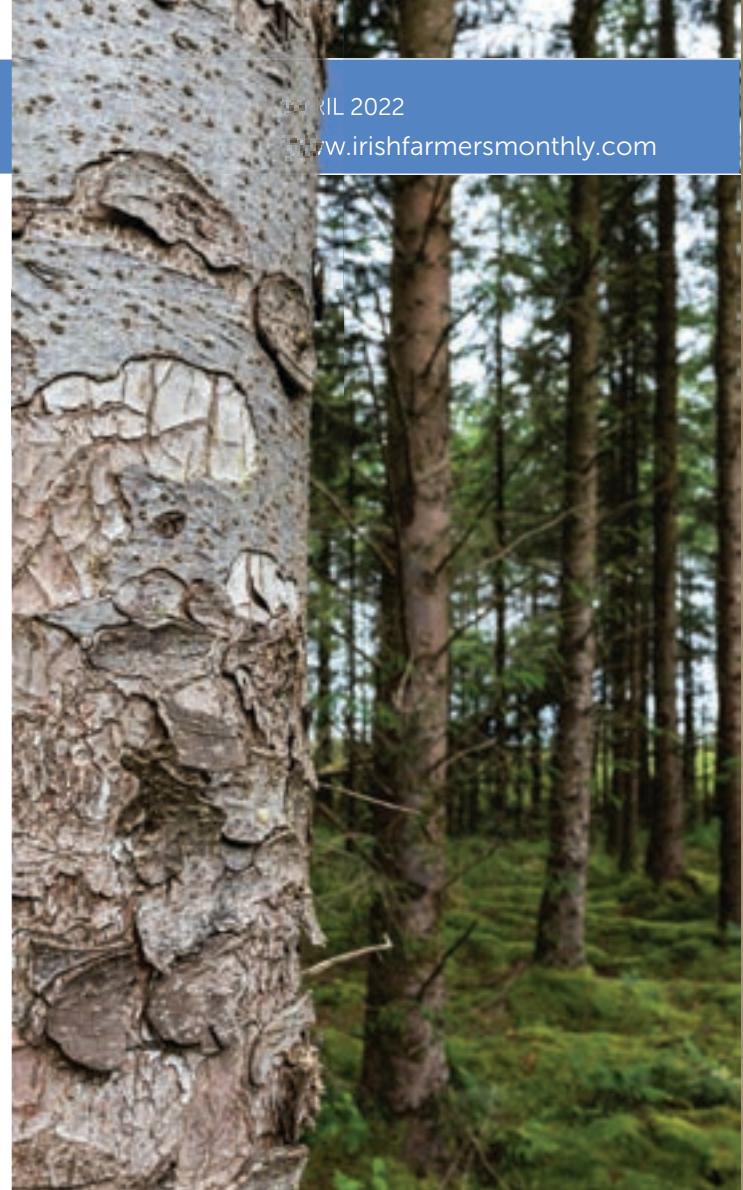
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€25 million bet on more beds



FBD Hotels & Resorts, a subsidiary of Farmer Business Developments, is betting big on a return to social and economic normality with its €25 million purchase of Killashee Hotel in Kildare. Add on another €5 million for a planned upgrade and the company will have spent €30 million on its latest hotel investment by 2024. The hotel group had its genesis in FBD Insurance where it was part of the insurance company's investment portfolio before it offloaded its hospitality and leisure facilities in a trimming down of ancillary investments in 2015. Farmer Business Developments, a key, farmer-owned, shareholder in the insurance company, took on the Irish hotels and Spanish golf resorts in what was then seen as a short-term investment to be realised when market prospects improved. While Farmer Business Developments has also sold some properties, it does look to be in for the long haul with its latest acquisition, alongside the €9m purchase of the Heritage Hotel in Laois in 2018, considerably increasing bed capacity. Farmer Business Developments, under the chairmanship of Padraig Walshe, also has leisure investments in Spain where a robust tourism recovery after the Covid pandemic is expected this year and next. Meanwhile, a land portfolio investment in Berlin has begun to deliver some long-awaited return. Located close to the new and now partially open Brandenburg airport in the city (after 14 years of delayed construction) some of FBD's land has been carved off and sold for a decent return. With Elon Musk's giant Tesla car factory just beginning manufacturing nearby, the expectation is that development land in the vicinity will become even more valuable with the potential to deliver a lucrative pay-back to Farmer Business Developments patient shareholders. Further windfall dividend payments to shareholders can be expected at some stage. On a side note, at full capacity, Tesla will roll out an expected 500,000 electric cars annually at its €5 billion Berlin car plant. The development has not been without controversy and delay with environmental groups objecting on the basis that the car plant will use very large volumes of precious Berlin water in its manufacturing processes.



Who owns carbon credits?

Most farmers do not give much thought to carbon credits and their potential value. At most, farmers would like to see a situation where the carbon they sequester in their soils, hedgerows and trees is taken into account in any audit of carbon use and storage on their farms and to offset any enforced carbon reduction mandates in the future. There is another debate to be had, however, in the eventuality that these kilos of carbon in sequestered storage become valuable as a tradeable commodity. Already there are forestry owners worried that the State may claim ownership on the basis that forestry plantations have been subsidised by the State over extended periods. John Hourican is one farmer who has been proactive in raising concerns about carbon ownership. He spoke at the recent Fine Tuning Irish Dairy conference and certainly provoked debate and interest on the subject. Whether farm-stored carbon is an asset owned by the landowner or the State may well require a legal decision, invoking constitutional issues around property ownership as well as declarations around the value and tradability of intangible assets. Farmers will have to be proactive on the issue, which centres around what may become a very valuable asset indeed.

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Teagasc case sets possible precedent

Without wishing or intending to enter into any debate over the recent Workplace Relations Commission decision to order Teagasc to pay substantial compensation to an employee found to have been underpaid in comparison with another staff member adjudged to have been doing the same work, the question of precedent being set must surely arise. To take one example, there are various pay grades and discrepancies in the salaries paid to teachers based on various criteria. The most obvious being that Secondary teachers first employed in the last decade are on a lower salary than teachers employed prior to that. In addition, there are teachers paid less or more, depending on whether they have an Honours or Pass degree. If we assume that all teachers of a particular subject are equally competent in their teaching skills, then one might assume that they should all be paid at the same rate. Given that this is not the case and since Teagasc's defence of grade, skills, experience and qualifications, not to mention responsibility, cut no ice with the WRC adjudicator, it is difficult to see how any such defence applies in the case of teachers of a particular subject being paid at different rates. There can be no argument that an older teacher, or one with higher degree status, is a more competent teacher as that raises potential discrimination against students taught by a teacher on a lower salary being less well taught. This is just one example of varying pay rates in various employments across the Irish economy where many of the people involved, male and female, are essentially doing the same job. Serious as the discrimination decision is for Teagasc, it pales in comparison to what may lie down the road in terms of discrimination cases being brought because of perceived inequities in pay for essentially the same work

Glanbia to support Sustainable Farming Academy

Glanbia Ireland, (soon to be known under another name entirely) has teamed up with Baileys to create an Academy focused on promoting greater knowledge and understanding of sustainable farming among its farm families and on supporting positive environmental actions on farms. It is an imaginative initiative, given the fact that farmers need continuing support in improving their environmental credentials. Another equally important aspect of this educational course is that it should build a larger cohort of farmers who can positively and publicly promote the high standards already in place on so many farms and the very positive environmental and sustainability actions that are taking place on thousands of farms across the country.

We need more well-informed and proactive promoters and influencers of all that is positive about Irish farming. The Sustainable Farming Academy is an education initiative that is intended to empower Glanbia Ireland's milk and grain producers with the relevant knowledge to continue to address sustainability challenges. It is also aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically



Dr Séamus Ó Tuama, Director of ACE (Adult Continuing Education), University College Cork; Jennifer English, Global Brand Director (SVP), Baileys and Jim Bergin, CEO, Glanbia Ireland.

focusing on Goal number four - Quality Education. The Sustainable Farming Academy's academic partner, University College Cork, will deliver an accredited and fully-funded Diploma in Environment, Sustainability and Climate to 20 farmer suppliers each year. The Diploma is designed to fit in with each farmer's full-time, on-farm responsibilities. The year-long UCC Adult Continuing Education Diploma recognises prior learning and each

participant's existing sustainability knowledge. Modules include Earth Science, Climate Change and Sustainable Development as well as Ecology, Applied Geographical Information Systems, Environmental Protection, Practical Environmental Management and more – all of which are directly applicable on farm. Applications open immediately, visit www.ucc.ie/en/ace/glanbia for information. The programme begins in September 2022.

Almost 400 students attend UCD Lyons Farm for the Agri Aware Farm Walk & Talk series



UCD Lyons Farm recently welcomed students from Dublin, Meath, Kildare, Wicklow, Wexford, Longford, Carlow, and Laois during the busing lambing season for the Farm Walk and Talk series. The event organised by AgriAware offers practical insight into many of the themes in the Leaving Certificate agricultural science syllabus. Students in attendance were delighted with the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and helped deliver some of the new arrivals under the watchful eye of Professor Tommy Boland. A total of 10 practical stations were set up across the farm which were delivered by UCD staff and organisations including ABP, Dairymaster and Horse Racing Ireland.

Professor Frank Monahan, UCD Dean of Agriculture and Head, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science said: "The UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science is delighted to host the Agri-Aware Farm Walk and Talk event again this year and to welcome over 350 students from 14 schools to our UCD Lyons Farm. We see this initiative as a very important one in supporting Agri-Aware's objective of raising awareness of the importance of the Irish agri-food sector among the public at large. The students who visited the farm will influence the future development of the Irish Agri-Food sector, some by becoming directly involved in farming and food production, others as consumers. Understanding the essential role agriculture plays in delivering a secure and sustainable global food supply is critical. This event will contribute to that understanding."

TRACE MINERAL INJECTION PRE-BREEDING

EVEN WELL-FED COWS CAN BENEFIT FROM "TOP UPS" AT A HIGH DEMAND PERIOD.

One of the key performance indicators and a major determining factor for farm profitability is compact calving.

Adequate trace mineral levels are vital for reproductive performance in cattle. Copper deficiency can lead to decreased conception rates, infertility, silent heats and foetal resorption.¹ Zinc deficient cows display abnormal oestrous as well as a decrease in fertility.²

At critical phases in production like breeding, increased demand for minerals, variable oral intake, rumen antagonism and poor absorption can result in oral minerals taking weeks to restore a cow's trace mineral stores, which alone may not be enough to ensure cattle are in adequate trace mineral status to meet profitable targets of a compact calving.

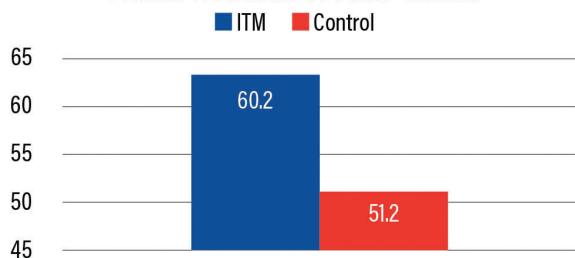
Trial work has shown that strategic injectable trace mineral "Top Up" can help to improve calving distribution.³

Injectable trace minerals bypass the harsh rumen environment and antagonists, raising circulating trace minerals within 8 to 10 hours and liver levels within 24 hours.⁴

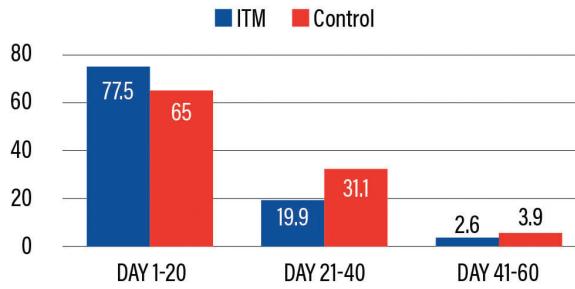
The study illustrated in the graph below indicates that supplementing cows with an injectable trace mineral (ITM) may improve reproductive performance indicators significantly.

Ask your vet how injectable pre-breeding trace mineral supplementation could help get your cows and heifers back in calf more quickly^{3,4}

CONCEPTION RATE TO FIXED TIME AI³



IMPROVED % CALVING DISTRIBUTION³



1. Hollister C.E, et al, Vet J. 2003 Sep;166(2):125-39.

2. Underwood, E.J. (1981) *The Mineral Nutrition of Livestock*. 2nd Edition, Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux, Slough.

3. Mundell J.R, et al. The Professional Animal Scientist 28, 82-88(2012)

4. Pogge D, et al. J. Anim. Sci. 90, 2692-2698 (2012)

Email info@virbac.ie to register your interest in a free consultation on the benefits of injectable trace minerals (state your county) or contact the Virbac Team directly.

THE VIRBAC TEAM IN IRELAND

Oliver Dillon (086) 8210418 (North East, East, South East)

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InTouch

Protecting ourselves for the future

Cathal Bohane, InTouch Nutrition

The arrival of April brings its own set of challenges and rewards on-farm. The increased warmth in the days has been very welcome, heralding the arrival of the "magic day" on farms when grass growth meets farm demand. There are a lot of questions being asked and decisions being made around the increasing costs of inputs on farms across the country. Unfortunately, unless we have a crystal ball, there are more questions than answers, but one important thing is that you need to act in getting your farm ready for the next 12 months and now is the time to do this.

While it sounds unusual to be completing a fodder and feed budget at this time of the year, this is the most crucial step we can take. Understanding stock and feeding requirements are the first steps in developing a plan. Most should know their stock numbers for the year ahead and when they will be realistically fed. It also allows us to reflect on stock numbers, and if they are high or if we are supporting unproductive stock in the system, now is the time to make this decision.

We should know how much silage will be left in storage and how much will be produced during the new season. While fertiliser is expensive and unavailable in some parts, the use of other combinations of organic and artificial fertiliser, as well as the overall reduction in fertiliser usage, will no doubt reduce yield. We need to consider this but also realise that reducing fertiliser use by 5% will reduce yield very little based on a crop's response to nitrogen. Nevertheless, we need to be realistic about our tonnages. It is never an issue if we have silage left.

We can now allocate feed according to each class of stock throughout the year and factor in any emergencies for weather (i.e., if cows are in by night during the summer/autumn for a month, they will eat approximately 600 kg per head).

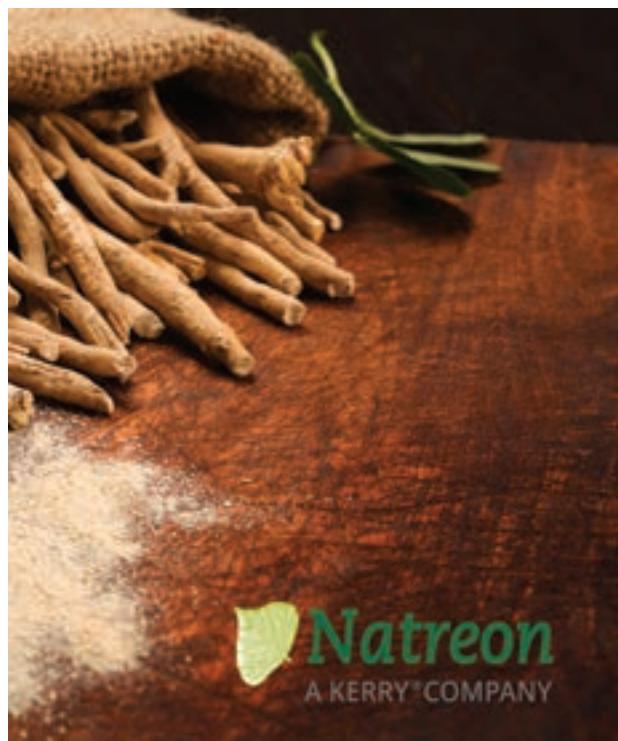
This exercise will allow us to determine any shortfall and how we can fill this gap. Forages will be more expensive to buy and grow this year. Grass silage alone will be 50% more expensive to produce due to increases in land, fuel, fertiliser and plastics. It is now more important than ever that we focus on making high-quality silage and reduce the losses in the field and storage.

Concentrates will be expensive again this year, and forages will play a role in offsetting the quantity required. For this reason, we need to focus on making top-quality silage and looking at the possibility of using alternatives like maize, beet or others where availability and price allow.

What is clear is that many farms this year will be doing something different, and just looking at the traditional diet of grass silage and concentrate might not be sufficient.

The most important thing to note is that there are plenty of experts out there ready to help you decide. It is important to reach out and ask. InTouch is more than willing to help.

Kerry completes acquisition of Natreon



Kerry, the world's leading taste and nutrition company, has announced it has completed the acquisition of U.S.-based Natreon, Inc., a leading supplier of branded Ayurvedic botanical ingredients.

Natreon supplies branded and scientifically studied and tested Ayurvedic extracts to the dietary supplement and functional food and beverage industries across the globe. The acquisition significantly expands Kerry's leadership position and ProActive Health portfolio of science-backed branded ingredients, furthering the company's technology growth. The branded ingredients in

Tillage Incentive Scheme launched

Following on from the package of measures announced to provide support to Irish farmers, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Charlie McConalogue T.D., has launched the Tillage Incentive Scheme. Minister McConalogue said: "As part of our response to the cost increases currently facing Irish farmers, I am delighted to launch the Tillage Incentive Scheme. The Tillage Incentive Scheme aims to support farmers to grow more tillage crops in 2022, to reduce Ireland's

Business

Natreon's portfolio are protected by a wide range of U.S. and foreign patents and supported by a total of 52 clinical studies which support the efficacy of their health benefits. The ingredients will be integrated into Kerry's ProActive Health portfolio and leveraged by Kerry's broad customer base. They will be supported by Kerry's global application and R&D network, including continued investment in the science and clinical evidence supporting the brands.

Commenting on the acquisition, Gerry Behan, President and CEO Taste & Nutrition at Kerry Group, said:

"Consumers are increasingly looking for nutritional benefits when purchasing food and drink, with recent proprietary consumer research from Kerry stating that 42 per cent of U.S. consumers are more likely to purchase a product which is backed by research or scientific data."

"Ayurveda is one of the world's oldest holistic and alternative wellness practices with historical roots in India. Today, we see growing use of ayurvedic and botanical ingredients which are trending in functional foods and beverages for their ability to deliver stress, cognitive, and energy benefits, for example. Our acquisition of Natreon allows us to participate in this dynamic market with on-trend and science-backed Ayurvedic ingredients, including the well-known Sensoril® Ashwagandha brand."

"This acquisition will allow us to deliver health benefits substantiated by clinical research to a greater number of consumers, ultimately supporting our ambition to reach over two billion people with sustainable nutrition solutions by 2030. We are delighted to welcome the Natreon team to Kerry," concluded Mr Behan.

Kerry has been building a leading position in science-backed functional ingredients within its ProActive Health portfolio for the past several years, most recently with the acquisition of Spain-based company Biosearch Life in 2021. Headquartered in New Brunswick, New Jersey, U.S., Natreon has 34 employees and operates three facilities, a head office located in New Jersey, a R&D facility located in India and manufacturing site in Nepal.

dependency on imported feed material. We have acted quickly to put this package in place and I am grateful to my Department and everyone in the sector for working so hard to deliver it."

Minister McConalogue added: "The budget for the Tillage Incentive Scheme is €10 million and with a proposed payment rate of €400 per hectare.

This payment reflects a contribution towards the increase in the cost of growing crops in 2022."

Farmers wishing to apply for the Tillage Incentive Scheme should declare the eligible crops on their 2022 BPS application on www.agfood.ie by the closing date of 16th May 2022.



Renewed focus on home-grown forage quality

Maeve Regan,
Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

In the current climate of rising farm input costs, the focus must be turned towards increasing efficiencies within the farm gate – which includes improving the quality of our core home-grown feed, grass silage. Grass silage makes up approximately one quarter of the annual feed budget on the average dairy farm and an even greater proportion on a beef farm.

There are several key concepts regarding best practise silage making – we outline our top 3 below:

1. Cutting Date

Cutting grass younger improves digestibility and protein content, resulting in a reduced requirement for supplementation. Once seed heads start to appear, DMD will be around 70% and will drop by 1% DMD every 2-3 days thereafter. As an example, in the current situation with feed costs, the difference in feed requirements between having 68% DMD (early-June) versus 74% DMD (Mid-May) silage, would be approx. 2 kg/hd/day – across 120 days for 100 animals, this would equate to €9,600 additional meal costs alone on farm.

When discussing earlier cutting dates, the age-old debate of quality versus quantity is often raised, however cutting earlier allows for quicker and earlier regrowth's, leading to increased annual yield/ha. Weather is the obvious variable when it comes to silage making, so some flexibility will be required.

2. Effective Wilting

Once cut, grass should be tedded out immediately and allowed, in ideal conditions, no more than 24 hours in the field to achieve an effective wilt. Target a dry matter content of approximately 25% for pit silage. Where wilting continues for longer periods, grass quality will begin to deteriorate and significant energy losses can be seen. Over-wilting will result in very dry silage prone to secondary fermentation and heating at feed-out.

3. Using A Silage Additive

Achieving a fast and efficient fermentation to preserve silage is critical to avoid dry matter losses/waste, but also to retain as much nutritional value as possible. Silage treated with an additive have been proven to achieve a better feed-out, with increased dry matter intakes, added energy content and digestibility, resulting in improved animal performance.

Agritech's GrasZyme Sugarboost is proven to:

- Increase ADG by 110 g/head/day in beef situations
- Increase milk production from forage by 1 litre/cow/day
- Increase DM intakes by 0.4 kg/head/day
- Reduce fermentation losses by 6.1% (equates to 30t in a 500t pit)

For a tailored plan on improving forage quality on your farm, contact your local Agritech Sales Advisor.



www.agritech.ie

Dogs Trust launches 'Big Shoes to Fill' Campaign



Research by Dogs Trust Ireland has revealed that 54 per cent of dog owners have not considered who will look after their pet, should they pass away before their dog does. The Charity hopes its poignant 'Big Shoes to Fill' campaign will highlight the importance of having plans in place for pets should the worst happen and motivate dog owners to avail of their free Canine Care Card service. The emotive TV ad shows the special bond between a dog and his owner who sadly passes away.

Having the card means Dogs Trust will be able to care for beloved pets, should their owners become too ill to be able to keep their dog or should the worst happen.

Speaking about the free service, Becky Bristow, Executive Director at Dogs Trust Ireland, said: "The recent pandemic has highlighted how unpredictable life can be. Our free Canine Care Card ensures dog owners can have peace of mind that dogs like Bumble will be cared for and will find a loving home through Dogs Trust, should the worst happen. We want to normalise people making plans for their pets, so no dog is left without an owner and a roof over their head."

Ciara Murran, Head of Communications at Dogs Trust Ireland, continued: "We're encouraging people of all ages to consider what would happen to their dog should they become too ill to care for them or should they pass away before their pet. We suggest appointing a trusted friend or family member who agrees to take care of your dog or who agrees to sign your dog over to Dogs Trust, should you be unable to do so. We also recommend updating your will to include your Canine Care Card information and letting your family and friends know of your wishes."

For more information and to ensure your dog will receive a lifetime of care, even when you can't look after them, visit DogsTrust.ie/CanineCareCard

Bord Bia introduces new Food Processor Standard

Bord Bia has developed a new Food Processor Standard (FPS), which combines and replaces the Meat Processor Quality Assurance Standard (MPQAS) and the Prepared Fruit and Vegetable Standard (PFVS). The Standard is designed to ensure adherence to best practice in food processing from intake through to dispatch. The FPS will become mandatory from November 15th 2022 but processors can opt to be audited against the new standard from May 15th. Speaking about the new standard, Alice McGlynn, Origin Green Head of Operations said: "The new standard's requirements are not vastly different from the previous schemes' but there is greater emphasis on sustainability, food safety and, for meat processors, animal welfare. To achieve certification to the standard, businesses will be required to have an independently verified sustainability plan in place, such as with Origin Green membership. The sustainability plan submitted must set targets and track progress over time. Members must also provide evidence of an appropriate food safety culture, which is a requirement of a new EU food safety regulation."

The standard is structured into five core modules to allow members to tailor the scope of their certification to match their operations.

- Module A is the minimum requirement for

certification and covers food safety management and sustainability.

- Module B covers product quality and Quality Mark logo use.
- Module C covers all aspects of meat processing from the lairage to cutting and mincing.
- Module D applies only to fruit and vegetable processing.
- Module E lays out requirements for further processing such as pasteurisation, smoking, and fermentation.

Modules A and B are mandatory for any processor who wishes to use the Bord Bia logo on packs. This modular approach facilitates a more agile response to changing market and legislative demands. Important amendments or new modules may be implemented as necessary without the need to make major changes to the overall standard.

Alice continued: "From a marketing perspective, the new standard will demonstrate to national and global customers that Irish food processors are continuously evolving their practices to meet increasing market demands around sustainability, transparency, traceability, and authenticity, across all aspects of animal and food processing."

IT'S A NUMBERS GAME

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reduction in thrive
across full groups of
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*Free gun (while stocks last) with every 2.5L. 1. Literature review at cocci.news/research. DYCOXAN® 2.5 mg/ml Oral Suspension for sheep and cattle. Contains diclazuril for the prevention of clinical signs of coccidiosis. Refer to product packaging and leaflets for full indications, side effects, precautions, warnings, contra-indications and meat withdrawal. Advice should be sought from Medicine Prescriber. Further information can be found on the datasheet, SPC or at www.farmhealthfirst.com. DISTRIBUTED BY: Chanelle Veterinary (Ireland) and Chanelle Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Ltd (UK), Dublin Road, Loughrea, County Galway. IE: POM: VPA10987/122/001. UK: POM-VPS VM: 08749/4085. ©Chanelle 2022 All rights reserved.

Kerry's dairy growth story

The extraordinary growth in milk volumes across the country since the abolition of milk quotas has been mirrored in the Kerry dairy region, as outlined by Pat Murphy at the recent Fine Tuning Dairy conference.

The CEO of Kerry Dairy Ireland told the conference that there had been impressive volume growth with production ramping up from 850 million litres in 2008 to one 1.3 billion litres last year. What is equally startling, and perhaps a little disconcerting, is the rate at which the number of milk producers has contracted in the same period. There were 3,900 farmers supplying milk to Kerry in 2008. There are now 900 fewer producers. That's a reduction of 25 per cent in a little over a decade when there might have been an expectation that supplier numbers would have at least stabilised. The decreasing numbers of milk producers is not unique to Kerry, but it does confirm that, in simple population terms, the sector is in continuous decline and has been for decades, despite the fact that dairy offers the best opportunity for profitability and income. At the same time, output per producer has risen, reflecting a national and international trend towards larger production units and fewer producers. This scaling up in Ireland is a result of the new opportunities offered for output



Pat Murphy, Kerry Group with Mary Buckley, attending the Fine-Tuning Irish Dairy Conference.
Picture Brendan Gleeson

growth post quotas. Outside of Europe, it has been happening for decades. Witness the size of the New Zealand dairy industry compared to Ireland. From an almost equal production platform back in the 1980s when European production restrictions were introduced, New Zealand output has risen to approximately 22 billion litres compared to Ireland's production figure of 8.7 billion litres, and that

takes into account an almost 50 per cent growth spurt in Irish production since 2015.

Unique production system

Pat Murphy's commentary on the relative uniqueness of Irish milk production is worth noting: "Ireland's geographic location, temperate climate and soils provide ideal conditions to grow grass and to allow cows to graze outdoors for the majority of the lactation period. This natural, grass-based diet, supplemented by concentrate feeds to maintain overall cow health, means Irish dairy has significantly greater concentrations of fat, protein and other beneficial nutrients. In addition, grass-based dairy has a more consistent and better taste-and-flavour profile than indoor concentrate fed cows."

Massive processing investment

Farmers are fully aware of what they have invested in increasing milk output. Pat confirmed that capital



investment at industry level has been equally impressive. He showed that capital spend between 2015 and 2020 across the Irish dairy processing sector came to €1.2 billion with a further €1.1 billion expected to be spent by the end of 2025. The investment in increased capacity and efficiencies, along with improved sustainability and added value expenditure have transformed the profile of the sector, adding huge economic benefits across rural Ireland.

as novel technologies and improved breeding and management practices are adopted across the industry. As a pointer to the strategies involved to achieve this, Pat described the Evolve Programme being undertaken by Kerry milk suppliers as being targeted at delivering a further 30 per cent reduction in carbon intensity by 2030. This, he insisted, will be brought about through a combination of factors including improvements in soil and fertiliser management, energy use



Growth potential

Neither is the growth story in Irish dairy concluded, unless there is a blunt restriction placed on our ability to produce milk from grass, as Pat Murphy confirmed in his presentation to the Fine Tuning Dairy conference audience. He forecast, based on producer surveys both in the Kerry region and across the country, that milk volume is anticipated to grow at an annual rate of 2.8 per cent reflecting continuing strong global demand for dairy. Pat broke down the anticipated 2.8 per cent annual growth into a combination of 1 per cent volume/productivity gains and just under 1.8 per cent increase in cow numbers per annum. The carbon intensity of Irish milk production has fallen from 1.06 in 2014 to 0.94 in 2021, and can be expected, as Pat Murphy believes, to reduce further in the years ahead

"Ireland's geographic location, temperate climate and soils provide ideal conditions to grow grass and to allow cows to graze outdoors for the majority of the lactation period."

efficiencies, better grass management, a variety of production efficiencies, herd health, knowledge transfer and an emphasis on biodiversity."

Milk price outlook

The Kerry Head of Dairy was quite positive on the short-term outlook for milk price, even as he outlined the economic production challenges facing producers: "Milk price is going to go up more over the next six months. That's positive, but input costs have gone up too, including fertiliser, feed and energy prices. Farmers would want to be getting the price they are getting today for milk to try and keep the show on the road. The price outlook is positive because there is no great surge of milk coming out of New Zealand or America or Western Europe over the next number of months, so milk prices are going to stay high for the rest of the year."

The milk road ahead

In his conclusion remarks Pat Murphy highlighted several positive aspects of Irish milk production as well as the need to protect our reputation in key areas. Our Irish family farm structure and its ability to deliver quality and security of food supply in global terms were top of his list. He cited the potential benefit of an Origin Green grass-fed certification programme in securing consumer preference. Continued reduction of carbon footprint at farm level by adopting the Teagasc MACC Program, along with addressing water quality issues arising from dairy, were prioritised. Pat recognised the imperative of reducing antibiotic usage through Herd Health/Milk Recording Programmes. Pat also told dairy farmers that they have a responsibility to provide quality calves to the beef industry and ensure there are no animal welfare issues that could damage our reputation. On the processing side, Pat prioritised the need to continue to add value to dairy by continuing to move away from commodities. He added that customers/consumers must be willing to pay more for sustainable dairy. Most of all, as Pat Murphy concluded: "Dairy must provide an acceptable economic return to producers."

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Paddy Murphy, Clerk of Works, NBI

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Driving fodder production

Matt O'Keeffe talks to Mike Magan, chairman for the National Fodder and Food Committee, on the challenges facing the industry.



When you want something done, ask a busy person. Minister McConalogue certainly seems to have adopted that motto in his choice of chairman for the National Fodder and Food Committee, set up to identify strategies to ensure that there are adequate fodder supplies in the country next winter to feed our livestock.

Mike Magan had no sooner retired from his position as chairman of AHI, a position he has held since its inception, than he was asked to become chairman of the NFFC. Mike acknowledges the importance of developing viable strategies to cope with the situation Irish agriculture finds itself in: "The potential for massive problems developing is there. We have this extraordinary confluence of factors, very high fuel prices, and availability issues, very high fertiliser prices and even more serious availability difficulties and the ongoing grain price and availability factors added on. All these factors happening at the one time could potentially give us very great difficulties into the future."

Action plans

The second meeting of Magan's Committee coincided with an announcement by Minister McConalogue of a €12 million support scheme to promote more cropping this year. A welcome development as Mike agreed: "There is very good engagement from all the participants on the Committee. There is cross-sectoral representation including farm organisations, milk and meat processors. That should facilitate the emergence of viable strategies to cope with the challenges facing us. The Minister was very keen to send a strong signal that we need to do something practical and timely to offset the likely deficit in grain import supplies in the coming months. We grow in excess

of two million tonnes of grain and we utilise a total of six million tonnes, so clearly the sums do not add up if grain imports are in short supply. If we can grow more grain in Ireland, that is a positive outcome for us. Can we grow enough to offset the looming deficit? Probably not, certainly in the short term. But we can start making inroads in that four million-tonne shortfall by growing more of what we feed to our livestock on this island. The bigger initiative is advising farmers as to what they can do on their farms to become more self-sustaining. The starting point is to calculate an inventory of the amount of silage left over after this winter and, with a knowledge of stock numbers and area farmed, then ask the question as to whether we can grow the tonnages of grass to graze our stock and make adequate supplies of quality fodder for next winter. This is an annual strategy except this year it is a critical exercise because fodder or feed purchase options may be limited next winter. We have four million hectares of grassland. If we can grow an extra tonne of grass dry matter per hectare that would deliver an additional four million tonnes of silage. That is the most straightforward and important thing that farmers can do. Planning for that must start right now. That means doing all the necessary calculations and get the fertiliser spread with the intention of growing extra tonnages. Yes, fertiliser is very expensive and even scarce, but assuming supply can be secured it is still the best way of driving up grass productivity at this critical time and providing adequate fodder supply on our farms. After the first cut of silage is secured, the exercise needs to be repeated to ensure our livestock will have plenty to eat next winter. There is nothing fancy or outlandish about this. It is simply doing what we have been doing, only better."

A tight timeframe

The question of time for planting crops was a clear issue at the end of March, Mike Magan admitted: "There could be in the region of ten thousand hectares available to grow additional crops. Some moderately productive grassland could go into tillage. Obviously, much of the best tillage land is already being cropped. There are areas of land previously in tillage that could go back into grain production. The main point is to maximise the use of whatever acreage is available. I want to see a full take-up

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"I am pleased with the structure that is in place. We have great people involved. AHI has grown from myself and Joe O'Flaherty initiating the establishment of Animal Health Ireland to the stage where we have seventeen highly committed people working in the organisation."

of the €12 million support scheme. That would indicate a level of success. Some funding will go towards supporting clover and other non-grass sward development, but the major proportion of €10 million is there to support additional tillage acres. That equates to €400 per additional hectare brought into production. It is a decent support mechanism and hopefully will encourage farmers to plant additional acres where they can do so."

Expensive and scarce fertiliser

Getting absolute answers as to the availability of fertiliser is difficult, as Mike admits: "We have indications that there are sufficient supplies for this part of the year and that supply generally loosens up when crop planting is competed across Europe. It may not be the blend a farmer wants or the straight requested but in general supply should be available. There is absolutely no indication or commitment on price and there might be timing delays in landing supply in the yard. Because the situation is so fluid, getting exact data is difficult but we are getting indications that fertiliser supplies will be available."

A fine health legacy

Mike has completed a successful tenure as AHI chairman. He highlights the main developments during his time: "I am pleased with the structure that is in place. We have great people involved. AHI has grown from myself and Joe O'Flaherty initiating the establishment of Animal Health Ireland to the stage where we have seventeen highly committed people working in the organisation. The technical working groups should also be commended

for their insights and dedication to disease control and eradication. The implementation groups that bring policy into practice are the other key part of the health jigsaw. The science is well laid out and, while there is always need to tweak the implementation process and timelines, the science behind the policies remains in place. Early on we prioritised some essential initiatives in terms of animal health developments that we needed to pursue. Mastitis, lameness, BVD, IBR and Johne's Disease were all prioritised. The one that has defined AHI and its ability to resolve specific disease problems is BVD. We were optimistic in terms of the timeline for eradication, but aside from that, the eradication campaign has been a success with the Department now applying to have the country declared BVD-free. That's worth €100 million to the livestock industry. Average Somatic Cell Count has been reduced from 270,000 to 170,000. That's another notable success from AHI's endeavours. That's quantified as being worth €55 million per year to processors and farmers. Calf care and colostrum management protocols are now widely understood and applied with knock-on health benefits for our calves. I would like to see advances in Johne's disease control. It is an issue that is there in the background and has long term implications for our livestock disease status as well as immediate implications for individual herds. I would also like to see a national IBR programme implemented. It won't be as difficult on farmers as the BVD initiative with preventative vaccination being the main driver of eradication."

ONE DAIRY VOICE

In 2022 Irish dairy needs a central, consolidated voice, one that champions the industry amongst the people on the street – the consumers of dairy products – those who, ultimately, grant us our social licence to produce.

The NDC will be that voice.

CONNECTING THE FARMER AND THE CONSUMER

The NDC re-connects the dairy farmer with the dairy consumer, building greater understanding of what farming is and what the farmer does, building trust in the production system and restoring pride in Irish dairy.

DAIRY SUSTAINABILITY

The NDC raises awareness of Irish dairy's impact against the pillars of sustainability – economy, society, community and environment – developing understanding of what sustainability means for Irish dairy and showcasing the initiatives that are improving the industry's performance.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

The NDC promotes the nutritional benefits of dairy products and their place in a healthy, balanced and sustainable diet. It counteracts misinformation and is a source of trusted nutritional information, as well as recipes which celebrate Irish dairy.

The NDC is creating a position – for itself and for the industry – from which our voice cannot be ignored, promoting real debate on the issues and the development of an informed dairy narrative.

View the NDC Manifesto 2022 here: www.ndc.ie/manifesto2022

RESEARCH AND UNDERSTANDING

The NDC uses qualitative and quantitative research to measure sentiment, behaviours and attitudes, gauging the impact of its activities and adjusting them as necessary.

MADE IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

The NDC provides the opportunity to show support for the Irish economy and for Irish jobs – on dairy farms and in the wider dairy sector – and the reassurance of knowing that dairy products carrying the NDC Guarantee are both farmed and processed locally.

CHAMPIONS OF THE FUTURE

The NDC champions the Irish dairy industry's social licence to produce – the public's tacit agreement that dairy produce and dairy farming are central to Irish society and to the health of the nation and that dairy farming and dairy farmers should be assured of their long-term futures.

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Are you ready to Beat the Drop?



Eddie Phelan, Ruminant Commercial Manager at Alltech Ireland, discusses milk solid production.

The main 'burst' of calving has settled down on many farms, and now the focus has shifted to milk production and the season ahead or, more importantly, milk solid production.

We must remember that our milk payment system is focused on kilograms of butterfat (BF) and protein. This is a function of milk yield and solids percentage. Our task is to maximise all of these and get the cow back on calf while keeping an eye on the total cost.

If we look back at our milk recordings or co-op report for the year, a general theme runs through all of them: High percentage solids for the first six weeks, then a drop in protein, followed by a drop in butterfat heading into the second round of grazing. It is more important to pay attention to the fluctuations than the overall level when analysing this data. For example, it is more worrying to see protein going from 3.5 per cent to 3.25 per cent rather than it being 3.3 per cent all year. In the former, we are getting a negative change in diet or energy levels, which will have knock-on effects on body condition and fertility. Keeping cows above 2 kilograms of milk solids (MS) for as long as possible is a target many should aim for, and this can be achieved in many ways, such as:

26 litres at 4.0 per cent BF and 3.5% protein

= 2 kilograms MS

28 litres at 3.8 per cent BF and 3.2 per cent protein

= 2 kilograms MS

It is important to remember the MS calculation for your own farm and complete the exercise regularly (detailed below). Milk production should fall no more than 1–2% per week post-peak. Analysis of your co-op report should see multiples of this during the May–July period, which is lost production and, more importantly, revenue.

(Milk yield litres/100) x (Fat% + Protein%) x 1.03

Protein is driven by the starch and sugar content of the diet, and the focus should be on this rather than increasing the energy alone. Starch is usually derived from a grain source in the concentrate, and the most abundant form of sugar over the next while will be grazed grass.

Getting cows out to grass is vital, as we see the effect of what going onto a better source of silage or forage can do to production levels. The focus should be on optimally utilising the first round of grass to retain quality in the sward in the subsequent rounds. While focusing on quality is one thing, we also need to pay attention to quantity, or dry matter intake (DMI). Cows need to be outside for



the right reason and to consume grass in adequate conditions, rather than being outside to stand by the hedge or enjoy the scenery. Know your dry matter requirement and the amount they are getting from grass today. While many farms shy away from grass measurement, at a minimum, you need to outline two figures. Supplements in the form of concentrate and forages need to be used and, going by feed demand, based on the cow/milk solids production. While protein levels will be spectacular on many farms during the first six weeks, this can be propped up by body condition losses. This means that each farm needs to assess its feeding regime, especially if they have had previous sharp drops in protein percentages.

Lower milk fat can be due to several reasons. While we usually associate it with a lack of fibre in the diets, it can be attached to a lack of energy in the diet. Or, if cows are grazing, then discovering fatty acids in grass can also have adverse effects. Linoleic acid, which is prevalent in most forage species, is especially abundant in lush grass and can lead to a higher-fat diet. This can cause reduced fibre digestion, lower rumen pH and subsequent compromised rumen health. Ultimately, this can lead to a reduction in butterfat percentage. Data from research has shown that as little as 2 grams of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) in the rumen can cause a 20%-drop in butterfat.

If you are experiencing a lower butterfat percentage, you first need to assess other issues/characteristics in the cows, such as manure consistency. It should not be loose or overly watery, but more like soft porridge in a grazing situation.

Dropping butterfat can be somewhat unavoidable, as our focus should be on grazing high-quality, lush grass. However, other issues, such as dropping milk yield, body condition or milk protein, reduced intake or poor cud-chewing, should be a cause for concern, and we do need to act to correct them. We can help by supporting rumen health because we know that if we do not look after rumen health, then the effect of the CLA on our butterfat percentage

will be exacerbated. Avoiding rapid changes to any diet is essential. While the weather is unpredictable, adjust any dietary changes slowly and avoid sudden changes in rumen pH.

The use of a live yeast, such as Yea-Sacc®, in the parlour concentrate has been proven to improve fibre digestion and rumen pH in grazing situations (UCD trials). Yea-Sacc is the most widely researched live yeast culture for promoting rumen stability, helping cows avoid the variations in rumen pH that can interfere with DMI, fibre digestion and butterfat production. Talk to your feed and/or

mineral supplier to ensure it is added to your concentrate.

The presence of 80–100 kilograms of lush grass, high in fatty acids, can be hard to counteract. Lower butterfat is an issue that could last two to five weeks in mid-lactation and does not affect the visual appearance of the cow. The solutions above outline how we can improve the rumen environment so that we are not severely impacted by it and, ultimately, enhance butterfat percentage. In fact, if implemented well and acted on as quickly as possible, it will go a long way to beat the drop in the first place.

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The pre-breeding period is critical for a successful breeding season

MSD Animal Health offers advice on examining fertility in relation to farm profitability

It is widely recognised that one of the key factors underpinning farm profitability is fertility performance. Farmers are well aware of the consequences of poor fertility; increased labour, higher AI usage, less replacement heifers generated, less milk produced, increased calving interval and spread in calving pattern. Comprehensive research from UCD (Lane 2013) identified two of the most influential factors that affected fertility performance on seasonal calving dairy farms to be calving spread and the quality of heat detection. Putting a focus on the drivers of these two key factors prioritises certain farm management decisions which will have the greatest impact on making improvements this year.

Calving Pattern

A compact calving pattern is driven by high submission rates alongside high conception rates both of which have inter-related components. In order for a cow to be submitted for service she must be cycling and the farmer must have a reliable method of heat detection. For cows to be cycling, nutrition, energy and health are top priorities after calving. Energy balance in early lactation is likely to be one of the most important nutritional issues affecting subsequent fertility. Setting farm goals around transition management of cows in order to limit the extent and duration of negative energy balance in early lactation requires regular assessment of body condition score (BCS) to ensure 90% of the herd is calving down with a BCS between 3 and 3.25.

Nutrition and Animal Health

In relation to achieving high conception rates there are three elements of importance including the cow, the bull and the farm management practices. Cows must be at least 42 days calved, healthy and not have lost more than half a BCS post calving. In terms of health status, reducing the risk posed to herd fertility performance by infectious diseases such as leptospirosis, BVD and IBR should be part of every pre-breeding program. Leptospirosis infection in dairy cows is associated with reduced fertility performance, poorer conception rates, abortions, stillbirths (Dhaliwal 1996) as well as the zoonotic risk of transmission to humans and infection of farm staff. The prevalence of antibodies to leptospirosis in unvaccinated Irish dairy herds is high at 79% (Leonard 2004) demonstrating a high level of exposure to infection. This justifies vaccination as a control strategy for every dairy herd in the country. Vaccination for leptospirosis with Leptavoid-H should be done as a primary course



with 2 doses 4-6 weeks apart completed over two weeks from the planned start of mating with an annual booster thereafter. Leptavoid-H is the ONLY vaccine licensed to protect against both strains of *Leptospira hardjo*. Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) is a very costly disease that results in significantly impaired fertility performance due to abortions, embryonic losses and infertility. The prevalence of BVD in Ireland has been decreasing year on year but the biosecurity risk of BVD for each herd in terms of cattle purchases, boundary fences, personnel and equipment must be assessed on a farm-by-farm basis. Vaccination with Bovilis BVD can help protect the unborn calf from infection. A primary course consists of 2 doses 4 weeks apart given a month before breeding a single booster prior to breeding each year thereafter. Both Leptavoid-H and Bovilis BVD can be given at the same time, minimising handling and labour involved with administration. Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) is known for causing respiratory illness in cattle but there is a body of evidence demonstrating negative reproductive outcomes such as poor conception rates and abortions (Graham 2013) following infection also. Complete and regular herd vaccination for IBR using Bovilis IBR Marker Live is instrumental in a herd's IBR control programme. Vaccination reduces both clinical signs and viral shedding in the case of primary infections (Animal Health Ireland). Vaccination strategies for IBR, leptospirosis and BVD proactively tackle risk associated with infectious pathogens known to reduce herd fertility while maintaining a high health status for breeding. Each farm is different so talk to your vet now and make a plan that will mitigate the risk in your herd.

Heat Detection Methods

Effective and practical methods of identifying individual cows in heat are essential to good breeding management. Optimal herd observation of 20 minutes 5 times a day result in heat detection rates of 90-95% (Crowe 2018). This approach requires a high level of labour, skill and commitment which can be in short supply on farms today especially considering the advantages of accurate heat detection technology as an alternative. Cow monitoring systems such as SenseHub cow collars or ear tags, measure activity, rumination and eating time to build a profile of cow behaviours. Changes in activity associated with oestrus are quickly detected and notification of heat onset is delivered to the app where a timeline for optimal service is generated. Research demonstrates there is ample room for improvement in this area as the range in heat detection rates on farms of just 30-70% of cows showing oestrous behaviour usually being detected (Crowe 2018). As heat detection feeds into submission rates and overall reproductive performance, improvements here through technology are win-wins for farmers through reducing labour and eliminating the inconsistency of manual cow observations. Covering the basics well in the pre-breeding period sets up the herd for successful reproductive performance. Through monitoring of BCS, nutrition, vaccination programs and improved heat detection, huge gains can be made in reproductive efficiency and overall farm profitability.

Have a conversation with your vet to discuss last year's breeding season and what areas you can try improve for this year's season.

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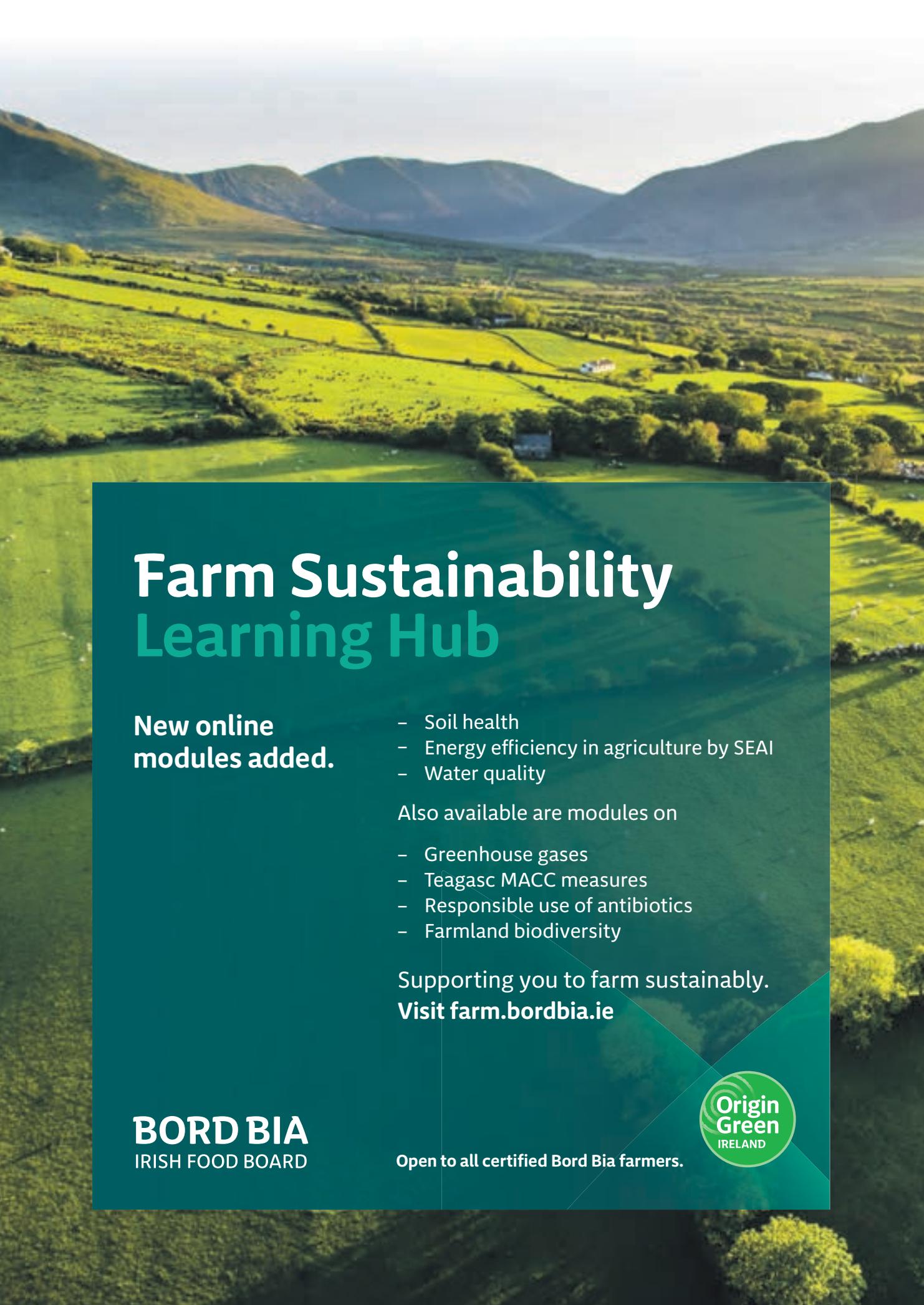
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Trust issues

A lack of public trust in Irish farmers' production methods is threatening their social licence to produce. In an effort to address this, **Zoe Kavanagh** – CEO of the National Dairy Council and Spokesperson for the European Milk Forum – wants to re-introduce the farmer to the consumer.

Social licence refers to the level of public trust granted to an industry sector by the community at large and its key consumer base. "From a National Dairy Council perspective, all of our research shows that consumers believe the Irish dairy product portfolio is strong (apart from a small group of questioning young females) and the nutritional benefits of dairy in the diet are recognised in an even stronger way since the pandemic. But the production system and the whole topic of dairy farming is showing a deterioration of trust and the public is feeling that the national value and economic contribution are not as strong as the price being paid on the environmental cost. 39 per cent of consumers disagree with the statement: 'I trust dairy farmers to behave appropriately when it comes to the environment'. That trust has been deteriorating since 2017. Water emissions, general land use and biodiversity are the issues driving it. If those areas continue to deteriorate public trust farmers' social license to produce is under threat and communities could view dairy farms as data centres... and that is so far removed from what Irish dairy is about." According to Zoe, we need to restore trust in dairy farming and the most powerful voice is the farmer. "There is a growing distance between consumers in urban areas and the farmer. We want to reintroduce the farmer as a food producer and connect the two. We need to encourage a greater understanding of what the farmer does and what it takes for dairy farmers to do what they do in a sustainable way."

Telling engaging stories, says Zoe, is at the heart of this. "We have found that when we start telling stories around

sensor technology – like health monitoring 'Fit Bits' for cows – consumers really engage with these stories. We need to tell the story of grass and what it takes to grow it so well and that story needs to be told primarily by the farmer. We need to remind people that our climate is perfectly designed for dairy farming and encourage people to visit our farms and see biodiversity in action." The challenge is to tell these stories in an impactful honest way, grounded in science, and not to simply present a pretty, well-packaged story that could be accused of greenwashing – to win both hearts and minds, says Zoe. "We have to demonstrate, with proof points, that in Ireland a dairy cow has the best life of all dairy cows in the world, grazing outdoors with health and longevity to the fore, resulting in a good quality of life for the cow and high quality, sustainable food production." Zoe continues: "There is a perception that alternative products are more environmentally friendly, but that is simply not the case. If you actually do the life cycle analysis comparison of dairy versus almond juice from 'grass to glass' you will find that Irish dairy is far more environmentally friendly and has a much smaller carbon footprint. But Irish farmers do need to continue to improve on carbon emissions and on biodiversity and we know that. It is a journey, it is not complete."

Zoe adds that dairy's nutritional credentials also need to be promoted as well as the 18,000 farm families that are involved in this industry today. "Economic sustainability cannot be ignored and we shouldn't lose sight of that. It is about employment, using the land within the community for the best purpose in a responsible way and providing a highly nutritious product portfolio." Global food security in the face of war in the Ukraine is prompting the question: can we feed ourselves and others? How can we do this in a sustainable, and affordable, fashion? Is our food system secure and can we be more self-sufficient? Referring to recent Government messaging around dairy and grain production, Zoe notes: "The idea of bouncing into grain production on the back of a three-week agenda is something we need to be careful about – these farming businesses are set within eco-systems and it is not a light switch that we can turn on and off. The evolution of our dairy industry needs to be one that is long-term and sustainable in its strategy, delivering for both the farmer and the consumer while protecting our environment."



**FROM THE FARMER
TO THE CONSUMER**

ONE DAIRY VOICE

National Dairy Council

Everyone's Dairy

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THE FARMER

Louise Crowley is a dairy farmer based in Limerick. Passionate about communicating the facts about her enterprise and the efforts she and her father make on the farm towards climate action measures, Louise is active on social media and is an ambassador in the NDC's From the Ground Up campaign. Talking about her farm, she explains: "We are calving down 185 cows this year and aim to milk 180. We had 89 per cent calved in the first six weeks and we have 80 replacement heifers so far. Grazing has been tough, February was very wet so we are about 21 per cent behind where we should be right now." Highlighting her interest in being part of the NDC's campaign, Louise says she is keen to get the message out to the general public about life on a working farm and the realities of what is being done towards delivering a more sustainable product, both environmentally and economically. "We need to educate people about where their food is coming from and how it is produced. I really feel the farmer's voice needs to be heard, especially young farmers who are making future plans for their own families and the next generation to come." In less than three years, Louise has gained a loyal following of over 25,000 on Instagram where she offers a direct insight into her life on the farm. "People are surprised at how emotionally connected I am to my cows. We need to show people the practices on our farm – we are not ripping calves away from cows and they are not just a number to us. Animal welfare is key and I know every one of my animals individually. At the end of the day my dad and I simply want to produce the best quality milk as efficiently and as economically as possible, with the environment to the fore of every decision we make."





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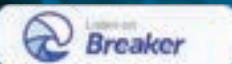
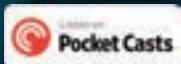
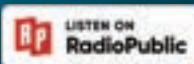
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Latest research in practice

Zoe McKay, lecturer in grass forage science at UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science, discusses current research ongoing with the UCD Systems Herd.

The importance of efficient nitrogen use in pasture-based dairy systems is a very hot topic at the moment. Nitrogen is one of the key inputs into all ruminant agri sectors, in particular dairy. Approximately ninety two per cent of Ireland's total agricultural land is in grass and this offers a natural competitive advantage.

A focus of research in the last 30 plus years has been on perennial ryegrass-based swards – this suits our 21-day grazing rotation patterns and is very responsive to inputs of chemical nitrogen. Nitrogen is a very important nutrient for our swards, and also for our dairy cows. But excess nitrogen means that nitrogen is also being excreted into the environment and the losses of those nutrient inputs and the impact it has on our water and air quality, for example, are issues we need to address.

Now, we have industry targets that we must achieve to try reduce the environmental impact of dairy systems. By 2030 we need to reduce chemical nitrogen use on Irish farms by 20 per cent, reduce losses of nutrients by 50 per cent and increase our biodiversity. The current national average in terms of nitrogen use efficiency is 24 per cent and we need to constantly try to improve that. So, we need to investigate, how do we use nitrogen more efficiently and how do we reduce our requirement on chemical inputs and do this in a more environmentally friendly way? Research will dictate how we do that and whether or not we achieve these targets.

A lot of research we do at UCD Lyons Farm is collaborative – working with partners such as Department of Agriculture, Enterprise Ireland, Teagasc and Industry. Farmers are also very engaged in the process and we have many farmer groups visiting Lyons every year. They know the

expectations and there are a lot of farmers already actively carrying out practices such as using protected urea, using Low Emission Slurry Spreading, establishing clover and reducing the amount of protein or nitrogen in concentrate feed.

The UCD Lyons Systems Herd is into its seventh year of establishment and is focused on developing a profitable high-output grass-bases system. The research is funded by Dairy Industry Ireland. The rationale for this research is that a high output grass-based spring milk production system can be profitable when built on a foundation of good grassland management and meeting both milk and fertility targets can have a place in a sustainable Irish dairy industry. My research is focused on grassland management: clover reseeding, nutrient management, grass budgeting etc. We are looking at solutions to reduce nitrogen requirement in the herd while supporting a high level of output. A key area of interest is incorporating clover into the grazing platform – we have 45 per cent of the platform in perennial ryegrass white clover swards. The plan is to do more reseeding and over sowing and to have the whole platform in a clover sward over the coming 2-3 years and therefore significantly reduce our reliance on chemical nitrogen. The use of protected urea is also an important tool that we are using to improve the environmental sustainability of the system – this has been affected by the availability of the product



this year.

Another newly established project we are currently working on is the inclusion of the herb plantain into grazing swards to investigate its potential to reduce nitrogen excretion from dairy cows. With perennial ryegrass there are challenges: a project recently funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and in partnership with Moorepark – PASTURE-NUE – is looking at the inclusion of plantain in the diet of the dairy cow and its potential to alter the way nitrogen is used and how it is excreted. We are also investigating its impact on grazing dairy cow performance. So, our swards will be: ryegrass and white clover; and then ryegrass, white clover and plantain. This project will also investigate options for mitigating nitrogen loss via varying concentrate supplementation strategies.

In addition, we are currently working on an Enterprise Ireland innovative partnership programme with BioAtlantis and Nutritech, which is researching the potential for seaweed to be used in our grazing ruminants' diets to assess its impact on nitrogen excretion and importantly assessing the mode of delivery. This project will deliver the extract via in-water supplementation (instead of concentrate feed) to investigate methods of efficient delivery to cows at grass.

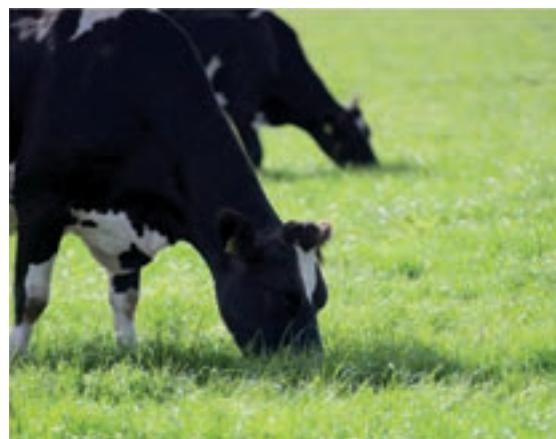
Seaweed extracts and compounds therein have the potential to modify digestibility and reduce nitrogen excretion. Can we identify the seaweed extract that may have this potential, delivery it to grazing animals via their water and develop a greater understanding of the pathway of nitrogen excretion and how it impacts performance?

The trial work for the aforementioned research will be carried out this year and next year and we hope to see outputs from these projects in the next 2-3 years.

I would like to acknowledge all of members of the research team, the postgraduate students and staff at Lyons farm for their help and support with the above research.



Zoe McKay grew up in a Ballyfin, Co Laois. She completed her degree in animal science in UCD and her PhD at Lyons Farm in dairy cow nutrition. Today, she teaches at UCD in the area of grassland science and is part of the research team with the UCD Systems Herd.



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The future of farming

Miriam Atkins talks to Dr John Daly, Research & Innovation Manager at Dairymaster, about the company's focus on delivering solutions that will shape the future of Irish farming.



Dr John Daly has been working with Dairymaster since 2009. With a background in mechanical engineering and a PhD in design optimisation, John hails from a mixed suckler and dairy farm in Co Cavan. "I have always had an interest in farming, but I have older and younger siblings so I knew that I would not take over the farm and would do something else instead." His role at Dairymaster involves a focus on research and development: "I oversee external research and new product development, specifically the software and electronics aspect. Our engineering manager deals with the mechanical aspects of products and we work together to bring new products to market. We have up to 40 engineers dealing with R&D." As John explains, the work Dairymaster undertakes needs to live and breathe on the farm and the practical application of the research undertaken is paramount: "When we start to develop a product first in the lab it is all nice and clean and we treat it like a baby. But when it goes

out commercially it can get used in different ways that you may not have envisaged. Our technical engineers, for example, ensure that testing is done in different types of environments, which helps make the products more robust and the testing we do more comprehensive." Dairymaster's core product line is around milking equipment as well as animal handling equipment, feeding equipment, fertility monitoring, etc.

Changing landscape

Commenting on the evolving dairy landscape in Ireland, John notes that there has been significant change over the past 10 years: "While we have been through a phase of expansion, this is not the focus at the moment: costs, climate, labour and food security are the issues today. The war in Ukraine has brought food security to the fore. But there has to be a balance between making sure we do what is right for the environment and also making sure we feed the world from a sustainable position. It has been shown that Irish dairying, on the global stage, is very good indeed when it comes to sustainable practices but we still have a lot to do, and we need to keep striving to produce food at a lower environmental impact."

Working with Teagasc on research relating to animal welfare and efficiencies in milking is ongoing for Dairymaster. "We need to be always improving. While many farmers have done the upgrades, we need to show those farmers, who have not, the benefits for food hygiene, animal welfare and farmer welfare as well – on top of environmental benefits and efficiencies on farm." All of these issues, John notes, go hand-in-hand. "For example, on the challenge of attracting skilled labour, by investing in labour-saving equipment you are reducing the amount of time standing in the yard, and you will also find it easier to attract labour with these upgrades."

Data management

John continues that improving animal handling and safety on farm is also key. And data management is at the heart of a modern farming enterprise. "There is a lot more focus now on data and using it for improved management; viewing each cow as an individual. As herds are increasing there is less time for the farmer to identify each individual cow, so how do you ensure all cows are at their peak, at their optimum? We can monitor each cow for many things: from a health point of view, early intervention with lameness, for example, makes a huge difference. Identifying the cows that need attention today is key – whether it is illness or if the cow is in heat and needs to be inseminated. Preventing problems from escalating into a more serious issue not only benefits the cow but also benefits the environment; an unhealthy cow is still contributing to the carbon footprint, so cows need



to be at their optimum for peak efficiency (although not necessarily at their maximum)."

A holistic view

"What we hope to do is to bring more management insights to the farmer – to give farmers faster, better ways of identifying cows that need to be dealt with. It is about looking at a more holistic view of the cow's health and performance. Taking all the information we can about the milk flow in the parlour and then combining that with the data we have around the behaviours of each individual cow, 24/7, offers real scope to improve efficiencies, deliver on environmental issues and ensure the best animal welfare practices."

"The onus – and the opportunity – for us as manufacturers and suppliers of equipment onto farms is to simply help the farmer manage the myriad of challenges he/she faces in their working day. We need to not just give the data or the latest research, we need to give the actionable insights. So, we work with Teagasc on field trials and improving accuracy for our technology and we also work with farms, trialling our latest tech on farms. And we have a great relationship with those farmers – there has to be trust there because if something doesn't work on a Sunday evening, they need to know that we will address that quickly and have it up and running again asap. Our engineers are out there visiting farms, getting insights from the farmer directly, which informs our own research as well."

The future

So where does John see the focus will be for the dairy industry in ten years' time? "It will continue to be those big topics such as animal welfare and climate – the question is how we deal with these issues over the next decade. Energy efficiency is crucial and we have a five-step process to help farmers improve here. For example, maximising milk pre-cooling with adequate water flow, using heat recovery for hot water heating, installing a variable speed milk pump, and upgrading to high efficiency condensing units and a modern direct expansion bulk milk tank. We need to maximise on cow welfare and ensure longevity in the herd, which brings us back to the health and fertility monitoring."

"We know that Ireland can produce high quality food at very sustainable levels in comparison to our counterparts, but we all have to play our part in constantly improving on this and we have to make sure we follow the science. We also need to applaud those farmers that are doing a good job in the delivery of sustainable food production. I personally believe we should not be restricting production in areas where we have sustainable production; if we do, our dairy produce will simply be replaced with produce from somewhere else with far less sustainability credentials."

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Fine Tuning Irish Dairy

Last month's Fine Tuning Irish Dairy conference in Limerick saw an excellent line-up of speakers tackle the key issues facing Ireland's dairy industry today, delivering lively debate and thought-provoking insights to the audience in attendance.

At the outset Pat Murphy, CEO, Kerry Dairy Ireland, gave an overview of the Kerry group since its foundation in 1972. Kerry now is a global giant with over 22,000 employees with 150 factories in 36 countries, and turnover of €7.5 billion. Pat's presentation covered social responsibility, and the recently launched Kerry EVOLVE sustainability programme. Philip O'Connor of IFAC then outlined the farm budgeting strategies that farmers must undertake to safeguard their businesses, while he also covered energy supplies, staffing and potential opportunities in farm-based biomethane and solar production.

That was followed by a novel video presentation organised and presented by John Heslin of MSD which featured Justin McCarthy, Lorcan Allen, George Ramsbottom, Frank Mitloehner, Conor Geraghty and Dr Paddy Wall. Prioritising the utilisation of monitoring and other novel technologies to improve farm productivity was among the diverse topics covered. Some of the interesting soundbites which came out of the discussion included the growing disconnect between the consumer and food producers, as well as the need to educate young people that farming is a good business to be in. Conor Geraghty from Veterinary Ireland spoke about EU regulations on the use of antibiotics, Lorcan Allen from the Sunday Business Post outlined the reasons for increased fuel, animal feed and fertiliser costs, and Justin McCarthy, Editor of the Irish Farmers Journal, spoke about the need to dispense with cows that are not productive.

A lively debate followed with input from dairy farmer Louise Crowley, and NDC's Zoe Kavanagh. Louise, an impressive ambassador for the NDC, spoke about the need to educate young children from an early age, and explain the role farmers play within the food chain. An interesting statistic from Zoe Kavanagh taken from a recent survey confirmed that 78 per cent of Irish consumers regard Ireland's grass-fed dairy as being superior to other countries.

The conference then moved to discuss Climate Action with University of Limerick lecturer, Dr David Styles, tackling the thorny issue of who takes the responsibility and pays the costs of climate change mitigation measures. He was then joined on a panel discussion by Fergal Morris, General Manager MSD and Richard Kennedy, CEO, Devenish Nutrition. The quote of the conference came from Richard Kennedy: "The more efficient you are, the more sustainable you will be".

The dairy conference was supported by AXA Farm, MSD Animal Health and the National Dairy Council.



Pat Murphy, Kerry Dairy Ireland.



Fergal Morris, Jack O'Connor and John Heslin, MSD Animal Health.



Richard Kennedy, CEO Devenish Nutrition; Fergal Morris, General Manager MSD Animal Health and Dr David Styles, Lecturer in Environmental Engineering.



Cathal McCormack, Alltech, Zoe Kavanagh, National Dairy Council and Pat Murphy, Kerry Dairy Ireland.



Matt O'Keeffe, Editor of Irish Farmers Monthly.



Jack O'Connor, MSD with Louise Crowley, Farmer.



Philip O'Connor, Head of Farm Support, IFAC.



Philip Hayes, Damien Bratton, Brian Prout, Edel Mullane, Myles Reilly, Hugh O'Neill, AXA Smart Farming.



Head space

Ireland's dairy sector is driving a new rural mental health campaign featuring Samaritans' helpline signage on milk tankers travelling across the countryside. **Erin McCafferty** talks to dairy farmer Peter Hynes and Conor Mulvihill of Dairy Industry Ireland about the campaign.

It no longer has the same stigma that it used to in Irish society, but mental health issues are just as prevalent – affecting men and women from all walks of life, including farmers. In fact, some would argue that the isolation and solitary nature of farming can exacerbate underlying mental health conditions.

"It can be an extremely isolating job," says Peter Hynes, a dairy farmer from Cork, who in recent years has become an advocate for mental health amongst farmers, founding AgMentalHealthWeek with his wife Paula in 2020.

"Farming is also a demanding and tough occupation," he adds. "The harsh reality is we lose more farmers to suicide in Ireland, than farming accidents each year."

Whilst there were nine deaths due to farming accidents reported in Ireland last year, there were 41 cases of farm-related suicide in County Cork alone (according to Cork County Council). Already, another 13 have been reported since January 1. Peter knew five of them. And these are just the ones we know about.

"The exact figure for suicides in agriculture is hard to quantify as not all are reported as such," he says. "For example, if a firearm is involved, it's considered death by misadventure."

Reaching out

It was Peter who came up with the idea for a recent mental health awareness campaign that saw the advertising of the Samaritans' helpline signage on 500 milk tankers which travel across rural Ireland.

"The dairy industry were accepting of the idea from the start and have carried out phenomenal work in backing

this campaign," he says. "That's the big thing with mental health, it's not enough to share the Samaritan's phone number, we must start talking about the problem to break down the stigma surrounding it."

The dairy tankers travel over 50 million kilometres a year across rural Ireland and are owned by the members of the Ibec group Dairy Industry Ireland (DII). "If a farmer is struggling, the reality is they're not going to leave the farmyard," explains Peter. "They're going to disconnect themselves from society. And if they live alone, they might get a visit for an hour or two every two to three days, and that's their only chance to communicate."

As a dairy farmer himself however he saw an opportunity to highlight the issue on dairy tankers, and in the process not only show farmers that help is available but break down to the stigma surrounding mental health and get people in rural communities talking about it.

"Ensuring that we highlight the importance of reaching out for support in times of crisis is crucial and the greatest way to reduce stigma around mental health and suicide is through a united voice," he adds.

He's aware that suicide can be a sensitive issue for families who have lost someone to suicide. At the same time, he says, it's vitally important that we talk about it openly.

"Someone who's feeling suicidal, won't feel comfortable talking about it, unless we as a society do," he says. "We need to figure out a way of dealing with that."

Stress factors

It's not just isolation that's a problem. These days, farmers are facing a number of challenges including rising input



and production costs, environmental regulations around nitrogen inputs, and the possibility of curtailments on cow numbers.

"Farming has always been challenging," says Peter. "Ultimately, we're governed by global weather patterns and climate change and increased regulation. And now there's the issue of food security with the war in Ukraine. These issues do put farmers under added pressure and I think the lack of understanding from the public and from the media about how food is produced doesn't help."

Conor Mulvihill of Dairy Industry Ireland is positive about the future of Irish dairy farming. "It's one of the most sustainable types of farming, environmentally and economically, at the moment," he says. "What we produce is a classic example of working together as an industry to

ensure the very best of quality produce."

While the herds have increased in recent years, producing on average 5 million litres of milk to 8.7 million litres in the last decade, they produce zero carbon emissions, he says. "This is because our cows are grass-fed and kept outside." He agrees however that farming can be a stressful occupation. "We've been getting feedback that farmers are finding it quite difficult due to environmental issues and questioning of their methods," he says. Irish farmers do have some improvements to make he notes, but he believes they're being scapegoated at the moment. "We have to do more on improving water quality, on biodiversity and on reducing emissions, but not all the attacks on farmers are warranted," he says. "I think a lot of Irish farmers feel under attack at the moment and this is adding to their stress."

In an effort to help with some of that stress, the Dairy Industry Ireland were happy to come on board with the mental health campaign around milk tankers, he says. "The campaign offered us a way to penetrate rural settings, rather than putting adverts on bus hoarding in urban areas, which they would never see," says Conor.

Trickle-down effect

It's hoped the campaign will have a trickle-down effect creating more awareness of the Samaritans in remote rural areas. They already have 2,000 volunteers across the country and answer more than half a million calls and emails each year. Once farmers connect, regular newsletters and social media messages can be sent to them, keeping them aware of the support on offer.

"I am absolutely confident that by working together we can address all of the issues facing Irish farmers and it's important to remember that," says Conor.

Anyone can contact Samaritans for free any time from any phone on 116 123, even a mobile without credit, and the number won't show up on your phone bill. Or email jo@samaritans.ie or go to www.samaritans.org to find details of your nearest branch. For more information on volunteering with Samaritans visit www.samaritans.ie/volunteer



ON DAIRY
SUSTAINABILITY

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Beef farmer adds on dairy enterprise

Liam Delaney and his father Jim farm near the Heath in county Laois. In previous times Liam would have been instantly recognisable as the 'Face of McDonalds': "I did those TV ads for McDonalds - all of ten years ago. The ad campaign ran for three years and highlighted the provenance and quality of Irish beef used in the company's burgers.



"We are still beef farmers. Instead of suckler cows we now keep dairy cows, which deliver offspring to supply our beef finishing enterprise. We still grow our own wheat and barley to feed the cattle on the farm with home-grown concentrate. We treat our barley with Alki-grain and mix in molasses. So, while there are big changes on the farm, we still have a huge commitment to beef production."

Suckling out and dairy in

Just two years ago, the Delaneys took the decision to invest in a dairy herd: "We never thought that dairy would be an option because of the fragmented structure of the farm. We have just 40 acres around the house and yard. Going into dairy was one of the best decisions I ever took. We started in February 2020. The decision was prompted by a range of factors. First of all, our Single Farm Payment, through the introduction of Convergence, was decreasing and is continuing to reduce. Beef and tillage farmers are so dependent on the SFP it is very disheartening to see the payment built up in the base years becoming smaller and smaller. The price of beef and grain wasn't enough to make a living without the EU support payments. With my parents, Jim and Frances, getting older, our children

in school and eventually college in the years ahead, we came to the decision that, unless I took an off-farm job, we would have to diversify. We looked at the options and the best one was to start milking cows. The beef enterprise just wasn't returning enough to provide an adequate income for two families. Eventually we would need another labour unit and the existing enterprises couldn't support that. In three or four years I wanted to be in a position to put the children through college if they wanted to go in that direction, pay for a full- or part-time labour unit and have a reasonable return for my own labour. Dairy allows me to do all that."

From horses to robots

Jim has been farming in the area since 1962: "I was 14 years old when I began farming with three brothers, two of whom are now dead. We have three children, Liam who is farming here, along with Seamus and Josephine. We had work horses before we bought our first tractor in 1962. An MF35 was a fine tractor then. There were pigs, grain, beet, cattle and milking cows. Now, with the dairy cows, grain and beef there are three main enterprises on the farm. There have been huge changes over the years. We still grow almost fifty acres of grain and we have a malting contract with Glanbia." (Jim was a member of the Glanbia Coop Council for many years).





The Delaney suckler herd was established in 1988 and eventually grew to eighty suckler cows: "We reared bull beef and were as intensive and efficient as possible. My father founded the first Beef Suckler Discussion Group in the country back in the 1990s. Now our aim is to carry that efficiency into our dairy enterprise.

A newly-installed 14-kW PV solar system makes a good contribution to electricity requirements on the farm. We have a Lely A5 automated milking system for milking the cows. It works well for us as my wife Brenda works off-farm. In the mornings I get the kids, James, Harry, Kate and Sadie, out to school and I'm back on the farm to do a day's work with the milking looked after by the robot. I also do some contract work, rolling about 3,500 tonnes of barley for farmers every year so I can fit that in as well. We operate a three-way A/B/C grazing rotation so the cows come in to be milked and return to a fresh paddock. The robot needs to be monitored regularly but it frees up a lot of time in the day for other work. We started out with high EBI heifers sourced from AI-bred herds. Sean Hayes of Progressive Genetics was a great help in sourcing animals bred for high fertility and production. Last year the Holstein/British Friesian herd averaged 552 kgs of milk solids, using 1.3 tonnes of supplementary concentrate feed."

Buffering with zero-grazing

In mid-March the herd was averaging 28.8 litres per day with butterfat

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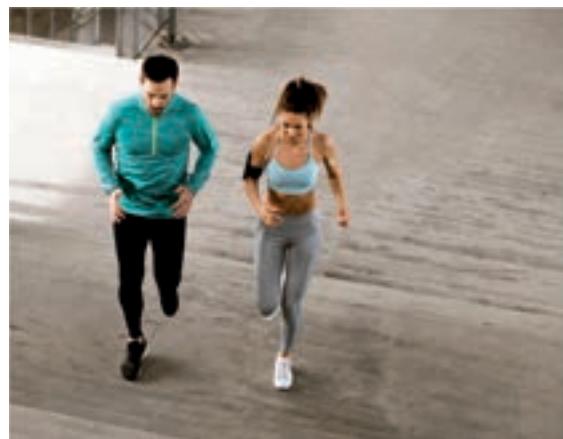
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"We had work horses before we bought our first tractor in 1962. An MF35 was a fine tractor then. There were pigs, grain, beet, cattle and milking cows. Now, with the dairy cows, grain and beef there are three main enterprises on the farm. There have been huge changes over the years. We still grow almost fifty acres of grain and we have a malting contract with Glanbia."

of 4.6 per cent and protein averaging 3.5 per cent. The grazed grass is supplemented with zero-grazed grass in the shoulder spring and autumn periods. Otherwise, they have grazed grass through April to July when some zero grazed grass will again be introduced. In mid-March the Delaney cows were being milked 2.3 times per day on average with scope to manage individual cows: "We feed to yield so each cow gets an individual concentrate allocation based on her yield. Some cows are milked less often depending on circumstances. We had a cow with twins, for instance, and we reduced her milkings per day to allow her time to recover condition. Foot-bathing is available for any cow that needs it. We also have a hoof care unit so cows can be directed into that facility when required. The Lely can cope with seventy cows, so we need to ensure that there is no delay in the milking throughput as we are up to that number in the herd."

Consolidation

While there is space allocated for a second automated milking unit, no decision has been made to increase the herd size: "We could do it. We would be a lot busier and need to draw in far more grass from outfarms. We might not be able to maximise the throughput capacity of a second unit. Financially it might make sense to eliminate the beef enterprise but with restrictions on milk output and more work involved we are focussed at the moment on getting as much as we can out of the existing herd and managing the cows as efficiently as possible. We were lucky that quotas were abolished to allow us to develop a dairy herd. Irish dairy is built on family farms like we have here, it's a great opportunity and I would hate to see young farmers, especially, denied an opportunity to milk cows if they want to."



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Jim Bergin, CEO



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GOODNESS
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HERE

MESSAGES:

- ▶ Get into the habit of running a low-cost system/ mentality.
- ▶ Be a positive cost saver rather allowing things to happen by accident.
- ▶ You must make a grassland plan for 2022.
- ▶ Plan and manage the 2nd grazing rotation carefully.
- ▶ Reduce meal requirements by grazing silage ground twice before closing.
- ▶ April is the best time to re-seed and stitch-in clover and it will pay for itself.
- ▶ Plan to manage Co-op restricted milk yield in April, May and June.
- ▶ Livestock farmers should grow barley or wheat – a civic duty!
- ▶ A 10-day pre-breeding heat detection plan reduces workload.
- ▶ Don't let anyone with a vested interest choose your AI bulls!
- ▶ This month, even though a huge cow breeding month, I am concentrating on growing and using grass because of the seriousness of the situation prevailing.

PLANS FOR APRIL

- ▶ Get your cost saving hat on.
- ▶ Make a grassland management plan for 2022
- ▶ Make a breeding plan, by date, for 2022
- ▶ Do a cost control plan and update each month.

COST SAVING ATTITUDE

- ▶ The year 2022 will be remembered for massive increases in fertiliser, meal, and oil/energy costs and the consequential increase they made to almost all other costs. Therefore, farmers must do something different this year!
- ▶ Firstly. Let us remind ourselves of the relative costs of the major cost of feeding a cow for the year:
 - ▶ Grazed grass will cost 14c/kg DM
 - ▶ Silage will cost 26 – 30 c/kg DM
 - ▶ Meal will cost 42 – 48 c/kg DM
 - ▶ It is crystal clear from these facts what you must focus on.
- ▶ Low cost is an attitude; you may not need to operate there but you must lower your costs – every dairy farmer must because since the abolition of quota costs have increased significantly on most farms
 - ▶ Low costs, as we know them, won't be that low in 2022.
 - ▶ Low milk price should not drive low cost; we should be driven by the principle of sales less cost equals profit.
 - ▶ Low-cost operators are more “technically aware” than others because they are driven by circumstances that they must, without adversely

affecting animal health or soil production,

- ▶ More than anything, it is an attitude on doing things differently.
- ▶ Don't waste grass; therefore, graze out paddocks to 4cms so as not to let grass rot.
- ▶ Feed as little meal (citrus, palm kernel, soya hulls or barley) as possible in April, none is required because grass is plentiful and it will sustain 27 litres/cow/day.
- ▶ Use slurry (empty all tanks) on silage fields, using LESS. now to save on N.
- ▶ Use Protected Urea/Urea (not CAN) for whole year because it is 77 per cent the cost.
- ▶ Use test bulls at €8.5 each (order them).
- ▶ Use magnesium flakes in the water to save on magnesium costs.
- ▶ Do not give cattle or heifers a ‘let-out’ dose for hoose or worms – why should you?
- ▶ Save on drug costs by using generic products as you pay more for trade named products.
- ▶ Collect and reuse rainwater and cooling water.
- ▶ Get calves off milk replacer and onto grass and meals now.
- ▶ Expect your school-going and college children to make a significant contribution to your labour needs – develop rotas by agreement.
- ▶ Remember the “Celtic tiger” days have not returned and inflation will be 8 per cent...some of us remember the agony of 1984!

DON'T DO SOLUTIONS!

- ▶ The solutions to a high cost for necessary input year are not to:
 - ▶ Increase cow numbers to stocking rates greater than 3 cows/ha on milking platform (MP). Therefore, most farmers should sell off their April calvers and poor performing cows.
 - ▶ Feed more meal to produce more milk – just because milk will be 40 -50 c/l, because there is an uneconomic response. The following farmer example, using a Teagasc programme, shows that feeding 760kgs meal instead of 560 kgs cost an extra €72 per cow and while the milk yield increased by 126 litres, valued at 44c/l results in a gain of €52. In other words, a loss of €20/cow/year by feeding an extra 200 kgs. A loss of €30 would have resulted if the farmer increased the meal fed from his 760 to 1060 kg/cow.

| Meal/cow/yr | Cost at €360/ton | Diff. | Milk Yield | Value at 44c/l | Diff. |
|-------------|---------------------|-------|------------|-------------------|-------|
| 560 kg | €202 | - | 5240 | €2306 | |
| 760 kg | €274 | €72 | 5366 | €2358 | €52 |
| 1060 kg | €382 | €108 | 5537 | €2436 | €78 |

- ▶ Decrease fertiliser use – this is the very last cost of all costs to focus on,

- ▶ Do no reseeding of poor producing fields – poor grass fields will grow 4-6 tons/ha DM less.
- ▶ Deferred loan repayments (they will have to be paid sometime),
- ▶ Defer payments of merchants, contractors, vets, local services and others.
- ▶ Neglect animal health and breeding costs
- ▶ Neglect farm maintenance of buildings or machinery costs,
- ▶ “Do all the work myself as I can’t afford to hire labour” – burn-out and depression will be the outcome for you.
- ▶ Use professional help from your Agricultural Adviser, Vet, Accountant, Bank Manager etc. – this is the year they will be of greatest benefit to you.

GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

- ▶ When the Government are getting all excited about grass there must be something seriously wrong!
- ▶ At the prices of fertiliser many farmers todate (20 Mar), upwards of 30 per cent, have no bag fertiliser applied. How clever is that?
- ▶ The consequences are we will be short of expensive winterfeed next winter and more, really expensive meal will have to be purchased, even though with the war we are not sure of supply.
- ▶ This grassland plan is an essential exercise so as:
 - ▶ Not to be overstocked for the year,
 - ▶ To have enough winter feed for the stock you intend to feed next winter,
 - ▶ And have enough grazing ground for your present stock in April and May,
 - ▶ It will also “cajole” you into having a large 1st cut of silage – this is a major way of reducing N input because you may not need a 2nd cut or at worst very little,
- ▶ This is one major way to save on contractor and silage feed costs per cow.
 - ▶ 1st cuts yield 10-12 tons per acre compared with 5-7 tons for 2nd cuts.
 - ▶ Quality is 6-8% units better.

- ▶ If little or no 2nd cut is taken more land is available for summer grazing, a saving on Nitrogen.
- ▶ Pit 2nd cut silage is 25%-40% more expensive than 1st cut.
- ▶ The way to maximise 1st cut is to graze cows, cattle and calves at high stocking rates, as follows, on the grazing area during April-May:

| | 100 Cows on | 30 (330 Kg) yearlings on |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Very high stocking | 21ha (4.8 cows/ha) | 4 ha (2500kg/ha) |
| High stocking | 22ha (4.5 cows/ha) | 4.5 ha (2200 kg/ha) |
| Medium stocking | 25ha (4.0 cows/ha) | 5.5 ha (1800 kg/ha) |

- ▶ Calves can be stocked at 22 per ha during Apr/May.
- ▶ With this info you should subtract the grazing area required (for cows, calves and replacements), as calculated above, from the total farm hectares to give you the area that can comfortably close up for 1st cut. This exercise will alert you to the fact that you may be overstocked to provide enough winter feed and may need to rent silage ground, buy “pit silage” or sell off stock. Likely to be very expensive options.
- ▶ To achieve these stocking rates, use the Nitrogen levels recommended.
 - ▶ To carry these SR's farmers, because they have applied little or no N todate, should apply 46-60units/acre of N on the whole grazing area NOW.
 - ▶ If no P or K has been applied, spread 3 bags of 18:6:12 per acre.
 - ▶ If you do not get very high growth rates to sustain the very high stocking rates projected, you will need to feed some meal(2kgs),
- ▶ Amazingly, this planning exercise is done by very few farmers - a fundamental mistake!
 - ▶ To make 70-75 per cent of your silage requirements from 1st cut, therefore, close 40-45 per cent of your farm for 1st cut silage in April.
- ▶ Silage fields should get 80-90 units of N plus 3 bags 0:7:30 per acre; this can be reduced by 7 units N and 1 bag 0:7:30 for every 1000 gallons of slurry used.



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- I or your adviser can supply you with a simple computer programme to do this plan.

REDUCE MEAL COSTS IN APRIL

- Feed no meals in April, because, if grass is plentiful, it will produce 27 litres/day. For every 4.5 litres a herd is yielding above that, feed 2 kgs meal.
- A few facts about meal;
 - Every €1 spent on meal equals an actual cost to the farmer of €1.60.
 - Every 1kg extra meal fed reduces grazing time by 15 minutes.
 - The return on money invested in meal feeding is only 3 per cent.
- You must get yourself feeding the meal level by mid-April that you intend feeding cows in May. This enables you to achieve better cow conception rates/less embryo loss because they will not be exposed to diet energy change during breeding.
- Feed the cheapest meal you can find, barley, palm kernel, soya hulls or citrus pulp. With good quality second rotation grass, there is no need of extra protein with these.

GRAZE SILAGE GROUND A SECOND TIME

- This option must be very seriously considered this year because it will save on:
 - Meal feeding during April.
 - Feeding pit silage or maize silage during April,
- With this advice closing-up date will start on 15th April and finish 25th April and so it will average around 22nd April closing. Fields/paddocks earmarked for silage, regardless of how much grass is on them must be grazed from 1 to 15 April or later on some farms.
- With good growth rates, the cutting date will be somewhere near 10th-14th June.
 - Pretty early enough for silage cutting,
 - A split cutting date would be advantageous to facilitate the early availability of aftergrass,
 - Quality will be very good because of the short growing period and no 'rotten butt',
 - Some farmers, for the 2nd time, will start grazing the silage ground on the 5 April and finish on 15 April; this will facilitate cutting on 5-6 June.
- When the silage area has been grazed apply:
 - 3,000 gallons of slurry (= 24-30 units of N) per acre onto bare ground, otherwise, that slurry will contaminate the silage.
 - Most fields will have received 60-70 units of N per acre and about 20 units (25-30% of applied N) of this will be available for the silage crop.
 - Therefore, with the slurry you only need 30-50 units per acre of Urea.

MANAGING 2ND ROTATION:

- Using last year, a very bad spring, to help you deciding on when to start the 2nd rotation is going to lead to the wrong decision because there is a lot of grass on the first grazed paddocks. They are two totally different years - grass-wise!
- Most farmers should finish the first rotation between 1st and 15th April (wet land) – the earlier the better as every 15 days will grow 0.5 tons DM/ha/Yr.
- The target pre-grazing cover should be, 1,200+ Kgs DM, on the early paddocks of the second rotation:
 - Based on Groups telling me, on the 20 March, that their covers on the 10 per cent of the farm to be grazed first in 2nd rotation averaged 600-800kg; it is almost certain that these will have 1200 cover in early April.
 - Particularly as growth rates are predicted to be 35 - 40 kg DM/ha/day on fields with adequate N.
- The first paddocks of the third rotation should not be grazed until they have 1500 kg DM cover, probably after 25th April:
 - Paddocks need 25 to 30 days to regrow that amount because growth rates in April will average to 40-50 Kgs DM per day.
 - Therefore, do not let this rotation become too short.
 - Some farmers use the spring rotation planner during this period to ensure that this does not happen.
- To provide quality grass for the year, April is key:
 - Paddocks must be grazed down to 3.5 to 4 cms.
 - Match the pre-grazing cover to farm grazing stocking rate.

USE 50% NITROGEN BEFORE 30 APRIL:

- Too many farmers make the mistake of not putting on enough Nitrogen early in the season:
 - Never more so than this because it is so expensive but we will run into grass shortage because of low levels on N available and poor tillering,
 - Urea is the cheapest source but some farmers have a confused ignorance that CAN is better,
 - No argument on which to use, but do not use Urea where lime has been spread within last 2-3 months.
 - Make up your mind as to the quantity of N you plan to use, based on your stocking rate allowance and get 50 per cent of it on before the end of April.
- Use Nitrogen to match your stocking rate during April/May as follows:

| Stocking Rate May/June (L.U/ha) | N(Urea) Units/Acre | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----|
| | Apr | May |
| 3.75 or less | 23 | 23 |
| 3.75 - 4.0 | 30 | 28 |
| 4.0 + | 40 | 40 |

- Sulphur with the Nitrogen on Sulphur deficient soils is recommended:

- ▶ Use 5-20 units per acre.
- ▶ Generally light, sandy soil.

BEST RESEED IN APRIL

- ▶ To reseed or not in a high-cost year? Yes, as the return on investment is 58% on the money spent.
- ▶ The best time to reseed is April-May because:
 - ▶ Weather is usually better,
 - ▶ More importantly, perennial ryegrasses can compete better with weed grass compared with autumn sown,
 - ▶ They can be grazed several times during the year to 'thicken' the pasture,
 - ▶ There will be no loss in yield from that field in the year of sowing because it will be able to be grazed 42 days after sowing with yield better for the remainder of the year.
 - ▶ Moorepark has shown that pastures with less than 60% perennial ryegrass should be reseeded.
- ▶ Identify fields with low perennial content or that have been poached:
 - ▶ Either plough up, or use the one/two pass system to prepare the seedbed.
 - ▶ Spray with Roundup fields that are to be cut for baled silage (7-10 days before cutting or grazing).
 - ▶ They must be limed (1-2ton/acre), generally whether they need it or not (to break down the sod).
 - ▶ Make sure to roll before seeding.
 - ▶ Use 3 bags 18:6:12 per acre.
- ▶ Choose your grass varieties based on the PPI index
- ▶ All new reseeds should have white clover included (2kgs/ha).
- ▶ White clover reseeding/stitching-in on milking platform is an absolute do
 - Task this year. Why?
 - ▶ Nitrogen use is going to be restricted for environmental reasons,
 - ▶ Nitrogen is going to be expensive from here on.
 - ▶ It is best to sow it in April by stitching-in into pasture (not old grasses) free of perennial weeds.
 - ▶ Red clover should be seriously be considered for sowing on outside silage blocks:
 - ▶ Teagasc research over 6-years has shown that, with NO nitrogen, it grew slightly more silage than swards getting 48units of bag N/acre.

- ▶ Silage will be high quality, lowish in % protein, and is hard to preserve (needs 48-hour wilting),
- ▶ Because of its growth habit it should not be grazed – shortens its life,
- ▶ It has a life span of 4-5 years with the need for a 4 year break before next reseeding of a 10-year reseeding cycle.
- ▶ James Humphreys, Teagasc, suggests a mix of 9 kgs Perennial Ryegrass + 4 kgs Red Clover + 1 kg White clover,
- ▶ Potash is essential (200units/year) and Phosphorous (units/year) and soil pH must be 6.5+.
- ▶ It is best to sow red clover in April by ploughing or preferably mini-till.

RESTRICTING MILK PRODUCTION: APRIL, MAY, JUNE

- ▶ Farmers in Glanbia and Centenary Co-ops are facing this challenge this year (and it may also be your problem in the future!) and it must be dealt with to avoid penalty in a year that one can ill afford same.
- ▶ At this stage what are the possible solutions?
 - ▶ Reduce cow number – very profitable to sell off late calvers, poor performers, lame/mastitic cows or other 'passengers',
 - ▶ Go on OAD milking but the loss cow be 20-30 per cent for the remainder of the year,
 - ▶ Reduce peak milk yield in April by:
 - ▶ Putting thin/marginally thin cows on OAD for 3 weeks: a second batch of similar cows could be OAD milked in May – this procedure would confine the yield reduction to 20% (Approx.) to the period of OAD with no effect for the remainder of the year.
 - ▶ Reducing meal feeding to zero or at max 1 kg/cow/day.
 - ▶ Continue feeding 'new milk' to late born calves.
 - ▶ Lease out cows to farmers, complying with DAF regulations, not in the same predicament.
 - ▶ The following actual farmer case study may help clarify:
 - ▶ As outlined above, grass will yield 27 litres, therefore, grass alone will deliver the peak yields required to milk his new 'quota' even milking 13 extra cows.
 - ▶ Base on above, if the farmer wants to achieve the

ICMSA

THE FAMILY FARM ORGANISATION

John Feely House, Dublin Road, Limerick.
Tel: 061 314677 Fax: 061 315737 Email: cathalmccarthy@icmsa.ie Web: www.icmsa.ie

Management Hints

| Month | Actual Supply in 2021 (191cows) | Average Monthly Yield (litres)* 2021 | Maximum Volume Allowed in 2022 | Projected Volume Produced in 2022 From 204 cows (Using 2021 Av Peak Yield) | Target Av. Yield per month for 204 cows to achieve allowed Volume (Litres)* |
|-------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| April | 155960 | 27.22 | 152,303 | 166,586 | 24.89 |
| May | 157365 | 26.57 | 160,088 | 168,029 | 25.31 |
| June | 143235 | 25.0 | 144,169 | 153,000 | 23.56 |
| | 191 cows | | | 204 cows | |
| Year | 543kgs MS/cow (760kg Meal) | | | | |

*To calculate: Divide the milk sold by the No of cows and days in month ($155,960/191/30 = 27.22$ for April 2021)

- new monthly average, say April with a reduction of 2.5 litres/cow/day, he only needs to reduce last years meal feeding by 1 kg/cow/day.
- ▶ This farmer is a 'super' grassland farmer, growing over 16 tons/ha last year, feeding 760 kgs meal and selling 543 kg MS/cow. It only adds to my conviction that the target of 1:1:1 (1kg MS:1Kg Meal:1Kg BW) can be achieved. He achieved 1:1.39:1.03, achieving 103% of the cows' genetic body weight.

GROW BARLEY OR WHEAT – A CIVIC DUTY!

- ▶ Is asking grassland farmers to do this, asking too much. I don't think so! Why?
 - ▶ We all have a civic duty to 'do our bit' in the present war climate,
 - ▶ With green barley predicted to be close on €400/ton, livestock farmers need to risk manage that possibly as well as the extreme risk of not being able to source imported grains,
 - ▶ The Gov is going to give a subsidy of €160/acre and the €400/ton should make it more than worthwhile to consider.
- ▶ I am convinced that many dairy farmers could put 5-20 hectares into cereals. But more convinced that cattle farmers could easily release much more than this area.
- ▶ The following has been confirmed by the DAF as being eligible for the subsidy:
 - ▶ Only crops following permanent pasture, fallow or temporary grass,
 - ▶ Wheat, barley, oats, rye, oilseed rape, maize, fodder beet and potatoes.,
 - ▶ There is no upper limit to the area that can be sown,
 - ▶ The crop can be cut for wholecrop,
 - ▶ Arable silage does not qualify as it is a mix of protein, cereal and grass,
 - ▶ Barley undersown with grass will qualify but the barley must be established first and visible as an arable crop on satellite imagery.

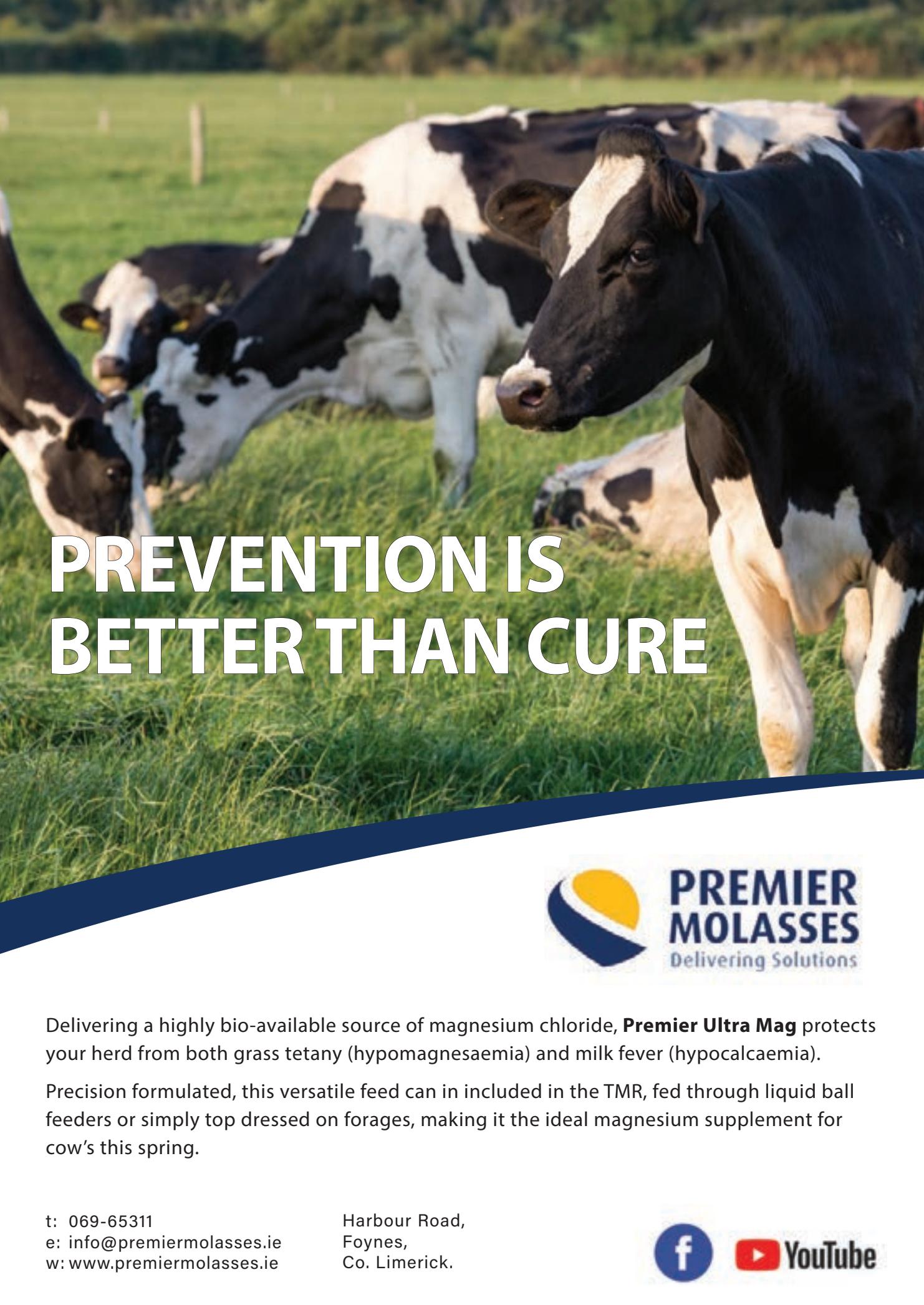
- ▶ If you are worried about your lack of knowledge about cereal growing, talk to your Tillage Adviser and he will guide you.
- ▶ Do a buddy-buddy arrangement with your local Tillage Contractor, letting him do all the work, advice and you supply all inputs. Talk to him soon so as to sow in early April to maximise yields.
- ▶ With a 'good will' approach we can make this work to the benefit of the country.

USE ICBF SIRE ADVICE TO SELECT YOUR AI BULLS

- ▶ Use ICBF sire advice to choose your AI bulls from the active bull list.
 - ▶ A very simple to use valuable tool that enables you to mate the best cows with the best AI bulls,
 - ▶ I am amazed how few farmers use it.
- ▶ I recommend the following when choosing (average) a team of Black & White AI bulls:
 - ▶ EBI €300, Fertility €140, Calving €45, Maintenance €20+, Health €10, MS 26kgs, % F 0.33 and % P 0.20
- ▶ The following are my incomplete list of B & W bulls (easy calving for heifers) that meet these criteria:
 - ▶ FR6547(+Hfs), FR6484 (+Hfs), FR7755, FR7932, FR7938, FR 7167(+Hfs), FR8046, FR6517, FR6625, FR 7671, FR 7620, FR6844(+Hfs), FR7017, FR6853, FR6628 (+Hfs), FR7170 (+Hfs), FR 7059(+Hfs), FR5803, FR6616, FR6631, FR7749, FR5902
 - ▶ Jersey crossing can still be recommended if your herds' genetics and % F & P are low but use sexed semen.
 - ▶ Use a stock dairy bull if you wish to lose €80-€100 per year for every cow in your herd.
 - ▶ This is the most valuable two hours you will spend this April.

"Victimhood is optional"

This statement will be true in late autumn if you don't do some of what is recommended now!

A photograph of several black and white cows grazing in a lush green field under a clear blue sky.

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE



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New Holland's new T7

New Holland Agriculture's new flagship T7 Heavy Duty (HD) tractor maintains the powerful performance, exceptional agility and outstanding versatility that are the hallmark of this tractor and delivers a superior working experience with the brand-new Horizon Ultra cab and next-generation PLM Intelligence features. It is ideal for contractors who need to multi-task in a variety of field and transport applications, and look for a boost to their comfort, efficiency and productivity.

"We asked our customers what they expected from their future tractor and developed the new generation T7 HD based on their demands, and it delivers everything they dreamed of," says Sean Lennon, New Holland Agriculture Vice President Europe. "We designed the brand-new Horizon Ultra cab to give them the best working experience with all the space, comfort, quality finish they asked for, and the quietest cab on the market. On top of this, the next-generation PLM Intelligence will make it easier for them to access our intelligent farming solutions which deliver substantial added value in terms of better decision making and accurate execution, boosting their efficiency and profitability."

The Horizon Ultra cab has been redesigned from the ground up to meet the customers' most demanding expectations: "The T7 HD might seem the same from outside, with the same compact, stylish appearance," explains Oscar Baroncelli, New Holland Agriculture Tractors Product Management Leader Global, "but it's totally new inside: just 2 per cent of parts are carry-overs from the previous model! It is more connected than ever and sets a new record as the quietest in the industry with just 66 dBA. We believe it is going to transform our customers' experience when they work in the

field." The T7 HD maintains the T7 range "family feeling" while offering a spacious work environment where the driver feels far less enclosed by the cab structure. The cab has been lengthened to provide additional room for the passenger and more floor space. Customers will appreciate the ample storage available: a 30-litre storage space behind the seat that will comfortably hold the driver's carry-on items; a 12-litre capacity cooled compartment; covered storage behind the passenger seat with a USB charging point and a mains voltage socket; open storage trays on the right side of the cab, and a netted storage bin within the roof bezel. The redesign has further improved visibility to the front and down to the rear hitch and implement, while cameras keep a safe watch on the area around the tractor. A new work light package with up to 24 LED lights ensures visibility around the tractor and implement is maintained into the night. The spacious cab provides a supremely comfortable work environment with clean, uncluttered surfaces and intuitive operation with ergonomically located controls on the new SideWinder Ultra armrest and user-friendly IntelliView 12-inch display. The controls can be configured to match the operator's preferences, and customisation is as simple and extensive as desired. The CentreView display placed in the centre of the steering wheel – an industry first – provides a clear line of sight. The new class-leading automatic climate control system with zone selection, which has 35 per cent more capacity than the previous model, easily maintains a comfortable temperature in all seasons. The top-of-the-range Auto Comfort seat features lateral suspension and a climate control system that extracts moisture on hot days or warms on cold mornings. The Horizon Ultra cab's

advanced connectivity enables customers to bring their digital life on board effortlessly, as their mobile device automatically connects to the screen and can be operated with a button on the armrest.

The T7 HD introduces the next-generation PLM Intelligence, which represents a step forward in New Holland's Precision Land Management strategy. It marks the shift from traditional farming practices to agriculture 4.0., where Precision and Interconnected Farming assists farmers to plan all operations in advance, manage in real time the behaviour and performance of each machine, and achieve maximum precision and efficiency. "These new developments are the result of New Holland's strategy to be more and more connected to our customers," says Carlo Lambro, New Holland Brand President. "Servitization and digitalization are the gates to the future. They have made possible to integrate the physical presence at the wheel with an array of digital services that mean we can always be at our customer's side, helping them to get the job done." The next-generation PLM Intelligence is a new electronic architecture that will be adopted in all New Holland next-generation equipment, so that customers will find the same logic when switching machines and easily access data to get the job done more efficiently. This is part of New Holland's strategy to integrate digital technologies to deliver a smart and connected agriculture, with easy-to-use solutions that make farming more sustainable and productive. They include the traditional precision farming applications aimed at making the operator's life easier while optimising yield and input costs; solutions based on connectivity and monitoring focused on improving the machine's productivity; and cloud-based solutions based on data analysis and planning to facilitate farm management decisions. Through the MyNewHolland App, customers can register their machine and retrieve its technical information, and access the MyPLMConnect portal, where they can manage their fleet and farm data in a single environment. The MyPLMConnect system enables them to receive dynamic information in real time from individual machines at work in the field and analyse the data to make informed decisions. New Holland is also introducing the new PLM Cygnus receiver, which is core to the enhanced autoguidance architecture on its tractors featuring PLM Intelligence. It provides reliable position, compensating for terrain variations, and helps acquire guidance lines very quickly, delivering accurate and reliable guidance. The receiver also supports New Holland's satellite-based correction sources, in addition to the highly accurate RTK correction distributed through the brand's PLM RTK+ network. New Holland's advanced connectivity also helps customers minimise downtime. The machine is connected to the farmer and the dealer, who can monitor the location and status of the registered connected units. They are able to conduct remote diagnostics via the New Holland Remote Assistance tool as well as supporting the operator in the cab with the IntelliView Connect feature which enables them to share screen sessions. The machine is also connected to New Holland's Control Room, which alerts the dealer about error codes, suggests solutions, and can even prevent possible failures.



Issue of cost

Over 70 per cent of farmers are to cut back on fertiliser usage this season. It has been noted that

a third of farmers have not purchased fertiliser yet. Fertiliser prices are now running at an all-time high: prices are now running at a rate of three times greater than 2020 levels.

Meanwhile, pig slurry demand remains strong with a load of slurry – approx. 6,000 gallons – coming in around €70/80 at present. Over half the pig producers in Ireland are cutting down on pig numbers with at least 20 per cent of the poultry industry considering the same route of cutting numbers as inputs in this sector continue to soar. Demand for loans for fertiliser operated through Cultivate finance and the local Credit Unions has increased dramatically. The cost of making a bale of silage is expected to hit between €45 and €50 a bale this summer. Baled silage will now become more expensive than pit silage. Some stats doing the rounds are highlighting that forage maize will cost less per ton of dry matter to produce than 3 cuts of silage this year. It is worth checking out the research being carried out by CAFRE when it comes to making decisions this year, the three main problem areas being diesel fertiliser and the cost of plastic.

Recently, the EU commission announced a €500 million aid package to support EU farmers most affected by the Ukraine crisis. We are getting An €12 million as a tillage support scheme. The breakdown on this is as follows: farmers will be paid to plant additional crops such as barley, oats and wheat this year to qualify for the €400 /hectare payment. Ground must not have been in tillage in 2021. The jury is still out on how it is going to be implemented and managed with options still to be looked at for growing grass silage... we will wait and see. On the market front, the dairy industry is remaining strong. On the sheep side, as the Easter trade begins, prices and demand remains strong. In the beef trade, compared to last year prices are up €1/kg with a possible further lift on the cards. The grain market remains strong and our domestic market remains healthy against a backdrop of ever increasing inputs.

On the machinery front it is important to flag that some dealers are being caught on credit card scams for parts and machinery. It's now a case of checking and double checking caller's purpose and ID before any transaction is conducted.

Machinery orders are remaining strong. On the tractor front the CSO figures are showing that there was 484 new tractors registered in the first two months of this year compared to 498 in the same period last year. In the second-hand market, there were 426 used imported tractors registered for the first two months this year: this is down from 733 tractors in the same period last year. Against a backdrop of supply of new units and input costs the market is performing remarkably well. Dealers are now up and running with open days so check out social media and see what's coming up in your area. Support local at all times. And don't forget, the tractor run season is about to commence, so get out and support your local events this year; it will be greatly appreciated by all charities.

With the regional shows now coming to an end all roads now are leading to the FTMTA show in Punchestown on the 13th and 14th of July. Stand bookings are going strong so get booking now to avoid disappointment.

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

Noel Dunne

The New Deutz 6C Series

The new 6C Series is equipped with 4 cylinder DEUTZ Stage V engines, allowing productive work in any possible condition. Performance and economy are leading features of the three models which are ranging from 120 hp on the 6115 C and up to 136 hp on the 6135 C. For additional performance during PTO work and during transport application all models are featured with an engine boost, generating up to 7 hp more, allowing the 6135 C to reach a max power of 143 hp.

The new 6C Series offers a choice of 3 different transmission variants: Powershift, RVshift and TTV. The 3



stage powershift transmission with 5 gears and up to 4 ranges is the base and fulfils all basic needs. It includes as the RVShift and the TTV transmission also the adjustable PowerShuttle which ensures smooth and precise manoeuvres. The brand new RVshift transmission is based on

a full Powershift concept and offers 20 forward and 16 reverse speeds with Automatic Powershift function (APS). Depending on the needs the transmission can be also equipped with a supercreeper which covers speeds from less than 100m/h. The RVShift transmission allows the 6C to accelerate up to 50 kph fast (at economic engine revs) which is a unique feature in the segment. 40 kph are reached at less than 1650 rpm to guarantee minimum fuel consumption. Thanks to its transmission layout it allows a fast and uninterrupted shifting, offering also the possibility to "jump gears" for an even faster acceleration.

The new 6C series offers different hydraulic configurations. All models offer enough lifting capacity in the front and in the rear. The front lift with a capacity of 3000kg can also be equipped with a 1000 rpm front PTO. The rear lift features up to 7000kg lifting capacity and, depending on the transmission, up to 4 PTO speeds. As option all models are available with a ground speed PTO with independent shaft. The new TopVision cabins guarantee perfect all-round visibility thanks to the 4-pillar concept. Of course, the new 6C series is also ready for farming 4.0. The iMonitor allows the driver to manage all the functions of the machine. The fully integrated performance steering option offers also a quick steer function for reduced steering wheel turns on the headlands or while working with the front loader. Additionally to ISOBUS the models can be also equipped with the most advanced and sophisticated auto guidance and telemetry systems.

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New twin motor drive for SCORPION

The VARIPOWER transmission in the SCORPION 1033, 741, 736, 732 and 635 has now been replaced by the new VARIPOWER 2 twin motor, designed and manufactured exclusively for CLAAS. The compact drive unit from the JAGUAR forage harvester promises a long service life, improved drive efficiency and reduced noise levels.

VARIPOWER 2 comprises two hydrostatic motors inside a compact housing which share a common shaft and swash plate. Both motors have a maximum swivel range of 23 degrees, with both traction units controlled by a common distribution unit.

As before, the operator can select three driving ranges – 0 to 15 km/h, 0 to 30 km/h and 0 to 40 km/h – with the simple press of a thumb. The top speed is reached at a reduced, fuel-saving engine speed.

VARIPOWER 2 transfers just as

high torque to the wheels as the previous VARIPOWER transmission. The simple, compact design, which dispenses with the need for transfer gears, ensures a high level of wear tolerance and long service life. The new feature is that the housing oil is continuously extracted from the drive housing by a powerful Venturi tube, which significantly reduces churning losses when driving at speed. This ensures maximum efficiency and low fuel consumption even on fast road journeys.

The SCORPION 960, 756 and 746 will continue to work with the VARIPOWER (746) and the high-performance VARIPOWER PLUS transmission (756, 960) with wide-angle hydrostatic pump and second displacement motor.

New cameras and other features for all models

New options for the SCORPION

include the latest generation CLAAS cameras. These can be mounted at the rear and on the telescopic arm or hitch frame and are housed inside a new holder for optimum protection. The image is transferred to a separate display in the cab, which switches automatically to the rear camera when reversing. This greatly increases safety and convenience for the operator. Integrated heating inside the camera housing prevents the lens from misting up or freezing when the weather is cold or wet. A new four-digit counter is also available within easy reach of the joystick for manually counting load cycles. Other new features include an LED flashing beacon, self-cancelling indicators and additional tyre options. The rear of the vehicle can now be accessed without tools.



Farmhand Ltd. announces partnership with First Citizen Agri Finance

Farmhand Ltd. has announced the commencement of a strategic partnership with First Citizen Agri Finance. The aim of this partnership is to offer more finance options for Irish farmers purchasing machinery from Krone or Amazone.

The choice of Krone Finance and Amazone Finance products will be available throughout the established network of Farmhand dealers. This announcement also coincides with Farmhand Ltd. celebrating 60 years in business, and the team are more committed than ever to growing the Krone and Amazone brands in Ireland.

Paul Scrivener, Managing Director of Farmhand Ltd., commented:

"This partnership with First Citizen is an exciting step in making new finance options available through our network of dealers nationwide. Our agreement with First Citizen



Stephen Scrivener, Sales & Marketing Director at Farmhand Ltd.; Paul Scrivener, Managing Director at Farmhand Ltd.; Pat O'Neill, National Agri Sales Manager at First Citizen Agri Finance; Celine Griffin, Sales Support at First Citizen Agri Finance; and Margaret Gilchrist, Sales Support at First Citizen Agri Finance.

will expand the choice of financial products available to farmers and we

can be confident that our customers will receive the best service available."

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The **Steketee EC-Weeder** is a true all-rounders among tools: it is suitable for all crops that are grown in rows. Also with its many tool options, it can be configured individually and locationally. Whether corn, sugar beets, sunflowers or beans – the EC-Weeder has the right equipment for all needs.

The integration of the brand Steketee within the LEMKEN group enables perfectly concerted techniques of plant care.

CULTIVATING FOR YOUR SUCCESS!

A large red agricultural machine, specifically a Steketee EC-Weeder, is shown in the foreground, being pulled by a green tractor. The machine has multiple red components and black tines. In the background, there's a blue sky with clouds and some agricultural fields.

Find out more on steketee.com

Darlene Doherty-Burney, LEMKEN Area Sales Manager, 00351 96 020066, darleneburney@lemken.com

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John Deere Roadshow comes to Templetuohy

On Saturday 29th January Templetuohy Farm Machinery Ltd's Laois Depot hosted the 6R 140 and 6R 185. It was the first time the new 6R tractor range was available to see in the Republic of Ireland. On the first stop of the Irish leg of John Deere's roadshow, two new models were exhibited of the new 6R Series, which fuses power, performance, and digital intelligence to help you achieve your goal across Ireland and the U.K.

Below is a snapshot of what was on show.





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RIDEMAX FL 693 M is BKT's response in terms of transport applications mainly on asphalt, in the agricultural sector.



BKT

GROWING TOGETHER

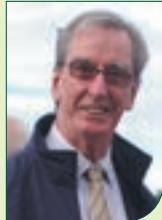
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Increasing Grain Production

**Tom Murphy**

Professional
Agricultural
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organisations to a meeting in Kildare Street, to discuss the urgent action needed for Ireland to deal with expected shortages. Of course, agricultural contractors, who will have to play a major role in any plan, were not taken into the equation. I do not understand how, with one of the most serious issues facing the country since WW2, the Government, Department of Agriculture and policy advisers still forget that agricultural contractors must be included in the planning process where there is any change of strategy in relation to crop production. PAC Ireland has, once again, taken this up with the Department of Agriculture and will continue to do so.

Russia and Ukraine together account for nearly one-third of the world's barley and wheat exports; and Ukraine is a leading producer of corn and is also the world leader in sunflower oil production, which is used in food production. So, it is no surprise that one of the recommendations arising from the meeting was to urge farmers, where at all possible, to switch to sowing wheat, barley, and other grains. There will of course be support for farmers following this advice.

Countries around the world are restricting their grain exports and

As the world's food supplies are drastically affected by the war in Ukraine and as sanctions against Russia take effect, the Government called in the farming

in war-torn Ukraine it is not physically possible to start planting, so there is no doubt that farmers across the EU will need to urgently reassess their farming strategies. We could be heading for a "wartime" crisis with global food shortages, the like of which very few have experienced or can contemplate.

Agricultural contractors have the machinery that a majority of farmers changing to grain production do not have. It is now that they will come to the fore and play a central role in supporting farmers in making production changes. However, farmers and their advisors must make it a priority to consult with agricultural contractors or we could end up with chaos and a shortage of machinery to service grain production.

Farmers and contractors must agree before any work takes place how the unprecedented escalation in fuel prices will be paid whether that is by an agreed surcharge or farmers providing fuel at the gate.

Machinery Safety

As we get into stride with the season and if farmers diversify into crops production, this may necessitate more use of machinery by farmers, some of which may not have been used for some time. Safety must remain at the forefront of everyone working on farms. This chart shows the sad record of fatalities involving vehicles including tractors, quads, loaders, teleporters, etc. which account for 72 per cent of fatalities in the farming sector. It follows that these vehicles also account for the most serious and life changing injuries occurring in the sector.

Planning your work schedule and carrying out regular maintenance and just as important, not taking chances is a great investment in safety. Don't cut corners to save seconds or minutes when it could cost your life.

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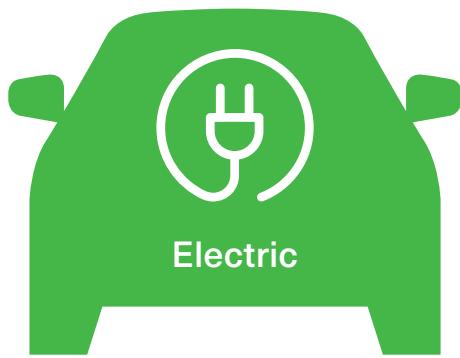
LEMKEN invests €18 million in new facility for hoeing technology



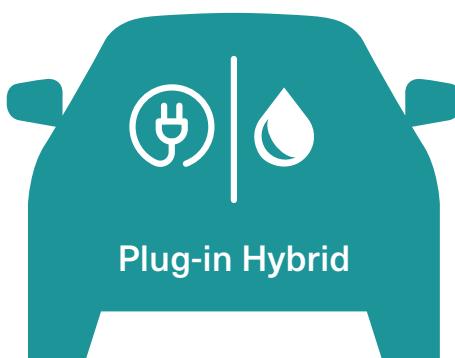
Nicola Lemken and Anthony van der Ley at the location for the new Steketee factory

In 2018, the agricultural technology specialist added hoeing technology, a promising field for the future, to its product range for professional arable farming. Since then, Steketee, the Dutch machine factory that LEMKEN acquired for this purpose, has grown rapidly, benefiting from the global shift towards mechanical, camera-controlled weed control. LEMKEN will therefore invest in a new plant to be built in Dinteloord (North Brabant), not far from the current facility. This new plant will also be connected to the Nieuw Prinsenland Agro Food Cluster as an additional benefit. The factory is scheduled to open its doors at the end of 2023 and will employ at least 30 additional members of staff. LEMKEN's Managing Director Anthony van der Ley explains the reasons for this step: "The world around us is changing fast. That's why everybody involved in the production chain needs to work together to ensure sustainability in food production. Primary agriculture in particular plays a pioneering role here. New technologies open up a wide range of possibilities. For example, by switching

to smart mechanical weed control we can apply crop care products more precisely and gradually reduce their use. That's why we have been going full steam ahead with the development, production and sales of Steketee machines since 2018." Van der Ley adds that the company's ambitions go beyond a simple expansion and modernisation: "We want to invest significantly more in product development to build on Steketee's position as an innovator, for example with the use of artificial intelligence." Iljan Schouten, Managing Director of Steketee, is excited about the company's future prospects: "Just three years after our takeover of Steketee, we are now taking a big step forward. I'm very proud that LEMKEN trusts the Steketee brand and our team of young talents and experienced employees. We place great value on new technologies in both our factory and our end products. We want to create not only a state-of-the-art production facility, but also a development centre and an AgroForum as a source of inspiration and knowledge for our national and international customers."



Electric



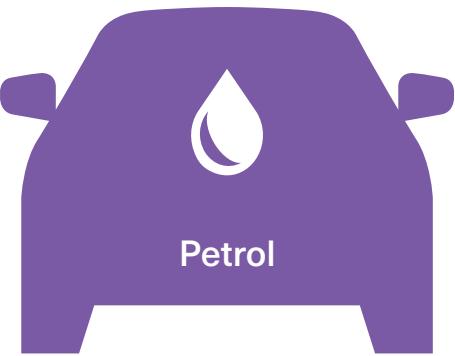
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RARE SHEEP

Erin McCafferty reports on the Valais Blacknose – the rare breed of sheep gaining popularity in Ireland

They look like they've stepped out of cartoon, but Valais Blacknose sheep are very real. Think abundant wool coats, black furry faces and jet-black ears, knees, hocks and feet. It's no wonder this adorable breed of rare sheep, which originated in Switzerland, is fast gaining popularity in Ireland.

It's not just their appearance that appeals. These are friendly, sweet-natured animals who have a gentle, fun-loving nature. They're ideal for breeding and make great pets.

Business focus

Donegal woman Cliodhna Muldoon, from Trusk in Balboffey, has been breeding Valais Blacknose since 2018 and, despite not coming from a farming background, was one of the first in the Republic of Ireland to see their potential.

The 25-year-old became a breeder on the advice of her partner Martin McCafferty who keeps pedigree Charollais and Blue Faced Leicester sheep.

"I wanted an unusual breed," explains Cliodhna. "I did some research online and I immediately thought this is a breed that people are going to be invested in because they're so cute."

Cliodhna and Martin travelled to a show in Omagh

in 2018 where they viewed the sheep and soon after they purchased a Valais Blacknose foundation ewe from a Northern Irish breeder. Later that year, the ewe produced lambs from an embryo transfer, and Cliodhna began to sell them. The following year, she bought another six ewes and so the flock expanded.

She now has eight stock ewes and three stock rams with another, recently purchased ram, on the way. Her ewes produced lambs last March and she has more lambs due in April with plans to keep another ewe lamb.

Supply and demand

Such is the demand for the breed that all of the lambs born in March were sold ahead of their birth. "People are booking lambs a year in advance of them being born and paying deposits because they're so scarce and they want to be assured of getting one," says Cliodhna.

These days, there are 25 Valais Blacknose sheep breeders, with approximately 80 ewes, in the Republic of Ireland. Switzerland has in recent years banned their exportation, although they are still available in Holland and the UK.

Irish lambs however can no longer be registered in the UK due to Brexit. So this year, Cliodhna and Martin set up their own Valais Blacknose Society, which



For more information:
Visit
truskvalaisblacknose on Instagram or Facebook

means that buyers can see the lamb's lineage. This is important given that gene pool is small.

Labour and love

And while they may be in demand, Valais Blacknose are not cheap. Cliodhna's lambs sell for £3,500 to £4,000 each. In the UK, they've been known to sell for as much as £12,000 for a single lamb.

It's a nice little earner for Cliodhna, who works by day as a microbiologist for Northern Ireland Water, and Martin, who has his own tiling business. But it allows them to save money as they're getting married at end of next year and plan to build a house.

Of course, working full-time and managing three breeds of sheep means they're always busy. They take two weeks off at a time when lambing and spend all their evenings and weekends with the sheep. But it's a labour of love for Cliodhna. "I wouldn't have it any other way," she says. "I take great pride in breeding the Vallais Blacknose."

High maintenance

These are pedigree animals with a sensitive nature and require more care than the average sheep. Lambing is also more complicated. "The Vallais have long legs, long, narrow bodies and big heads," explains Cliodhna. "You're pulling for a long time before they're born and when you get them out, they're a bit slower to stand than the average lamb. You have to work with them. You'd be worried that the ewe would scrape at them," she adds.

As soon as they're born, Cliodhna makes sure the lambs are responding. Then she uses a stomach tube to insert 80 ml of colostrum into each lamb. "We used to feed them with a bottle," she says. "But we found that the Valais lambs can't swallow very well and the colostrum could get lodged in their lungs, which can lead to the onset of pneumonia. Since we stopped bottle

feeding them, we've noticed a huge difference. They're up and on their feet in about 20 minutes," she adds. Their little feet however are not conditioned to soft Irish soil and more used to the hard mountainous ground of Switzerland. As a result, they often get sore and need to be looked after.

In addition, and unlike other sheep, Valais Blacknose crave affection. "When you go up to them in the field, they come running over," says Cliodhna. "They nibble and rub up against you and they love having their heads scratched. They're completely different to any other breed and do better when you're constantly around and playing with them," she adds.

Choosing the right home

But as Cliodhna emphasises, the breed is not suited to everyone. The owner must come from a farming background and needs to know how to look after sheep. Often it is women, the wives or girlfriends of farmers, or farming families with young children who are attracted to the breed.

Cliodhna takes great care to make sure that her lambs go to the right people.

"We recently had a Valais lamb go to a lovely family in Galway," she says. "The mother sent me a video later showing her young daughter playing with it. The little girl would jump in the air and the Valais lamb would imitate her and jump up too. When she stopped, the lamb would stop. It was unbelievable to watch."

Given their sweet nature, Cliodhna find it impossible not to get attached to individual sheep. "When you're going out every morning and evening to feed them, and you get to know their personalities, you bond with them," she says. "It's so hard to sell them off to someone else."

She loves the fact however that they'll give someone else joy. "They're such lovely animals," she says. "I really think they make people happy."



Working from heights

Ciaran Roche, FBD Risk Manager, on the dangers of carrying out any work at height.



Work at height such as replacing, maintaining, cleaning or painting roofs and clean gutters is very dangerous if not carried out in a safe manner. There were 21 work-related fatalities involving falls in the Agriculture sector during the period 2011 to 2020. The most common of these involved victims falling through fragile roofs. These incidents mainly occurred when victims climbed onto the roofs of farm buildings to repair or clean them and stood on fragile roof surfaces such as Perspex skylights or rotten roof beams, or fell through unfinished gaps in the roof. Falls predominantly affected older victims, with over half of all fatal falls occurring to victims aged 65 years or older. In addition to the fatal accidents many more have suffered serious injuries, some resulting in permanent life-changing disabilities. Falls from heights are the main cause of fatalities and serious injury when maintenance and repair work is being carried out on farm buildings. Therefore it is essential that every precaution is taken to ensure the safety of all persons working at height. As appropriate get competent and insured contractors to carry out work at height. The risk of death and serious injury is so great from "Work at Height" that the law requires that a comprehensive site specific risk assessment must be carried out for all work at height regardless of duration. This risk assessment must be carried out by a competent person and must identify all the hazards including the presence of fragile roofing materials and must set out the controls that will be put in place. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 (Part 4, Work at Height) is based on a risk assessment approach and requires, in selecting the most appropriate work equipment for a particular activity, that the selection process takes into account the hierarchy of controls: 1. Avoid work at height where possible; 2. Prevent falls from height; 3. Reduce the consequences of a fall.

When carrying out work at height it must be ensured that:

- All work at height is properly planned, organised, supervised and carried out safely;
- The place where work at height is done is safe;
- All work at height takes account of weather conditions;

- Those involved in work at height are instructed and trained;
- 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 from fragile surfaces are properly controlled;
- Injury from falling objects is prevented.

Always ensure that there is a safe means of access. If a ladder is used ensure that it is in good condition, footed, secured at the top, and extends at least one meter above the roof access level. Use appropriate crawl or roof ladders as appropriate and always have a system of fall prevention or fall protection in place. For more extensive work at height the use of scaffold or a cherry picker (MEWP) may be more appropriate.

Fragile Roofing Materials

A roof is considered fragile if it cannot support the weight of a person or where part or all of the roof can easily be broken or shattered. Most agricultural roofs are made either entirely or partly from fragile materials making carrying out any work at height on them a significant risk. Fragile roofing materials include: metal roof sheets which may have deteriorated with age and become fragile; unreinforced asbestos cement sheeting; roof lights such as Perspex sheeting; roofs in poor structural condition. Roof lights and Perspex sheeting are a particular risk because they can be very hard to identify due to weathering or as they may have been painted over. A high proportion of deaths are caused by falls through fragile roof coverings. Any work on fragile roofs, however trivial it may seem, must be carefully assessed, planned and supervised. Always assume all roofing materials are fragile unless confirmed otherwise by a competent person. We would strongly encourage farmers to engage a fully insured competent contractors to carry out works of this nature who are experts in this field. In addition, we will be pleased to check contractor's insurance details for you at no charge.



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Focus On Food Security Cannot Be A Short-Term PR Exercise

For years, ICMSA and farm organisations across the EU have been highlighting the importance of food security for our EU citizens but the issue fell on deaf ears with the assumption of our policymakers being that there was no issue here. Food was plentiful and farmers would continue to produce sufficient quantities of food and if they decided not to, we can simply import food. That was the solution and EU farmers were sacrificed in trade deal after trade deal. The Green Deal, Farm to Fork and the Biodiversity Strategy were published with little attention to food security or the economic and social sustainability of EU family farms. The CAP Strategic Plan was sent to Brussels, a plan that can only be described as an attack on commercial family farms producing high quality food and time will show that this plan will be a disaster for farming and rural Ireland unless it is radically changed.

Unfortunately, it has taken the appalling situation in Ukraine for policymakers and politicians to wake up and to take the issue of food security seriously and let us be very clear, food security was going to become an issue irrespective of the Ukrainian situation due to the over regulation of the EU food sector, the cheap food policy and the use of imports to undermine sustainable EU food producers.

Firstly, we all hope that the Ukraine situation can be resolved as soon as possible, that the war ends and that Ukrainians can start to rebuild their lives. Secondly, it is unfortunate that it took a war to bring a focus on food security and the current public utterances from politicians cannot be a short-term PR exercise. Politicians have a bad habit of highlighting issues, then moving on to the next issue and forgetting about matters until the next crisis hits. Food security is too important for this to happen again.

Farmers today are struggling with unprecedented farm inputs costs, the availability of inputs and be in no doubt, food production in the EU and globally will be severely hit in 2022. The EU needs a short-term plan that delivers farm inputs at a reasonable price, that the price of food reflects the cost of production and delivers the required quantities of food to ensure self-sufficiency. In the long-term, if the EU is to learn anything from the current



Pat McCormack
President, ICMSA

situation, it can never again allow itself to be dependent on others for its supply of food and energy. Public policy at EU and national level must ensure that we are self-sufficient in food production and energy.

What needs to happen? The EU needs to establish its food requirements for the next thirty years and then policy needs to be developed to deliver this food in a sustainable manner. This will require a review of the Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy, Climate targets and the CAP Strategic

Plan. Nobody is saying to tear up these policies but what is required is realism. For example, the push for organic farming will undermine our food security objective, that is a reality that cannot be ignored. Food production of any form has an environmental impact and we must produce sufficient quantities of food with the least environmental impact. This is going to require changes in how the price of food is determined, it is going to require controls on imports in terms of preventing the undermining of sustainable food systems in the EU and it is going to require policy initiatives to support sustainable food production at the required scale. The regulation of farming needs to be realistic and critically sustainable from a social, economic and environmental perspective, policymakers for too long have either forgotten or more likely chosen to ignore the social and economic elements. Be very clear, the EU needs commercial family farms and the CAP Strategic Plan and other policies need to be immediately amended to support these family farms.

Food security is currently receiving attention at the highest political levels. The EU has a problem in relation to food security. This was coming in advance of the Ukraine situation which has brought the issue to a head. Hard decisions need to be taken, the price received by the primary producer needs to reflect the cost of production, regulation must ensure that the EU produces the required amount of food in the most sustainable way and if the current utterances are a short-term PR exercise, we will all be back here in two years' time discussing the very same issues. The ball is in the court of our political leaders at EU and national levels.

Clover Farm Walks

The Teagasc Grass10 team, along with Grassland Researchers from Teagasc, will run a series of farm walks. Topics to be discussed at the farm walks include white clover, nitrogen fertiliser, grazing management and feed security in 2022.

| Date | Location | Time |
|----------|---|------|
| 5 April | Kevin Moran, Caherlistrane, Co. Galway, H91 PP29 | 11am |
| 5 April | William Dennehy, Currow, Co. Kerry V93 D2F1 | 11am |
| 6 April | Laurence Sexton, L.J.G. Dairy, Kilbrittain, Co. Cork P72 FC99 | 11am |
| 6 April | Bryan Daniels, Kilmoganny, Co. Kilkenny R95 P202 | 11am |
| 7 April | Jim White, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary E91 WC53 | 11am |
| 7 April | Ger Pardy, Birr, Co. Offaly R42 FD88 | 11am |
| 12 April | Michael Doran, Duncormick, Co. Wexford Y35 X735 | 11am |
| 12 April | Patrick O'Neill, Mostrim, Co. Longford N39 FC64 | 11am |
| 13 April | James Barber, Rathdowney, Co. Laois R32 E8H2 | 11am |
| 13 April | Oisin Gill, Hollymount, Co. Mayo F12 XH64 | 11am |
| 14 April | Michael Gowen, Kilworth, Co. Cork P61 T998 | 11am |
| 19 April | Trevor Boland, Skreen, Co. Sligo F91 X535 | 7pm |

Book your ticket for these events at
www.teagasc.ie/cloverwalks or scan the QR code
 Registration is advised but not essential



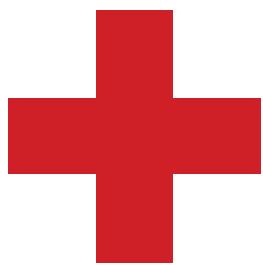
The big wind-up

Who knew Minister Eamon Ryan and Bob Dylan have so much in common? Well, maybe not that much, but both certainly believe that "The answer is blowin' in the wind". In truth, the ballad, written and first performed by Dylan way back in 1962 has little to do with wind velocities or its intermittent nature on land or sea. It is a philosophical song written in support of the Civil Rights Movement that was blowing at full gale in the US during the early 1960s. Eamon Ryan has a philosophical, even ideological attachment to offshore wind, being the foremost Irish advocate of this renewable energy source and the potential of Ireland to become the wind OPEC of the world. Onshore wind is less reliable than offshore wind, simply because the wind blows more often at sea than on land. That does not mean offshore wind is fully reliable. Be calmed seas are not an unusual phenomenon. Relative energy production reliability is one aspect of offshore wind energy production. The one million sq. kilometres of sovereign seas off our shores, especially the western seas where the wind blows more frequently, are inhospitable places to construct large wind turbines. A turbine on the side of a mountain in Mayo is a lot more reliable in being able to withstand severe weather impacts than one several miles off the Mayo coast. The costs of offshore turbine construction are much higher than land-based turbines – by an estimated factor of at least 2.6 times. The additional costs can be attributed to higher material costs to build structures that can withstand extreme wind and wave impacts over extended periods. The construction costs of building at sea are also a magnitude of a land-based construction operation. Ongoing maintenance costs of offshore turbines are higher. In addition, they have a shorter lifespan because of increased wear and tear from

their inhospitable locations. That, in turn is another cost to be factored into the energy equation of offshore wind energy production. That is not to say that offshore wind production is not a viable renewable energy source: it is. However, it will be a higher cost energy than alternative energy sources, including on-shore wind energy, gas or coal-fuelled power plants.

Our policymakers are placing a lot of confidence in the potential of offshore wind to provide a large proportion of our energy requirements in the decades ahead. It may well live up to that confidence. Consumers should, however, be fully aware that even if offshore wind turbines live up to their potential to deliver large amounts of (intermittent) energy for our electrical needs, the cost of that electricity will be high. We are already seeing the negative impact on the economy, on household budgets and on public attitudes of higher electricity costs. There has yet to be a realisation that, even if the current vectors driving up energy costs are mitigated by an end to hostilities in Ukraine, we have entered an era of higher energy prices, whether that energy is sourced from renewable or non-renewable sources. Weaning ourselves off hydrocarbons will add permanent cost-of-living increases to our household budgets as well as to farms, factories and the overall economy. We have little enough choice, it seems. We cannot continue to rely on unstable, hostile regimes to supply us with gas or coal, or grain for that matter. Neither can we indefinitely postpone the mitigation measures required to minimise the effects of climate change, to whatever degree it impacts on Ireland. It will not be a costless exercise. Higher energy costs, carbon taxes and Public Service Obligation levies to subsidise renewable energy development are here to stay.





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REPIDOSE THE RIGHT BALANCE



KILLS WORMS AND ALLOWS IMMUNITY TO DEVELOP

The **ONLY** pulse release bolus to provide season long protection against:

- ✓ Lungworms
- ✓ Stomach Worms
- ✓ Gut worms



Tribovax 10 Suspension for injection for cattle and sheep contains *C. chauvoei* whole culture, and the following toxoids: *C. perfringens* type A (α), *C. perfringens* type B & C (β), *C. perfringens* type D (ε), *C. novyi*, *C. septicum*, *C. tetani*, *C. sordellii*, *C. haemolyticum*.

Butox Pour-On Suspension 0.75 % w/v contains 7.5 mg Deltamethrin per ml for topical use. Withdrawal periods: Meat and offal: 18 days; milk: 12 hours. In cases of heavy infestation it may be necessary to repeat the treatment after 4-6 weeks.

Repidoze Ready Pulse is a cylindrical pulse release bolus device made up of a PVC cap segment, seven individual cells, corrugating central alloy core and mild steel end weight of sufficient density to prevent regurgitation. Withdrawal period: Meat & offal: 7 months after administration of the product. Milk: Do not administer to cattle producing milk for human consumption, nor to cattle within 7 months of an expected calving date which precedes the production of milk for human consumption.

Legal category: **LM**

Always read the package leaflet or SPC before use. Prior to first time use on a farm, it is strongly recommended that the advice of a veterinary practitioner is sought.

*Where 2 doses of Tribovax 10 are part of a primary vaccination and are administered 4 to 6 weeks apart as recommended by SPC.

**Butox Pour-On gives 6-10 weeks fly control depending on the degree of infestation, fly species and weather conditions.

Use medicines responsibly.

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MSD Animal Health Ireland - Cattle & Sheep

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For more information visit
bovilis.ie

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