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IRISH

JUNE 2022

FARMERS

MONTHLY

CLIMATE AND ENERGY FOCUS: SUSTAINABLE STRIDES IN PRACTICE

- + MATT CARTHY ON SINN FEIN'S AGRICULTURAL PRIORITIES
- + THE BIOMETHANE OPPORTUNITIES FOR IRELAND
- + REDUCING ANTIBIOTICS ON PIG FARMS





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JUNE 2022

EDITORIAL

Matt O'Keeffe, Editor



HIGHER PRICES WILL NOT MEAN HIGHER PROFITS

Ongoing farmgate price increases across the beef, lamb, dairy and cereal sectors are feeding into consumer price increases. There are several reasons for this food price inflation, including, though not exclusively, the disruptions to grain and fuel supplies caused by the war in Ukraine. It should be remembered that commodity prices were rising before Putin's troops invaded Ukraine. Inflated fertiliser prices were also well embedded at the beginning of the year. Clearly, the war has driven up production costs far further than would otherwise have been the case. Likewise, cattle and sheep prices, and dairy to a lesser extent, were increasing significantly by the end of 2021. Some of the more extreme futures prices to the end of this year are more speculative than predictive. Commodity speculation is not new. It has always been an unfortunate aspect of all manner of international trading. Many people who make their living from buying and selling, without ever getting their hands dirty producing anything, engage in playing a rising or falling market in anticipation of making a speculative killing somewhere along the way.

Producers would do well to avoid extreme exuberance in relation to where prices will be in six months, though in the event that food prices climb higher as shortages become more acute, further increases in farmgate prices will inevitably follow. As ever, grain prices will dictate much of what happens in the period ahead. Unless the Ukrainian situation deteriorates significantly, it is now anticipated that the harvest in that country could be close to eighty percent of historic production figures. The equally important issue is how that grain and oilseed harvest will be moved to market. Meanwhile, there are two major challenges

for Irish farmers. The first is to retain as much as possible of the increased prices for milk, beef and lamb. The second, though by no means secondary, challenge is to maintain or even increase production to capitalise on historically high prices. The two challenges are linked. With extraordinarily high fertiliser and feed prices, increasing profitability through increased productivity doesn't necessarily leave more profit on the bottom line. Averages tell a lot. Average grass production is still well short of ten tonnes of dry matter per hectare. Improved grassland management and output doesn't necessarily require higher inputs and that must be the aim of farmers at a time of high input and high output prices. It is easier said than done and yet there is no other route to sustained profitability. In any case, if the recommendations coming through from the Food Vision Dairy Group are even partially imposed on producers, then there will be no other option but to lift productivity from static or reduced inputs. If a significant reduction in the use of chemical nitrogen is mandated, then the hill of higher productivity will be increasingly difficult to climb. Add in a consequential reduction in stocking rates and current or higher farmgate prices will be an absolute necessity, allied to an appreciable reduction in input costs over time, if producers are to have any hope of maintaining viability and profitability on their farms. If productivity falls, we will see further strains on international food supplies. That may have been an aspiration of EU Green Deal advocates as well as our own well-heeled, anti-commercial-farming commentariat but when the result is misery and hunger for millions across the world, even their minds may be concentrated by the inadvertent results of their foolish agendas.

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TIME TO PARK THE TRACTORS

Much as we appreciate the charitable rationale behind the many tractor runs we regularly see being organised across the country, we must now consider whether that method of raising funds for deserving causes should be at least suspended for a period. The cost and scarcity of fuel is the most immediate reason for such a suspension. The fact that we are all in a race to reduce the unnecessary use of hydrocarbons for environmental reasons provides another imperative to stop any unnecessary parades of tractors on our roads and streets. Some might justifiably point to the absolutely unnecessary use of SUVs in urban and suburban Ireland but that is a matter for a different forum. The farm organisations have also used tractorcades, or glorified tractor runs, to highlight legitimate grievances. That strategy has run its course, even if the sight of impressive fleets of expensive machinery trundling through our towns and cities, disrupting daily life for other commuters, was not always a somewhat dubious public relations exercise.

PROTOCOL PROVIDES THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

With beef and store cattle prices at all time highs one might be forgiven for thinking that a new and permanent era of higher prices has arrived, even if it is matched, at the moment at least, by equally record-breaking input costs. There are, however, too many imponderables to predict confidently that there will be decent profits to be made from cattle in the medium term. The current dispute between the UK and EU over the Northern Ireland Protocol could easily jeopardise current price levels should the disagreement between the parties not be resolved satisfactorily in the coming weeks. A trade dispute involving 15 per cent tariffs on Irish food exports would knock almost €1/kg off current beef prices. A trade war is clearly in no one's best interest and there are some indications as we near the end of May that sense will prevail. Meanwhile, most people in the Irish Republic and around Europe are scratching their heads in bewilderment at the level of opposition to the NI Protocol in certain circles. While there are some costs, as well as time and effort involved in observing the Protocol, most of us look at the Northern Ireland economy as having the best of both worlds, especially for UK loyalists, who retain their British identity and trading access, while also having full access to the wealthiest consumer market on the planet.



Open the camera on your phone & scan the QR code for more info!



Milk Quality Farm Walk

Wednesday, 15th June 2022 | 1.30pm

Michael, Mary Ita & Alex McCarthy,
Kilmurry, Feenagh, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick
Eircode: V35 RF70

This event is organised by Teagasc, with support of Kerry Agribusiness, the National Dairy Council and Ornuu, and celebrates the excellence of Irish Dairy Farming, highlighting annually the NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards.

The farm walk will address the following topics:

- Review of the McCarthy family farm performance
- Producing high quality milk with low SCC and TBC
- Establishing and managing high performance clover swards
- Selective dry cow therapy - making better decisions with milk recording
- Carbon efficient milk from pasture based dairy systems

For more information visit: www.teagasc.ie/milkwalk



ONE 2022 CONFERENCE

After virtually holding this event for the past three years, Alltech ONE 2022 opened its doors to 2000 delegates from across the globe last month in Lexington, Kentucky.

This year Alltech ONE conference had over 140 speakers from across the globe, which included Paul Polman, Former CEO of Unilever; Heather White, Author; Robbie Walker, Keenan's; Damien McLoughlin Professor of Marketing UCD; and Damien O' Reilly from RTE Countrywide. One common dominator across a lot of this year presentations is the urgent need to address the climate.

At the event, President and CEO of Alltech, Mark Lyons spoke on the challenges facing our climate and the need to collaborate with industry and as individuals to drive home this message. Mark, like his late father Pearse, is an inspirational speaker, who is passionate about our planet and believes we all need to play her role in protecting the environment. He introduced Heather White, the woman Erin Brockovich calls the "Brene Brown of the environmental movement" and author of the book One Green Thing. Heather spoke about creating the 'Planet of Plenty' and she touched on young people's attitude to climate change: researching for her book, she quoted a recent survey on Climate Change, in which 10,000 young people aged between 16-25 participated in. One incredible statistic was that 1 in 4 of those surveyed do not want to have children because of what's happening to our planet. However, we must be positive about our planet and that agriculture can and is playing its part in protecting the environment.

Next up was Dr Vaughan Holder, Ruminant Research Director at Alltech. He spoke about the challenges facing agriculture. Holder believes that the world without livestock would create a further problem in reducing carbon. The goal is to understand the impact of cattle production, and pasture management on an ecosystem. Changing the mindset and capturing carbon in the soil are vital if we are to focus on the future. He focused on the three key pillars of sustainability - economic, environmental and social - which needs to be balanced, not only for those who share our planet today, but those who will inherit it tomorrow. Agriculture is integral to all three pillars.

Another inspirational speaker was Chris Koch. Chris does not let limitations or obstacles get in his way, despite been born without any arms and legs. Born in Alberta in Canada, Koch was raised on a small farm, and told his own story as a man determined to continue to live a full and active life. Koch love s to spread his message 'If I Can...' and is an avid traveller, marathoner, farmer, and a renowned motivational speaker.

The closing ceremony at this year's Alltech One was a fitting end to a superb conference.

Dr Mark Lyons was joined on stage by Erik Weihenmayer Blind Adventurer, and Mick Ebeling founder and CEO, Not Impossible Labs. Mick is the author of the book Not Impossible - The Art and Joy of Doing What Couldn't Be Done.

He has achieved world recognition working with a wide array of Fortune 500 companies, is a recipient of the Muhammad Ali Humanitarian award and is listed as one of the most innovative and creative thinkers on the world stage. A Grammy award nominee, he has been honoured numerous times for his humanitarian work. Time magazine called his Eyewriter invention as of one of the top 50 innovations of 2010, and the device is now part of the permanent collection in New York Museum of Modern Art. The Not Impossible Lab is currently working on a number of projects, and in 2021 won the Time Best Inventions for the second time.

Talk about been spoiled for choice, following Mick Ebeling was Erik Weihenmayer: Erik shared his incredible story as a man who at 14 became blind, yet unbelievably has climbed Mount Everest. Erik brings audiences a powerful message about a No Barriers Attitude to life. In 2001 Erik became the first blind person in history to reach the summit of Mount Everest. In 2008 he achieved his quest to climb the Seven Summits. His adventures have earned him dozens of awards, In September 2014, Weihenmayer and blinded Navy Veteran Lonnie Bedwell kayaked the entire 277 miles of the Grand Canyon. Overall Alltech's ONE event certainly lived up to expectations.

Roll on next year!



FTMT GOLF SOCIETY PORTARLINGTON OUTING



Last month, the first FTMT golf outing for the machinery trade took place in Portarlington. An impressive turnout of players attended from all over the country, it was the first outing for three years due to Covid. The event was once again sponsored by the Irish Farmers Journal. Portarlington continues as a very popular venue, and the excellent course and good weather added to an enjoyable day for all the participants. The overall winner of the men's competition and the Farmers Journal Trophy was Charles Cavanagh of Abbey Machinery Ltd. The winner of the Ladies competition, and the Paddy Callan Trophy, was won by Margaret Logue. Pictured is Charles Cavanagh receiving the Trophy from David Kincaid of the Irish Farmers Journal, together with David McCarthy Captain of the FTMT Golf Society and Noel Dunne, MC.

NO EASY CLOVER FIX

Clover-rich swards are not a simple solution to the demand for reduced nitrogen inputs on Irish pastures. There are complex issues to be managed. A presentation from Dr Phil Creighton at the recent IGA Sheep conference confirmed the practicalities and benefits of lifting clover inclusion in our swards. He also outlined the challenges to establishing and maintaining clover plants in those swards. Management practices for clover-rich swards differ significantly from grass-based swards. The dearth of clover growth for early Spring grazing means striking a fine balance between safeguarding the permanent presence of clover in the sward and at the same time ensuring that there is sufficient grass bulk to reduce those early Spring feed costs. With more promotion of slurry as a fertiliser input at critical seasonal growth stages we can expect more weed pressure in swards. This, in turn, presents challenges to maintaining clover in the sward as herbicide options are limited. We can expect higher sward maintenance costs with clover swards because, in order to manage weed control, the only viable option will be to reseed more often. Another unintended result of maintaining more clover in swards is the need to have quite low covers going into the winter. Does this mean that the practice of closing paddocks gradually from early October must be revised? Otherwise, the clover presence may decline over the winter period as it requires an open sward to survive. The practical solution is that only a percentage of swards will be clover rich, requiring another specific change in management practices. This in turn will facilitate selective grazing of clover and grass swards to minimise bloat threat. These observations are only intended to reinforce Philip Creighton's analysis that further ongoing research at Athenry and other centres is critical to finessing a sward management regime allowing clover to be an integral part of our pastures in the coming years.

CLIMATE INNOVATION FORUM

The Climate Innovation Forum, a flagship event of London Climate Action Week, returns for the fourth year this month to bring together senior public and private sector decision makers to accelerate the delivery of net zero commitments made in Glasgow during COP26. 2022 is all about delivery and action. We need firm plans and fine print. We need to keep the pressure on governments to make more and more ambitious commitments. We need tangible action from across value chains. We need collaboration and scale. Building on the success of 2021, this year's Climate Innovation Forum unites business leaders, policy makers, city stakeholders, innovators and the finance community to become the critical touchpoint between COP26 and COP27, to deliver climate action at pace and scale through the adoption of innovation.



Finishing at grass – weigh up your options for winter 2022

Maeve Regan,
Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

As beef producers, we are in the business of converting feed into kilograms of carcass as efficiently as possible, and with current forecasts around concentrate prices for this winter, the efficiency of producing this kilo of carcass must be assessed. Feed costs account for 75% of variable costs in Irish beef production. Grazed grass is still the cheapest feedstuff available to us, and this year above any other, the opportunity to finish a percentage of cattle at grass must be strongly considered.

It has long been stated that regardless of the finishing period occurring at grass or indoors, the economic sustainability of any beef production systems depends on optimising the contribution of grazed grass in the lifetime intake of an animal. However, typically when cattle are housed for finishing, the cost per kg of live weight gain increases by up to 50% compared to grass-based finishing. To put this into perspective, in 2022 Teagasc estimates the cost of a kilo of dry matter (DM) of grazed grass will equate to 12.5c, relative to one kg of silage at 21.6c/kg DM and concentrate costs expected to land close to 45c/kg.

Therefore, the question must be asked, is there a proportion of animals on farm that can achieve adequate fat cover and live weight gain to be slaughtered directly from grass this summer? In many cases later maturing animals will require an indoor finishing period, but can this feeding period be shortened by feeding at grass?

Feeding Rates

Supplementation rates at grass will depend on grass availability, grass quality and animal type. A high energy, low protein supplement will suffice, as adequate protein will come from grass. Grouping cattle on their ability to finish off grass is worthwhile (age, breed and gender related). A 'build up' period to a concentrate finishing diet can be implemented later in the season at grass for the groups returning to the shed prior to slaughter.

Grass is plentiful/good quality	0.5 kg conc/ 100 kg live	3 kg to a 600 kg steer
Grass is scarce/ quality deteriorates	1 kg conc / 100 kg live weight	6 kg to a 600 kg steer

Excellent grassland management will underpin the success of finishing cattle efficiently from grass. Energy is the main driver of live weight gain, which will be achieved by utilising top quality grazed grass (rotational grazing, targeting pre-grazing covers of 1,200-1,600 kg DM/ha).

For more information on finishing cattle at grass, contact your local Agritech Sales Advisor or visit www.agritech.ie.



www.agritech.ie

FCI WELCOMES SILAGE GRANT TO SUPPORT CONTRACTOR SERVICES

The Association of Farm & Forestry Contractors in Ireland (FCI) has welcomed the proposed €100 per hectare silage making grant announced by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue, TD, to help farmers to cope with the increased Silage Contractor costs during the silage harvest of 2022. Focusing this grant aid on silage making will ensure that Farm Contractors who provide a silage harvesting service can be paid the necessary fuel surcharges to maintain their operations, which are proving essential to modern Irish farming. However, the grant worth €55 million to the industry is almost exactly the increased fuel costs for Farm and Forestry contractors compared to the 2021 costs. According to John Hughes, National Chair of the FCI, the cost of the exorbitant agricultural diesel price increases during 2022 can now in some way be defrayed by the proposed Government aid mechanism in the form of the Silage Grant, to allow farmers to meet the additional Silage Contractor charges for 2022. "This silage harvesting grant has come at a time when all Farm & Forestry Contractors were burdened with an additional 2 cent per litre of fuel Carbon Tax cost at the start of this month, pushing diesel costs even higher. At FCI we recognise the clear but belated understanding by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and Teagasc, as well as the farm organisations, of the huge cost increases incurred by Silage Contractors for 2022 and why the role of the Farm & Forestry Contractor must be supported. The national priority is now to ensure that we have the largest silage harvest on record. That will demand a concerted effort, led primarily by Silage Contractors who will provide the skills, machines and energy to meet this national challenge."

CLIMATE FOCUS

ACROSS IRELAND, DAIRY FARMERS ARE PUTTING THEIR SHOULDER TO THE WHEEL AND PLAYING THEIR PART IN ADDRESSING ONE OF THE GREATEST

CHALLENGES FACING ALL OF US. BY CLARE KAVANAGH, STOKES PERSON FOR THE EUROPEAN

As the evening lengthens and we enjoy sunnier days one of the most beautiful sights countrywide is fields full of dairy cows grazing contentedly. Our grass-based system, enabling cows to graze outdoors for up to ten months, is both natural and environmentally sustainable and is a major contributory factor in our dairy industry's status as the most carbon efficient in the European Union (EU). Our dairy sector, the country's oldest indigenous industry, is built on the hard work of 17,500 family-run dairy farms, all of whom, are committed to producing top quality, nutritious dairy products in the most environmentally friendly and sustainable way possible while simultaneously feeding an estimated 45 million people globally. As we approach the midway point of the year, there are significant issues on the minds of dairy farmers. Global instability and supply chain crunches are making it more challenging for many farmers.

Food security is suddenly a topic of conversation at the kitchen table; policymaker discussion figures prominently for the first time in a long time and of course, sitting over all of this, is the issue of how to respond to a changing climate.

There is an incredible awareness among dairy farmers of their

role as custodians of the land and of leaving it in the best state possible for the next generation; a responsibility

which drives the sector. Across the country, dairy

farmers are deploying the latest scientific and

technological innovations on-farm, working in

tandem with a multitude of organisations to

ensure sustainability is embedded in every

step of the dairy production process. Recent

survey findings, canvassing the views of 1,500

adults found that 79 per cent recognise that

dairy farmers are taking action in relation to

the environment. All of these developments

serve to remind one about the major part

Irish dairy farmers play as food producers

and their position in the global supply

chain, providing consistently high-quality

nutritious products. As we look ahead

it is vitally important, that consumers,

appreciate the significance of their

role and continue to support a

sector, which delivers, day in and

day out and ensures high quality

dairy products are on our

tables.

References available on request.



PINERGY SOLARELECTRIC APPOINTS AGRICULTURAL SALES MANAGER

Pinergy SolarElectric has announced the appointment of Dick Meaney as its new Agricultural Sales Manager. Dick's role will focus on driving national sales in the agricultural division to match the growth ambitions of Pinergy SolarElectric.

In his new role, Dick will be supporting farmers to become more sustainable in the long term by embracing renewable technologies through Solar PV, helping them to reduce their carbon footprint at farm level while simultaneously enabling them to reduce energy costs on the farm. Dick's core areas of responsibility will be advising farmers across the country on their renewable and microgeneration strategy, whilst supporting them with their broader sustainability challenges particularly in managing agricultural emissions.

Speaking about the new appointment, Michael Norton Head of Commercial Sales at Pinergy SolarElectric said: "We are excited to welcome Dick to the role of Agricultural Sales Manager here at Pinergy SolarElectric. Dick comes to us with a wealth of experience working in the agriculture and renewables sector. We are looking forward to building a new future for the agri-solar energy market where farmers can reap the long-term benefits of solar energy including generating their own energy 365 days a year as well as earning revenue from any excess solar energy generated with suppliers like Pinergy". Prior to joining Pinergy Solar Electric Dick worked in a number of positions which included Development Officer for the LEADER Programme at Carlow County Development Partnership, Assistant Manager at New Ross/Waterford Livestock Mart Ltd., Capita Customer Solutions- Quality Assurance Auditor for Bord Bia and Forestry Services Ltd-Agent for Lightsource Renewable Developments Ltd. Dick is originally from Kilkenny and qualified with a Bachelor of Ag Sc in Rural Development from University College Dublin.



STRATEGIC TRACE MINERAL INJECTION BYPASSES THE HARSH RUMEN ENVIRONMENT AND "MINERAL TIE UP"

In 2013, a survey of grass samples from 44 farms across Ireland showed pasture trace mineral levels at 73%, 50% and 38% of lactating dairy cow requirements for copper, zinc and selenium respectively, meaning cattle can be on the threshold of subclinical or clinical trace mineral deficiency during the grazing season¹.

Daily oral trace mineral intake is essential for maintenance, but the issue of low pasture trace minerals is exacerbated by trace minerals being relatively poorly absorbed from the digestive tract regardless of the source².

Furthermore, oral trace minerals face the additional challenges of antagonists such as sulphur, molybdenum & iron. These antagonists can bind to the essential trace minerals like copper and selenium, "tying them up" and decreasing absorption further³. Some continental beef breeds are relatively poor milkers, coupled with low trace mineral levels in the milk, means that as calves at grass grow they will deplete their trace mineral stores, which could lead to subclinical or clinical deficiency developing mid-season, adversely affecting growth rates⁴.

In regions that have pastures high in antagonists like parts of the US or Australia, strategic trace mineral injection has for years been an effective way to overcome this challenge. Strategic trace mineral injection has been documented as a means to rapidly increase cattle's trace mineral stores ahead of high demand periods.

In a 2012 study, supplementing cattle with a trace mineral injection showed statistically significant increases in plasma trace minerals within 8-10hrs post injection and increased liver levels within 24hrs⁵.

Hartman et al (2018) demonstrated that beef cattle fed a diet containing greater concentrations of antagonists like sulphur and molybdenum had greatly decreased liver trace mineral stores. As part of this study, the cattle's trace mineral stores were attempted to be restored by either trace mineral injection along with a maintenance diet or by high trace mineral diets alone. Regardless of the dietary antagonism present, trace mineral injection rapidly improved the copper and selenium status of the cattle. Oral trace minerals supplied at 150% of the daily trace mineral requirement from organic/inorganic blend took 28 days to recover optimal trace mineral levels and an inorganic diet, also at 150% of daily trace mineral requirement, took 42 days⁶.

Cattle grazing pastures that have poor trace mineral levels or a high antagonist burden are at increased risk of developing subclinical trace mineral deficiency and this may negatively affect performance.

Good oral nutrition is essential for maintenance, but oral nutrition alone can take weeks to build back up the trace mineral stores in depleted cattle. Injectable trace mineral supplementation has been shown to quickly restore mineral reserves and thus could improve herd performance through high demand periods and support profitability.

ASK YOUR VET ABOUT STRATEGIC TRACE MINERAL INJECTION.

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ZURICH INSURANCE APPOINTS NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Zurich Insurance, has appointed Diane McGarrigle as Farm Business Development Manager for the Northwest region. In this new role, Diane will work with farmers based in the Northwest, to provide leading offerings and services in the region, while also working to develop and enhance Zurich's overall farming business. Diane joins Zurich with over 23 years' experience looking after farmers insurance needs in Donegal, having previously worked as branch manager in FBD. Commenting on the appointment, Graham Minogue, Head of Agri sales, Zurich Insurance Ireland said: "Diane brings with her a breadth of extensive sales and management experience and business knowledge that will make a significant contribution to our business. Diane's appointment will be instrumental in helping to develop our offering in line with our growth plans and our new policies, especially in the Northwest region."



NEOEN ENERGIZES IRELAND'S FIRST GRID CONNECTED GROUND-MOUNTED SOLAR FARM

Neoen, one of the world's leading independent producers of exclusively renewable energy, is pleased to announce its Millvale solar farm (15 MWp, County Wicklow) has been connected to the Irish national grid. Millvale forms part of a portfolio of three solar farms fully owned by Neoen. The other two – Hilltown (18 MWp, County Meath) and Hortland (25 MWp, County Kildare) – are currently under construction. The solar farms were among the winning projects in the first auction of the Irish government's Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS 1) in 2020. The energy generated by the solar farms will be sold under PPAs (purchase power agreements) supported by the Irish government via a CFD (Contract for Difference) mechanism valid until 2037. Eamon Ryan, Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, commented: "This is a momentous occasion for Neoen, all those involved in the delivery of the project and particularly for the Irish electricity system and ESB Networks. This is the first of many solar projects expected to energise under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) this year and an

important starting point on our journey under the Climate Action Plan of reaching up to 2.5GW of solar on the electricity system by 2030. RESS is one of the primary policies set out in the Programme for Government and the Climate Action Plan to address Ireland's climate challenges over the coming years. RESS supports the growth of the green economy, creates sustainable work opportunities, and benefits citizens as renewable energy becomes more cost effective and replaces our reliance on fossil fuels." Cyril Perrin, Managing Director of Neoen Ireland, commented: "We are proud to be the first to supply the Irish national grid with solar energy, a milestone in Ireland's strategy to diversify its energy mix. I would like to thank Wicklow County Council and the main contractor Omexom, as well as its subcontractors and the local stakeholders – the farmers who own the land, the residents of Millvale, ESB Networks and our partner BNRG – for the trust they have placed in us. The three new plants provide a solid foundation for actively pursuing further solar, wind and storage projects to drive our growth in Ireland."

Nicholas Tarrant, Managing Director, ESB Networks, added: "ESB Networks is working to connect and facilitate up to 80% renewable electricity generation by 2030 as set out in the Government's Climate Action Plan. This will be achieved by enabling new renewable generators connect to the electricity network, with the growth of grid scale solar playing an important part in delivering this target." The construction of the solar farms has created around 100 jobs, with 11 local firms involved in the work. Sheep grazing will be used to control the growth of vegetation in the solar farms. Together, they will generate enough electricity to power 12,700 homes and will prevent over 17,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year. A financial contribution to community projects will support local development initiatives worth around €100,000 a year for the duration of the RESS support. Neoen also operates eight wind farms in the Republic of Ireland, with a combined capacity of 53.4 MW and develops a portfolio of over 400 MW of wind, solar and storage projects, allowing it to establish a strong presence in the Irish renewable energy sector.

InTouch

ASSESSING OUR JUNE REPORT CARDS

CATHAL BOHANE, INTOUCH NUTRITION

The arrival of June is a bit like a report month for many farms. Breeding is into its second cycle, if not third and the silage is in if you are focusing on high quality. At this stage you know whether it was good or bad or in exam terms whether it was a fail, pass or pass with honours. All is not lost either way and you will have another attempt to rectify.

Growth has picked up on many farms around the country and it is currently outstripping demand for grass. While this is good news it can also create many issues as well. One of the biggest questions we will face in InTouch over the next few weeks is dropping yield and solids. Lack of feed/grass is not the issue here for a change but rather too much of it. Cows in this period are going into covers greater than they can manage and to achieve anywhere near good utilisation we need to somewhat force them to graze down leading to cows eating less than they should and consuming poorer quality grass which is a double blow in terms of energy intake. Excess grass needs to be taken out as silage or else other stock needs to be used for some paddocks. Some farms would have taken paddocks during the main crop of silage but for many farms that are cautious they would not have taken enough and would have continued to "chase their tail". Measurement of grass is key here to calculate how many tonnes of dry matter needs to be removed from the farm. Currently grass is growing >70kg/ha and for those even at 3cows per hectare grass is growing 30% faster than you need it. Good managers of grass live on the edge when it comes to grass supply and demand and in short this is the only way to keep quality, residuals, and production at the right levels. Measurement removes the risk from this approach.

Supplement needs to be assessed based on your own farm and the type of cows and system you are running. Many farms are highly stocked, or cows are producing >25litres where supplement is still required not to mention the higher yielders in every herd. These need to be looked after and if we are reducing the buffer feed or supplement we need to be conscious of the weather and growth moving forward to bring it back in quickly to support production and pregnancy. A rule of thumb that I use is if you are talking about buffer feeding or increasing supplement you should have done it a week ago. Do not wait until grass runs out or production falls to act.

Breeding is also at the forefront of our minds and while it is fresh, it is important to assess submission rate and conception to first service. The figures you are looking for is 90%+ and 65% respectively. As stated earlier, all is not lost and remember pregnancy rate is submission rate x conception rate and we can still work on getting the percentages up.

Finally, with the first cut in the pit or in bales it is again a good time to update a feed budget to see if we are prepared for the winter season ahead, now that we have more accurate figures available. It was certainly good to see a lot of silage being taken out a week or ten days earlier for reasons of weather and fertiliser. By default, this should lead to higher quality.

KEENAN **Alltech**
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NEXT TRANCHE OF ORGANIC PROCESSING INVESTMENT GRANT SCHEME OPENS

Minister of State of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Senator Pippa Hackett has announced that the next tranche of the Organic Processing Investment Grant Scheme is currently open and will close on 31 July 2022. The Organic Processing Investment Grant Scheme aims to develop the organic sector ensuring a consistent supply of high-quality organic produce to the market. The scheme provides funding to processors who wish to invest in developing facilities for the processing, preparation, grading, packing and storage of organic products consequently providing them with an opportunity to further enhance income.

Announcing the opening of this tranche, Minister Hackett stated that: "We have seen 380 new applicants to the Organic Farming scheme in 2022 which is almost a 20 per cent increase in application numbers to the Scheme in comparison to 2021. Altogether this means just under 700 new farmers joining the scheme in the last 12 months. As the demand for organic produce continues to increase each year, I am steadfast in my commitment to the development of the Irish organic industry by providing the necessary supports to producers and processors to meet market demands."

She added: "Following the continued success of the Organic Farming Scheme in increasing the overall yield of quality organic products, the Organic Processing Investment Grant Scheme provides essential financial assistance in the processing of these products, increasing the supply of quality Irish organic products to both domestic and international markets." Funding of €1.2 million has been allocated to the scheme. Applicants can apply for grant aid for off farm investments up to €700,000 on eligible expenditure.

The Scheme continues to open in tranches; this tranche being open to 31 July 2022. Copies of the terms and conditions of the Grant Scheme, together with application forms, are available from the Organic Farming Unit, Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Johnstown Castle Wexford and on the Department's website.

NED HARTY AWARDED BUSINESS LEADER OF THE YEAR 2022



The recently held Business Leaders' Gala Dinner and Awards at the Rose Hotel in Tralee honoured the entrepreneurial spirit and achievements of Kerry-based business leaders and brought together established and emerging business entrepreneurs from across the county with the purpose of celebrating inspiring Kerry business owners. At the event, Ned Harty Director of Dairymaster was presented with the title of 'Business Leader of the Year 2022'. Commenting, Ned stated: "I am delighted to accept this prestigious award; our aim is to build better products for dairy farmers around the world and I'm delighted to see the company continue to grow. Many of the team that are here with me tonight have worked with me for 40 years, collectively we have over 300 years' experience, it's amazing." Ned founded Dairymaster in 1968, started from humble beginnings and now Dairymaster is one of the world's leading dairy and agri-tech companies with customers in over 40 countries worldwide. Ned has dedicated his life to the dairy industry, he has seen many changes in his lifetime, technology has significantly advanced, and he has always been to the forefront of new ideas.

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*From January to December 2021, on average we paid out on 99% of motor, farms, van, farm and windscreen insurance claims. Zurich Insurance plc is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

SINN FEIN PERSPECTIVE ON AGRICULTURE

"OUR JOB IN SINN FEIN, IF ELECTED TO GOVERNMENT, IS TO HAVE AN AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND A VISION THAT WILL DELIVER FOR FAMILY FARMS, FOR THE COMMUNITIES THAT DEPEND ON THEM AND FOR THE WIDER AGRI-FOOD SECTOR." THAT WAS MATT CARTHY'S SUMMATION OF SINN FEIN'S AGRICULTURAL AGENDA WHEN HE SPOKE TO MATT O'KEEFFE RECENTLY.



The Sinn Fein TD and agriculture spokesperson was a member of the European Parliament when the Common Agricultural Policy reform negotiations began: "I was critical that there was inadequate national conversation over the provisions proposed for the next CAP. That was in the context that the CAP and overall EU budget cannot be taken in isolation. Due to what I would describe as a bad starting position from the Irish government, we ended up with a very weakened CAP in terms of the funding available for the various proposed CAP schemes. Ireland will be paying much more into the European budget but getting less back from the most important element, the Common Agricultural Policy, at a time when

farmers will be asked to do much more to receive that funding. At European level there has been criticism of the inequities in the CAP. I shared a number of those criticisms. Some of those inequities are being addressed, although it is happening, unfortunately, in the context of a relatively smaller overall budget."

INADEQUATE CONSULTATION

Matt Carthy is critical of Minister Charlie McConalogue's consultation process: "Some of it was very minimalistic, with many of the decisions pre-ordained. We had asked that the Minister bring the strategic plan to the Dail for debate so that we could all take ownership of the template for the next CAP. Instead, he sent it to the European Commission which saw the plan before any

farmer or elected member of the Oireachtas." "The Commission sent back a scathing response and again we have no idea how the Irish government intends to respond. To me, the CAP is a payment for services. Farmers are paid to produce the best quality food under the strictest regulations in the world, in a way that protects our environment while developing our rural community. It is a hugely important payment and there is no other service for which people are receiving the same payment as they were in the 1990s. But that is what is being asked of farmers."

ON CONVERGENCE

"I have been critical of farm organisations and the Irish government for investing all our political capital in fighting Convergence. It is

"WE WANTED TO SEE A REGULATOR WITH REAL TEETH INCLUDING CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT POWERS. THERE IS MONEY BEING MADE BUT IT HAS NOT BEEN MADE BY THE PRIMARY PRODUCER. I WANT TO SEE WHO IS MAKING THE PROFITS."



"FARMERS HAVE TAKEN THE BRUNT OF MEDIA RHETORIC AROUND CLIMATE ACTION. WE HAVEN'T SEEN SUFFICIENT SUPPORTS AND INVESTMENTS THAT WOULD ALLOW FARMERS CONSTRUCTIVELY PLAY A PART IN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS."

happening at European level. There is no way in which a policy of farmers getting different rates for essentially carrying out the same roles under the CAP payment system will be tolerated for a prolonged period. I had pleaded that instead of focusing on how the financial pie is sliced, we should have been pressing for a bigger financial package, considering the increased challenges and the importance of food security, along with the additional burdens that are going to be placed on farmers. As Taoiseach at the time, Leo Varadkar committed Ireland to paying additional funding in the European budget, without any conditions whatsoever. Meanwhile, Irish farmers were left fighting over who gets what percentage of the available funds."

FOOD SECURITY

The Cavan/Monaghan TD insists that he has continuously warned that Europe needs to protect its food security: "We took cheap food for granted and weren't putting in place the building blocks and vision to ensure that we would have a sustainable agriculture at both domestic and European levels. I was critical of the fact so many agricultural sectors have been allowed to become uneconomical. We have no sugar beet production anymore. Our tillage sector is too small to meet our needs. Our intensification and specialisation have led to a huge vulnerability for farmers, as we have seen specifically with the pig sector in recent months. They did exactly what was asked in specialising and now find themselves at the mercy of the market with very few supports to protect them. The mushroom sector is under pressure because the use of peat compost is under threat. Overall, what has been missing has been a vision for agriculture that ensures we have food security, rather than reacting to crises as they arise on a daily basis."

FOOD AFFORDABILITY

So, are we heading towards food shortages? "In Europe, we are more likely to be looking at food affordability issues as opposed to food scarcity. There are also huge fears in relation to livestock feed. The third 'F' is fuel and whether, in addition to cost, there will be a shortage. While there has been some positive rhetoric from the Irish government and the EU, recognising the challenges facing farmers, there hasn't been the type of comprehensive response that I believe is warranted. Any idea of letting farmers fend for themselves runs contrary to the policy that has been in place for two generations where, essentially, we had the Common Agricultural Policy, whose primary purpose has been to ensure food availability at an affordable price,

and it worked well in that regard. The problem is that there have been many additional facets added to the CAP, including a focus on biodiversity and climate action. That is all well and good, but you cannot expect

"AGRICULTURE IS THE SECTOR THAT WOULD BENEFIT MOST FROM A UNITED IRELAND."

to get the same services as previously as well as additional services from farmers in return for lower funding. It doesn't stand up as reasonable or practical. In the short term we need to get farmers over the particular difficulties they are in as a result of the war. Secondly, if we are serious about climate action and biodiversity, we need to put policies in place to make those things happen while allowing farmers to farm profitably. Too many farmers have been operating at a loss and vulnerable to the whims of the market, but they are not operating in a free market. The product our suckler farmers are in competition with, for instance, does not conform to the same quality or production or environmental standards that our farmers are subject to. Mercosur should never have been on the table. I welcome the belated government opposition to its implementation. We also need to re-examine several potential EU trade deals where agriculture could be sacrificed for the benefit of other sectors."

An extended interview with Matt Carthy is available on the KCLR website under 'Farmshow archives'

"DAIRY EXPANSION WAS DRIVEN BY GOVERNMENT POLICY. IT HAS BEEN THE ONLY PROFITABLE MAINSTREAM LIVESTOCK SECTOR. WE NEED OTHER PROFITABLE OPTIONS TO ALLOW FARMERS CHOICES BEYOND DAIRY."



ASA CLOCKS UP

80

YEARS OF SERVICE TO MEMBERS



MATT O'KEEFFE TALKS TO ASA PRESIDENT DR GEORGE RAMSBOTTOM ON THE ASSOCIATION'S PRIORITIES.

Now in its eightieth year, the Agricultural Science Association (ASA) continues to promote scientific endeavour in the field of agriculture. The ASA is a voluntary body representing a membership made up of graduates in the agricultural and food sciences in Ireland. With upwards of sixteen-hundred members, the Association is a valuable support and networking structure for all those with professional qualifications in the agricultural sciences.

The current president of the ASA, Dr. George Ramsbottom, is putting his stamp on the association during his year-long tenure: "One of our major responsibilities is to regularly run continuous professional development events. These are intended to provide updates to members on novel technologies and practices that arise in their spheres of work. Over the past couple of months, we have worked to that end with meetings held at Moorepark and UCD Lyons Estate. The latter event, held at the end of April, was instrumental in informing members of the competitive challenges facing grass-based dairy production. The biggest challenge is coming from the environmental issues that have to be managed by the sector. We highlighted some of the recent research that has been undertaken on the UCD farm to mitigate environmental challenges. The previous event, held in Moorepark back in March, also gave direction on what needs to be done in ensuring that Irish farming can improve its environmental sustainability standards while maintaining its economic sustainability. The use of multi-species swards and their role in achieving faster growth rates in drystock animals was a particular focus at Lyons. The question mark and the focus of considerable research is around best practice in establishing the swards and ensuring the persistency of some of the species sown."

MASS ADOPTION REQUIRED

George fully understands the implications of mass adoption of new farm management practices: "When you stand back and look at it dispassionately, there is a huge challenge facing us in the years ahead. However, there are three or four key technologies which drive many of the emissions reduction targets. In my role as a Teagasc Specialist, mainly on the dairy side, I see two of the technologies being adopted quickly by greater numbers of farmers in the years ahead. The use of protected urea is straightforward. More challenging is the development of clover-rich swards. Protected urea will reduce gaseous emissions and clover rich swards will reduce the amount of nitrogen required to grow the same quantity of grass. Another technology that is available immediately and already being adopted on farms is the use of EBI to breed more highly productive cows. That

essentially allows more milk to be produced more efficiently from the same number of cows. That will come through in the form of higher milk solids potential and greater fertility and longevity."

Is the target of 22 to 30 per cent carbon equivalent reduction possible by 2030? "It is possible, though hugely challenging. It can only be achieved through widespread and wholesale adoption of up to four key technologies that can deliver real change. EBI, Protected Urea and clover inclusion can deliver practically all the change that is required, if adopted on the vast majority of farms. It will require ongoing change and at a faster pace than previously."

PROMOTING AGRI SCIENCE CAREERS

The ASA places much emphasis on promoting agricultural science related career opportunities: "The Agricultural Science degree, in its many facets, is a great general and broad qualification for young people to pursue as a pathway to a career. Personally, I have thoroughly enjoyed my own career in agricultural science. I started off after my primary degree by undertaking a Masters. I then worked in the Veterinary College as a research assistant for a period, before joining Teagasc, initially as a general advisor and more recently as a Dairy Specialist. In that role I have been based at Kildalton, then at Grange and latterly at Oakpark. In the course of that 20-year period as a Dairy Specialist, I spent a very formative year in New Zealand working as a Group facilitator with NZ farmers. That experience really broadened my horizons. That's just by way of example of the opportunities open to those who pursue a career in the agricultural science sector. It is a wonderfully diverse career and offers great opportunities for young people, while undertaking their degree course, to decide the exact career path they want to take in the sector. There is no straightjacketing, because the sector is so broad."

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION

George Ramsbottom, in many ways, epitomises the concept of continuous education and learning, as he explains: "I got the opportunity in 2016 to go back to college, while still working full-time, to undertake a doctorate. It was something I always wanted to do to build on a first class

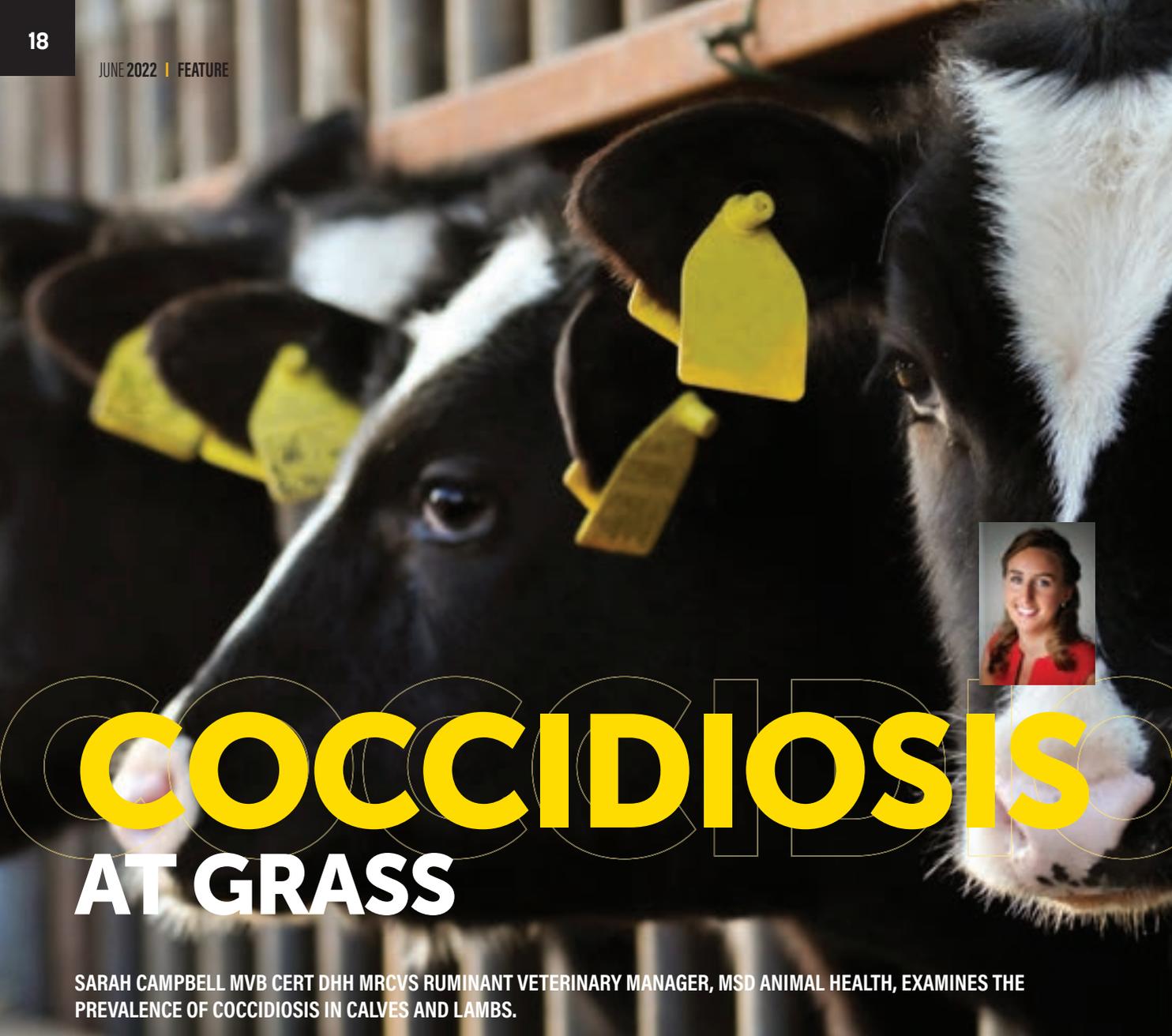
Masters from my initial studies in UCD. It was a matter of personal as much as professional development that that persuaded me to undertake a PhD. I had enormous support from my wife along the way. My thesis involved studying the impacts of change on dairy farms brought about by the introduction of quotas, including the productivity of cows, and how farmers reacted in financial terms, specifically their income generation capacity over the quota period."

ASA PODCASTS

Dr Ramsbottom described the genesis of the very popular ASA podcast series: "My predecessor as ASA president, Dr Anne-Marie Butler, decide to pursue the development of a podcast series. She secured sponsorship from Ulster Bank. I followed on by securing funding from Dairygold and the results have been very well received. Basically, it involves interviews entitled 'Experts in their Fields', with various people who have made their careers in agriculture related areas. A recent podcast featured John Lancaster from Wexford who has a degree in agricultural science and works in the international commodities trading sector. John emphasised the benefit of a broad degree providing choice for graduates."

COMMUNICATIONS REVOLUTION

It could not be said that the Covid pandemic had any positive outcomes, apart from the fact that online communication has now become mainstream, as George Ramsbottom asserts: "All organisations struggled to cope with Covid lockdowns. The ASA overcame this by embracing internet technology, including organising two very successful and well attended online conferences as well as a series of webinars that encouraged increased membership in the ASA. I am, though, delighted with the fact that, all going well, we will have a physical conference next 8th of September in Kilkenny. We are making it a full, single day event with a conference, followed by a dinner for members and guests that night. Planning is well advanced and we will announce a full line-up of speakers over the coming months. The networking experience is very important for our members and we expect that to resume when we meet face-to-face in September for the annual ASA Conference."



COCCIDIOSIS

AT GRASS



SARAH CAMPBELL MVB CERT DHH MRCVS RUMINANT VETERINARY MANAGER, MSD ANIMAL HEALTH, EXAMINES THE PREVALENCE OF COCCIDIOSIS IN CALVES AND LAMBS.

Coccidiosis is a disease caused by a parasite called *Eimeria*. Oocysts are capable of surviving for long periods of time and eventually all calves and lambs are likely to become infected.

Calves and lambs can be infected from birth resulting in clinical disease from just three weeks old. Disease is usually seen in calves between three weeks and six months old and lambs aged four weeks to six months old. Scour is one of the signs frequently associated with an outbreak of coccidiosis, although sub-clinical disease results in far greater economic losses.

Many disease outbreaks occur at grass when animals pick up infective oocysts on pasture. After ingestion, *Eimeria* oocysts enter the cells lining the guts. The oocysts multiply inside these cells before they emerge and destroy the cells resulting in massive damage to the

gut lining.

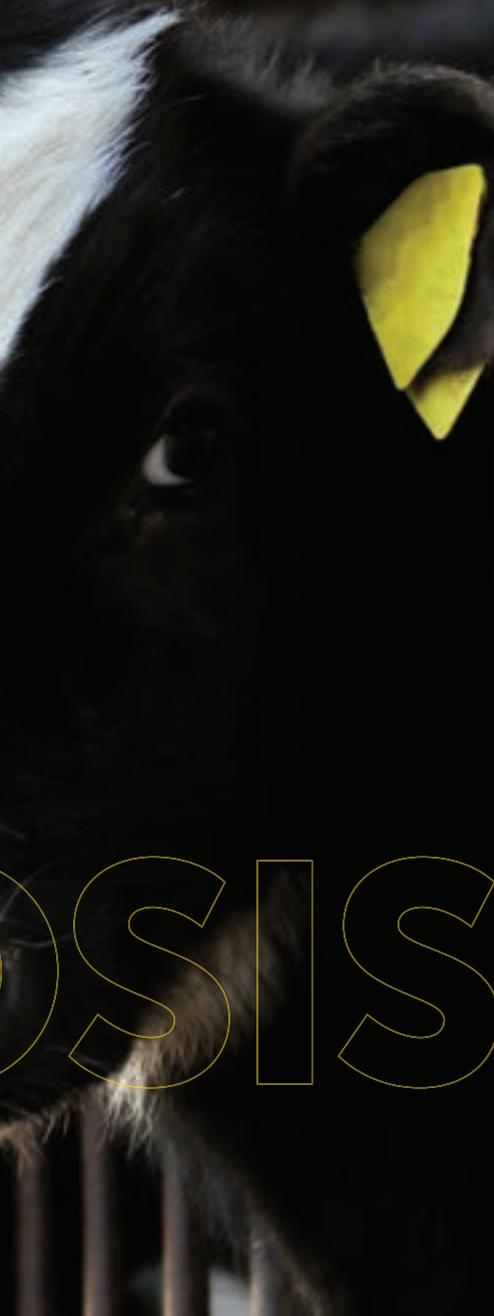
Millions of oocysts pass out in faeces which contaminate the environment and become the main source of infection to other animals. Coccidiosis is common on farms although not all animals show clinical signs of disease, some are sub-clinically affected.

SUB-CLINICAL DISEASE

Sub-clinical disease occurs when the signs of illness are not as obvious. During the multiplication phase damage is occurring to the guts resulting in a reduced ability to absorb nutrients from food. Animals maintain a good appetite without achieving their expected daily live weight gain. This leads to a generalised ill thrift in the group. Sub-clinical coccidiosis can cause a greater economic loss than the clinical condition as many more animals are likely to be sub-clinically affected.

EXPOSURE AND IMMUNITY

Nearly all animals will become exposed to coccidia oocysts at some point in their lives. As *Eimeria* oocysts are present on most farms, the likelihood of infection at an early age is high. Many lambs and calves benefit from passive immunity acquired from their dam when they receive plenty of colostrum. Passive immunity wanes over time so they need to acquire their own immunity. Exposure to coccidia oocysts is necessary for animals to develop immunity. To develop immunity, animals need exposure to low levels of infective parasites and a healthy immune system. Natural immunity helps animals resist future challenges. Most animals are immune by one year old. Exposure to a high infectious pressure, or stress that diminishes the effectiveness



of the animal's immune system, can overwhelm natural defences and result in disease. Stressors such as mixing groups, weaning, turn out or a sudden change of diet, castration and bad weather can reduce the immune response. Animals that have not received enough good quality colostrum are often at risk from an early age. High stock numbers in paddocks can contribute to the risk of disease occurring. Coccidiosis is a group disease rather than an individual animal issue. An entire group is usually exposed to a similar infectious burden of *Eimeria* infection in the same environment and are subjected to the same external stressors. Therefore, if one lamb or calf presents with clinical signs such as bloody diarrhoea, the whole group should be considered infected.

CONTROL

Developing immunity against *Eimeria spp.* is key to control. However, eliminating coccidian oocysts from farms is practically impossible. Therefore, ensuring immunity develops is crucial. A control strategy may include:

- Good hygiene
 - » Keep the build-up of faecal material around feeding troughs to a minimum to lower oocyst ingestion
 - » Move feeding troughs and buckets regularly
- Avoid over-stocking outdoors
- Fence off wet areas in fields if possible
- Administration of prophylactic drugs such as diclazuril to infected animals during asexual reproductive stages of parasite development.
- Coccidiosis outbreaks are a herd level problem and precipitated by stress.
 - » Minimising stressors such as mixing, re-grouping, dietary changes and over-stocking.

PREVENTATIVE TREATMENT OPTIONS

For animals that are already showing clinical signs, treatment is of limited value as the life cycle of the parasite has already been completed and damage to the guts has already occurred. Pain relief, rehydration and supportive therapy is required to promote the recovery of individual clinical cases. Once coccidiosis has been diagnosed in an individual animal, treatment using a product that kills the parasite should be given to the entire group. Diclazuril is the active ingredient in Vecoxan® that inhibits parasite reproduction, thus limiting parasite multiplication and gut damage. Vecoxan® is used for the prevention of coccidiosis in lambs caused by *Eimeria crandallis* and *Eimeria ovinoidalis*. In calves, Vecoxan® is used to aid in the control of coccidiosis caused by *Eimeria bovis* and *Eimeria zuernii*. Vecoxan® has a zero-withdrawal period for meat in calves and lambs and normal routines for manure spreading from treated animals apply.

It is important to treat all young animals in the batch and to keep animals grouped according to age and separated from animals of different ages, as one of the main sources of infection to younger animals is older calves or lambs shedding oocysts into the environment. To prevent disease and reduce the impact of sub-clinical disease, treatment using

Vecoxan® should be administered close to the time when exposure to coccidiosis is known to occur. Exposure is required for protective immunity to develop. Therefore, treatments should be administered 8-15 days after moving to a high-risk environment or if historical data is available, approximately one week before the expected outbreak. A single administration to susceptible animals

The Principle of Coccidiosis

Treatment: Control the level of challenge to prevent disease but to still allow enough exposure so that young animals can develop immunity.

during risk periods is appropriate although a re-treatment may be necessary if the period of risk is prolonged.

Findings from studies in lambs shows that treating lambs infected with coccidiosis with diclazuril (Vecoxan® 2.5 mg/ml Oral Suspension) does not interfere with the development of natural immunity. Vecoxan® 2.5 mg/ml Oral Suspension facilitates exposure of the immune system to the parasite. It acts on all life stages of the parasite in the host animal and rapidly lowers the challenge. It has been suggested that, by causing the rapid death of *Eimeria*, Vecoxan® 2.5 mg/ml Oral Suspension may allow proteins belonging to the parasite to be recognised quickly by the immune system, leading to a rapid immune response. In calves, studies found that those previously treated with Vecoxan® responded better to subsequent infections than those who had previously naturally recovered from the disease. The study also found that previously treated calves shed fewer infective oocysts. Reducing the level of environmental contamination is key to disease control.

CONCLUSION

In summary, coccidiosis infection at grass is extremely common. Control of disease in calves and lambs requires adequate exposure to pathogenic *Eimeria* species for protective immunity to develop, prophylactic treatment of the entire group using Vecoxan® along with minimizing stressors that precipitate disease and attention to detail regarding environmental risk factors.



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FUTURE PROOFING THE LIVESTOCK SECTOR

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN INTRODUCES A NEW FULL AND PART-TIME ONLINE MSc IN ANIMAL SCIENCE. HERE, THE PROGRAMME DIRECTOR FOR THE NEW POSTGRADUATE OPTIONS IN ANIMAL SCIENCE, DR KIERAN MEADE - AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF IMMUNOLOGY AT THE UCD SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCE - OUTLINES THE AMBITION FOR THE PROGRAMME.

The School of Agriculture and Food Science in University College Dublin has recently undertaken a detailed scoping exercise in conjunction with selected industry partners and leading stakeholders to assess the future skills requirements for graduates in the Animal Science sector. In recognition of the need for advanced knowledge acquisition and training in Animal Science, the School has designed and will shortly launch a new taught online Masters programme in Animal Science.

The livestock production sector is already a core engine of employment and economic growth but significant new employment opportunities are arising as a result of efforts to design and implement the sustainable livestock systems of the future. Building on a longstanding tradition of excellence in undergraduate teaching and research in UCD, the one-year (full-time) MSc postgraduate programme will deliver new modules in cutting edge areas of Animal Science. Modules will include Nutrition, Reproduction, Genomics & Genetics, Infection, Immunity & Health, and sustainable livestock systems. The teaching will be led by internationally renowned subject experts and informed by the latest research being performed on the



UCD Lyons farm, in other national research bodies and internationally. A core element of the new MSc will be to foster industry knowledge and with leading industries spanning the livestock production and pharmaceutical sector will provide valuable insights to graduates. The new programme has been designed with the needs of people in employment and flexible part-time (2-4 years) MSc options are also available. In future years, online pathway options will facilitate the completion of certificate and diploma options in Animal Science for students seeking upskilling in a specific subject area of interest. In agriculture in general, as well as across the livestock production sector, we are facing an age of unprecedented challenge and opportunity. Meeting the challenge of sustainable growth in livestock production systems will require a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary skill set in graduates with commercial awareness, problem solving, critical thinking and communication skills. Therefore, an important emphasis of the MSc will be on the development of personal and transferrable skills to equip graduates to occupy future leadership positions in the livestock sector, both at home and internationally.

MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND THE MARINE VISITS UCD LYONS FARM

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D. dropped into UCD Lyons Farm recently to meet with staff and students to find out about the most up to date research taking place and the University's ambitious development plans for Lyons Farm. Pictured from left to right are: Professor Karina Pierce, Director of External Relations, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science; Professor Frank Monahan, UCD Dean of Agriculture; Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D.; Professor Helen Sheridan, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science; Professor Tommy Boland, Associate Dean for Research, Innovation and Impact, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science and, Professor Alexander Evans, Chair UCD Lyons Management Committee.





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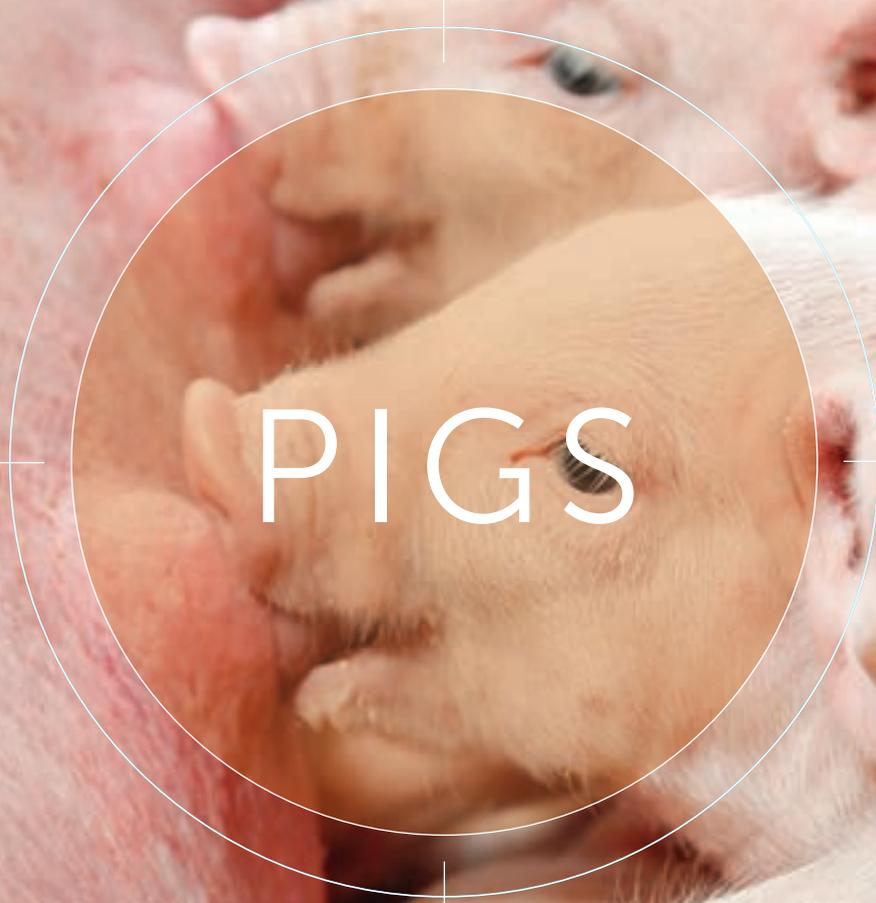
It ensures your food has been produced to the highest
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www.bordbia.ie/qualitymark

FOCUS



PIGS

SUSTAINABLE ADVANTAGE

IRELAND'S REPUTATION FOR SAFE, SUSTAINABLE AND PREMIUM FOOD IS OPENING NEW MARKETS

In April, Bord Bia held its first major in-person event in Mexico since Ireland gained market access to export pigmeat there in 2020.

The event was designed to raise awareness of its three-year campaign, European Pork: Excellence in Quality Assurance and Food Safety, that focuses exclusively on pork for Mexico.

In 2017, Mexico was identified a priority market for Irish pigmeat, as part of the Irish government's Prioritising Markets, Opportunities for Growth study, and this €760k campaign, which began in June 2020, aims to build awareness of Irish pork's quality assurance and food safety credentials, while also helping to progress and expand on market access for pork.

According to Bord Bia's consumer research, while pork has always been an important part of the Mexican diet, greater urbanisation and a growing middle class with rising consumer incomes who have an interest in food safety, have helped drive a sharp increase in pork demand. And they are looking for variety, says Noreen Lanigan, Bord Bia's Europe and North America Director: "There is both a strong demand for quick and easy to-use pork solutions, along with an appetite for premium pork cuts particularly among younger Mexican consumers."

In 2021, some 240,000 tonnes of pork were exported from Ireland, worth around €0.5 billion.

There were over 249 million pigs slaughtered in 2021 in the EU which equates to around 23 million tonnes carcass weight. In 2021, 5.76 million tonnes of pork, worth €14 billion, were exported around the world. The EU Pork trade-focused campaign will build awareness and understanding of food safety, quality assurance and sustainability of European



pork, and Irish pork is well positioned to supply this increasing demand as we produce pork to the strictest EU food safety standards, explains Noreen.

Mexican government officials and food industry representatives including top importers, distributors, and wholesalers gathered at the Irish embassy in Mexico City for an EU Pork seminar featuring presentations on Irish pork and production. Speaking at the event as part of the Irish government's trade mission to Mexico, Irish

Minister of State with responsibility for Research and Development, Farm Safety, and New Market Development, Martin Heydon T.D. said: "I am honoured to lead our department's first official visit to Mexico since securing access for the export of Irish pigmeat to Mexico.

Gaining access for Irish pigmeat exports to Mexico highlights the value of investing in strategic relationships in priority markets and there is no better way to demonstrate Ireland's commitment, with the support of the European Commission, to this market than by investing in a three-year information and promotion campaign for pork in Mexico.

"I am particularly pleased to announce that the first commercial shipment of Irish pork will arrive into Mexico early next month, representing an important milestone and first step in forging a stronger commercial partnership with the Mexican meat importers." He added: "Food Vision 2030, the strategy for the Irish food industry, highlights Ireland's credentials in world-class bio-security systems, high welfare, quality assurance and our commitment to sustainability through Origin Green, Ireland's national food and drink sustainability programme. We believe that Origin Green will be the differentiating factor in Mexico - a developed market of discerning consumers who care where their food comes from."

Prior to this event, in November 2021, Bord Bia and the Irish Embassy in Mexico hosted a webinar for Mexican importers which featured a Global Pork update from GIRA International, and in February 2023 Bord Bia will exhibit at Expo Carnes y Lácteos.

Ongoing campaign events will include trade seminars and welcome visits for Mexican partners to Ireland to experience first-hand Ireland's world class pork production, and the workings of farms and processors.

Information for exporters on access, trade and certification conditions for Mexico and other non-EU markets is available on a dedicated web portal at: <http://www.marketaccess.agriculture.gov.ie/meat/northsouthamerica/mexico/>



The Pig Edge Podcast

The Pig Edge is Teagasc's monthly pig podcast for farmers. Presented by Amy Quinn and Ciarán Carroll, the podcast covers the latest news, information and advice to improve your pig farm performance!

How to cut energy costs on farm

Damien Fowley and David Fitzgerald from Exemplar Energy Solutions join the podcast to discuss the main contributors of energy use on pig farms, where savings and efficiencies can be made, and whether renewable energy could be a solution on farm.

The Benefits of Pig Manure for Reducing Chemical Fertiliser Usage

Mark Plunkett, Teagasc explains how farmers using pig manure or any organic manure can reduce their chemical fertiliser usage. Mark highlights the environmental and economic value of pig manure, as well as the benefits for both tillage and grassland farmers using this organic fertiliser.

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IPHS CONFERS AT CRITICAL PERIOD FOR PIG PRODUCERS

AFTER TWO YEARS OF ONLINE GATHERINGS, THE IRISH PIG HEALTH SOCIETY (IPHS) RESUMED TO ITS PHYSICAL-PRESENCE CONFERENCE FORMAT.



The topics discussed were of the utmost importance to hard-pressed pig producers around the country. The cost/price squeeze being currently experienced has not only decimated profitability, it has already led to the closure of some of the most efficient and long-standing pig production units in Ireland and across Europe.

WIDE-RANGING PRESENTATIONS

The recent event in Portlaoise attracted a range of top quality local and international speakers covering essential topics for pig farmers, including feed, welfare, performance and technology. Prof. Ilias Kyriazakis, from Queen's University, gave an informative presentation about using alternative and new feed ingredients for feeding pigs. Professor Kyriazakis specialises in the effects of animal management on their performance, their ability to cope with challenges (such

as pathogens), and the environmental impact including the use of alternative and home-grown feeds for livestock systems. The eye-popping increases in feed costs on pig farms in recent months gave the Professor's presentation a sense of urgency as producers search for more efficient feed ingredients both from the perspective of increasing feed conversion efficiency and of making savings in actual feed costs. With large commercial units, even a couple of cents saved per kilo of feed input has a significant effect on at least reducing financial losses in the present crisis.

COMMODITY MARKET CHAOS

Rory Deverell, from StoneX, was another speaker. StoneX, an international financial services company, operates across a range of services and products including energy, renewable fuels, livestock and dairy products and, as outlined in Rory Deverell's IPHS

presentation, in offering physical trading services for feed and food commodities such as grains and oilseeds. StoneX also operates comprehensive futures management and market intelligence units. Rory outlined the potential dynamics that will influence the global feed commodities market in the next 6-12 months. As a senior commodity risk manager for StoneX, serving a wide range of commercial commodity trading companies across the EMEA region, he was in a particularly good position to inform IPHS conference attendees of the events that have led to the rampant increases in feed costs on Irish pig farms and provide some indication of the future feed pricing figures producers must factor into their production costs. Unfortunately, there was little enough optimism of even a restoration of some stability in international feed commodity prices in the immediate future. It is a period of

enormous flux with prices climbing to historic highs.

PIG HEALTHCHECK

As well as being the current president of the IPHS, Dr. Carla Gomes is also the AHI Pig HealthCheck Programme Manager, with extensive knowledge in using animal health data to allow producers make the most informed decisions on their farms. Dr. Gomes presented on the Pig HealthCheck programme activities and database that can be used by Irish pig farmers and vets to improve animal health and welfare. It is often said that information is power, and the AHI representative provided up-to-date proof of that dictum with the latest Irish and international research and advice on pig health and welfare developments.

ON-FARM EXPERIENCE

Another impressive presentation came from UK-based speaker Charlie Thompson. Charlie, an English pig farmer and vet based at Bridge House Farm in Northamptonshire, previously won Britain's Pig Farmer of the year in 2020. He described his use of various technologies to improve farm performance. Pig producers are among the most open-minded farmers in adopting novel technologies that offer cost-

effective options in their production units where every cent per kilo made or saved is critical to profitability and viability.

FREE FARROWING

Emma Baxter of SRUC (Scotland's Rural College) is an animal welfare and behaviour scientist, specialising in pig projects that cover challenges throughout the pig's life cycle, from optimising piglet survival in high welfare farrowing systems to investigating humane stunning at slaughter.

Dr. Baxter gave valuable insights into specific studies that included a strong emphasis on the practicalities, challenges and implementation of freedom farrowing on pig farms. SRUC has an impressive range of research, training, advisory and consulting roles in its remit and has an ongoing partnership with Edinburgh University as well as access to many of the leading commercial farms and research centres across the UK.

PIG PANEL DISCUSSION

A popular feature of IPHS conferences is the inclusion of a broad-based panel discussion on immediate and future challenges facing the pig sector. This year's discussion was undertaken at a time of unprecedented financial crisis for pig producers. Chaired by

Ciaran Carroll from Teagasc, the panel, which included contributions from many of the conference speakers, gave an opportunity to the pig producer panellists to share their experiences and insights into how they are trying to survive the current pig industry crisis. While there are no simple solutions to the predicament of high and still-rising input costs allied to below breakeven pig prices, the discussion did serve to highlight the fact that an industry-wide response is required, including producers, processors, secondary processors, retailers and consumers, as well as the advisory and research support system. Further Government and banking intervention will also be needed if the Irish pig production sector is to remain scaled and viable. IPHS President, Carla Gomes, closed proceedings on a positive note: "I was especially pleased with the return to normal IPHS meeting protocols. It was great to be back and the conference was a tremendous success with good attendance from producers, industry, and trade participants. Again and again, we see the resilience and resourcefulness of the Irish pig industry." Without doubt, that resilience and resourcefulness will be needed more than ever in the coming months.



EXTRAORDINARY LOSSES IN PIG PRODUCTION

PAT ROCHE HAS BEEN PRODUCING PIGS NEAR BAGENALSTOWN IN COUNTY CARLOW FOR THE PAST 38 YEARS. HERE, HE TALKS TO MATT O'KEEFFE ABOUT THE CHALLENGES FACING PIG FARMERS IN IRELAND TODAY.



After working in the Netherlands for a period Pat returned to establish his pig unit at the Roche farm in Carlow. The current crisis afflicting the pig production sector has been described as 'existential' by those close to the sector. It is not a description that Pat disagrees with: "The pig production sector is cyclical. We have always had peaks and troughs, that's part of the challenge of being a pig producer. This is different, however. We have never experienced a situation like what is happening now. Losses are out of control and unprecedented. Feed input prices rose by €45 per tonne on several occasions. In total, feed prices have gone up by €185 per tonne in the past 12 months and prices are still rising. As of now in the last week of May we don't know the full impact of the ban on wheat exports by India, but it will likely add more to the cost of pig feed. The average losses per pig produced have been calculated by Teagasc as amounting to €50 to €60 per pig depending on individual

producer circumstances. This time last year the price of feed was around €1.05 per kilo of pigmeat produced. Right now, the cost is 70 cents more. That's €1.75 per kilo. The average price for our produce on the 23rd of May is €1.72 per kilo so the price we are receiving is not covering the feed cost and that is before we calculate all the other production costs. That is totally unsustainable. We have wages, veterinary costs, electricity, fuel and a range of other costs including ongoing repayments that add up to 60 cents to the production cost per kilo of pigmeat. Previously, those costs would have amounted to an average of fifty cents per kilo. The rises in electricity and fuel have driven those additional costs up by ten cents per kilo. Since last August, producers have been covering production costs through drawing on any reserves built up as well as through borrowings. At the level of losses being experienced that is totally unsustainable. We have to get to the point, and very quickly, that the business is at least

at breakeven. Producers are nowhere near that point."

PRICE INCREASES NO MATCH FOR RISING COSTS

"On the first of April we got a twenty cent per kilo price increase that brought the price per kilo of pigmeat to €1.45. On the same day, the cost of feed rose by €45 per tonne adding another eighteen cents per kilo to production costs. In mid-April there was an additional six cents price increase for pigmeat and that was followed on the 1st of May by another €45 per tonne increase in feed costs. A further six cent price increase was received in mid-May but that still left producers a long way off breakeven, which is the least we need in the short term to stay operating. Up to now, many producers have not felt the full force of increases in electricity costs because they would have been in fixed price contracts. Most of those are coming to an end and electricity costs will potentially treble to reflect the energy increases that have occurred in recent months."

“SINCE LAST AUGUST, PRODUCERS HAVE BEEN COVERING PRODUCTION COSTS THROUGH DRAWING ON ANY RESERVES BUILT UP AS WELL AS THROUGH BORROWINGS. AT THE LEVEL OF LOSSES BEING EXPERIENCED THAT IS TOTALLY UNSUSTAINABLE.”

A COMPETITIVE SECTOR

Irish pig producers are on a par in terms of production efficiency with the best in the world, as Pat explains: “We all have the best genetics, feed ingredient costs are similar, though there is an added feed import cost for Irish producers amounting to about €30 per tonne of feed. Our pigs weaned per sow are on a par with the best figures internationally and feed efficiency is also competitive. In fact, many Irish producers are more efficient than our European counterparts.”

The effect of this cost squeeze has already resulted in a 12,000 decline in sow numbers in this country, as confirmed by Teagasc. If things continue as they are that figure can only increase in the coming months if there is not a serious correction in the price of feed and the price of pigmeat. There are around nine thousand jobs dependent, directly and indirectly on the Irish pig production sector. Ultimately, no business can sustain these losses. Pat is straight-talking on the situation: “Not being profitable in the short term is simply not sustainable in the long term. If it continues there will be no pig production sector in Ireland in a very short time.”

STEMMING THE LOSSES

Pat outlines what is needed to stem the huge losses being suffered by producers: “IFA and producers have lobbied hard to improve prices. A lot of effort has been put into securing price increases from secondary processors and retailers. I firmly believe that a lot of people do not understand the extent of the financial difficulties which pig producers find themselves in through no fault of their own. I feel that if you are not living through it on a daily basis, it is difficult to fully comprehend the situation. How can it be justified that a farmer, any farmer should have to go out to work every day and take a serious loss every day. It simply can't continue. There has been some response from government but the reality is that the scale of the losses makes that intervention totally inadequate to meet the losses being incurred. There is a promise of further subvention later in the year but again, it is unlikely to reflect the scale of loss involved. With producers losing between €50 and €60 on every finished pig, the scale of daily losses could not be sustained by any business.”

SUPPLY/DEMAND IMBALANCE

Supply and demand are totally out of sync in the international pig industry. China rebuilt its pig sector to scale in an unprecedentedly short time scale after being wiped out by African Swine Fever and the anticipated longer-term deficit in that market has almost disappeared. In addition, supply is exceeding demand in Europe with some reductions

in Germany and other countries being offset by continuing production increases in Spain, now one of the powerhouses of European pig production. It is estimated that Europe is one hundred-and-twenty-five percent self-sufficient in pigmeat, a recipe for disaster without considerable export opportunities to China and elsewhere. Before a belated price increase from some Irish retailers at the end of May, the Irish pigmeat price at €1.70 per kilo was significantly under the average European price of €2 per kilo, itself loss-making. Breakeven price is €2.25 per kilo so a price, if attained, of €2 would not reverse the loss-making situation in which pig producers find themselves, but it might provide sufficient respite for many producers to continue operating while an anticipated reduction in European production brings the supply/demand ratio closer to balance.

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TULVIN

REDUCING ANTIBIOTICS ON A PIG FARM IN CORK

PATRICK O'CONNOR RECENTLY REMOVED IN-FEED MEDICATION AND ZINC OXIDE AFTER INTRODUCING ILEITIS VACCINATION, BUT HE DIDN'T DO IT ALONE.

In April last year, Patrick O'Connor noticed that his second stage weaners weren't thriving. "They had good weights at weaning and had done well in the first stage, but about a week after moving

there was a noticeable lack of thrive with pale pigs, the presence of loose granular faeces and increased mortality," he explained.

Patrick spoke to his vet, Miguel Rueda Lopez from Ark Animal Care in Newbridge, Co Kildare, who carried out a clinical inspection and laboratory investigation. The presence of ileitis was confirmed by PCR test, an infectious enteric condition caused by the bacteria *Lawsonia intracellularis*. As a result, a new vaccine, Porcilis *Lawsonia*, was initiated to control the infection. He gives the vaccine via the intradermal IDAL system mixed with another vaccine, Porcilis PCV ID, at around 21 days, prior to weaning at above 9kg about 28 days of age. "I've been on the IDAL for a couple of years, it's wonderful. In this day and age everyone should be using

technology like this for ease and welfare."

Within a couple of weeks of introducing the vaccine, Patrick had noticed an improvement in the pigs and felt everything was stabilising. "At that point, we started looking at using a blend of organic acids in the drinking water. Water acidification seemed to further improve things. We had been using in-feed medication in the creep and link because of a previous problem with *Streptococcus suis*, but we got on top of that, and Miguel and I felt confident in removing the antibiotics."

Having successfully tackled the issues with ileitis and eliminated in-feed medication, Patrick turned his mind to reducing the use of zinc oxide. "I knew the ban was coming, so reckoned I would take it out sooner rather than later in case we had problems down the line, but thankfully it just worked."

Patrick's results speak for themselves. The 300-sow, birth to bacon unit is going from strength to strength. Production metrics have improved: Feed conversion efficiency (FCE) is up to 2.49 from 2.6 the previous year and he is selling pigs 10kg heavier than previously. "You just have to look at the pigs differently – just because pigs and pens are clean does not mean they are doing well. It is important to weigh pigs and measure production, because pigs off zinc oxide will be dirty, but I know they are thriving. We have also seen behavioural improvements and a reduction in tail biting."

It's now been a year since Patrick first noticed the drop in thrive caused by ileitis and he's glad he made the changes. "We've seen a real improvement and that's a good thing given the way feed prices have gone recently. There's nothing fancy or high tech about what I did, just basic improvements over a period of around 3 months, in conjunction with regular consultation with our vet and nutritionist. I say to people, be patient, give it six months – if I can do it, so can you. In hindsight I should have done it five years ago."



MAINTAINING PIG WELFARE WITH REDUCED ANTIBIOTICS

New regulations regarding the control and use of veterinary medicinal products and medicated feed came into force on 28th January 2022. They aim to increase the availability of these products across the EU and to address the One Health One Welfare challenges of Antimicrobial Resistance. However, the introduction of the legislation presents challenges to pig farmers and vets, especially with the forthcoming ban on zinc oxide later this year.

The Code of Practice Regarding the Responsible Use of Antimicrobials on Pig Farmers (Veterinary Ireland, Teagasc, IFA) recommends that farmers adopt a 'Prevention is better than cure' approach that incorporates Herd Health planning, biosecurity, vaccination and good husbandry.

Bacterial diseases such as *Lawsonia intracellularis* (ileitis), APP, Glassers, *S. Suis* and *Mycoplasma hyopneumoniae* can all be controlled using vaccination and studies have also linked their use with reduced antimicrobial usage. Research also shows that the effective control of viral diseases such as PRRS or porcine circovirus, can also have a positive impact on a range of bacterial issues on farm. Speak to your vet about a Herd Health Plan for your farm that incorporates alternatives to antibiotics where appropriate. Ensure it is kept up to date and that everyone on the farm is following the recommendations.



PARTNER PROMOTION



Needle-free and intradermal vaccination relies on high pressure to deliver an exact dose of vaccine into the skin in a fraction of a second. Compared with traditional intramuscular (IM) vaccination with a needle and syringe, it's less stressful for the pigs, stimulates an effective immune response, and is easy and simple to use for farmers. Needle-free IDAL® devices from MSD Animal Health can be used with Porcilis Lawsonia, Porcilis M Hyo ID ONCE, Porcilis PCV ID and Porcilis PRRS, allowing vaccine protection against the four most common diseases in growing pigs.

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For more information speak to your vet

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Porcilis® Lawsonia lyophilisate and solvent for emulsion for injection for pigs: Each dose of 2 ml reconstituted vaccine contains inactivated *Lawsonia intracellularis* strain SP94-08. Porcilis® Lawsonia ID lyophilisate and solvent for emulsion for injection for pigs: Each dose of 0.2ml reconstituted vaccine contains inactivated *Lawsonia intracellularis* strain SP94-08. Legal Category: R01 (POM-V).
For information on side effects, precautions, warnings and contra-indications please see the Summary of Product Characteristics or contact MSD Animal Health, Red Oak North, South County Business Park, Leopardstown, Dublin 18 Ireland.
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LOWERING ZINC OXIDE DEPENDENCY



DR. HAZEL ROONEY, PIG TECHNICAL COORDINATOR, ALLTECH IRELAND, TAKES A FINAL LOOK AT ZINC OXIDE USAGE IN PIGLET FEEDS BEFORE THE UPCOMING EU BAN

As all of us are now aware, the use of therapeutic doses of zinc oxide (ZnO) for preventing and controlling post-weaning diarrhea (PWD) in young piglets will be banned in animal feeds in the EU from June 2022. This article will briefly discuss the use of ZnO in piglet feeds, the rationale behind its widespread use and the emerging environmental and health concerns from prolonged ZnO utilization. The key to ensuring that pigs can thrive and survive in a post-zinc oxide era is for EU pig producers to adopt a multi-faceted approach that encompasses optimal nutrition, management, health, and welfare practices (see Figure 1). We will look at several of these factors, which, when used in combination, should be capable of alleviating PWD in young piglets and lowering ZnO dependency.

THE ROLE OF ZINC OXIDE IN PIGLET FEEDS

At weaning, piglets are subject to a multitude of stress factors over a very short period that contribute to gastrointestinal tract and immune system disturbances. These factors can be nutritional, environmental, health-based, and physiological. Because the pigs are under such stress, the early post-weaning period is typically characterized by poor growth performance (e.g., reduced feed intake) and increased susceptibility to PWD.



Figure 1: A holistic approach to achieving optimal pig performance without the use of therapeutic levels of zinc oxide.

Pig producers have relied heavily on the use of high levels of ZnO in piglet feeds (2,000 ppm or higher) over the last two decades, as an effective and relatively inexpensive tool for preventing and controlling PWD, with subsequent improvements in piglet growth performance, feed intake and digestion. Although the precise mode of action of ZnO against PWD in weaned piglets is not yet fully understood, it is believed to be related to a significant improvement in both intestinal morphology (i.e., improved gut structure and function) and nutrient digestion and

absorption.

If ZnO is proven to be such a successful nutritional strategy for young piglets, many have asked why the European Parliament has decided to ban the use of therapeutic levels of ZnO by June 2022. There are two main reasons for this:

Recent reports have highlighted its negative environmental impact - zinc accumulates in soil after zinc-rich pig manure is applied to the land as an organic fertilizer. These high levels of zinc in the soil and surface water are deemed an environmental pollutant.





Figure 2. The Alltech Seed, Feed, Weed program is designed to positively impact gut health, affecting both microbial diversity and gut structure.

Studies and reports have also demonstrated ZnO's contribution to the increase of antimicrobial resistance, as high levels of ZnO may increase the proportion of multi-drug-resistant *E. coli* in the intestines of piglets. Adopting a holistic strategy will be key to successful pig production. Unfortunately, there is no single replacement for ZnO. Instead, pig producers across the EU will need to adopt a combination of novel nutritional and management practices to manage PWD in young piglets. Let's take a look at some of these practices:

NUTRITION

Lower protein diets: Reducing the dietary crude protein level for a short period after weaning will reduce the incidence of PWD and improve the intestinal health of piglets by preventing an excess of undigested protein from reaching the large intestine. However, it is critical to ensure that essential amino acid levels and/or ratios are not reduced below the requirement of the pig.

High-fiber diets: Fiber in the post-weaning diet plays an important role in controlling the intestinal morphology and microbiota of piglets and improving gut health. Fibers can also increase the activity of some digestive enzymes, such as lipase.

Organic acids: Organic acids have been used successfully in pig production as a useful tool in controlling PWD symptoms and supporting piglet growth, particularly around weaning. The benefit of organic acids comes from their powerful antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties. The response to organic acids can depend on several factors, such as organic acid type, inclusion rate, the health status of the pigs and hygiene and welfare standards on the unit.

MANAGEMENT

Sow and piglet gut health: Getting piglets off to a healthy start in life will help to maximize their lifetime growth performance

and minimize antibiotic use. The key to achieving this involves promoting gut health and development as soon as possible after birth. Alltech's Seed, Feed, Weed (SFW) program (see Figure 2) supports gut health in sows and piglets by modifying the swine gut microbial population to establish favorable and more diverse microbial populations, reducing *E. coli* attachment to porcine intestinal cells and optimizing gut structures to ensure optimal nutrient absorption.

High-quality colostrum: Unlike infants, piglets are born without maternal antibodies, making them vulnerable to infection. Pig producers need to ensure that newborn piglets have an adequate supply of good quality colostrum because colostrum is rich in immunoglobulins. These immunoglobulins provide piglets with their first line of defense, helping to build their immune system and protecting them until they actively produce their own antibodies. Incorporated into Alltech's SFW program are feed materials such as Actigen (Alltech), which have been shown to increase colostrum quality and, subsequently, support the gastrointestinal integrity and stability of the piglets that consume it.

Age and weight of pigs at weaning: A significant challenge producers face is getting piglets to have an early intake of solid feed after weaning. To ensure consistently high feed intake post-weaning and, consequently, high lifetime growth, weaning an older and heavier pig should be practiced.

Drinking water quality: As water is an essential nutrient, it's necessary to provide pigs with water of sufficient quantity and adequate quality. Furthermore, restricted water intake can reduce feed intake and ADG by up to 15%.

HEALTH

Biosecurity in pig farms: Implementing strict biosecurity protocols is one way to manage bacterial infections. This can include

ensuring that feed trucks and vehicles are sanitized before entering the farm, that pigs from different groups are never mixed and that producers operate a strict all-in-all-out policy. If strict all-in-all-out policies are implemented, the health status of pigs will improve over time as a result.

Hygiene: Dirty environmental conditions are also a contributing factor to PWD because poor pen and feeder hygiene can affect the health status of piglets. This can be prevented via correct sanitation (i.e., follow strict washing and disinfecting protocols, disinfect rooms with a chlorocresol product, allow rooms to fully dry before new pigs are moved in and ensure that all staff is properly washing their boots).

WELFARE

Social stress and the environment: Because pigs experience a high level of stress so abruptly at weaning, it results in intestinal and immune system disorders and, ultimately, piglets suffer with PWD. However, pigs are less prone to disease and intestinal upsets if they are not stressed. It is, therefore, important that producers look at ways of reducing social and environmental stress at weaning by focusing on several aspects, such as feed and water provision, floor and feeder space allowances, the mixing and movement of pigs, temperature, and ventilation.

Until recently, ZnO represented one of the vital nutritional strategies for preventing and controlling diarrhoea in young piglets and the associated detrimental post-weaning 'growth check.' However, increasing concerns over environmental pollution and contributions to the spread of antimicrobial resistance have led to an EU ban on the use of high levels of ZnO in piglet diets. Adopting a holistic strategy that encompasses optimal nutrition, management, biosecurity, health, and welfare practices will be key to ensuring that pigs can thrive and survive in a post-ZnO era.



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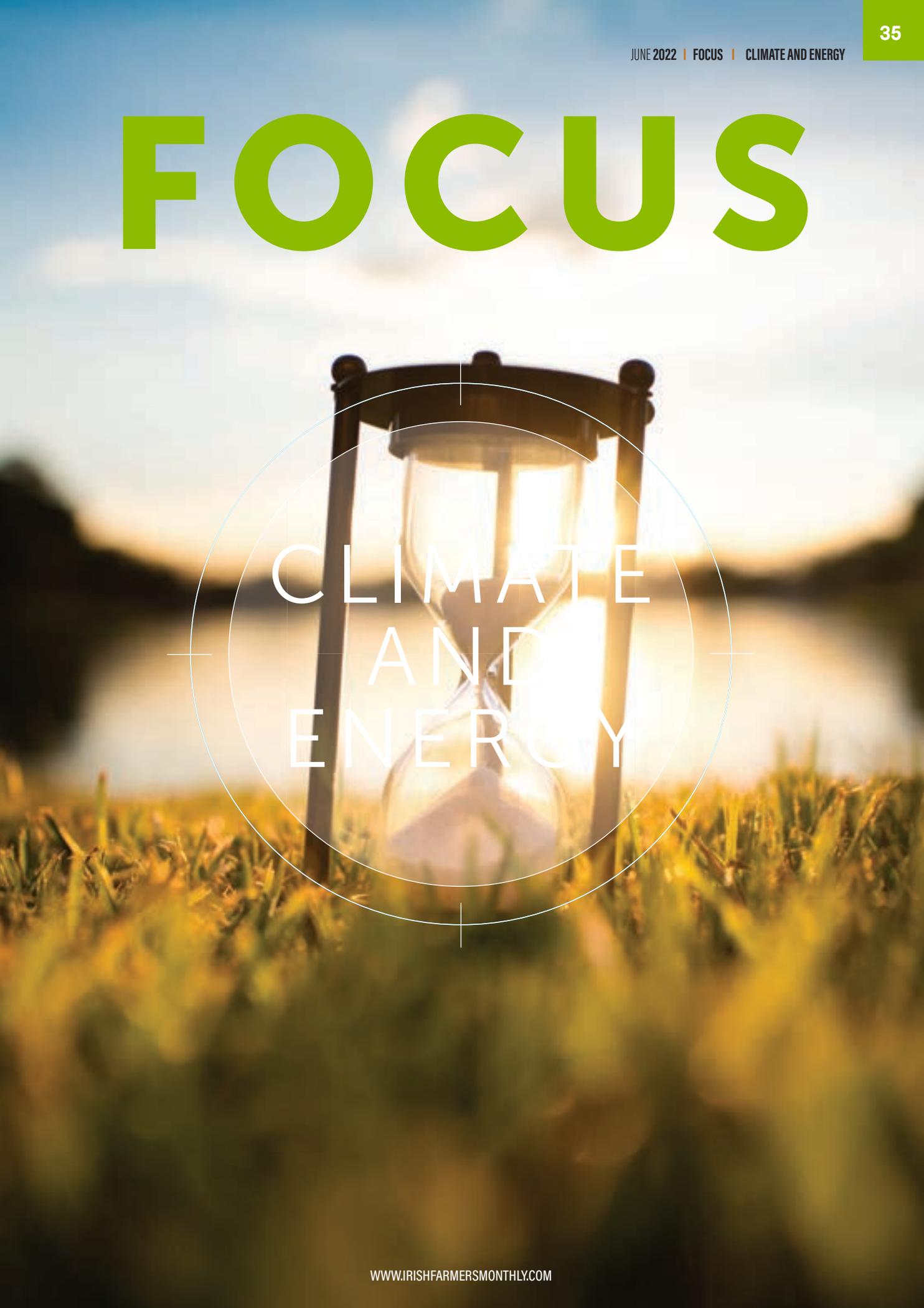


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FOCUS

An hourglass is positioned in the center of the frame, set against a background of a field of tall grass at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The hourglass is dark, and the sand is visible. Overlaid on the hourglass is a white circle containing the text 'CLIMATE AND ENERGY' in a clean, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in three lines: 'CLIMATE', 'AND', and 'ENERGY'.

CLIMATE
AND
ENERGY

SUSTAINABLE BIOMETHANE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR IRISH FARMERS

EUROPE'S RAISED AMBITION FOR SUSTAINABLE BIOMETHANE PRODUCTION AND FRESH CONCERNS FOR ENERGY SECURITY, STORAGE AND PRICING, AS WELL AS CLIMATE CHANGE, OPEN UP NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR IRELAND: THIS WAS THE CONSENSUS AT A RECENT RENEWABLE GAS FORUM IRELAND (RGFI) / REGATRACE KNOWLEDGE SHARING EVENT IN DUBLIN.



Dairy industry reps with Teagasc at the RGFI Biomethane Knowledge Sharing event in Feb 2022

Sustainable agriculture feedstock-produced biomethane can be delivered sustainably and at scale to assist in decarbonising both Ireland's energy system and the full agri supply chain – further supporting diverse farm incomes and the rural economy. This was one of the key conclusions in the REGATRACE Ireland roadmap, published on 1 June 2022 as part of a European biomethane programme, REGATRACE, a Horizon 2020 funded project. REGATRACE is a European collaboration between member states on the trading of biomethane and issuing of Guarantees of Origin. RGFI is the lead partner for REGATRACE in Ireland and since 2019 has collaborated with key public and private stakeholders to develop an agreed vision and roadmap for sustainable biomethane in Ireland. The event held in the Castleknock Hotel at the beginning of June marked the culmination of Ireland's contribution to the REGATRACE

programme, with the publication of a shared Vision and Roadmap for AD Biomethane Production in Ireland. It was a timely event given the announcement in May of the EU Commission's "RePower EU" plan and the proposed scale-up of sustainable biomethane to 350 TWh by 2030. REPowerEU Plan is set to lead an investment in the region of €300bn in biomethane production across member states, to achieve the new ambition and its actions include the integration of REGATRACE findings on a pan-European biomethane grid access action plan.

"The sector is set to deploy 35 bcm of sustainable biomethane by 2030, including 3.5 bcm more by the end of this year across Europe. By doing this, we would replace approximately 16% of the current gas consumed in Ireland. The increase in sustainable biomethane production will also help us reduce waste, increase food security, and support the transition to agroecology

in our farms. The biomethane industry in Ireland is scaling-up and is preparing to invest up to €1.8 billion over the coming decade. There are plans to develop up to 125 anaerobic digester plants by 2030 with the Government to announce the Renewable Heat Obligation by end of Q2 2022, which could deliver up to 2.5 (TWh) of sustainable biomethane," said Mr PJ McCarthy, CEO of RGFI.

IRISH AGRICULTURE WELL PLACED

Ireland is well placed in relation to sustainable agriculture feedstock – such as multispecies swards. Teagasc has confirmed the availability of 2 -4m tonnes feedstock for AD biomethane, with both parties of Teagasc and RGFI promoting that circa 2 to 3% of this sustainable feedstock would be available as a backstop in the event of future fodder shortage.

For Irish farmers and the processing sector, this will assist in decarbonising the agri food supply chain – further supporting the global marketing of Irish food and drinks products. A sustainable, agriculture feedstock-based AD biomethane industry in Ireland will also enable the following:

- Security of supply, storage and energy price stability
- Commercial sustainability and competitiveness
- Animal slurry management and mitigation of potential Nitrates Directive limitations / derogations.
- Improved soil quality and productivity
- Delivering improved air, water, quality.
- Supporting the development of a bioeconomy
- Secure supply of organic fertilisers from



PJ McCarthy CEO RGFI speaking to Irish and European AD biomethane stakeholders at Teagasc Grange.

AD and reduced chemical fertiliser and herbicide reliance.

- Opportunity to earn a guaranteed income from the implementation of improved land management practices
- other complementary farm incomes providing rural investment and income diversification

THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE AND TEAGASC GRANGE AD PLANT

Earlier this year RGFI, alongside Teagasc, hosted the Board of the European Biogas Association (EBA) on its first Board meeting to be held outside of Brussels, during which time they visited the Teagasc AD, biomethane plant at Grange, based on grass and slurry feedstock. Teagasc was represented by the Director, Frank O'Mara, Chairman, Liam Herlihy, Prof Paul Crosson, Principal Research Scientist and JJ Lenehan,

The Renewable Gas Forum Ireland (RGFI) is an industry forum, member organisation which represents the full supply value chain and advocates for the gas consumers demand for renewable gas/ biomethane/bioLPG/ Biohydrogen - industry. Its membership includes scientists; AD developers and operators, farmers; community organisations, shippers/suppliers and industrial gas consumers in the food and transport sectors. Biomethane has the potential to decarbonise thermal heat processes, transport and support a move towards carbon farming (with the production of sustainable feedstock, organic farm practices, biofertilisers, and associated positive impacts on biodiversity, air and water quality) as well as other positive environmental, economic, and social benefits. Renewable Gas Forum Ireland CEO, PJ McCarthy, welcomed the European Commission's RePowerEU policy announcement as a decisive step towards the rapid development of the AD biomethane sector in Ireland and throughout Europe. The new EU target for biomethane of 35 billion cubic metres (bcm) (350TWh) by 2030, offers tremendous environmental and social benefits for Ireland - as underpinned by recent RGFI feasibility studies.

Building Officer.

During the visit the Acting EBA President, Italian dairy farmer and AD operator Piero Gaittoni, and CEO Harmen Dekker spoke about how the European experience has proven not only how AD biomethane has and can aid decarbonisation ambitions at national, food processing and farm level but that it can also diversify the income streams of farmers. International scientific data and research into sustainable biomethane production has been supplemented by Teagasc research, providing evidence that the development of a sustainable biomethane industry in Ireland is technically feasible if developed in a co-ordinated manner.

IRISH POLICY SIGNALS

While concrete plans for the development of an AD biomethane sector have yet to be settled in Ireland, there are many encouraging and clear policy signals from Government. Teagasc is a key stakeholder on this journey. Information sharing and knowledge transfer to and among farmers is critical. The Teagasc Signpost Farms Programme and Teagasc AD biomethane demonstration plant are all important elements in the build out of the biomethane industry.

"Timing is of the essence for Ireland to adopt a considered and collaborative approach, across Government, across industry response as to how Ireland plans to achieve the EU biomethane target. However, what is needed now is for Government to come to the table with policy support on key elements of planning, market conditions, regulation, matching funding, and the announcement of the Renewable Heat Obligation Scheme," said Mr McCarthy.





Gas
Networks
Ireland

Biomethane made from farm waste can decarbonise Ireland's energy and agriculture

Ireland's €2.7bn, 14,617km national gas network is considered one of the safest and most modern renewables-ready gas networks in the world, securely supplying more than 30% of Ireland's total energy, including 40% of all heating and almost 50% of the country's electricity generation.

Since natural gas was discovered off the coast of Kinsale in the 1970s, the gas network has been helping Ireland reduce its carbon footprint by providing a cleaner alternative to coal and oil to more than 710,000 Irish homes and businesses.

Now the gas network is now preparing to transport cleaner, renewable gases such as biomethane made from farm and food waste and hydrogen made from renewable electricity, that will enable Ireland to meet its climate action targets in the most cost effective and least disruptive way while ensuring a secure and diverse energy supply.

"Ireland's gas network is a national decarbonisation solution of size and scale. It's ready for renewable energy," Gas Networks Ireland's Director of Customer and Business Development, David Kelly, said.

"A net-zero carbon gas network will reduce emissions across a number of key sectors, including those that are traditionally difficult to decarbonise, such as transport, agriculture, industry, heating and reliable power generation."

"With learnings from across Europe and the UK as well as insights from our own research and development facility, we're preparing to transform the gas network and ultimately Ireland's entire energy system to deliver a cleaner energy future in line with national and EU policy."

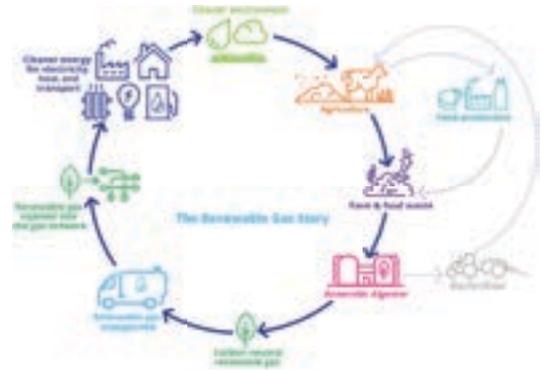
The conflict in Ukraine has highlighted the need to enhance and diversify Ireland's energy security through the development of a domestic renewable gas industry.

In March, the European Commission released a new RePowerEU Plan that aims to reduce the European Union's dependence on Russian fossil fuels by diversifying gas supplies and speeding up the roll-out of renewable gases.

The Government's National Energy Security Framework released in April further highlighted the need for renewable gas development to enhance Ireland's security of supply, prioritising the development of a national hydrogen strategy and committing more than €8.4 million in Climate Action Fund funding for the Green Renewable Agricultural Zero Emissions Gas (GRAZE) project.

Led by Gas Networks Ireland, the GRAZE project will deliver Ireland's largest biomethane injection facility in Mitchelstown, Co Cork.

Biomethane is a carbon-neutral renewable gas made from farm and food waste that is fully compatible with the existing national gas network and appliances, technologies and vehicles, meaning



no expensive retrofitting is required.

Gas Networks Ireland first introduced small volumes of domestically produced biomethane into Ireland's gas network more than two years ago in Cush, Co Kildare, and the company continues to receive a large number of enquiries from framers and potential producers across the country.

A large domestic biomethane industry would support the decarbonisation of the gas and electricity networks and all homes and businesses connected to them, while also significantly reducing emissions in the agricultural sector by displacing emissions from slurry and other wastes, and facilitating the replacement of chemical fertilisers with a highly effective organic bio-fertiliser digestate that is a by-product of the process.

It would also provide new income opportunities for local communities from the sale of the biomethane produced, the sale of crops fed into the anaerobic digestion process and the sale of the organic bio-fertiliser.

The *Sustainability of Biomethane Production in Ireland* report produced by Devenish Nutrition and KPMG Sustainable Futures in October 2021, concluded that agriculturally produced biomethane can be delivered sustainably and at scale to decarbonise Ireland's energy system, without reducing the national herd, disrupting food production, intensifying agricultural activities or impacting on biodiversity.

"Along with playing a key role in meeting national and EU climate action targets and making us less reliant on fossil fuels, there is significant scope for biomethane production in Ireland," Mr Kelly said.

"As far back as 2016, the European Commission identified Ireland as having the highest potential for biomethane production per capita in Europe."

"A domestic biomethane industry will decarbonise agriculture and our economy, while also facilitating sustainable circular economies, with food and beverage businesses for example powering their operations with renewable gas made from their own waste."

Agriculture can power a cleaner energy future

Biomethane is a renewable gas that can be made from agricultural waste and seamlessly replace natural gas.

It is a proven solution for reducing on-farm emissions and delivering cleaner air and waterways.

It can also support additional income streams and jobs in rural communities.

Learn more at www.gasnetworks.ie/biomethane



THE DRIVE TOWARDS A RENEWABLE-ENERGY POWERED ECONOMY



PAT SMITH, CEO OF LOCAL POWER, PUT FARM-BASED RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION IN CONTEXT WHEN HE SPOKE TO MATT O'KEEFFE RECENTLY

“As electricity prices rise and look like staying higher than they have been historically, renewable energy production options will come more to the fore in farmers minds. I am taken aback by the fact that the government seems to be limiting its support for solar PV. We need to redouble efforts to support the development of renewable energy to reduce our dependency on imported energy as quickly as possible. If a farmer gets a grant to assist in the capital cost of a renewable installation on their farm, officials are suggesting that they cannot benefit from selling excess electricity into the grid. We need some pragmatic thinking here if we want to ensure that renewable energy production expands quickly on Irish farms. My contention is that the farmers receiving grants should not benefit from a premium on the tariff rate received but should be able to get a market-related feed-in tariff.”

GREAT GAS

Pat has taken a deep interest in the concept

of producing biomethane using farm produced digester feeds, including grass and slurry: “After several years of research I have a team in place to assist anyone considering developing out an AD (Anaerobic Digester) system. It is a large capital investment, and it needs to be done properly. If this source of natural gas is going to become scaled and worthwhile across the country, farmers are critical to its success.

Our neighbours in Northern Ireland, as well as the UK and across Europe have several hundred anaerobic digesters in operation with the benefit of Government support. With no support in Ireland, we find ourselves exposed to a quadrupling of gas prices because of the war in Ukraine. The reality is that there will be a lot more volatility and unforeseeable disruptions into the future and we have many industries that are dependent on gas as an energy source. That includes our dairy cooperatives, which are coming under increasing pressure because of EU obligations in relation to sustainability and environmental regulations. Meanwhile, we

have no biomethane industry to alleviate these regulatory pressures and mitigate the threats to gas supply and price. Biomethane production is an industry that can very much complement farming. It should not be seen as a threat. On several fronts, it is positive for farming. It can help with nitrates issues. It can provide a high-quality fertiliser to reduce imports of high-cost organic fertilisers. There are lots of positives to supporting the development of AD systems.”

One key attribute for the commercial success of biomethane production is the development of units that have reasonable scale. A number of farmers coming together or a cooperative approach, working with a developer will deliver that necessary scale, says Pat. “Anaerobic digestion has been proven to work at scale while involving the farming community. I am familiar, for instance, with a particular AD project in Denmark where a group of forty farmers, who part-own the digester, supply the plant with farmyard manure, chicken litter and other feed sources and take back the digestate for use as

fertiliser on their farms. The gas is extracted, leaving a compost material with readily available nutrients to be spread on the farms. I can't see why that blueprint could not be part of the solution to developing renewable energy sources in Ireland. Irish Coops realise there is a problem developing. They are huge users of gas and there needs to be a well-planned approach to this.

The location of AD plants will be critical. A few years ago, it might have been smart to site an AD plant in Wexford, for example, given the plentiful tillage area available to supply feedstock. With grain exceeding €300 per tonne and fertiliser selling at €1,000 per tonne, the economics of growing grass or maize to produce biomethane are not as clear and locating plants where there is a plentiful supply of farm slurries and manures might make more sense."

A PENNY SAVED

Pat has this advice for farmers: "A euro saved is as good as a euro earned. On a farm, if you have a bulk tank that can be designed to deliver heat recovery from the compressor so that water can be heated, that is a saving on the cost of water heating and can be a

viable investment. For solar PV, if the amount of electricity to be bought in can be reduced economically, then that option should be seriously examined. Generally, farm investment over the past few years has been about expansion, improving efficiency and improving lifestyle by reducing labour demand on farms. Over the coming years, investments on farms will have to prioritise energy and cost efficiency."

VACANT ROOF SPACES

While the Local Power CEO agrees that the development of solar power farms can be attractive, he has a general reservation: "There are instances where a farmer can receive €1,000 or €1,200 euros per acre for the next twenty-five years, index linked, and that can be an attractive option. There is, however, a lot of good land going into solar power production that will no longer be available for agricultural production, apart from light grazing under the panels. It is very regrettable that government and policymakers have virtually ignored the guts of 3,000 megawatts of potential solar power production space on the rooftops of farms and businesses. The farmer or businessperson could sell into the

grid and it should be economic for them to do so. That is not the case right now. The rooftop space is not producing food, so it is readily available for energy production without taking land out of food or feed production. Rooftop solar would facilitate electricity production across the country, instead of confining it to a few locations, so that far more people could benefit. I would like to see solar production on every farm roof over the next few years."

THE CASE FOR SEA TURBINES

"All of government, including ESB, Bord na Mona and other players are heavily invested in the concept of offshore wind turbine development. What will probably make it economic is the fact that offshore turbines are now far bigger with larger production capacity of 10 to 15 megawatts. That should bring cost efficiencies in their development. One aspect not factored in is that for several proposed developments there has already been a ten-year delay in construction due to planning objections and other barriers. Those delays must be removed if we are to safeguard our economy from power shortages and high-cost electricity as well as move away from fossil-fuel energy production."

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ON-FARM RENEWABLE BIOMASS ENERGY

TOM HOULIHAN, TEAGASC FORESTRY SPECIALIST, ON THE POSSIBLE COST SAVINGS AND SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES FROM USING BIOMASS HEATING.

With fossil fuel costs continuing to escalate and future uncertainties regarding their supply, the use of renewable, home-produced biomass as a heating solution in agriculture, can be an attractive alternative particularly in the poultry, pig and horticultural sectors. A recent Teagasc-coordinated workshop, one of a series completed as part of the AgroFossilFree project, focused on how farmers can improve their margins by cutting energy costs using appropriately-sourced biomass heating while also improving their farm sustainability.

AGROFOSSILFREE PROJECT

AgroFossilFree, funded under the EU's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, seeks to create a framework under which farmers, advisors, educators, researchers, technology developers and providers will co-operate to evaluate and promote currently available Fossil-Energy-Free Technologies and Strategies (FEFTS) in EU agriculture. AgroFossilFree has created an online "AgEnergy Platform" containing all available FEFTS in the form of easily accessible and comprehensive end-user material. It allows users to register and submit new FEFTS and also interact with relevant stakeholders to express ideas and needs. Barry Caslin of Teagasc outlined that the way we produce and use energy is going to change dramatically over the coming years due to the drive to decarbonise our energy uses. With increasing fossil fuel prices, as an island nation we need to become more energy secure. The use of renewable energy technologies provides opportunities for farm diversification, the potential for energy savings and additional income to the core farming enterprise. Along with the competitive cost of renewable fuels such as sustainably-sourced wood chip, farmers with a high heat demand can also benefit from the Government SSRH support scheme for biomass. They can also make use of on-farm resources such as suitable forestry material

WITH INCREASING FOSSIL FUEL PRICES, AS AN ISLAND NATION WE NEED TO BECOME MORE ENERGY SECURE. THE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARM DIVERSIFICATION, THE POTENTIAL FOR ENERGY SAVINGS AND ADDITIONAL INCOME TO THE CORE FARMING ENTERPRISE.

(e.g. energy assortments from harvesting operations) or grass to feed biogas units which will contribute to the reduction of national greenhouse gas emissions.

SUPPORT SCHEME FOR RENEWABLE HEAT

Ray Langton, Programme Manager at SEAI, provided an overview of the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH). The scheme provides financial incentive for the agricultural, commercial, and public sectors to replace fossil fuel heating systems with technologies such as heat pumps, biogas and biomass heating systems. In the case of the latter, successful applicants can avail of 15-year ongoing operational support, by way

of a tiered tariff, based on usable and eligible heat output in renewable heating systems. Installations must conform to biomass fuel criteria (sustainably sourced and adhering to greenhouse gas limits), fuel quality criteria as well as air quality standards.

To date, 51 agricultural applications have been approved, including 24 poultry, 15 mushroom, 8 pig, 2 horticulture and 3 other enterprises. These applications range in size from 150 megawatt hours (MWh) to 1,500 MWh, with support on offer ranging from €8,000 to €40,000 per annum. Workshop participants also heard of challenges and opportunities in the mushroom and poultry sectors. For example, Mr Leslie Codd of Codd Mushrooms outlined how suitable boiler systems, operating at up to 85 per cent efficiency, are working successfully in many mushroom farms in Ireland, again with potential to avail of the SSRH. Fuel costs were reported at circa. 50 per cent of those of oil at current rates.

THE ROLE OF BIOENERGY

Sean Finan, CEO of the Irish Bioenergy Association (IrBEA), highlighted the role of bioenergy in a zero carbon future. He cited the availability of significant volumes of suitable forest biomass (forestry, wood processing residues and post-consumer recovered wood), which, along with short rotation coppice and short-rotation forestry, could deliver ambitious renewable heat targets up to 2040 and beyond. He outlined approaches to mobilise this resource and develop sustainable supply chains. As well as favourable policy and support measures, other essential elements include enhancement of the network of biomass trade centres or wood fuel production centres and use of certified biomass fuel, available through the Wood Fuel Quality Assurance Scheme.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Ger Cross, Commercial Director of Woodco, outlined the technological developments and improved emissions performance of



technologies, the renewable fuels that are appropriate, the resultant benefits both economically and environmentally and the direction of travel from a policy perspective. Those considering their energy options should not miss Energy In Agriculture, the Energy and Farm Business Show 2022, taking place in Teagasc Gurteen Agricultural College, Co Tipperary on Tuesday 19 July.

biomass wood-fired boilers. Woodco is one of a number of technology providers within this sector. Ger outlined the need to adhere to high fuel standards and the importance of matching biomass boilers with fuel type. Good combustion is essential to minimise particulates and this can be facilitated with the help of a range of technologies. He also described the range of available flue-gas abatement technologies, including multi-cyclone, ceramic filters, electrostatic precipitators and bag filters. The EcoDesign label is in place since 2019, setting strong thresholds for both efficiency and emissions. The Triple E Products Register, administered by the SEAI, is a searchable list of energy efficient products. As there is a high threshold for entry onto the register, such products meet a minimum set of stringent energy efficiency criteria and typically would represent best-in-class efficiency standards. Such equipment can lower the user's carbon footprint through efficiency and reduced energy consumption.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

Now is an ideal time for farmers to reflect on the energy usage on farms and where energy prices for their enterprises may be in the future. Renewable energy technologies such biomass boilers, matched with appropriate farm enterprises, can reduce energy costs while also reducing the farm carbon footprint. It is important for farmers to make informed decisions on future options for such renewable technologies. These include understanding their farm energy requirements, the suitability of available

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CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE IN PRACTICE

THE RDS RECENTLY CELEBRATED INNOVATIVE IRISH FARMERS, FORESTERS AND AGRI-ENTREPRENEURS AT THE 2022 RDS SPRING AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY AWARDS.

With a total prize fund of €29,000, the awards celebrate and promote the principles of climate-smart agriculture in Ireland. Thirteen award winners took their titles over three main categories: Forestry, Livestock and Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development.

Speaking at the RDS, Minister Pippa Hackett said: "As an organic farmer myself, I see first-hand the climate, biodiversity and water quality benefits of sustainable farming and forestry. I understand the hard work involved, but also the pride and satisfaction that goes with practising climate-smart farming and forestry. I'm always fascinated to visit other farms to see how farmers are innovating, so I am delighted to be here in the RDS today to recognise the wonderful work being done by our award winners and their dedication to climate-smart agriculture."

According to RDS President, Professor J. Owen Lewis: "It is more important than ever to recognise the work of our farmers, foresters and agri-entrepreneurs, who are contributing to the sustainable development of Irish agriculture, which remains the most important industry in rural Ireland. This year's Spring Agriculture and Forestry Award winners have achieved a balance between the economic and environmental needs of the sector and are highlighting what is possible when experience is combined with innovation and dedication."

Professor Lewis added: "The RDS wishes to thank Minister Hackett and acknowledge the support of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine for these awards, in particular for their continued sponsorship of the Forestry Award category. Increased carbon sequestration through effective forestry management is recognised as one of the most effective tools available in tackling climate change and in promoting sustainable agriculture. These Awards recognise those who are setting the standard for others to follow in this regard. What they have been able to achieve is an inspiration to all involved in the future development of Irish agriculture." Forestry Award winners receive a cheque for €2,000, an RDS Silver Medal and a Certificate of Merit.

WINNER PROFILES



Down Matthew Forde and Brian Malcomson, Seaforde Estate.

PRODUCTION FORESTRY AWARD WINNER:

The 2022 RDS Production Forestry Award went to Seaforde Estate, Co. Down. Comprising over 168 hectares Seaforde Demesne has been home to the Forde family for almost 400 years. Throughout the centuries the Estate has evolved and adapted as each successive generation of the Forde family leaves its mark. Today, the woodlands on Seaforde Estate are a great example of the many benefits that forestry can provide. The woodlands are managed in accordance with the three pillars of sustainable forest management: economic, environmental and social. Timber production is the main source of income for the estate, with surplus income reinvested back into the woodlands. Where possible, the estate encourages the use of local contractors to support employment in the community. Always looking towards the future, trading of carbon credits is viewed as a potential income opportunity in the coming years.

Environmental measures include managing the woodlands to maximise carbon capture as well as actively managing the variety of tree species to encourage and increase biodiversity. Seaforde Estate has a complete range of public amenities that are listed on their website SeafordeGardens.com.

COMMUNITY WOODLANDS AWARD WINNER:

The winner of the 2022 RDS Community Woodland Award is The Lord's Wood, Co. Wicklow. Owned by Coillte the Lord's Wood has been developed into a fantastic amenity through the hard work and dedication of the Baltinglass and District Forum, Walkways Group. Utilising funding from the NeighbourWoods Scheme the site has been developed over recent years to include a looped walk, fencing, as well as a much-needed thinning to allow for native trees to thrive and biodiversity to flourish.

The Lord's Wood provides a recreational resource for both locals and visitors alike, with a noticeable increase in visitors since pathways have been established. The area like many other amenity woodlands came into its own during Covid-19 providing a sanctuary for locals who discovered this wonderful natural amenity on their doorstep.

Although a relatively new community resource the Lord's Wood is steeped in history. It gets its name as it is part of the original estate owned by Benjamin O'Neale Stratford, earl of Alderough. The entrance to the estate is called the Lord's Piers, a big granite gateway that is a well know local landmark.



Steven Meyen, Teagasc Forestry Advisor, presents Ross Buchanan, Co. Donegal, with the 2020 RDS-Teagasc Farm Forestry Award

RDS-Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

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For more information on the 2021/22 Awards, contact:

RDS Forestry

e: forestry@rds.ie
t: 01 240 7215

[@theRDS](http://www.rds.ie/agriculture)

**TEAGASC FARM FORESTRY AWARD WINNER:**

Cathal is a part time sucker farmer and farms 48-hectares in total, half of which is planted with a mix of Sitka Spruce and Oak. First planted in 2014 Cathal decided to plant mainly for economic reasons. Forestry has provided Cathal with a steady and reliable income stream which gives him security to plan and manage the rest of his farm enterprise. Cathal also recognises forestry as a good long-term investment for him and his family.

Cathal's forest is very productive and based on the current growth rate first thinning is expected by year 14.

Since planting his forest Cathal has developed a keen interest in forestry and is Chairman of the IFA forestry committee for Co. Cavan, he is also a Committee member of the Northeast Forestry Group.

MESSAGES

- Address June management issues based on fact.
- Adequate winter feed a big challenge this coming winter.
- Having extra grazing grass frees up ground for silage.
- Forage crops, sown now, are a winter feed option.
- Manage grass quality to reduce weekly milk drop to less than 2%.
- Is she in calf for 2023? Check and act.
- Careful management of replacements will pay.



By Matt Ryan

JUNE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- » If acceptable standards are not achieved, the manager must take action.
 - Poor or low results indicate something is wrong.
 - If not rectified quickly they will cost you a lot of money.
- » Will you have enough winter feed next winter for the stock you plan to keep?
 - One of your most important management checks for June.
 - Have we enough 1st silage taken? What should we do now?
- » Changes in milk yield and quality:
 - Has milk yield decreases by greater than 2% in the week? Why?
 - Is the fat /protein/lactose % up or down ... why?
 - Is the SCC and TBC up or down? Why?
 - Did we get caught with water or antibiotics in the milk? What went wrong?
- » Have you too little or too much grass?
 - What is the pre-grazing cover? What can we do to correct?
 - What is the average farm cover (AFC)? What are implications?
- » Are our calves coughing?
 - Why and what should we do?
 - Have our calves dried dung around tail head; equals stomach worms?
- » Are more than 25% of cows/heifers repeating?
 - There are several reasons which you must address.

WINER FEED: THE GREAT CHALLENGE

- » Most farmers are struggling to get enough 1st cut silage this year.
 - Possibly due to the high fertiliser costs influencing the amount of nitrogen used in the year to date,
 - Hence, a shortage of grass for grazing has prevented farmers closing up silage ground.
 - By mid-June you should have 80-90% of your silage in the pit.
 - Falling short of that target you must do something about it.
- » Check now:
 - The quantity of silage you have – allow for dry silage,
 - The amount of silage you require: The following are each animals' requirement in kgs DM/day: Cow = 11; Incalf Heifer = 9 and a weanling = 5.
 - Thus, you will be able to calculate your deficit.
- » What are the choices?
 - Grow more grass and cut more silage,
 - Grow forage crops,
 - Buy silage, either on shank, in bales or pit silage.
 - Buy fodder beet, maize, whole crop or brewer's grains,
 - Or reduce stocking rate now or carry less stock next winter.
- » The basic principle for June is to keep growing as much grass as you possibly can by:

- For 2nd cut apply N (80units) and use the equivalent of 2 bags 0:7:30 per acre to supply P & K, but more where fertility is low.
- Stock the cows and cattle at 3.5 to 3.8 livestock units/ha so that you can close up larger areas for silage cutting.
- You should only "top" pastures as a last resort because it is a method of wasting grass. Something we can't afford this year. If grass is getting strong, take out the surplus as round bales.
- Kale or rape are options to consider, discussed below, but they must be sown now.
- The feed value of winter forages and feeds will be determined by the price of barley (may be €400) and soya (may be €600) in the autumn (forward planning advice from a source) and Table 1 gives the value per ton as fed/utilised and per ton dry matter (DM) which may guide you:
- If you can buy any of the forages/feedstuffs listed cheaper than the utilised price or value per ton as fed, then purchase - the alternative of barley/soya mix will be poorer value. The reverse is also true.
- If purchasing silage on the 'shank' then be absolutely sure of the yield, quality and DM. The same goes for maize, whole crop and grass.

Table 1: Summary of Feedstuffs Value relative to Barley & Soyabean Meal

	Value/ton as fed	Value/ton DM	Value/ton utilised as Fed
Barley (86.6DM)	€400	€486	
Soya	€600	€695	
Grass Silage 72%DMD	€63	€317	€57
Grass Silage 68%DMD	€52	€290	€47
Brewers Grains	€86	€419	€75
Fodder Beet	€82	€430	€69
Maize Silage 25% Starch	€101	€314	€88
Whole Crop 25% Starch	€129	€287	€113
Grass: Mid-season	€73	€408	
Grass: Late season	€67	€372	

- » Some farmers are grossly over-stocked, carrying poor milkers, high SCC/mastitis prone cows and lame cows. Sell off now.
 - Use milk recording data and personal knowledge to weed them out.
 - Leave sentiment out of the decision.
- » If short you cannot justify having too many replacement units on the farm – there might be a case for treating the very poor ones as beef animals as the trade for them has been poor.

- » It must be obvious; if you are likely to be short of winter feed act now as the cost of meal is going nowhere but up.

QUANTITY OF GRASS FREES SILAGE

- » The following are the grass cover targets for various grazing stocking rates in Kgs DM per hectare that drive grass quality and yield during June:

Stocking Rate (cows/ha)	Pre-Grazing Cover (S.R. x 18 x 21+50)*	Average Farm Cover (S.R. x 180) **
3.0	1180	540
3.5	1380	630
3.7	1450	670
3.9	1524	702

* Stocking rate x Daily Allowance x Rotation Length + Residual = Kg DM/ha

** Stocking rate x recommended cover per cow = Kg DM per hectare

- » This is basic, fundamental knowledge required to manage grass to best effect. If you don't know that, you are now going to be left behind.
- » If you are under these target covers you will run short of grass and if over these, grass will get too stemmy. Cows will underperform if either of these two situations arise.
- » The advised grazing stocking rate for June & July is 3.5 - 3.9 cows/ha.
- » To grow grass, you need nitrogen (28 units/acre) and sulphur (15-20 units to year end) now. Spread any remaining slurry on 2nd cut silage fields on 'damp' days.
- » Spread lime on bare silage fields ear marked for grazing and other 'bare' grazing fields that need lime. Generally, all fields need 2tons/acre of lime every 3 years.

FORAGE CROPS: WINTER FEED OPTION

- » Forage crops - kale, forage rape, redstart, swedes and stubble turnips - may be an option worth considering if it is looking like you will be short of winter feed or if you want to risk manage that possibility. You still have time to sow all these now but swedes must be sown before mid-June.
- » These crops have a few advantages:
 - They can fill a winter feed deficit and allow animal have shorter indoor housing requirements,
 - They can be grown on another farm,
 - But they are weather dependent for feeding, fencing/allocation of feed and mineral supplementation - challenges to be overcome during winter.
- » Table 2 outlines the cost per ton of dry matter (DM) utilised.

Table 2: Cost per ton utilisable Dry Matter of forage winter feeds (Source: Teagasc)

	1st Cut Silage	2nd Cut Silage	Kale	Stubble Turnips	Rape
Cost/t DM	€155	€183	€187	€161	€242

- » Table 3 outlines sowing dates, grazing dates, possible yields, seeding rates and some general management considerations.

Table 3: Summary of Forage Crop Management

Trait	Kale	Redstart	Swedes	Stubble Turnips
Sowing Date	May - June	Mid-June - Mid-Aug	Mid-May - June	June, July Aug
Grazing Date	Aug - Feb	Sept - Feb	Oct - Feb	Oct - Feb
Yield (t DM/ha)	6-9	6-8	6-9	3-4
Seeding Rate (kgs/ac)	1.6 -2.0 4.5 if broadcast	3.5 - 4	0.3 - 0.4 2.0 broadcast	2.0 3. broadcast
General	Easy to manage Good feed value Weed may be an issue	Ready to graze 90-110 days post sowing Good regrowth	If feeding cattle best to store & feed thro' diet feeder	Introduce gradually Not winter hardy Roughage + minerals required

- » Let us examine kale a little more because it is the most frequently used. An 8 ton/ha crop of kale will be the cheapest source of feed next winter:
 - It is 80%DMD, as good as barley
 - It and fodder beet will cost less than €1.50/day to feed a cow next winter.
 - The expected yield is 8-12 tons DM/ha with early June sowing.
 - A 10-ton/ha average crop and allocating 4kg and 7.5 kg respectively to weanlings and cows per day (with another roughage), the crop will feed 40 weanlings or 20 cows for 60 days.
 - The weanlings and cows will gain 0.6kg and 0.25 kg respectively per day.
 - Sow where fields need to be reseeded or after 1st Cut silage
 - Requirements:
 - Sow in early June and thereafter 1 ton/ha/week DM is lost.
 - A fine, firm seed bed is essential.
 - Seed can be drilled or broadcast (need higher seeding rate) at 4.5 to 5 kg/ha,
 - Sow kale once per 5 years in same field to avoid clubroot.
 - You need a soil pH of 6.5 to 7.0
 - Nitrogen: It need 100kg/ha(80units/acre) split in two applications, the second one at the 2-3 leaf stage.
 - For a soil index 3, apply 30 P(24/acre) and 170 K(140/acre) at sowing. Poorer soils require more.
 - Watch out for pests as the crop develops.
 - There should be a run-back area available to the animals during feeding.

MINIMISE WEEKLY MILK DROP TO 2%

- » Summer milk is the cheapest to produce. Even this year, at very high fertiliser costs, it is only costing €2/cow/day to feed her.
- » The target is to produce 75% of your annual milk from April to September, Target 4,300 to 4,500 litres/cow during this period.
- » This is all about good grazing management.
- » Limit milk yield drop from one week to the next to 2% or 8-10% per month. Cow's yield decreases naturally from her April/May peak by 8-10% per month. If it decreases more than that, you, the manager, is to blame.
- » Weekly check the bulk tank:
 - A 100-cow farmer could have 4,000 litres in the bulk tank every second day.

- Next week there should be 3,960 litres or more in the bulk tank.
 - This is easy checked - students and employees should be asked to report on this weekly to keep them interested, and it will pay off if you act.
- » A decrease of greater than 2 litres per 100 litres per week indicates:
- Stemmy or strong grass is being fed to cows,
 - Grazing too tight (below 4cms) resulting in underfeeding,
 - Grazing the headlands of cut silage fields for 2-3 days,
 - Many cows bulling, or ill health (possibly sub-clinical magnesium deficiency, leptospirosis or IBR).
- » If grass has got strong and stemmy skip on to the next most suitable quality, over 80% DMD, grass paddock.
- This is difficult to achieve because most grasses get stemmy and seed in June/July.
 - Use baled silage to deal with strong grass (excess grass).
 - Grazing to the correct pre-grazing height for your stocking rate is the secret to grass quality with less topping and baling.
- » Grazing too tight.
- May result when grass is scarce but generally, we are not grazing tight enough,
 - Generally, in such situations, for every extra 1kgDM grass that is allowed to the cow her intake will increase by 0.4 to 0.5 kg DM and should result in an extra 1.1 litre/day of milk yield,
 - But un-grazed grass rots, which is wasteful.
- » If your stocking rate is not too high, then grazing to 4.5 to 5.0 cms may be sensible, but topping will be necessary.
- » Grazing the headlands after a silage cut is too prevalent:
- This grass is far too strong and stemmy (probably 65-68% DMD).
 - Animals have to do an enormous amount of walking to get their "bellyful" of feed.
 - If it has to be grazed, let the replacements do it.
- » Topping must be seen as a last resort - what you must do is have the pre-grazing cover correct for your stocking rate and round-bale surpluses. However, if the "dung-pad" area is greater than 25-30% and the post-grazing height is 5cm then you have two choices. Either leave for bailing in the next rotation, preferable, or top it now.
- » When the pre-grazing cover (PGC) is higher than your target, then that paddock must be cut for baled silage within 2-3 days of its due grazing date.
- This material should be cut, very low at 3.5 cms, tedded or left in small rows for wilting, then bagged,
 - Apply 1000 gallons of slurry (undiluted) for every 4 bales of silage removed from a paddock to replace the P & K removed,
 - This silage will be very good quality; it will be 80%+ DM, nearly as good as meal and costing one-third the cost,
 - It can and must replace meal in August-September-October,
 - Or it should be kept for feeding to milking cows next February,
 - Aim to have 1-2 bales of this material for every 4 cows in herd so as to reduce your Autumn-Spring meal bill.

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IN-CALF FOR 2023: CHECK & ACT

- » We are now in the most difficult part of the breeding season:
 - It is more difficult to identify bulling cows
 - Bulling activity is now only one-fifth of what it was 4-5 weeks ago.
 - Fewer cows are bulling, therefore, less bulling activity and as some cows are only mounted 5-6 times (average 10) with each mount only lasting 2-3 seconds, the chances of not seeding these cows bulling now is very high.
- » You must "up" your heat observation efforts:
 - Tail paint or such aids are now more important than ever and should be topped up every 3-4 days.
 - A vasectomised bull, if you have one, should be introduced now. Have one bull to 15 – 20 cows expected on heat. A chin-ball is as important as the bull, because heats will be missed due to the bull mating a cow and not remaining with her.
 - Many farmers are now using computerised devices during this period to "help out" but read the screen 2-3 times per day.
 - Use previous service dates, off ICBF report, to guide you to expect certain cows on certain day.
- » If more than 25% of cows are repeating then you have a problem. Look at the repeat trends and analyse the situation.
- » Bull late calvers at 35-40 days after calving with a young test bull (easy calving with a minus 7+days for calving interval). The same principle applies to repeat AI bulls being used.
- » Some farmers with infertile herds are scanning cows served more than 32-40 days to confirm pregnancy. If she is in calf on that date she has a great chance to staying in calf. If not, it allows you to use your Vet to take remedial action for those cows not pregnant or with a weak pregnancy.
- » Farmers must use 5 straws for every heifer required next year:
 - A 100-cow farmer will need 25 heifer calves; therefore, he needs to use 125 Dairy AI straws.
 - And farmers must keep using AI until that number of straws are used in the season. This includes repeats.
 - If the farmer intends expanding or has mastitis (a very big concern going forward), lameness or other health issues he must use more AI straws.
- » After 9-10 weeks breeding some farmers, who have not had a stock bull with the cows, scan them for pregnancy. This is a good idea as you can act on the results under veterinary supervision.
- » When the correct number of Dairy AI straws have been used, use beef AI or consider introducing the stock-bull.

- I favour AI, because it more profitable, safer and cheaper. Farmers with automatic heat detection collars should be able to stick with AI – will help to 'pay for them'
- Use a short gestation bull, such as Aberdeen Angus, Hereford or Belgian Blue.
- Bull power:
 - One young bull to every 20 empty cows,
 - One mature bull to every 20-30 empty cows.
 - When using 2 bulls rotate them every 24 hours so that they can rest and feed themselves.
 - If possible, avoid bulls having to walk cow distances and particularly not have around collecting yards.
- Don't use him if you haven't done all the checks on him:
 - Confirmed that he is fertile,
 - Confirm that he has all vaccines that your cows get,
 - Confirm that he is in good health and not lame.

MANAGEMENT OF REPLACEMENTS

- » You must know target weights so that you can make sure animals achieve the correct calving down weights. The following are 1st June targets:

	% Mature Cow	Holstein Fr	Jersey X
Yearlings (R2's):	63	367	342
Calves (R1's):	23	135	127

- The cows' mature weight is got by weighing 3rd calvers and older cows in June – worth doing NOW. You can also estimate the herds' mature weight by using the Maintenance data on your herds EBI
- » Cow Maintenance sub-index €20 = 542 kg.
- » For every €5 deviation from this add or subtract 5 kgs weight.
 - You must weigh replacements regularly to make sure you know what's happening and therefore deal with underweight animals. This advice is imperative for contract heifer rearer's/farmers with heifers on contract so that no disputes occur later in the year.
 - The summer is when you get 'cheap weight gain in heifers' – don't miss out!
- » R1 stage:
 - Calves must always be on the best grass, with residuals eaten off by 1.5-year-old heifers or cows. This leader-follower system results in best weight gains and natural parasites control and immunity.

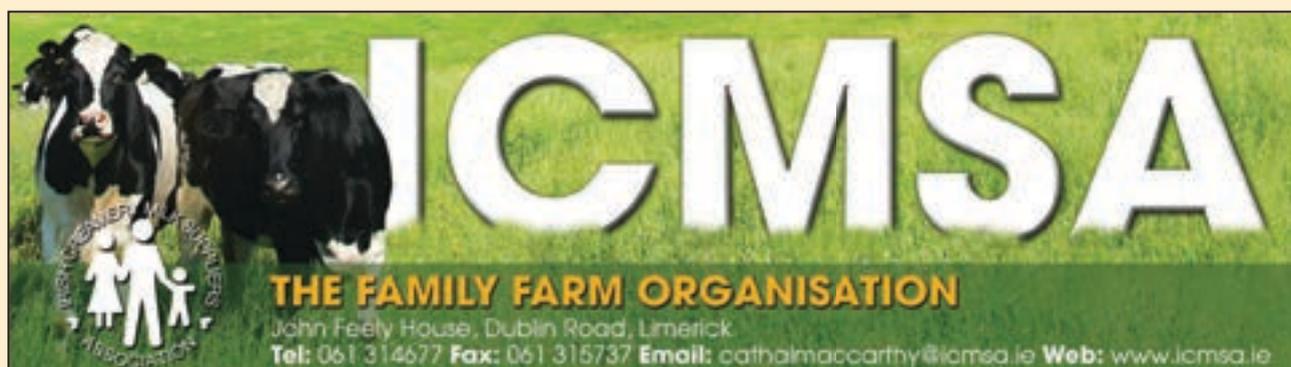


Table 4: Performance (kgs) of calves at grass under different grazing systems. (Source: Teagasc)

	12 Weeks	20 Weeks	30 Weeks	Gain/day
Calves + Adults	80	115	167	0.68
Calves Only	82	111	142	0.5

- Small calves would benefit from milk and/or meals in June,
- Big calves on good grass require no meals as the economics is poor – the conversion rate is 8:1,
- Stay on top of parasites such as hooose and stomach worms. Dose for hooose (Table 5 shows a significant weight difference) when oldest calf starts to cough and dose for stomach worms, if not on the Ivermectin programmes, with a white/yellow dose in late June and move onto aftergrass.

Table 5: Effect of mild hooose on calf weight gain (kgs). (Source: Teagasc)

	Initial Wt	Wt gain	No Days	Gain/day
Treated Animals	71.4	26.8	37	0.72
Untreated Animals	71.9	18.2	37	0.49

And dose for stomach worms (Table 6), if not on the Ivermectin programmes, with a white/yellow dose in late June and move onto aftergrass. Table 6 shows a weight difference of 24.3 kgs when comparing calves dosed for stomach worms in early-July and those not dosed. Obvious, what to do and when to do.

Table 6: Effect of stomach worms on calf growth (kgs). (Source: Teagasc)

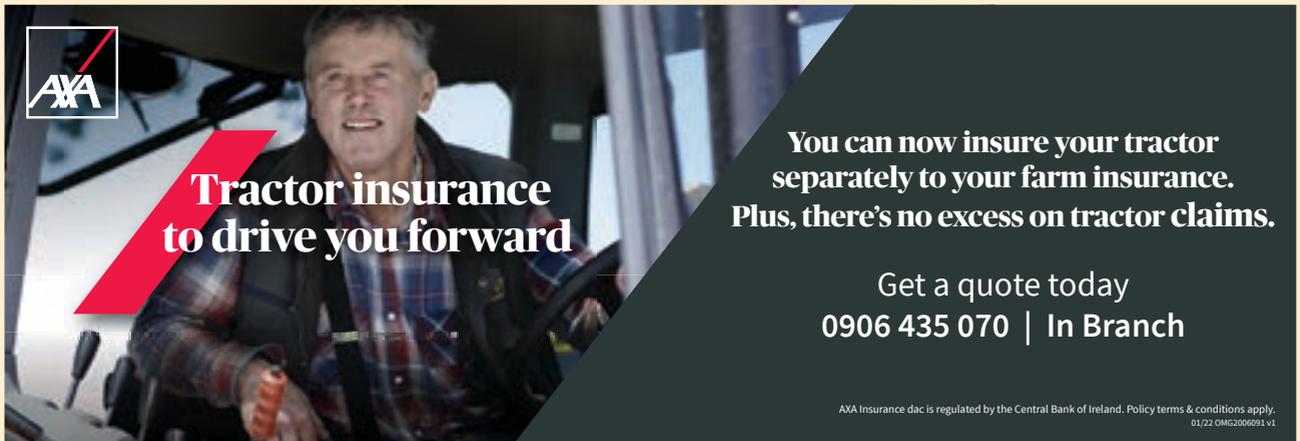
	Pre July	Post July	Difference
Infection Controlled	42.8	42.6	
Infection not Controlled	42.8	18.3	24.3

- » R2 stage:
 - Heifers mated after 12 June will calve down after 22 March – it is getting very late to start calving heifers into a herd. If she hasn't 'held' by now there is something wrong with her – beef her!
 - Underweight heifers may need to be separated out and run with calves on best grass or fed 1-2kgs meal separately.

BRIEF MESSAGES:

- » Dermot Heaney sent me this summary of a presentation John Upton, Moorepark, gave on energy savings on the farm:
 - Cooling is the biggest user of electricity on a dairy farm but an efficient plate cooler can reduce costs,
 - Night rate electricity is still the way to go for heating water – oil and gas heating costs have gone through the roof recently,
 - Heat recovery units are a good investment – water is heated to 40 C, with a payback of 3 to 5 years.
 - Variable speed vacuum pumps and milk pumps also have quick payback,
 - All these are grant aided,
 - When the demand for energy is minimised by using these technologies, then we should consider using solar energy.
- » Change milk liners now after 2000 milkings. If you have 10 rows being milked twice/day, then each liner has to do 20 milkings per day. Therefore, in that situation the liners need to be changed after 100 days (2000 divide by 20) milking (3.3 months). If not changed mastitis and SCC levels will increase.
- » High SCC/mastitis cows:
 - If the cow is a repeat offender, get rid of her,
 - Test the milking machine again and change liners.
 - You will need to pre and post dip all cows to reduce the spread,
 - Dip the clusters in parasetic acid after milking an infected cow,
 - Wear gloves,
 - Consult your co-op adviser.
- » High TBC:
 - Is your bulk tank cooling the milk fast enough? Get it checked out?
 - Is your cleaning procedure correct?
 - Use your Co-Op Adviser to sort out.
- » Time Off:
 - Plan to be only milking 5-6 days per week,
 - Plan to work less than 60 hours per week,
 - Plan now, by booking, a 2-week holiday away from the farm, preferably, where there is SUN.

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TIME TO GEAR UP WITH CASE IH

Case IH launched its 'Time to Gear Up' campaign last spring, which sees updates to the Farmall C, Puma and Maxxum models as well as the launch of three all-new loader ranges.

FARMALL C

Four models from the brand's 90-117hp range have gained a new four-cylinder engine, ready to meet the needs of professional small and mid-size livestock and mixed farmers. As well as meeting Stage V emissions regulations, the new engine boasts four valves per cylinder versus two on the former engine, for enhanced combustion.

Performance benefits include increased power output of up to 5hp, up to 10% higher torque levels and a maximum torque at a lower engine speed of 1,300rpm.

PUMA 140-175

The short wheelbase Puma tractors now benefit from some of the same updates as the long wheelbase 185- including an enhanced cab, with a redesigned entrance and aluminium steps. Premium-quality interior materials, a new cool-box and improved visibility from a wider-sweeping low mounted wiper are just some of the new features providing an enhanced experience for the

operator.

Puma CVXDrive models have received transmission upgrades, with greater response through improved acceleration and deceleration behaviour and enhanced drive pedal sensitivity. Additionally, transmission customisation is available through the AFS Pro 700 display to further personalise operation.

Three new packages are now available: The Selection Package for entry-level Puma models meets essential customer requirements, whilst the Advanced and Professional packages focus on more elaborate, technology-gear operator use.

BACK TO BUSINESS



The countryside highways and byways are full with agricultural mechanisation as the silage season kicks in to full swing; wagons, foragers, balers, trailers and much more besides are out in full force, along with tillage farmers spraying our most valuable winter crops. The countryside is buzzing like bees.

With growing conditions for winter crops almost perfect it looks like at this early stage that prices for grain and straw will be at a record high for the first time in a long time.

The excitement of watching this display of man and machinery is like parking up along the road on the boarders of Dublin Airport and watching all sizes of planes taking off and landing from far flung destinations with their own stories to tell.

And speaking of airports and destinations, I am back in the air again myself this month as the European machinery manufacturers launch what is up and coming for the 22/23 seasons.

Also TotY - the Tractor of the Year awards - is revving up its engines again this month in Italy to select the entrants for the 2023 competition to find the best tractors in each category. This will all come down to a final reveal at the EIMA show in Bologna later in the year. Yes, my friends, it is back to business on the European stage once again. Personally, I find travelling to different destinations very therapeutic and educational and it is great to meet your colleagues and peers face-to-face again. You get to see the pride and workmanship first-hand that goes into machinery manufacturing - these are the people who help to provide us with the tools to feed the world's growing population.

Meanwhile, the Irish live export trade is set for a boost as Israel is looking at importing Irish weanlings. As we go to press, the beef trade continues to grow week-on-week as factories look to secure supplies. Sheep prices are continuing to head north once again and milk prices continue to rise across the board as supply heads for peak production. On the tillage front, both world and native prices are on the high side with future prices this harvest expecting to be the best for years.

For the machinery sector, it is all systems go for the FTMTA machinery show next month - get booking if you haven't already done so. Down at the ploughing site in Ratheniska things will soon be hotting up for the National and World Ploughing Championships. Stand bookings are strong across all areas and larger than normal crowds are expected.

And, finally, it was with great sadness I learned of the death of former IFA president Alan Gillis from Co Wicklow, who passed away in May. He was a kind and generous man with his time - I spent many an enjoyable evening with him and his family down in Co Wexford. My deepest sympathies to his family, Anna, Hazel, Nigel and Barry.

Until next month, farm wisely and farm safely.



MAXXUM 115-150

The ever-popular Maxxum has received similar ergonomic upgrades to the Puma, as well as improved transmission on CVXDrive models. In addition, the six-cylinder Maxxum 150 has gained 5hp in un-boosted rated power, achieving 150hp.

NEW LOADER RANGES

All-new A, U and T front loader ranges for the Farmall C through to the Puma are now available with a broad selection of implements/attachments. Designed for maximum visibility and capacity, maximum lift heights range from 3.5-4.7m and maximum lift capacities from 1.2-2.7t.

Innovative features include the AUTO-UNLOAD System® which synchronises grab-opening and bucket-dumping functions for easy and efficient operation, the SHOCK Eliminator® which is the standard shock-absorbing technology on all three ranges and the FITLOCK 2+ System® which automates the hitching and uncoupling process.



STEKETEE'S STEERING FRAME

The Steketee EC-Steer parallel steering frame from LEMKEN turns unsteered hoeing machines from popular manufacturers into implements with joystick or even camera steering. It is a simple option for farmers who want to upgrade their existing hoeing technology or switch between systems. The three-point mounted steering frame enables smooth and precise steering while working with open lower link stabilisers on the tractor, as no lateral movements are transferred between the tractor and the

steering frame. Drivers control the machine from their seat using a joystick or the IC-Light camera steering system. Camera steering enables the machine to differentiate between crop plants and weeds based on different shades of green or the RGB colour spectrum. As a result, the machine can work automatically to within two centimetres of the plant.

The parallel steering frame is available as an integral part of standard Steketee machines or as a stand-alone unit that can be used to

upgrade any other hoeing machines. It comes in two versions. The EC-Steer 7 is suitable for hoeing machines with a weight of up to 2,500 kilograms and a working width of up to six metres. Its open three-point headstock offers the advantage that the camera can be positioned centrally on the steering frame to cover an extremely large field of view. The EC-Steer 9 with reinforced frame design is suitable for larger hoeing machines with a working width of up to nine metres and a weight of up to 4,000 kilograms.

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CLAAS TRION AWARDED FARM MACHINE 2022

The CLAAS TRION combine harvester has been honoured by an international jury with a FARM MACHINE 2022 award in the combine harvester category. Every two years, a jury of international agricultural and agricultural engineering journalists presents the FARM MACHINE Awards. Normally, these are awarded at Agritechnica, but due to the cancellation of this year's event, the German Landwirtschaftsverlag (dlv) decided on a digital award, with the jury presenting the new CLAAS TRION with an award in the "Combine Harvester" category.

"The FARM MACHINE Award is a great honour for everyone who worked on this product and confirms our development goal of a strongly customer-oriented, technologically broad-based mid-range combine harvester," explains Jan-Hendrik Mohr, who is responsible for the grain harvesting business area on the CLAAS Group Executive Board. "Rarely before have farmers and contractors from all the important growing regions in the world been so central to a new machine development as with the TRION. As a result, we can now cover



an equipment range from low-spec to high-spec from 258 hp, which gives customers the opportunity to catch up technologically with the LEXION, or to use a simple machine without a lot of electronics to suit their business." The TRION was first presented and launched in Europe in the summer of 2021 under the slogan "Fits your farm." With 20 models in the range, together with its wide choice of features, it completely redefines the medium combine harvester performance

class. From the 258 hp five-walker to the 435 hp hybrid combine with twin rotors, almost all models can be equipped with for example TERRA TRAC crawler tracks, belt inclined conveyors, MONTANA chassis slope compensation or various expansion stages of the CEMOS driver assistance system. Series production of the TRION started in February on the new combine harvester assembly line at the Harsewinkel headquarters, which was completely revamped just a few months ago.



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The effects of the war in Ukraine have reverberated through the world and many countries are producing products that were previously imported. So will Europe be able to cope with the fallout? It's a question that a small country on the periphery of the continent should be asking. I don't like to think so, but we are small guys and the big guys and big guys know what they want. If you have a choice of a wind turbine or a windmill, you would have thrown under the bus the little guy, particularly the little guy, who was totally vulnerable after the financial collapse of Google. So, I'm holding my breath for the vessels

is warning that the Commission is not happy with Ireland's plan for CAP reform and want changes. My worry is that if Ireland says 'no' we'll need to watch out for that bus again. Over recent years we have seen the EU Policy of buying cheaper food from outside of the EU with producers often not required to meet to the same high standards imposed on EU farmers. This has eroded the ability of Member States to have food security. I don't know if this policy is so that CAP payments can be reduced. A clever plan? I don't know. The Government is now looking for a way to make Ireland more self-sufficient, which is good news for Ireland. But the Government is also looking to diversify and diversify is not the proposed grant. I don't know if the details of it are in place. I totally support the idea of the McCormack's and the restrictions on what

receive this grant, as all farmers are suffering from unprecedented input costs. Many farmers will not have the range of machinery to service the changes they are being asked to make nor, in the majority of cases, will they have the funds to buy. Indeed, it would not be economically viable for them to do so. With the added pressure on farmers to divest themselves of old non-environmentally friendly machinery, I would suggest to turn to your Agricultural Contractor to discuss your ongoing requirements. You will find this the most effective and cost-efficient way to service the machinery needs of your farming enterprise.

On a separate, but related note, FTMTA Executive Director, Michael Farrelly said recently that they could see Agricultural Contractors were very much in the market for new Machinery. So, my advice to Professional Agriculture Contractors is to get along to the FTMTA Machinery show at Punchestown on 13th & 14th July.




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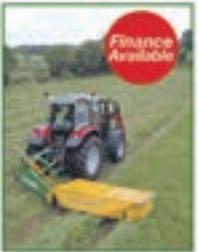
Combined Powers is the name of a joined Krone / Lemken project and design concept – the autonomous ‘process unit’ that consists of a drive unit and various implements. After passing trials in cultivating, ploughing, sowing, mowing, tedding and raking last year, innovative concept will be integrated in the well-proven forage harvesting and tillage systems of the two companies. Using a diesel-electric drive that generates up to 170kW (230hp), the drive unit is designed to meet the power input requirements of the implements used in the processes above. The drive power is transferred electrically to the wheels and the pto and from there to the implement which couples to a three-point linkage. The drive unit boasts multiple and extensive sensor systems which monitor the immediate surroundings and the implement attached, ensuring safe operation and optimum results as the primary objectives. Operators control and monitor the combination from a mobile device, transmitting jobs and job reports via a communication module and the agrirouter, the established data exchange hub. The speciality of the process unit is that it is controlled by the implement and not vice versa. This detail was considered imperative for achieving optimum results. The implement and the drive unit act as one integrated smart



system. Based on the long experience in the application of ISOBUS and TIM on Krone and Lemken machines, the drive unit and implement communicate and interact, sharing literally all types of data. The Combined Powers design concept also brings further benefits, because it was also developed to counter the increasing shortage of skilled labour in agriculture. Also, it will

free farmers from spending those long days in the field. Instead, they will become system operators who merely monitor the process unit which delivers a consistently accurate quality of work. Thanks to its enormous versatility, the unit is designed for year-round work and a long service life. Intensive trialling in all types of conditions and seeking feedback from farmers and contractors will continue this year.

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 <p>NEW PROCU 285/320 MP Finance Available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick fit blades Hydraulic folding suspension Swath Wheels Folding cover for easy access to cutting bar Mechanical lock for transport Drive Shield Module Friction clutch and over-run protection Watershed driveline 4mm cranked heavy duty blade Easy access to hitching of tractor to implement 	 <p>Finance Available TEDD-AIR 570 840</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hook lines 7 arms per rotor Headland management Spare wheel and lights included 4 rotor 5.7 m 6 rotor 8.4m Watershed driveline
 <p>Finance Available PROCU 3000 TC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick fit blades 25mm gears Drive shield module Watershed driveline Heavy duty conditioner bearings 	 <p>Finance Available PROCU 3000 MP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick fit blades Hydraulic floatation Direct drive 25mm gears Friction clutch and over-run protection Drive Shield Module Watershed driveline
 <p>Finance Available PROCU 210/240/280</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick fit blades Heavy duty cutter bar Multibend Belt Super floatation Galvanised frame Drive shield module Watershed driveline 	

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KRONE DEALER DAY AT FARMHAND

Farmhand Ltd, the Irish importer for Krone grass machinery, held a training event and machinery demonstration day for their dealer network at Lyons Estate, Kildare in May. This was attended by 110 Krone main dealer staff, from parts, service and sales. All Krone mowers are known for their excellent quality as well as the SafeCut impact protection system which protects discs and driveline with a 20 cent roll pin. The engineering that is dedicated to the larger mowers is replicated in the smaller mowers, all machines produced by Krone have the same technology and therefore benefits. All Krone mowers are driven from the rear of the bed, rather than

through the first hat, this avoids grass wrapping around the mower, and the complete mower range are shaft driven throughout the full range, always maximising the mower's performance with consistent power.

On the day, Krone presented the new Vendro Tedder. The landmark feature of these new tedders is their close attachment to the tractor which shifts more weight to the front axle and reduces transport length and lift requirement. All Krone Vendro tedders come with the Krone Octolink clutch providing maintenance free constant power transmission to each rotor. Krone rakes are built to last the pace of Irish farmers and

contractors. With unique features across the range, they rake clean every time without contaminating the forage. A DuraMax cast cam track with a 3-year warranty provides precision guidance for the tines. The small track diameter in combination with massive cams make for quiet running, reduces wear and leads to well-shaped swaths. The range of Krone forage wagons offer plenty of technical features that offer added value to the farmer or contractor. Krone round balers offer fixed and variable baling chambers as well as baler wrapper combinations. Below is a snapshot of what was on show - the full range of Krone machinery specifications can be found at www.farmhand.ie



Krone flagship - the Big X 1180 forage harvester, which comes from a family of 8 models and holds the title as the World's most powerful forage harvester - was on display. It comes fully equipped and is fitted with a 24lt/V12 Liebherr engine. It also has on board a the KRONE EASYLOAD system, which uses 3D imaging to automatically fill trailers.

On display representing the Krone forage wagons was the AX310 GL model. Aimed at the farmer market, this model is well equipped and comes with cables pick up 32 knife chopping unit along with a sloped front floor for better crop feed. It comes with either sprung or unsprung tandem axles and hydraulic levelling.



◀ The EASYCUT TS 320 CV trailed mower conditioner has been recently upgraded and comes with a new curved frame. A large 3.6 meter version is available and it's also available as a centre pivot option. The latest frame lifts higher than the older version and it comes with cutter bar suspension that can be adjusted from the cab.



This small six-rotor mounted unit is aimed at the farmer market. Working widths range from 4.7m to 11.2m. There are nine models available. Similar to its bigger counterparts, it comes with the maintenance free octolink clutches, curtain controls in the cab and mechanical dampers to prevent sway.



◀ Once again the show stopping BIGM 450 was on display. This machine has become a firm favourite with contractors since it was introduced and features all the extras from the BigX CAB and is powered by a 449hp Liebherr engine. Figures to date show that there are over 210 BIG Ms sold and operating in Ireland.



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WR SHAW LTD, CARLOW, HOST KUHN OPEN DAY



Kuhn's front mounted FC 3125 and rear mounted FC 3115 make the ideal combination for cutting 20 ft of grass with each pass. Both mowers contain Kuhn's Optidisc Elite bed, which is service free and quick attach blades are standard. As with all Kuhn mowers the beds are protected by our Protectadrive safety system. Both mowers have hydraulic float and the 3115 can fold up to 126° and has its exclusive Lift Control system with Non Stop safety system.



Kuhn's new HR 3030, 3 meter power Harrow. New trough assembly, 260hp rated gearbox, heavy duty packer roller. Options include hydraulic levelling bar and depth adjustment. Quick attach tines as standard. Pictured from left are: Killian Griffin, Kuhn Centre Ireland; Billy Shaw and Michael Eagers WR Shaw Ltd Carlow.



Kuhn's new GMD 285 and 315 non conditioner mowers, an ideal farmers mower. Robust headstock and frame incorporating a cover which can be opened front and back. These mowers can be folded vertically to 110° reducing transport height. Quick fit blades are standard and the bed incorporates Kuhn's protectadrive safety system resulting in the safest and cleanest cut on the market.



Kuhn's Optimer 3 meter disc harrow, the narrowest working width of a full range that runs up to 12 meters. 510 mm large notched discs makes it an ideal tool for shallow cultivations at high speeds. Hydraulic depth control and intermediate levelling harrow all come as standard with a wide range of rollers to choose from.



Kuhn FBP 3135 combi baler, film on film technology with the standard 750 mm rolls used on both the front and back of the baler. 2.3 meter pick up with 23 selectable knives drop floor unblock and rotor and pick up disconnect. Bela Max 4kg tub greaser programmable from the control box. Full isobus and 3D wrapping on the back capable of doing uneven number of layers.

KILDARE HAYLAGE PRODUCER GETS 'LIFT' FROM LATEST

Haylage is a nutritional animal feedstuff produced by combining hay and silage under scientifically-managed control and in carefully managed amounts. Leading producers in the sector are Robinson Farms of Maynooth, a family-run business for three generations now under the management of father and son team, Peter and David Robinson. As a horse and pony feed, the company is a major supplier to horse breeders, stud farms, racing and competition yards across Ireland. On the export front, it also services a significant client base across Europe and the Middle East. Here and internationally, another major purchaser are zoos for feeding to camels, giraffes, rhinos and hippos. Delivered in 75-litre Equi Haylage-branded bags to protect it from dust and preserve its nutritional value – and carrying a 'produced in Ireland' quality message – the process is one that calls for major investment in bulk handling equipment, not least for the warehousing and loading of its finished bagged product. To that end, the company has been a significant user of Merlo telehandler equipment with two recent purchases, a TF42.7 -145 and a 'first-in-Ireland' TF42.7CS-145, supplied to them by distributor McHale Plant Sales.



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Noel Dunne, Machinery Editor, Irish Farmers Monthly, is the Irish representative on the TotY panel, which consists of 26 jurors from major agricultural titles around Europe.

TOTY 2023 WARMS UP THE ENGINE!

On June 15-16 in Milan, during the kick-off event called "Let the Challenge Begin", the evaluating process of the tractors competing for the TOTY 2023 Awards will begin. The candidate tractors will run for the following awards: Sustainable TotY 2023; Best of Specialized 2023; Best Utility 2023; Tractor of the Year 2023.

Participants will have the opportunity to present their tractors to TotY's international jury during the event organized in collaboration with BKT, the event's official sponsor. The jury is made up of 26 professional journalists representing the leading European trade media. The finalist lists for each category will be released by the end of July, and the jury will be busy testing the finalists tractors on field during September and October.

The awarding ceremony, as is traditional, will take place on November 9th within the grand framework of Eima International. Additionally, following the success of the previous edition and the high level of public participation, this year's Eima visitors will have the opportunity to see all of the competing tractors in the special external TotY Area.



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AGRICULTURAL VEHICLE SAFETY ON THE ROAD

CIARAN ROCHE FBD RISK MANAGER, URGES ALL FARMERS AND AGRICULTURAL CONTRACTORS TO DRIVE AT SAFE SPEED AND LIGHT UP WHEN ON THE ROADS.



The main contributing factors to agricultural vehicle accidents include excessive speed, inexperienced operators, distraction, fatigue, poor driver visibility, lack of adequate lighting, overloading of trailers, oversized loads and machines, and poor mechanical condition of the vehicle and/or trailed implements. The majority of accidents involving agricultural vehicles on the road can be prevented by driving at safe speed, by ensuring that the vehicle is maintained in good condition and that it complies with regulations and safety standards for agricultural vehicles. In addition, the driver should be competent, free of distractions and the driver should take adequate breaks to rest, eat and rehydrate, so as to avoid fatigue. Drivers must never use a hand-held mobile when driving as it is illegal and dangerous, as it leads to distraction and it reduces the driver's control of the vehicle. Great care needs to be taken when driving large tractors, trailers and machinery especially on narrow country roads. We would also encourage all pedestrians and cyclists to wear high visibility vests, use the correct side of the road, keep in a single file and listen out for road vehicles especially when using narrow bendy country roads.

MAINTAINING VEHICLES

Maintaining vehicles and trailed implements in a road worthy condition is essential

as mechanical faults are one of the main contributing factors to road accidents involving agricultural machinery. Lights, indicators, brakes, tyres, window, mirrors, wipers, steering and hydraulics are a few of the main features that need to be checked. Always keep the windows and mirrors clean and maintain the wipers in good working order, as it is crucial to ensure good visibility when driving. Agricultural machinery with poor braking systems must never be driven. It must be ensured that appropriate braking systems are fitted and maintained. Tyres must be maintained in good condition as they are essential for good braking.

LIGHT UP AND SAFE AND SECURE LOADS

There are serious road safety risks associated with using poorly lit agricultural vehicles on public roads. It's important that vehicles are equipped with full lighting systems i.e., side lamps, head lamps, rear lamps, stop lamps, direction indicators, amber beacons, and number plate lighting. Trailers carrying excessive loads will prevent a vehicle from stopping in adequate time once the brakes are applied and will also make the vehicle unstable on the road. Regulations and standards specify the maximum weight loads that can be borne by a trailer and the maximum vehicle lengths and widths that can be used on public roads. They also

deal with the use of certain vehicles on the public roads which exceed the maximum vehicle dimensions which may be permitted in certain circumstances (e.g. combines at harvest time). All agricultural contractors and farmers should familiarise themselves with and adhere to the regulations and standards for agricultural vehicles on the road. Guidance is available on the Road Safety Authority Website: www.rsa.ie

SIGNAGE AND CLEAN-UP

Warning signs used correctly, can reduce the chances of an accident occurring. During harvest time, warning signs should be placed at strategic places along roadways and at entrances to farms and fields, especially concealed entrances, to warn passing traffic to slow down as large machinery is using the roadway. The Roads Act 1993 states that it is an offence to allow stones, clay or any other material to remain on a public road where, by doing so, it would cause a hazard or potential hazard to people using the road and obstruct or interfere with the safe use of the road. Drivers of agricultural machinery must try to maintain roads in a clean manner and, when appropriate, tyres of vehicles must be washed down to avoid carrying mud and stones onto the public road. Always drive at a safe speed and be mindful of other road users.

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HOME ALONE

DEMAND FOR ALONE'S SERVICES INCREASED BY UP TO 400% DURING THE PANDEMIC. DESPITE THE LIFTING OF RESTRICTIONS, IT HAS REMAINED AT THESE LEVELS. ERIN MCCAFFERTY REPORTS ON THE IMPACT OF RURAL ISOLATION.

It can happen at any time to anyone and knows no age or geographical boundaries. Loneliness is an issue affecting an increasing proportion of people in Ireland, and for the elderly, the problem is getting worse. These are people who have lived full lives. They've held down jobs, raised families and are often very sociable. But in later years, they can find themselves alone through no fault of their own.

"We all expect as we get older to have a few more health challenges and to slow down a bit, but I don't think anything prepares you for the pain of having no one to talk to; not having any emotional support; not having someone to hear your opinion; or to share your challenges with," explains Sean Moynihan, CEO of Alone, an Irish charity that works to combat loneliness in older people. Loneliness can be the result of bereavement, or ill health, or due to the closing down of local services, or due to financial issues leading to poverty. The fact that many older people are not computer literate can further add to their isolation. The demise of the

community has also played a part. For those living in isolated, rural parts of the country, the problem can be magnified, with days or weeks when they literally do not see another soul. "Rural life has changed drastically in the last 30 or 40 years," says Sean. "People used to see each other more from day to day. But a lot of business has now gone online, and this has led to fewer personal interactions. It's so easy to become isolated in this context."

In addition, we've just had two years of a pandemic when much of the social activity in Ireland stopped. Many older people, in both urban and rural areas, some of whom who were previously active in the community, had to isolate for health reasons. And while some social activity has restarted, not all of it has yet resumed.

To make matters worse, we're now dealing with inflation, which has led to a rise in the cost of living, which can put financial pressure on older people. It's also led to a rise in the price of petrol. This especially impacts people living in rural areas, who may not be able to afford to travel to see other people.

All of these problems are worrying. "It's the perfect storm," says Sean. "There's huge evidence to suggest that loneliness shortens a person's life and, in this respect, it's more detrimental than even smoking or diabetes." So what is the Irish government doing to combat the issue? "We have huge national programmes to combat smoking and diabetes, but we don't have a strategy or a cohesive plan to deal with loneliness. There are simply no government policies in place," says Sean.

Alone has been campaigning to have loneliness recognised for 40 years. It works across the country – in cities, towns and rural areas and aims to de-stigmatise it. "There's no shame in being lonely," says Sean. "Change simply happens in life and people can find themselves alone all of a sudden without it being their fault. What's more, often they don't have the language to identify what's wrong with them or to describe the challenge they're facing. We aim to change that." Alone volunteers visit older people, including anyone over the age of 60, in their homes, giving them a social and emotional



VISIT: WWW.ALONE.IE TO VOLUNTEER OR TO DONATE

“CHANGE SIMPLY HAPPENS IN LIFE AND PEOPLE CAN FIND THEMSELVES ALONE ALL OF A SUDDEN WITHOUT IT BEING THEIR FAULT. WHAT’S MORE, OFTEN THEY DON’T HAVE THE LANGUAGE TO IDENTIFY WHAT’S WRONG WITH THEM OR TO DESCRIBE THE CHALLENGE THEY’RE FACING. WE AIM TO CHANGE THAT.”

connection, as well as practical support. In addition, they offer support to 4,000 to 5,000 people a week by phone which is available seven days a week, 12 hours a day. It doesn't matter whether the older person wants to talk about loneliness, healthcare, finance issues, or the weather. Alone will support them and help to solve their problems.

“It takes a lot of bravery to reach out and say, ‘You know what things aren't as good as they used to be and I need a bit of help,’” says Sean. “But it makes a huge difference to people’s lives.”

Retired farmer Kevin O'Donnell, 82, lives on his own in a remote part of Co. Leitrim, and receives regular visits in his home from an Alone volunteer.

Kevin lost his wife Nancy, with whom he was married for over 50 years, three years ago. The couple had five children together, but only two of them now live close by and Kevin spends a lot of time alone. “I go up to the graveyard and say a prayer every day,” he says. “I miss Nancy terribly. She was everything to me.”

When the district nurse suggested she put him in touch with an Alone volunteer, Kevin agreed. “The lady from Alone comes to the house every now and again and she’s a lovely person,” he says. “We’ve had some very nice chats. Her company is always welcome,” he adds. “It makes all the difference to me.” He’s noticed a huge change in rural life. “Nobody has time to chat anymore,” he says. “Also, many young people move away, and I find the new people who come to the area don’t want to mix.”

Kevin says he would encourage anyone living alone in a rural area to get in touch with Alone. “It has been a great help to me,” he says. “Everyone needs someone to talk to. Sure, that’s what life is all about.”

Alone currently has approximately 3,500 volunteers, but they have hundreds of older people on waiting lists and they desperately need more volunteers, especially in rural, or hard to reach, areas of the country. “We actually need 9,000 volunteers, so we’re always looking for more people to get involved, either on the phone or in person,” says Sean.

The charity also trains older people how to use technology. In addition, it provides training to community organisations around the country, to help older people to manage their own social connectivity, finances, health, and their wellbeing etc through technology. Demand for the service increased by up to 400% during the pandemic and has continued at those levels. “There are older people suffering in our streets, in our hinterlands and nearby,” says Sean. It’s about trying to engage with them and keep them involved in society. We need to realise there is a lot of pain and suffering involved with these people. We need to make them visible.” In fact, many of the volunteers are older than the people they are supporting, because they’ve retired. No matter what their age however, the reality is that volunteers working for Alone get great joy out of helping older people. “I have never met a volunteer who didn't say they got more out of it than they put into it,” says Sean. “Making connections and giving back to the community is the greatest joy you could give yourself. It’s reciprocal and there’s huge evidence to back this up.”

ICMSA

THE DEGRADING OF IRISH DAIRYING



Pat McCormack,
President, ICMSA

At the time of writing, it looks increasingly like the final draft of the Food Vision Dairy Group that will be submitted to Minister McConalogue will contain measures that - whatever they are called - are intended to function as restrictions and quotas. The attitude of the Government and several of the agencies seems to have been largely pre-determined and the process seems much less about meaningful discussions towards a solution than it was about informing the farmers about what had already been decided. We have already said that we think that Ireland is about to make a historic error in terms of its dairy sector and though we conceded - and are happy to do so - that more progress had to be made on sustainability, we remain absolutely convinced that a grievous and irreversible wrong is about to be done to Ireland's dairy farmers, the wider dairy sector and, most importantly, the rural communities that rely on milk production for economic survival and social coherence. There are only so many times that you can tell people that they're making a fundamental mistake. There are only so many times you can ask the most pertinent questions only to never receive an answer. For the record - and everything from now on, should be 'on the record' - we'll just ask a few one last time. Firstly, can the Irish Government explain or guarantee that any fall in Irish production will not be filled by increased production from scientifically proven less sustainable producers? If they cannot guarantee that then what exactly is the point of the most sustainable producer

in the planet cutting back and leaving a volume deficit that is then filled by increased production from less sustainable producers? This is the original question and it's still the most important: if the whole point of this policy is to reduce dairy emissions, then the net effect of this decision by Ireland will be to increase net emissions. No-one seriously disputes this and, on its own, it should force the Irish Government into a fundamental rethink.

If the Irish Government's response to that is that we are obliged to deal with the emissions that result from our production of milk then they must explain why milk - seemingly uniquely - entails the producer being responsible for the emissions associated with the commodity. As ICMSA - following Colm McCarthy - has pointed out on innumerable occasions, Saudi Arabia is not charged with the emissions associated with our consumption of petrol imported from their production facilities. The Saudi Arabian petrol is consumed in Ireland, and we are therefore charged with the emission connected with that. But strangely enough and when it comes to milk that responsibility shifts back: Ireland is responsible for the emissions associated with any of our dairy products consumed in Saudi Arabia. When it comes to petrol, the emissions bill is presented at the consumption end of the transaction. But when it comes to milk, the emissions bill falls only on the producer. Why? Will we ever get an explanation from any of our ministers as to why our milk producers are responsible for Saudi Arabian consumption of our baby formula

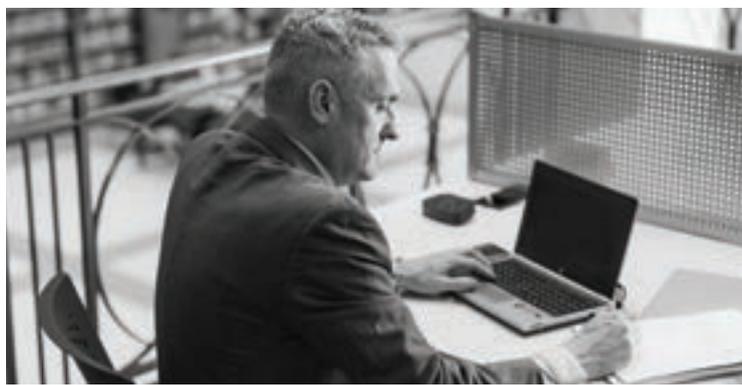
and cheese, but they are completely exempt from any emissions consideration regarding our consumption of their petrol? Over to you, Minister.

There is no point in pretending that ICMSA is confident about the direction that the Food Vision Dairy Group had decided upon. We do not - and will not - accept the recommendations on nitrates usage. There are no circumstances in which we will agree to the limits contained in the Report. We have argued that it is counter-productive and obsolete to lock ourselves into dairy volume reductions based on figures and data that is already being overtaken by research and developments in breeding, technology, and science. But it looks like that argument has been rejected and we move on to the Government funding to transition our dairy sector through to the new reduced position. That is going to mean serious funding directly to the farm families and that funding is going to be in addition to existing CAP and national arrangements.

I'm not going to lie: ICMSA thinks that Ireland is making a fundamental, long-term, and wholly avoidable mistake on the future of its multi-billion Euro dairy sector. We are going to lose a world-leading position for absolutely no gain in overall environmental ambition. No amount of window-dressing reports can or should change that conclusion. We can predict one thing safely: history is going to be hard on those who conceived of and delivered this economic and social policy of self-mutilation; Ireland's deliberate degrading of its dairying - the one area in which we led the world.



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VERY END

A FORMULA FOR DISCRIMINATION



It happened quite rightly with tobacco.

First, the advertising of tobacco products was banned. Then only plain packaging with health warnings was allowed. Finally, all tobacco products had to be hidden from view in shops and supermarkets. Tobacco is a dangerous carcinogenic, impairing health and causing thousands of deaths every year for smokers and bystanders alike.

Tobacco, however, is a far cry from infant formula, which has been developed to such a degree that it closely mimics the natural milk produced by lactating mothers. Yet, the banning of infant formula advertisements is now being promoted by those who know what is best for mothers and their babies. Breast is best and for all of those mothers who are willing, able and whose daily lives allow for extended breast feeding, the best option should be the first choice. That, however, is not the case for many mothers who, for a myriad of medical and social reasons, cannot adopt or continue breast feeding for their young children. It is support and understanding that mothers need, not guilt shaming as a consequence of banning infant formula advertising. What other interpretation could be taken from such a ban but that the use of infant

formula is inherently shameful and should make mothers feel guilty of malnourishing their babies?

Irish milk producers are regularly upbraided for producing high quality milk to be used as a key ingredient in infant formula, much of it for global export. The USA is currently experiencing a deficit of infant formula and has turned to Irish producers of high-quality formula to meet the needs of American mothers. We also export infant formula to China where countless thousands of Chinese mothers know that the Irish-made product they buy is of consistently high quality and safe for their children. There are those, however, who criticise such exports. Who are they to lecture Chinese mothers as to how they choose to nurture their offspring? By denying them access to high-quality Irish infant milk formula, they are dictating their own prejudices and preferences onto women who must make their own, often difficult, choices. Apart from an elite of well-heeled and usually articulate people there are no best choices in this world. There are only practical choices. In the case of whether a mother breast feeds or provides infant milk formula to her child, the choices vary from physical to financial and include personal choice, which, whether 'those

who know best' like it or not, is still a legal and legitimate option.

How far are we willing to go in allowing 'those who know best' to dictate our lives? Should advertising for disposable nappies also be banned? There is no argument here. Reusable nappies are the best choice for the environment. Less waste, lower use of non-renewable materials and lower cost over the lifetime of a reusable nappy. Except that, for many if not most mothers, a reusable nappy is not nearly as practical as its disposable counterpart and that's before the additional time, effort and cost of washing and drying reusable nappies is taken into account. In an ideal world, what mother would not prefer natural fibres such as cotton or hemp-based nappies surrounding their babies bottoms rather than the polypropylene, polyethylene and polyacrylate constituents of disposable nappies, with about 5,000 of them ending up in landfill for every two and a half year baby cycle? So, let's ban disposable nappy advertising too. Better for the environment, better for babies. Better for mothers? Just when most women began to think that they were free to make their own life choices, 'those who know best' are again dictating to them.





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€150 COULD HELP PROVIDE VITAL PERSONAL HYGIENE ITEMS

You can also donate directly to the Irish Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal in your Revolut app.

The humanitarian need is huge and suffering has increased for millions of people across Ukraine. With your help, we can continue to provide urgently needed assistance. Red Cross teams are on the ground now in Ukraine and will continue their work to repair vital infrastructure, support health facilities, and help families with life-saving supplies. This is a rapidly evolving crisis, and your donation could help those affected to access food, basic medical supplies, shelter and water.

A HERD APPROACH TO IBR LIVE VACCINATION



VACCINATE YOUR CALVES NOW
IBR is an endemic disease in Ireland with almost 75% of herds infected³



Check out our vaccination protocol video



Scan with phone camera

TALK TO YOUR VET ABOUT BOVILIS IBR MARKER LIVE

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

Use Medicines Responsibly

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

1. Herds with high prevalence of IBR may need to vaccinate calves from 2 weeks of age intranasally. Next vaccine should be given at 3-4 months of age either intranasally or intramuscularly.
2. Intramuscular Vaccination.
3. Cowley DJB et al, Aspects of bovine herpesvirus infection in dairy and beef herds in the Republic of Ireland. Acta Veterinaria Scandinavica 2011, 53:40.
4. Kynetec data April 2020.

MSD Animal Health Ireland - Cattle & Sheep

@msd_ah MSD Animal Health Ireland



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