

# FARMERS

## MONTHLY



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- + HORSE SPORT IRELAND CEO DENIS DUGGAN ON THE CHALLENGES FACING THE SECTOR IN LIGHT OF BUDGET 2023**
- + FORESTRY FOCUS - THE SHORTCOMINGS IN CURRENT AFFORESTATION AND HOW TO DELIVER ON PLANTING TARGETS**



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OCTOBER 2022

## EDITORIAL

Matt O'Keeffe, Editor



## THE BUDGET GAMBIT

**The recent Budget should be recognised for what it was – a rescue mission at a time of war and extraordinary inflationary pressures especially in energy and living costs.** Ministers Donohoe and McGrath walked a tightrope in their Budget 2023 presentations. Unlike the British Budget of the previous week, the Irish version was able to rely on strong tax revenues to finance much of the spending. That revenue stream comes with a health warning as Corporation Tax may or may not continue to deliver such largesse. In any case, given the fact that Ireland has amongst the highest debt per capita in the world at €44,000 per person, there is little room for complacency, especially with interest rates rising.

From an agricultural perspective there were some notable Budgetary features. The continuing roll-over of Partnership and Young Farmer Stock Reliefs as well as Stamp Duty Relief and land restructuring and consolidation reliefs is welcome. These do does not represent new investment but are critical aspects of a coherent generational land mobility policy. A time-limited accelerated capital relief measure for the construction of slurry storage facilities is welcome, as there is still a capacity deficit on many farms. The continuing focus on environmental management is recognised with the €218 million funding of a range of agri-environment schemes, with the main spend allocated to the new ACRE Scheme. The Tillage Incentive and Fodder Support Schemes are also allocated funding as is a new Liming Scheme which is to be supported with €18 million. The details of how the Liming Scheme will operate have not yet been finalised. A renewed National Forestry Programme will receive an extra 12% in funding and hopefully indicates a commitment to get the afforestation programme back on track. Finance is

provided to trial AD development. That potential energy source must be prioritised if we are to meet our renewable energy production targets. Likewise, the expansion of the TAMS budget to provide sufficient funds for supporting large-scale, farm-based solar developments is critical if we are to lower carbon-sourced energy use.

On the subject of energy costs, farm businesses will benefit from the introduction of a Temporary Business Energy Support Scheme. Under a complex calculation mechanism, a portion of electricity bills will be reduced up to a maximum of €10,000 relief per month between September and February. On the taxation side, a concrete levy of 10 per cent adds costs to construction across the economy. It is justified to alleviate the multi-billion State cost of Mica redress but will inevitably add cost to construction of houses, factories and farm buildings.

Looking at the overall Budget strategy, it is clearly an expensive gambit on the part of the Government to alleviate the worst impacts of rising living costs and the cost of doing business when faced with price increases across a range of inputs. Farms will benefit from many of the concessions delivered in the Budget but no one will be better off. The aim, as far as it can be achieved, is to mitigate the worst impacts of rising prices. In that regard, the Budget should ensure that we are less badly off than we would otherwise be. The question must be asked as to what happens next. If the war in Ukraine ends, if the UK's reckless borrow and spend policy does not derail its economy and our UK export trade, if inflation is brought under control internationally and interest rates stabilise, then the Government's Budgetary intervention may succeed in keeping the economy growing, maintaining full employment and managing our €225 billion national debt. Not a lot to ask for, then.

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## NO IRISH NEED APPLY

Despite the huge growth in Irish milk production since 2015, none of the major Irish dairy processors made it into the top twenty global dairy list based on turnover. Topping the Rabobank-compiled list is Lactalis, the French dairy giant with a turnover of €22.6 billion. The Swiss headquartered Nestlé is a few billion behind with €18b turnover. Third place is filled by another French company, Danone, with total revenues of €17.7 billion. Dairy Farmers of America had sales of €16.3 billion and China's Yili was a billion off with its top line figure of €15.4 billion. Remember, these figures relate only to dairy-related activities by the companies listed.

Add Lactalis and Danone together and the two French-based companies had combined sales of over €40 billion for their dairy divisions. These are, of course global companies, so not all revenues are generated on native soil. Far from it, in fact. From an Irish perspective, what is particularly interesting about the list is the absence of either Kerry Plc or Glanbia Plc. Based solely on turnover figures both would have made it into the top twenty with gross income figures of €7.35 billion and €4 billion, respectively. Clearly, Rabobank fully differentiates between 'pure' dairy revenues and ancillary or even totally non-dairy sales. While Kerry has a huge taste and nutrition product portfolio of non-dairy gestation, that is less the



case for Glanbia, with major dairy-linked revenue earners including its whey-based protein range. Presumably, Rabo has both the time and energy to tease out direct-line dairy revenues from some very complex corporate financials. If we want a real fix on the stupendous size of some of these companies, we have only to look at Nestlé. Not only is it top of the pile in its dairy related income, Nestlé's total gross earnings came to an eye-catching €90 billion last year with profits to match.



## RATHENISKA RUMOUR MILL

It could, of course, be idle gossip but there is ongoing speculation that the Ploughing will return to Ratheniska next year. Not just the National Ploughing Championships, mind... the speculation is in relation to a re-run of the World Ploughing at the same venue in 2023. Quite how that possibility fits into the World Ploughing Association's long list, extending into the 2030s, of candidate countries wishing to host the prestigious event is unclear. Given the turmoil in Eastern Europe, the rumours may not be without foundation. The fact that Anna May and her team took on the World event at very short notice, when Russia was deemed an unsuitable option, and organised it very successfully may influence the decision makers. Ratheniska is as close to a perfect venue as can be found anywhere on the planet. Not only that, but the Irish Ploughing Championships also attract attendances which other host nations could only dream about. Watch the space. At time of going to print there was no white smoke as to whether even the National Ploughing would return to Ratheniska, though the odds must be firmly in favour of staying put for at least one more year, perhaps even two, as the NPA seeks to rebuild its revenues after the two-year Covid pandemic moratorium on income. Much will depend on the attitude of the surrounding landowners. It is a big ask to surrender their farms indefinitely, whatever the payback.

## BLACK IS THE COLOUR

KCLR's Sue Nunn asked a seemingly innocent question of two breed organisations in her travels around the Ploughing. As she stood outside the Irish Aberdeen Angus and Irish Angus stands, both in close proximity, Sue wondered aloud as to the difference between the Irish Angus Society's and the Irish Aberdeen Angus Association's cattle. To the casual observer, and Sue fully admits to falling into that category, the cattle look pretty similar. An innocent bystander in one Angus tent admitted that he hadn't a clue. Strictly speaking, the Irish Aberdeen Angus grouping is an Association while the Irish Angus entity goes under the guise of a Society. Still not clear on the actual physical differences between an Irish Angus bull and an Irish Aberdeen Angus Bull? Me neither. The distinctive black breed (or red) originated in Scotland and was first introduced here in the 1860s. The Irish Angus Society is headquartered in Carrick-on-Shannon while its Irish Aberdeen Angus Association counterpart is based in Tuam. While of the subject of differentiation, it should also be noted that the Red Angus, an increasingly popular colour option, is the very same breed as the black version. The only genetic difference is the presence or absence of the red recessive gene determining the actual colour.



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## BEYOND MEAT SHARES NOSE-DIVE



### The vegan burger manufacturer Beyond Meat's share price has almost halved since 2019.

The 92 per cent fall in value is attributed by the company to the higher cost of its non-meat alternative offering, which retails at just short of double the price of a natural beef burger. Despite scaling up significantly since the company launched on the stock market, it hasn't been enough to deliver the cost reductions necessary to bring the vegan burger price in line with its traditional meat-based competitor. McDonald's in the US trialed the alternative burger for a period under the McPlant brand but withdrew it after what was described as lacklustre demand from consumers. Adding to the company's woes was news that Beyond Meat's Chief Operating Officer, Doug Ramsey, had been arrested for allegedly biting a man's nose in a post-American football game fracas. The former Tyson Foods executive was suspended by the company as a result.

The plant-based burger was still on sale in McDonald's Irish outlets at the time of writing. A spokesperson for McDonald's indicated a positive response from its customers, although market share for the McPlant burger compared to its Big Mac counterpart were not immediately available. Meanwhile, ABP Group is continuing to promote its non-meat chicken, pork, duck and lamb Dopsu range in the UK. A year on from its launch onto the UK market the chickenless, No-Chicken Pieces are said to be performing well.

## SCIENTIST CALLS FOR GREATER TRANSPARENCY AROUND RED MEAT STUDIES



Pictured, from left, are: Thanawat Tiensin, Director, Animal Production and Health Division, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations; Shirley Tarawali, Chair, Global Agenda on Sustainable Livestock; Brendan Gleeson, Secretary General, Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine; Alice Stanton, Director of Human Health, Devenish Nutrition; Tom Arnold, Government of Ireland's Special Envoy on Food Systems; and David Kennedy, Head of Dairy, Bord Bia

### One of the world's most respected clinical scientists has called for greater transparency around red meat studies which don't take into consideration the full benefits derived from its consumption.

Professor Alice Stanton, Professor of Cardiovascular Pharmacology at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and Director of Human Health at Devenish, said policy makers should be extremely wary of any studies which aren't "rigorously and transparently evidence based and ignore the protections against nutritional deficiencies afforded by animal-sourced food".

She was speaking at the recent Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock multi-stakeholder meeting held this week in Dublin where over 150 professionals from 42 countries convened for a week-long event entitled 'Livestock Sector Actions Towards More Sustainable Food Systems'. It aims to encourage the global livestock sector to display and commit to actions toward more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient livestock systems as part of a global food system transformation. In recent months, Professor Stanton has led a campaign calling for the authors of the very influential Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Risk Factors study to provide evidence for the dramatically increased number of deaths attributed to unprocessed red meat consumption, contained in The Lancet published GBD 2019 report. She also queries why the editors of The Lancet have not required immediate correction

## LESS IS MORE

The increasing adoption of LESS technology is a remarkable success story. As Professor Frank O'Mara showed in his presentation to the ASA conference last month the take-up of Low Emission Slurry Spreading is quite phenomenal. From a standing start of less than 10 per cent using LESS four years ago, seventy percent of dairy farmers were using the technology last year. An even more impressive figure is that while only 25 per cent of slurry spread on dairy farms in 2019 used LESS, that figure had almost trebled to over seventy percent by 2021. Frank's figures for the use of Protected Urea are equally impressive. Between October 2021 and June of this year Protected Urea usage increased by almost fifty percent on Irish farms. That is at a time when all fertiliser products tripled in cost and PU prices increased pro rata. Protected Urea supply was also increasingly scarce during the period outlined by the Teagasc Director. The statistics are not quite so impressive in relation to drystock farms with much lower adoption rates for LESS. However, the direction of travel is firmly upwards in terms of more farmers using the technology year on year. In fact, from a low base four years ago, there has been exponential growth of the use of LESS on drystock farms. In 2021 25 per cent of slurry on cattle farms was spread with Low Emission Slurry Spreading techniques. Four years previously the figure was less than five percent. If the increases in dairy and cattle farms using LESS and the volumes being spread continue on the current trajectory, at least one component of the MAC Curve will be fully achieved in the timescale necessary to meet our emissions targets.

of the serious author confirmed errors in this report. In her address, Professor Stanton highlighted the protective effects of animal-source foods, including red meat, and emphasized the need for clear and consistent evidence-based health messages. Professor Stanton said: "It's an honour to be part of this valuable event, which has brought together people from multiple disciplines, from across the globe, to share learnings and reflect on how the livestock sector can work together to contribute to more sustainable and resilient food systems. Animal-source foods are an important source of many key health promoting nutrients and, as part of a balanced diet, they protect against nutritional deficiencies, helping to reduce the likelihood of childhood stunting, iron deficiency anaemia, and elderly frailty. "It is vital that public health messaging is based on accurate scientific data and that is why I am campaigning for greater transparency in the evidence used to inform policy. As such, I have called on the authors of the GBD 2019 study to share their evidence and to correct their errors. Given the substantial influence of GBD reports on worldwide nutritional policy decision-making, it is of considerable importance that the GBD estimates are subject to scrutiny, and that they continue to be rigorously and transparently evidence based."



## Winter Feed Planning

Maeve Regan,  
Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

Over the last number of weeks, growth has slowed significantly in many areas due to soil moisture deficits. This has resulted in many of us resorting to filling the gap with silage on farm and depleting our reserves. With planned feeding continuing in some cases to build covers of grass for next spring, assessing available forage reserves for winter 2022/23 must be prioritised.

As a starting point, it is important to analyse the quality of feed available on farm as this will help inform our decisions regarding winter feed plans. Where quality is high, options are much more plentiful regarding being able to stretch silage reserves where deficits occur.

### Fodder Budget

Firstly, we must know the quantity of feed available to us in the yard. The below formula will help calculate the volume of silage in the pit.

**Length x breadth x average height in metres, divided by 1.35 = tonnes of grass silage**

Or

**Length x breadth x average height in feet, divided by 45 = tonnes of grass silage** (typical precision chop grass silage)

Secondly, we will need to calculate what the requirement for winter could be. This will include knowing total stock numbers that will be carried through the winter and having a realistic estimate at the length of winter on your farm (include a 3-week buffer always).

Animal Type	Tonnes of pit & (bales of silage) required per month of winter
Dairy Cows	1.6 (1.45 bales)
Suckler Cows	1.4 (1.26 bales)
0-1 year old	0.7 (0.63 bales)
1-2 year old	1.3 (1.17 bales)
2+ year old	1.4 (1.26 bales)
Ewes	0.15 (0.135 bales)

### Tailored Advice

Once we know what we have, relative to what we need, a deficit or surplus will become clear. Every farm scenario will be different, and the advice here should be farm specific, based on feeding equipment/facilities, feed barrier space, body condition score at dry off etc.). One factor that is becoming apparent on farm currently is prioritising milking cow forage for next spring as part of the budget.

**For more advice on conducting a winter fodder budget and analysis, contact your local Agritech Sales Advisor or visit [www.agritech.ie](http://www.agritech.ie).**



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# InTouch

## BUILDING CONDITION FOR THE WINTER

**CATHAL BOHANE,**  
HEAD OF INTOUCH NUTRITION

Shorter days and longer nights are gradually heralding the arrival of winter. Events over the last weeks and months have moved the goalposts somewhat. A forage surplus has now become a forage deficit on many farms following an extended dry spell of weather. Maintaining yield is a priority at a high milk price, and on top of this, high silage feeding has depleted the reserves of forage.

Silage quality is average, at best, and there are a lot of poor-quality silages being tested of late. We have taken 600 silage samples so far this year, and there is a range in D value from 58 to 76. Animal body condition changes slowly, and milk yield is hard to recover once lost at this time of year. This emphasises the importance of testing your silage before it is too late. We are six weeks away from dry off on many spring calving farms, and preparation needs to begin now. Body condition is one of the cornerstones of the successful dry cow system, and now is the time to focus on this. It is more efficient to add or adjust condition now than during the actual dry period. If our target is 3–3.25, they need to be dried off in this condition instead of playing catch-up during the dry period. Body condition scoring must be properly executed, not just a passing glance at a few cows.



The main area of focus is the thurl, as shown in the picture above, courtesy of Penn State University. This is the line at the side of the cow between the hook and pin bones. A V-shape here indicates a BCS below 3, whereas a U-shape will mean 3 or above. While there are many other focus points, the thurl is the main one. Even the most inexperienced body condition scorers can master this one and guide you on whether you need to gain or maintain. Finally, rain over the last few weeks has given us the last flourish of grass. As we regularly say, focus on the cows' intake over the next few months, and everything else will look after itself. A combination of grass and supplement can create the perfect environment for milk production and body condition.

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## MALTING BARLEY DRYING SURCHARGE DROPPED

Boortmalt have confirmed that the final average malting barley price in 2022 for the FOB Creil contract is €398.38/t.

IFA Grain Chairman Kieran McEvoy said it's a record price for malting barley in Ireland and a very positive outcome for growers. Last year's price was €237.67/t and the price for 2020 was €173.73. However, he said inputs are also at record levels and tillage farmers will be concerned about their margins for next year. Following further negotiations between Boortmalt and IFA, it has been agreed that the €12.50/tonne drying surcharge will be dropped for harvest 2022. Kieran McEvoy

said due to early crop maturity and the warm weather conditions for much of the harvest campaign, grain moisture contents were considerably lower than typical this season.

"As a result and following a review of drying costs in the period following this harvest, it has been agreed that the charge will be dropped," he said. A payment of €2 per moisture point and a new €0.50c per point above 63kph will also be paid this season. Negotiations for the 2023 malting barley crop will begin between Boortmalt and the IFA Malting Barley Committee and aim to conclude by mid-October at the latest.

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## MREF WELCOMES REVISIONS TO PROPOSED PLANNING EXEMPTIONS FOR ROOF-TOP SOLAR ENERGY

The Micro-Renewable Energy Federation has welcomed new regulations which exempt roof top solar PV installations from the requirement to obtain planning permission and which were recently presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage, where further significant amendments were discussed and agreed. Commenting, Pat Smith, Chairman of the Micro-Renewable Energy Federation said that further amendments to the planning requirements within 'safe solar zones' (where a 'safe solar zone' is a 5kw diameter zone around airports) was a practical and welcome development and followed strongly held concerns and representations made by the Micro-Renewable Energy Federation during the recent public consultation on the new regulations.

Mr. Smith said: «The maximum area of solar panels on a roof that will be exempt from planning within these safe solar zones is being increase from 60 sq m to 300 sq m. Outside of 34 'safe solar zones' across the country, no planning requirement will be necessary for roof top solar PV installations. These revised regulations represent a very welcome, and long overdue development which will remove a further a major policy barrier to the widespread adoption of solar energy by homes, farms and businesses up and down the country." Mr. Smith complimented Minister of State, Peter Burke TD, and his officials at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage who he said have worked tirelessly to get these regulations finalized and over the line.

## DAIRYMASTER BUILDS FARM OF THE FUTURE WITH NEW DAIRYVUE360 PLATFORM

Dairymaster have completely rebuild their equipment and herd management platforms and have a new suite of software to bring to the market. The DM software platform controls the parlour allows remote diagnostics and troubleshooting for dealer technicians and also provides the dairy farmer with a view of everything that is happening in the parlour and collecting yard. DairyVue360 is a complete farm management platform, recording, analysing and displaying data for both the equipment and the cows. It combines the current milk production data with herd fertility and health and 3rd party data such as milk recording to provide a holistic 360 degree view of the farm operations. It has been developed with a complete re-architecture from the

ground up to create a platform for connecting the entire farm ecosystem into the future. DairyVue360 takes advantage of the latest connectivity protocols to deliver real time connectivity to the milking parlour – both on farm, remotely and via mobile. It is designed to interface with existing Dairymaster connected equipment and developments in the future. DM LiveVue will give the farmer a full picture of everything that is happening in the parlour real-time, from information for the cows entering or leaving the platform and status of cows currently milking, to the camera views at cups off or in the collecting yard. The new software platform will facilitate the rollout of connectivity upgrades to all the products in the Dairymaster ecosystem, such

as connecting the parlour productivity to your mobile phone, seamlessly integrating external data such as milk recording, and combining milk productivity data with health and fertility data to help the farmer make better decisions for the future of the farm and herd. They also launched DraftNow during the Covid pandemic, which is a standalone drafting system. It includes a new software programme and mobile App which has extra functionality and lots of benefits. It is a system that allows you to easily sort your cows remotely if necessary. It can be installed on farms with or without Dairymaster's auto identification system and is suitable with other makes of parlours that want a reliable drafting system.



Tirlán Ambassador and Irish rugby international, Tadhg Furlong; Tirlán Chairman, John Murphy; Norma and Brian Rohan of Embrace FARM. Picture credit: Finbarr O'Rourke

## TIRLÁN DONATES €3,000 TO EMBRACE FARM

Tirlán, formerly known as Glanbia Ireland, has donated €3,000 to bereavement support charity Embrace FARM. Tirlán Chairman John Murphy said: "The support network plays a crucial role in assisting farm families following life-changing illnesses or accidents. We hope that our contribution will assist the charity in their important work. Throughout our co-operative, we have a strong emphasis on workplace safety on our farms and in our 11 production facilities." Norma Rohan, founder of Embrace FARM, said the donation will be a strong support in delivering much needed services across the country. Tirlán is a world-class food and nutrition co-operative, with a diverse portfolio of quality ingredients, leading consumer and agri brands. The donation was made at the National Ploughing Championships where there was a strong emphasis on farm safety throughout the three-day event.

## IMPACT OF PRICE INFLATION ON AGRICULTURAL INCOMES

**A new report, by economists at Teagasc, provides an update on the forecast average margins and incomes that will be achieved across the agricultural sector in Ireland in 2022.** Along with other sectors of the economy, Irish agriculture has been hit by substantial input price inflation, much of it prompted by Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. However, there have also been significant price movements in farm output prices over the course of 2022. Even though three quarters of the year has passed, making accurate income forecasts across the various farm systems for 2022 remains challenging, as important data relating to the volume of input usage and changes in the price of some farm inputs are not readily available at this time. Dairy farms are forecast to achieve higher incomes in 2022 compared with last year, while incomes on Cattle Other farms (mainly finishers) are forecast to remain unchanged. Incomes on Cattle Rearing farms, Sheep farms, Tillage farms and Pig farms are forecast to be lower in 2022. A significant increase in income in 2022 is forecast on dairy farms, with an increase of 30 per cent or more on the 2021 level now forecast. This increase would take the average dairy farm income figure to over €130,000. Irish Dairy farmers have benefitted from a dramatic increase in milk prices due to the lack of growth in global milk supplies this year. However, on average milk production costs are likely to be about 10 cent per litre higher in 2022.

For the first time since milk quota abolition in 2015, no increase in aggregate Irish milk production is forecast this year. Dairy farmers have adopted a cautious approach to further expansion given the large increase in input costs that emerged. The unusually dry weather conditions in July and August have also had an impact on Irish milk production and milk production costs in some regions across the country, and this will affect the extent of the income increase experienced on individual dairy farms this year. The average income on Cattle Rearing farms is forecast to drop by 17 per cent in 2022, as higher production costs should more than offset the benefit of higher cattle prices. This would bring the average Cattle Rearing farm income back to about €9,000 in 2022. This decline is forecast despite the positive influence of the

Fodder Support Scheme on farm incomes. By contrast, the combination of higher finished cattle prices and the contribution from the Fodder Support Scheme should be sufficient to offset the increase in production costs on Cattle Other farms. The average income for Cattle Other farms in 2022 is forecast to be unchanged at about €17,000. Sheep farms will have benefitted from higher lamb prices in 2022, a year in which lamb prices still remained well ahead of the five-year average price (2017 - 2021), but as with other farm enterprises, sheep farms have been hit by higher production costs. Farm receipts from the Fodder Support Scheme in addition to the increase in lamb prices in 2022 will not be sufficient to offset the increase in production costs on Sheep farms. The average income on Sheep farms is forecast to drop by 15 per cent in 2022. This would bring the average Sheep farm income back to about €17,700 in 2022. In the Tillage system, favourable weather during the growing season in 2022 meant that Irish cereal yields were up for many crops compared to 2021. There were some notable exceptions on the yield front, with disappointing winter barley yields in some regions attributed to virus impacts. Favourable weather conditions at harvest time will have also benefited moisture contents and crop receipts. The tight global grain markets has also

resulted in higher cereals prices. Additional support was also available via the straw incorporation scheme. However, the rise in production costs on Tillage farms has been substantial and is forecast to more than offset the benefit of increased output value and additional support received this year. The average Tillage farm income is forecast to fall by somewhere close to 10 per cent, which would bring the average income in the system back to a little over the €50,000 mark. It has been a very challenging couple of years for pig farmers. Low pig prices have coincided with the sharp increase in feed and energy costs, pushing producers into negative margin territory. Pig prices have risen gradually over the course of 2022 and the extent of the increase is now large enough to begin to restore profitability in the sector. Nevertheless, the average pig farm will have incurred losses approaching €350,000 in 2022.

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# STRONG FARMING REFERENCE IN BUDGET

**MATT O'KEEFFE DISCUSSES THE RECENT BUDGET - AND ITS IMPACT FOR THE FARMING SECTOR - WITH MINISTER McCONALOGUE.**

**The all-embracing Budget contained an unusually large number of references to agriculture and especially front-line farming.** Agriculture Minister Charlie McConalogue was pleased with the Budget in general and the commitments to farming contained in it as he confirmed to Matt O'Keeffe: "I think it is a very strong Budget and, obviously, we are very conscious in government of the pressures facing everyone and the very real challenges that are facing farm families right now.

I was glad to be able to support farmers through, for example, the continuation of the Fodder Scheme and to forward pay it at the end of this year so that farmers can prepare for next year. We were also able to continue to run the Tillage Scheme. The continuation of the various tax relief schemes for land mobility promotion and generational renewal is important and we are providing some certainty by extending the periods in which they will operate."

## **MONEY FOR MUCK**

Minister McConalogue highlighted the introduction of funding to promote slurry storage: "The accelerated capital tax

allowance for the construction of slurry storage facilities is another aspect of our commitment to helping farmers meet their environmental obligations." He also outlined measures to reduce the impact of rising production costs: "The cost of energy, fertiliser and feed have risen enormously. I wanted to assist in meeting those short-term costs as well as assisting farm families in meeting environmental and emissions obligations in the longer term. It was particularly important that farms as businesses be included in the energy support scheme. It will provide some confidence to farmers that they can meet their energy bills over the winter."

## **30,000 ACRES PLACES**

The new ACRE Scheme was underwritten by a funding commitment in the Budget. Minister McConalogue was asked if the participation figure of 30,000 farmers would be adequate: "Yes, I believe it will for the numbers that will be applying this year. There is massive effort on the part of advisors working with farmers to have applications in place for next year and 30,000 is the number expected to fill the available capacity. Some farmers subjected

to a gap year will receive consideration in relation to supports. My objective is to get as many farmers as possible into the ACRES programme and our projection is that the figure will be around 30,000 farmers for the full year in 2023."

## **FARM-BASED ENERGY PRODUCTION**

There was an impressive announcement around the production of solar power on farms with a 60 per cent grant aid being put in place subject to an investment ceiling of €90,000. On the question of whether this TAMS-supported measure would allow farmers to sell surplus energy from their solar panel electricity production, the Minister had this to say: "There will be a feed-in tariff introduced separate to this, but the TAMS funding coming from Europe is for own farm use of the energy produced. What I did in this Budget was to put a separate allocation in place for solar TAMS, distinct from other TAMS allocations so that farmers can now decide to put in their own farm energy supply and get a 60 per cent grant for that. I believe there will be a strong uptake for this, particularly with energy prices where they are. The aid applies to both solar production and battery storage



**“IT WAS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT THAT FARMS AS BUSINESSES BE INCLUDED IN THE ENERGY SUPPORT SCHEME. IT WILL PROVIDE SOME CONFIDENCE TO FARMERS THAT THEY CAN MEET THEIR ENERGY BILLS OVER THE WINTER.”**

facilities. Together with the funding for an Anaerobic Digestion pilot model, I think this represents a firm commitment to promoting renewable energy production on farms.”

#### **NO REPRIEVE IN SIGHT**

The Agriculture Minister agreed that there is little prospect of significant falls in energy prices in the short term: “We would all hope that will happen but there is no sign of it in the immediate future so the focus in terms of this Budget was to help businesses and farms through this Winter and Spring and also how we can help families across society to cope with high energy prices. All the packages put in place around energy and electricity are designed to help people get through this time.”

#### **PROMOTING LIME USE**

One intervention that harks back to other Budgets in the last century referenced an €8m support scheme to encourage the spreading of lime. The Minister was positive of its benefits, though scarce on immediate details: “The design of the scheme is still being finalised. Basically, it will be paid on a per tonne basis of lime spread on farms. This makes economic sense and stands up in its

own right as a productive choice for farmers. It improves soil fertility and improves fertiliser efficiency. It can also help reduce the amount of chemical fertiliser required to grow grass and increase grass output on farms.”

#### **PROMOTING FORESTRY**

The Minister was optimistic that an increased forestry budget allied to a new Forestry Programme can kick-start momentum in the sector: “People are awaiting the introduction of the new scheme and starting in January, I think we will see a significant increase in planting. That’s why the funding was increased in the Budget. We had challenges around licencing over the past few years and significant progress has been made in unravelling those obstacles and bringing down the backlog that has developed. We are in a strong place going into 2023 in relation to delivering on our afforestation programme. Minister Hackett is very committed to increasing the area of our forest and I think the new increased rates will persuade more people that forestry is a viable additional income stream for many farms.”

#### **SUPPORTING SUCKLERS**

Minister McConalogue reiterated his commitment to suckler farming: “The new beef suckler scheme will be starting in January and will be worth €150 on the first ten cows and €120 on the remainder in any herd. That compares to €90 on the first ten cows in the outgoing BDGP. If you take the new suckler scheme as well as the BEEP-S, which will pay €90 per calf on the first ten calves, that will deliver a total of €240 per cow and calf. That represents strong support for the sector and I intend to maintain that commitment in the future.”



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# HURDLES AHEAD

**HORSE SPORT IRELAND CEO DENIS DUGGAN TALKS TO IFM ABOUT THE CHALLENGES FACING THE SECTOR IN LIGHT OF THE BUDGET 2023 ALLOCATION.**

**“This year has been an eye opener. It’s like first year in school in many ways!”**

Denis Duggan neatly sums up his first ten months as CEO of Horse Sport Ireland. The Tipperary native joined the organisation in January, and it’s been a steep learning curve. “I don’t have a background in the equestrian industry. I’d have to go back to my grandparents who ploughed with plough horses and Irish draughts for any equestrian pedigree! Coming from Macra and being involved in the agricultural industry was a great set up for this role. Yes, the sport and the animals are different, and the structure of the organisation is different, but a lot of the challenges are very similar to those I faced in Macra, be it issues of climate change or social license. It’s like all of agriculture, there is more that unites our sector than divides it.” It hasn’t all been hard work, he’s enjoyed the industry’s successes too, such as a weekend at the World Breeding Championships for Young Horses in Lanaken in Belgium. “In that competition, Ireland won two world gold medals for breeding, 6-year old ABC Saving Grace bred by Patrick Kehoe from Carlow and 5-year old BP Goodfellas bred by Kevin Babington and Greg Broderick. I was at the FEI World Championships in Herning in Denmark earlier this year for the first time and we achieved qualification for showjumping at the Olympics. It’s very exciting time for the industry and sport.”

But with the highs come the lows, and the recent budget didn’t deliver the level of

funding the organisation had hoped for. HSI had submitted an ambitious €33.4 million proposal for the horse sport sector but came away with €5.2 million from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). “While we had outlined €33 million, the actual overall ask was a lot more substantial than that because, along with other industry stakeholders and partners, we have been advocating for the opening up of TAMS (the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme) to equine farmers. For the last seven to ten years, equine farmers have not been eligible to access that type of capital funding and earlier this summer, Minister McConalogue agreed that equine farming would be eligible. Our work now focuses on ensuring that the scheme will be open for equine farmers who want to invest in stabling, young stock housing, walkers, weigh-scales, arenas, and equine fencing.

“We also carried out a substantial piece of research over the summer with IFAC accountants on the breeding industry. The Business of Breeding 2022 report quantifies the investment that equine breeders intend to make into their premises, such as young stock housing, stabling, equine fencing, turnout arenas, all-weather arenas and so on. That quantum of investment over the next three years is €342 million and the natural source of funding for some of those investments is an on-farm capital investment scheme, such as the successor to TAMS.”

Additionally, HSI had sought half a million

euro for funding for anti-doping and integrity programmes. “Over the course of any 12-month period, there are 26,000 horses in Ireland that will participate in pony jumping, showjumping and eventing, dressage and so on, but there is a very low level of anti-doping/integrity testing being done. We need a higher level of testing in the industry, and that may not be popular, but it is for the betterment of the industry. It’s a reputational issue. Based on the announced allocation, we don’t believe that will be funded by the Department, and that’s very disappointing. It is something we will continue to engage with DAFM to secure an increase in funding.” One of the organisation’s budget submissions actually sought to invest €3 million in the Department’s own IT systems to enable the digital transformation in the use of e-passports.

“We were asking the Department to invest in itself. Every horse must have a passport, and it’s a physical hard copy document. The legislation allows for a digital E passport and that would streamline a lot of applications and paper processing, making things a lot easier for breeders and owners of horses. A lot of the digital passport systems have additional benefits such as tracking vaccines. We were asking the Department for money for itself to upgrade its own IT systems to enable a migration to e-passporting in the industry. Ultimately, it is something that is in the best interests of the industry.”

While capital investment funding for

equestrian centres was not met, a glimmer of hope remains. "Travel around any part of rural Ireland and any soccer, tennis, hurling or rugby club has been able to access capital investment for new pitches and strips. Those types of premises are owned by the community and sports capital grants are focused on community only. Because of the makeup of the equestrian industry, equestrian centres are family businesses and so have never been able to access this type of funding. There are 163 AIRE-approved riding establishments up and down the country and we've looked for a relatively modest grant to enable some significant upgrade works in some of those centres. With rising construction costs, it's very hard for a family to make the substantial investment in the improvements that are needed. We haven't got the grant but there is an overall €43 million increase in the Department of Sport's budget, so we are hopeful yet."

One of the biggest asks of the budget proposal, at €15.5 million, was to put in place a fodder scheme for the equestrian industry. "Our Business of Breeding research indicated that for 52% of equine farmers, it is their sole enterprise – the remaining 48% also have a beef, sheep or dairy enterprise running along with their horses. Upwards of 80-90% of that cohort had very little knowledge of Department schemes such as Areas of Natural Constraint and GLAS (Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme). That indicated that there is very low uptake of basic payments. We estimate that between 9,000 and 14,000 breeders have no single farm payment and no access to it. This cohort of breeders and horse owners are in small herds with less than ten horses. Given the rising cost of feed, we've asked the Department to put a fund in place. Haylage for horses has doubled in price in the last 12 months, for example, so this is one area we will continue to actively engage with the department on.

"It is disappointing that funding for the horse sport industry has remained largely static while seeing rising costs everywhere. We're going to be challenged next year to do the same activity with less money." Is the level of funding allocated commensurate with the success the industry has earned? Denis doesn't believe so. "We are not supported to the tune of what the industry is delivering. HSI are in receipt of a six to seven million euro overall budget



**Dr Sonja Egan, Interim Head of Breeding, Innovation and Development, Horse Sport Ireland, holding the Irish Sport Horse, Danos Lola, with, from left, Charlie McConalogue TD, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine, Denis Duggan, Chief Executive Officer, Horse Sport Ireland, and Joe Reynolds, Chairman, Horse Sport Ireland, during the Studbook Series Launch 2022 at the National Horse Sport Arena on the Sport Ireland Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin. Danos Lola 2016 (ISH) by Carrera VDL (KWPN) out of Abigail Cruise (ISH) by Cruising (ISH), bred by Julie Dennehy**



**In attendance are, from left, Mayor of Tuamgraney Mary Coffey, Jerry Sweetnam, father of Team Ireland rider Shane Sweetnam, Horse Sport Ireland chief executive officer Dennis Duggan, Team Ireland rider Max Wachman, Ireland team manager Michael Blake, Team Ireland rider Cian O'Connor and team vet Marcus Swail as the The Aga Khan trophy is brought to Tuamgraney, Clare, following Ireland's victory in the Longines FEI Jumping Nations Cup at the Dublin Horse Show. Photo by Sam Barnes/Sportsfile**

for the horse sport sector, yet in the top 100 international showjumpers, 25 of them are Irish. Conor Swail is a great example; he is currently fourth in the World Jumping Rankings, and he is due to rise to third when the rankings are next published." I point out that there are eight Irish riders in the top 50. "We are punching way above our weight, particularly in showjumping, but similarly in eventing. The horses we produce in Ireland for eventing top the studbook every year. We're the world's leading studbook for event horses and that's down to Irish breeders breeding a type of horse that is sought after in eventing circles. "In breeding, our industry supports over 14,000 jobs across and has an economic value to rural Ireland of around €1 billion per annum. The €5million or so that is being delivered in

the budget is paltry compared to the actual value and what it delivers back to rural Ireland. "The breeding and production of horses is largely rural. If you take, for example, Greg Broderick in Ballypatrick stables outside Thurles, or Pat Kehoe, two gold medal breeders at the weekend in Lanakan those are horses that are bred and produced in rural Ireland. They use local suppliers, local farriers, local vets. Money in the equine industry multiplies across the rural community. To produce a horse from foal to 8-9 years old ready for international level competition costs thousands each year in feed, livery and training – which is all money circulating in the rural economy. The support for the industry doesn't match that. It doesn't match the demand, the ambition, or the results we achieve."

# EU POLICY PRIORITIES

## CHANGE

BILLY KELLEHER MEP HIGHLIGHTED WHAT HE BELIEVES NEEDS TO HAPPEN IN EU POLICY ACTIONS IN RELATION TO ENERGY AND FOOD SECURITY IN A RECENT INTERVIEW WITH MATT O'KEEFFE.



**WE CAN HAVE FOOD SECURITY AND WE CAN HAVE GOOD BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION. NONE OF THEM SHOULD BE THE EXCLUSIVE PRIORITY.**

**“There are huge challenges facing both Ireland and the entire EU in the period ahead. This extends from national economies to individual households.**

**We must ensure that Europe addresses the energy crisis in a unified manner.**

The decoupling of gas as the price setter for electricity across Europe needs to happen quickly. In addition, we need to reduce our consumption of electricity and the European Union needs to play a leading role in securing enough energy to get us through the coming winter. That is a significant challenge even if we manage to accomplish some element of price reduction through gas price decoupling and energy use reductions. Energy use reductions will require changes in our personal lifestyles and habits as well as in business practices. It even extends to how and when we use energy in public spaces.

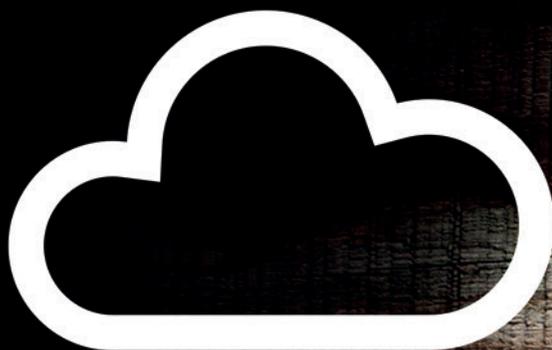
All of this will depend on full cooperation between all countries across the Union and full cooperation among citizens in Ireland and throughout the EU.”

### A GROWING REALISATION

The Munster MEP confirmed a change of attitude around food as well as energy by EU policymakers: “As well as protecting and improving our natural environment, there is now a change in terms of attitude in relation to food security. When I first entered the European Parliament three years ago, such conversations and discussions were unheard of. It was all about biodiversity and climate change mitigation actions, with no mention whatsoever of food security. That attitude has now changed fundamentally since the impact of the Ukrainian war became clear in relation to food supply both in Europe and across



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the world. It has shown how vulnerable we are to international shocks, so, from that perspective, I welcome the fact that we are now developing policies around agriculture and around energy, as well as around biodiversity and our climate change obligations.

Food security must be an integral aspect of all those policies. We can have food security and we can have good biodiversity and environmental protection. None of them should be the exclusive priority. Ultimately, we have to acknowledge our responsibility to make sure people have enough food to eat, not just within Europe but globally."

#### THE WAR FALLOUT

Continuing, he notes that the war in Ukraine changes everything: "We have strong solidarity across the European Union in supporting Ukraine's efforts to defend itself. Any other reaction would have serious implications for the long-term protection and security of the EU itself. That solidarity must be maintained. There are two things happening. First and foremost, many European countries are providing military support to Ukraine by providing armaments. We are also providing financial aid and there is a strong humanitarian

aspect as well. Ireland is especially strong in its support of refugees fleeing the conflict. That has come at a cost to countries, however, it is fully supported by most EU citizens. It is important that all countries carry a reasonable share of the burden. Those closer to the conflict are, naturally, most impacted by the refugee crisis. The concern is that as we go into the winter months the huge energy costs and increasing cost-of-living pressures on families will impact on our ability to continue the levels of support for Ukraine in all its dimensions. It should be said that there are groups including extreme right-wing groups that agitate against migrants and use the Ukrainian situation to advance their agendas.

This may raise tensions in the time ahead. We need to be conscious of this because it could easily change the positive dynamic of Ukrainian support across the EU. Recent elections in Sweden and Italy show that far-right political groupings are now a large element of the political landscape in several European countries. The political make-up of Europe could change very quickly and consequently the political mood and policies could change quite quickly. At the moment, all countries are committed to the economic and political

sanctions being imposed on Russia. There may be a need to increase the severity of those sanctions and continuing solidarity will be required and will face strong tests."

#### PERSONAL PRIORITIES

The MEP took time out at the National Ploughing Championships to assess the mood of people: "The biggest concern is around the cost of living. And the cost of running businesses including, obviously, farm businesses. It is the unknown factor in terms of how much worse the situation could get. That concern extends right across food prices, input costs including energy and fertiliser costs for farms. Farmers do realise that some of those costs have been softened by higher prices across most commodities right now. These are huge challenges for everyone. It should be said that, despite all the understandable gloom around the cost of living, there was also a sense of excitement around the fact that we have come through the worst aspects of Covid. Hopefully, that will continue to be the case because people have more than enough to worry about. Ultimately, the big issue right now is that underlying worry about rising living costs and how to keep jobs and businesses going in the months ahead."



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# LOST OPPORTUNITIES IN FORESTRY

PROFESSOR CATHAL O'DONOHUE RECENTLY PUBLISHED A FORESTRY REPORT COMMISSIONED BY AUXILIA GROUP, HIGHLIGHTING THE SHORTCOMINGS IN CURRENT AFFORESTATION POLICY AND OUTLINING A SERIES OF INITIATIVES THAT WOULD HELP DELIVER PLANTING TARGETS OVER THE COMING DECADES.

**Discussing the context for the report – The Economics of Afforestation and Management in Ireland – Cathal explains:** “At the foundation of the State one hundred years ago we had one percent of the land in forestry. We now have eleven percent planted with trees. That’s the largest land use change over that period, making forestry twice the size of crops, horticulture and hedgerows. Forestry in Ireland is a substantial part of our land use profile.”

## BUILDING ON SUCCESS

The UCG-based professor was asked whether current afforestation targets are achievable under existing policies: “We have been successful in the past. However, we have reached the limits of what we can do with current policies. Only two thousand hectares were planted in the past year. Our national forestry strategy has a target of eight thousand hectares being planted every year. To deliver what is necessary, which is about eighteen per cent of our land covered in forestry by 2050, we need to be planting eighteen thousand hectares annually. To achieve that figure, we need to think about doing things differently.” The recent shortfalls in afforestation, as Professor O’Donohue alluded to, have placed more pressure on Irish agriculture to reduce emission levels than would have been the case if we had reached our targets over the past decade.

## CARBON VALUE

Given our stated aim to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, does Professor O’Donohue think that is a realistic target? “Lower numbers of cattle and higher rates of afforestation trade off against each other. The key advantage of more trees is that they sequester carbon. We also know that the State places a very high value on that carbon. So, there are opportunities to use the value of carbon that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform estimates are in our trees, to devise novel policies to incentivise more trees being grown.” And could carbon value be lucrative for forest owners? “I think so, if we can devise the right policies that reflect the State’s own value placed on carbon.

At those suggested prices and values forestry becomes very profitable relative to most other land uses. Most cattle farms and the majority of cattle finishing farms would be better off financially if they turned their land over the forestry at present with the existing incentives. Eighty percent of cattle farmers would get a better return from forestry than their existing enterprises at current costs and prices.

Add in a carbon value to that income estimate and the vast majority of cattle farms and many dairy farms would be far better off in forestry.

At the higher carbon values forestry becomes competitive with dairy.”



### MAJOR RESTRUCTURING NEEDED

Some of the former Teagasc Rural Economy Director's proposals require major changes in State agencies with responsibility for developing forestry in Ireland: "We know what we need to do but making it happen is the challenge. In other natural resource sectors such as agriculture or fisheries there are national development agencies because there are differences between development and regulation. We would benefit from having a separate agency that links both private and public sectors and that has a clear focus on reaching our stated goals in forestry. Some independence from the parent Department would be positive."

### FORESTRY BENEFITS

Forestry has multiple benefits as Cathal emphasises: "Timber, carbon, biodiversity, recreation, impact on local economies are all important benefits accruing from forestry. So, a plan to accommodate all these attributes would be quite complex. Not every forest can deliver the same goals and that variation requires targeted incentives, working in partnership to make it all happen successfully." He also references the McKinnon Report in his statement of proposals: "I believe a single consent is required to cover planting, road construction, forest management and felling. McKinnon has also suggested this approach. The more hassle and obstacles people meet



**SITKA IS GOOD FOR TIMBER, AS TIMBER BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT IN BUILDING TO REPLACE CONCRETE AND STEEL. BUT THERE IS ALSO A NEED FOR LONGER TERM OPTIONS.**

in afforestation, the less likely that people or companies will plant trees. It is about reducing bureaucracy, frustration and delay. That doesn't mean we should not safeguard the environment. Those concerns can be met at the same time as making it easier for people to engage in forestry."

### FORESTRY AT SCALE

O'Donohue's report does acknowledge that, in order to meet a very ambitious eighteen percent forestry cover by 2050 would require more large-scale afforestation: "There is not a silver bullet, a single approach to this issue. It involves everything from the public sector re-engaging to partnerships with Coops; as well as the current approach of working with individual farmers and also the proposed strategy of planting field and farm boundaries and incorporating agri-forestry. A single development agency and the development of a broad-based plan would facilitate these different dimensions. At the moment, we

are putting most of our eggs in one or two baskets." Continuing, he is adamant that Irish forestry is now accommodating the need for a more diverse planting approach than was historically the case with Sitka Spruce plantations: "About thirty five per cent of current planting is broadleaf and, again, in the mix of tree types, we need variety. Sitka is good for timber, as timber becomes more important in building to replace concrete and steel. There is also a need for longer term options. In the UK, for instance, oak forests in the long term, can sequester large amounts of carbon. They also deliver recreation and biodiversity opportunities. That points to the ongoing need for a multi-track approach to afforestation policy that accommodates short term demand for timber as well as longer term benefits."

### MOBILISING SUPPORT

Professor O'Donohue's Report is being met with keen interest and will form the basis for discussion with various Government Departments and Ministers. The Professor will also address the Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture during the Autumn: "It is all about building an agenda to bring about positive change in order to correct the deficits we now have in forestry planting. We are in a difficult situation. However, we know what we want to happen. The missing link is in mobilising the necessary support to make positive change happen."



# CONSIDER THE BENEFITS OF TREES

**TOM HOULIHAN, TEAGASC FORESTRY SPECIALIST, DISCUSSES NEW FOREST CREATION ON THE FARM.**

New forest creation is an excellent pathway to develop attractive and valuable resources on the farm. However, farm forests also provide the pathway for many other farm benefits. These are well captured in the Shared National Vision for Trees, Woods and Forests, recently published by Minister of State, Senator Pippa Hackett. This visionary document anticipates that by 2050, Ireland's forests will be seen as a "key solution to climate, biodiversity, housing and health emergencies of the 2020's."

## **NEW FORESTRY PROGRAMME 2023-2027**

The current Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) Forestry Programme is in place up to the end of 2022. A new Forest Strategy to 2030 is being finalised via Project Woodland. It will set out clear objectives for the role of trees and forests in Ireland, with key values identified focusing on forests for climate, nature, wood, people and the

economy and rural development. The Forest Strategy to 2030 will be accompanied by a detailed Implementation Plan which will include a new Forestry Programme 2023-2027. The new Programme will aim to be ambitious and provide farm families with attractive opportunities to increase and diversify their income streams. It will also place a strong emphasis on increasing new forest creation and promoting the use of sustainable timber products.

As part of the Implementation Plan for the new Forest Strategy, the new Forestry Programme is currently going through a legally-required Strategic Environmental Assessment. The public will shortly have opportunity to review the proposed programme as part of this process. Whether large or small areas are involved, now is a good time to consider the benefits of trees on your farm and Teagasc can help you in this regard. When new broadleaf, conifer

and mixed forests are planted, Government grants cover the main start-up costs while attractive annual payments are available for several years for all approved applicants. Farmers and landowners may also select from a range of forest tree species. Planting the "right trees in the right places" can also facilitate combinations of suitable forest types to achieve future objectives and deliver many benefits.

## **A TIMBER RESOURCE**

Every day of our lives, we make great use of timber from our forests. A beech floor or an oak table are things of great beauty. Irish-grown hardwoods are an excellent resource; they take a long time to mature and benefit from careful management.

Commercial conifer species also have a strong role to play and provide multiple applications in our everyday lives. Their uses range from pallets and packaging

to timber fencing, roofing, timber frames, decking and wood pellets. Quality wood pellets, wood chip and firewood are green, renewable sources of heat that displace fossil fuels. As a result of multiple timber supply, production and use, the Irish forest sector contributes significantly to the economy, supporting numerous jobs, with many in rural areas.

### CARBON BENEFITS

Sustainably creating, growing and managing our forests can deliver excellent carbon benefits. As trees grow, they absorb carbon dioxide. On average, one hectare of forest can lock up between 1 and 10 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum, depending on factors such as species, soil type, growth rate and forest management approach. When trees are sustainably harvested and used to make wood products, the carbon remains stored in the wood for the life of those products. One cubic meter (m<sup>3</sup>) of processed wood can store up to 900kg of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. The Shared National Vision perceives forestry at the centre of the circular and green economy, with Irish-grown timber the material of choice for the appropriate substitution of carbon-intensive building materials for new Irish homes.

### WATER AND BIODIVERSITY BENEFITS

Trees growing near water are riparian woodlands. In appropriate locations, they can efficiently intercept nutrients and silt from various sources before reaching our watercourses. Riparian woodlands also stabilise riverbanks, regulate water temperatures and provide a food source for aquatic life. They can be incorporated on farms as natural solutions to protect and enhance water quality. Forests provide habitats for a wide range of flora and fauna. Fragmented habitats have some ecological value but when connected together, through tree planting and/or woodland creation, the benefits greatly increase, allowing plants and animals to travel and spread across the Irish countryside.

### FORESTS AND RECREATION

Trees and forests enhance the landscape and provide us with special outdoor places to visit and enjoy. They also provide the ideal educational resource in which to learn about and appreciate the environment. Forests are a close-to-home natural resource that offer an escape from the "daily grind"; allowing us to reconnect with nature. Did you know, a survey found that the main psychological wellbeing benefit for visitors to Irish forests was mental relaxation?

### FURTHER INFORMATION

The Shared National Vision perceives "a rich variety of diverse, resilient and healthy trees, woods and forests, established for multiple purposes and delivering multiple benefits for the environment, economy and society". Teagasc Forestry Development Department staff are available to address your forestry research, advisory and training needs. Contact us directly to find out about our latest research and to get answers to all your questions on farm forestry. You can also visit the forestry section on the Teagasc website ([www.teagasc.ie/forestry](http://www.teagasc.ie/forestry)) for easy access to comprehensive information.



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### Available to discuss:

Tree planting options; Forestry and farm schemes; Forest management; Harvesting issues



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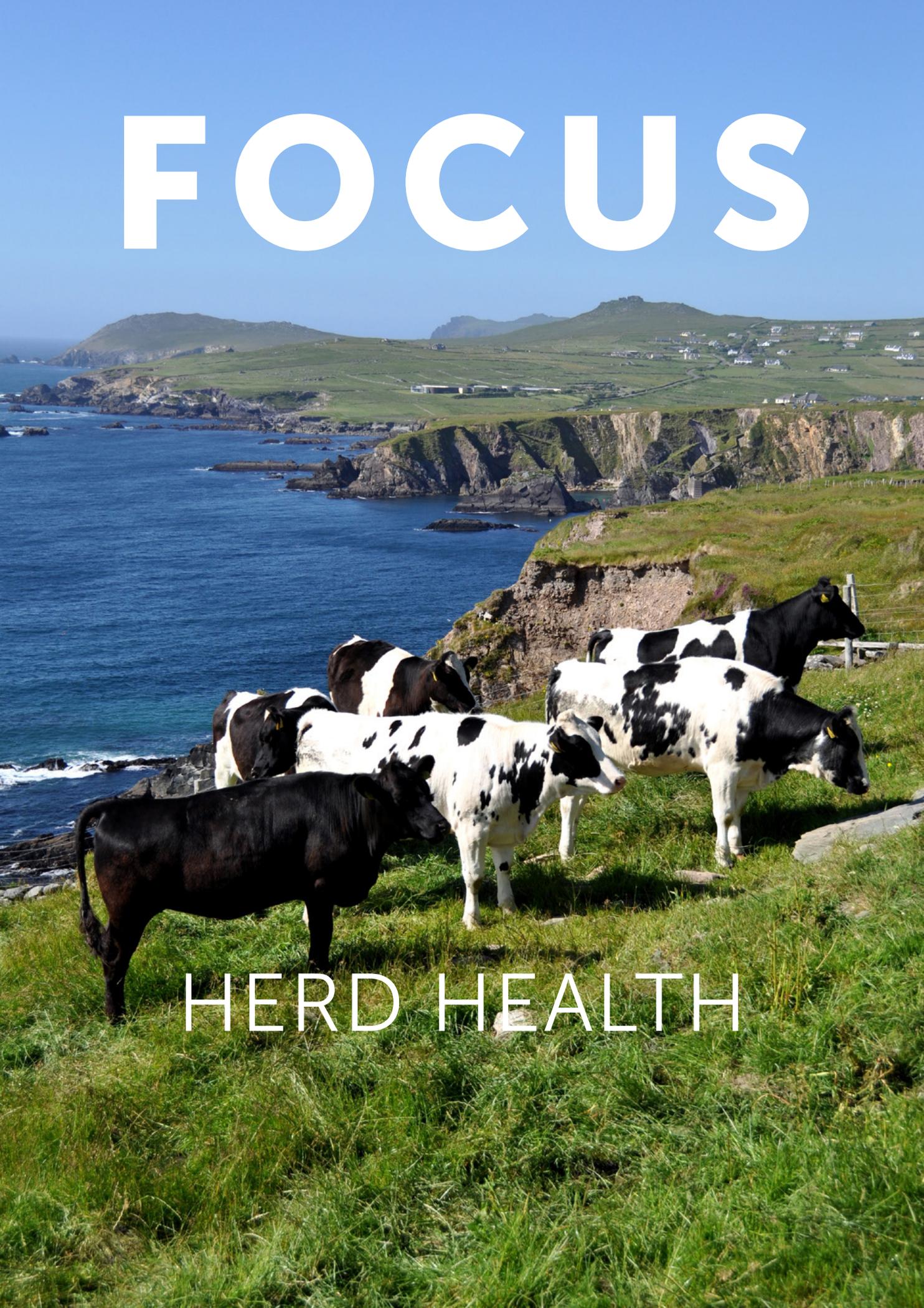
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# FOCUS

A herd of black and white cows is grazing on a lush green grassy cliffside. The cows are positioned in the foreground and middle ground, looking towards the right. The background features a dramatic coastline with steep cliffs, a blue ocean, and a small town built on a hillside under a clear blue sky.

HERD HEALTH



Thomastown, Co Kilkenny - not the Hanrahan farm

# LIVESTOCK FARMING HERITAGE

**THREE ANCIENT RATHS ON THE HANRAHAN FARM PROVIDE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE THAT THIS LAND HAS BEEN USED FOR LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION FOR MILLENIA. THE HANRAHANS HAVE FARMED NEAR THOMASTOWN IN COUNTY KILKENNY FOR AS MANY GENERATIONS AS THEY HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF. THE FARM NOW HOSTS A DAIRY-BEEF ENTERPRISE RUN BY PETER HANRAHAN IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HIS FATHER THOMAS. AS A SIGNPOST FARM, GRASSLAND AND ANIMAL MANAGEMENT ARE MONITORED WITH ALL DATA AVAILABLE FOR SCRUTINY.**



**Peter is married to Jennifer and they have two daughters, Grace and Sadie. Before the Hanrahans established the farm partnership and built up the calf-to-beef enterprise to replace a one hundred cow suckler herd, Peter worked off-farm as an electrician and with Teagasc.**

There is much to note, most particularly the excellent weight gains being achieved as cattle are brought from calves to finish. Peter outlines the process: "We buy in 220 calves at two to three weeks. We converted from sucklers seven years ago and it has worked out well. Stocking rates are up and so is profitability. All the calves are sourced on local dairy farms and we have built up good relationships over the years. We look for a healthy calf and one that will grow into a saleable carcass, with high beef value. They are all male calves, mostly Friesian, with

some Angus, Hereford and Aubrac crosses. It depends on the price and the breed make-up of a group of calves on the dairy farm at a particular time. We like to buy in groups of around twenty calves at a time for ease of management."

## PREVENTATIVE HEALTH PROTOCOLS

Peter and Thomas have well-planned health protocols from the time the calves arrive: "We give them a day to adapt to their new surroundings. Then they are vaccinated against coccidiosis, IBR and pneumonia with a further pneumonia booster in four weeks and another before they come back into the sheds in the Autumn. After the calves go to grass, they get a coccidiosis vaccine booster. After they are housed in the Autumn, they get their clostridial vaccines in two stages. It's been working well for us and a purpose-built

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**“MORTALITY FIGURES ARE VERY LOW; WE LOST ONLY TWO ANIMALS OUT OF 220 BOUGHT IN LAST YEAR, SO THE VACCINATION SYSTEM PAYS FOR ITSELF.”**

calf shed also reduces health challenges. Mortality figures are very low; we lost only two animals out of 220 bought in last year, so the vaccination system pay for itself. The calves stay on an automatic calf feeder until around ten weeks of age.”

The strong health protection regime stays in place right through the growth stages. Calves going to grass have roughage provided initially so they can adjust to the lush grass diet. They move on to fresh grass every few days. Young cattle are at grass

until December and back out grazing in early February, depending on ground and weather conditions. Weanlings are fed silage and 0.5 kg of meal during the indoor period. Younger stock received only one worm dose up to mid-September: “Dosing is based on faecal sample results. That decides whether there is a need to treat them or not.”

#### THE ‘WEIGH’ FORWARD

In addition to the calf shed there are two slatted sheds for the older cattle. All cattle are weighed regularly with calves first weighed at weaning. Yearlings are weighed as they leave the sheds in Springtime and again mid-season and when they return to the sheds for finishing. The fattening cattle are weighed every month to calculate weight gain performance: “It’s very important to monitor performance and identify any animals not thriving. There is no point in putting more feed into a bullock if it isn’t delivering weight gain. That all adds value to the enterprise. Calf thrive averages 0.9kgs per day through the grazing season with finishing stock hitting one kilo average daily gain.”

#### SAFE CATTLE HANDLING

An impressive structure in the Hanrahan farmyard is a new animal handling facility. In place for just two months, it is already proving its worth, as Thomas explains: “Some of the best aspects of the system include the fact that there is a forcing pen and gate at the back. That allows the animals to move into one of two races. One is for smaller calves and weanlings and the other is for yearlings and mature stock. There is a weighing-scales built into the head-unit. There are two safe zones and there are two holding pens and a drafting system at the front. The big plus is that is very safe. It’s also very efficient and we can handle a lot of stock quickly without hassle for either us or the cattle. Ultimately, we can track performance right through to finish and decide where improvements can be made, in animal and grass management as well as in choice of calves.”

#### GROUP THINK-TANK

A big benefit of Teagasc discussion group involvement is the sharing of ideas: “Talking to different farmers, meeting on each other’s

farms, with advice available from advisors. Membership is from right across the country so there is a great mix of people and ideas and different circumstances."

### FINISHING REGIMES

Good lifetime performance is reflected in slaughter ages and weights: "In the middle of September we had sixty cattle in the shed on an eighty-day diet to finish in six weeks. That will be a calf-to-beef timescale of twenty months. It's a change for us. We decided

when we weighed that the heavier cattle would be put on this early finishing trial to see if it is worth doing in the future. They are on four kilos of a maize-based ration together with 76.6 DMD first-cut silage." "The remainder of the finishing animals come into the shed in mid-November to finish. They take around one hundred days, with Angus and Hereford often finishing more quickly. Almost all are gone in twenty-four months or earlier. The Friesians finishing in January come in at around 330 kgs carcass weight with the early finishers on the trial probably hitting 300 kgs carcass weight. That's the aim. Grading is usually in the 0= and 0-range with a few hitting P and 0+."

### GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT

Since the Hanrahans joined the Calf-to-Beef Group, grassland management has taken on a new emphasis: "We had larger paddocks when we ran the suckler herd. We put a plan in place, dividing up the paddocks into smaller units and the water system was upgraded. We measure grass

measurement regularly and we are reseeded upwards of 20 per cent of the farm every year. Our aim is to increase clover content. Grass measuring helps to keep quality up. We are already seeing big improvements with higher stocking rates and more grazings. This year's first cut on the 20th of May delivered high quality 76 DMD silage. Low emission slurry spreading has helped to drive soil fertility and grass growth. Targeting slurry towards first and second cut silage ground and applying some slurry post grazing

reduces artificial fertiliser use."

Calf-to-beef is a work in progress for the Hanrahans: "We will try to avoid buying later calves as they add complications right along the line. The more calves we can get in early Spring the better it works for us so that's a focus for us. We are considering buying some Autumn calves to spread the workload and get more use out of the calf shed. We get on well with our calf suppliers and more breed information, DNA for instance, would be useful to avoid lower beefing-quality calves."

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<i>Streptococcus dysgalactiae</i>	5.7%
<i>Bacillus spp.</i>	2.5%
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Others	14.8%

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Froehlich-Kelly, R. 2020. Bovine mastitis. All-Island Animal Disease Surveillance, p.31.

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# PRE-CALVING MINERAL REQUIREMENTS

RICHARD DUDGEON, REGIONAL MANAGER AT ALLTECH IRELAND, EXAMINES THE TRANSITION FROM THE DRY PERIOD INTO LACTATION.

**Successful transition from the dry period into lactation is one of the most crucial moments in a dairy cow's lactation. It will have a direct impact on milk production, cow health and reproductive performance during the subsequent lactation.**

A successful transition can be achieved by getting the management and nutrition of dry cows right. This successful transition revolves around four key pillars: body condition, nutrition, minerals and management.

During the dry cow period, these four pillars will prepare farmers for easy, stress-free calving and set their herds up for successful lactation by reducing metabolic issues around calving, including milk fever, retained placenta, displaced abomasum and ketosis. As

previously mentioned, one of the four pillars is getting mineral nutrition correct in the dry period.

Dry cows should be fed a dry cow mineral for the duration of the dry period. Ideally, between weeks 6–8. This is to ensure there is a good reserve of minerals built up to allow the cow to calve down without any issues and continue into the lactation to follow.

## SILAGE TESTING

Most Irish silages do not supply the required amount of minerals to get the cow through the dry period. As a result, these minerals need to be supplemented. If you have not already done so, test your silage for minerals. This will give a good indication of the mineral status and ensure you are feeding a balanced mineral supplement.

It is important to note that the mineral status of our soils and forages varies tremendously from farm to farm and year to year. The simplest and most accurate way of knowing the mineral status is testing the forages being fed to cows, whether it be grass, grass silage, maize or wholecrop silage. Once known, informed decisions can be made on the most effective way of supplementation.

## MACROMINERALS

Magnesium is needed for the metabolism and absorption of calcium within the cow around calving. Throughout the dry period, a cow needs 40+ g magnesium/day. If a silage mineral analysis is 0.15 per cent magnesium, a cow eating 11 kg dry matter intake (DMI) during the dry period will take in 1.65 g from silage. As a result, the mineral



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—Ronan Síochru, farming on the Dingle peninsula for a Planet of Plenty™.

supplement will need to supply at least 35–40 g of magnesium. If the feed rate of the mineral is 120 g/head/day, it needs to be a minimum of 25 per cent magnesium to make up the deficit.

Potassium in Irish silages is typically between 1.8–2.4 per cent. However, the dry cow requirement is only 0.52 per cent. Potassium interacts closely with magnesium, tying it up in the rumen, which can slow down the absorption and mobilisation of calcium, leading to milk fever. With sufficient magnesium supplementation, the typical levels of potassium can be managed. If potassium is greater than 1.8 per cent in silage, it can be managed with magnesium by introducing Cal-Mag or sweetened Cal-Mag. Levels above 1.8 per cent need further measures as prescribed by a nutritionist.

### MILK FEVER

Research has shown that, where milk fever is relatively well-controlled, approximately 33% of cows may experience sub-clinical milk fever.

While dealing with customers, I often get the following question:

'I had a higher number of cows go down with milk fever before calving, despite using boluses for some. What can I do to reduce the risk of this happening again?'

We recommend the following:

- ▶ Test dry cow silage for minerals: If potassium is higher than 1.5 per cent and magnesium less than 0.4 per cent of DMI (40 g/head/day), the dry cow is at risk of milk fever or sub-clinical milk fever. Level of magnesium supplementation is very important; a dry cow will need around 40+ g of magnesium in total. Potassium locks up magnesium and magnesium is needed to help mobilise calcium from the bones.
- ▶ Check the calcium level in the dry cow diet: If greater than 0.45 per cent of total DMI (~ 50 g), the cow will become

too dependent on the supplemented calcium. This may result in her not being able to mobilise calcium from her bones, which can lead to milk fever.

- ▶ The risk of milk fever is reduced if cow BCS is monitored and controlled in late lactation and throughout the dry period. Cows should be dried off between BCS 3–3.25, and this BCS should be maintained throughout the dry period. Cows with both too high and too low BCS are shown to have an increased risk of milk fever.

### IMPORTANCE OF TRACE MINERALS DURING THE DRY PERIOD

Trace minerals, or micro minerals, play a huge role in the overall immunity, fertility and production of dairy cows. Irish grass silages have been shown to be 63% low in copper, 69% low in selenium and 29 per cent low in zinc. (Rogers and Murphy, 2000). As a result, supplementation is essential. Important trace minerals

- ▶ Zinc (Zn) supplementation is important at all times of the year as it helps to keep somatic cell counts under control, reduce incidences of mastitis and maintain the hardness of the hoof.
- ▶ Selenium (Se) is a natural antioxidant and boosts the immunity of calves and dairy cows by playing a role in the resistance to viral and bacterial infection. Selenium supplements will only be effective if fed with the correct levels of vitamin E, as the two work in synergy. This is very important on maize and silage diets, where vitamin E is very low.
- ▶ Copper (Cu) plays an important role in fertility and immunity. Copper deficiency can cause many issues, such as poor growth, reproduction problems, impaired immunity and diarrhoea.

Another common question on farms relates to the level of held cleanings. When the

level of held cleanings increases on-farm, the level of mineral supplementation also tends to increase, but this may not always be beneficial. See below some key points on the issue:

- ▶ First, as always, test your forage for minerals. Choose a mineral based on your forage mineral analysis. High potassium and low magnesium may also be the issue here, so you may need a mineral with higher levels of magnesium.
- ▶ Then, check the label to see what type of mineral you were feeding; ask your supplier if you are not sure. If most of the elements are inorganic (i.e., zinc oxide), feeding high levels of inorganic minerals can cause mineral interactions, such as the zinc oxide interacting with copper, making it less available for absorption, which may lead to more cows with retained placentas.
- ▶ Choose a mineral that contains organic minerals, such as Bioplex® Copper, Manganese, Zinc and Sel-Plex® (organic selenium). These are proven to mimic the minerals found in grass and, therefore, are more bioavailable with better absorption and less chance of mineral interactions.

### MINERALS THAT GO TO WORK, NOT TO WASTE

Research has shown that feeding these trace minerals in their organic form — Bioplex Copper and Zinc and Sel-Plex, an organic form of selenium — leads to better absorption, storage and utilisation by the cow. This builds up the cow's immune system and lowers the risk factors associated with difficult calvings and retained placenta.

Make your dry cow mineral count by using proven technologies as part of a dry cow nutrition programme that generates greater return on investment, benefitting both cow performance and farm profitability.



# CHANGING ATTITUDES TO ANTIMICROBIALS

**NEW RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS FARMER-VET RELATIONSHIP KEY TO TACKLING USE OF ANTIMICROBIALS IN AGRICULTURE**

**The relationship between farmer and vet is key to the behaviour changes needed to reduce the use of antimicrobials in agriculture. The new research, which was funded by safefood, surveyed more than 400 farmers and veterinarians on the island of Ireland.**

The two-year, cross-border project led by a multi-disciplinary team involving Teagasc, Queen's University Belfast and University College Dublin looked at the behaviours of farmers and veterinarians in the usage of antimicrobials as well as the barriers and facilitators to responsible use. The research also examined the factors underpinning attitudes towards antimicrobial usage and antimicrobial resistance in meat and dairy-producing animals.

Introducing the research, Dr Áine Regan of Teagasc said "It is challenging to change the routine way the health of animals has been managed for many years. The first step is to understand why changes are required in the face of this invisible threat, what changes are required and who needs to make them."

## CREATING CHANGE

The project used a combination of research methods, including farmer and vet surveys, and vet interviews, with the interview being the main data collection method, to ensure a holistic, systematic and 'bottom-up' approach, explains Professor Moira Dean. "A theoretic framework called the COM-B Model underpinned a questionnaire. It's a simplistic way of assessing a person's ability,

motivation, and opportunity to act and how all of these factors influence their behaviour. The findings were exciting and interesting and fed into seven behaviour change interventions." Dr Gary Kearney, interim CEO *safefood* continued: "By understanding their shared experiences and knowledge as well as co-creating interventions with farmers and vets that could work, we're more informed on how best to tackle the issue of antimicrobial usage in agriculture."

## THE FARMER SURVEY

A total of 392 farmers were surveyed to ascertain how antimicrobials are currently used. The survey found that social support and the experience level of the farmer were the greatest predictors of behavioural change. Generally, participants were positively disposed to changing their antimicrobial usage practices, and believed that this was possible at farm level, with 64% saying they had already made some changes. Respondents suggested introducing subsidised vaccination programmes or financial bonuses as a suitable approach to promote reduced antimicrobial usage. They

## PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT

Antimicrobial resistance poses a major public health threat, with huge social and economic costs. The European Commission's 'From Farm to Fork' strategy has set a 2030 target of reducing sales of antimicrobials in agriculture and aquaculture by 50 per cent, and this will mean significant changes for farmers and vets regarding how and when antimicrobials can be used.

thought introducing policies and regulations restricting the use of antimicrobials was not very helpful.

### THE VET SURVEY

Twenty-eight vets were given test-case scenarios describing responsible antimicrobial usage and asked questions that were designed to (a) elicit their perceptions towards responsible antimicrobial use; (b) identify the barriers and motivators for implementing such an approach; and (c) garner their own views on alternative treatment plans.

The barriers included the farmers' attitude towards antimicrobial use and the pressure on vets to prescribe them. "Sometimes the farmer just wanted antibiotics, and it was difficult to persuade them away from it," Moira says. In some instances, there was pressure from senior vets to resist change. Vets were also concerned about the welfare of the animals: They wanted to reduce usage, but they didn't want the animal to suffer. The facilitators included a gradual approach to reducing antibiotic use, encouraged greater communication between farmer and vet, tailored treatment plans, and assigning one vet per farm to help build a relationship with the farmer. Moira noted that the emphasis should be on relationship building and fostering better communication so that the farmer takes ownership and feels in control, that they are making the changes needed with guidance rather than being told what to do.

This empirical work with farmers and vets informed effective and targeted intervention design. Seven behavioural change interventions, grounded in behavioural science, were developed, and a co-design process with 70 diverse agri-food stakeholders ensured these interventions were feasible and practical.

### YIELDING RESULTS

One of the most significant drivers of behavioural change on farms is the farmer-vet relationship. Although farmers report vets as some of their main sources of information on good animal health practices and advice, vets report challenges in effectively communicating to farmers about the changes required on the farm. "Research increasingly talks of a shift in the role of veterinarians and farm advisors on farms from reactive to proactive," explains Áine. "Rather than a



## MEET THE RESEARCHERS

**Dr Áine Regan** is a Research Officer at Teagasc. Áine is a behavioural scientist focusing on behavioural change, and science and risk governance in the agri-food sector. She has a BA in Psychology, an MSc in Health Psychology, and a PhD in Public Health and Psychology.

**Professor Moira Dean** is a Professor in consumer psychology and food security. Moira has worked several projects funded by the Food Standards Agency, safefood, The Danish Agency for Science Technology and Innovation, Medical Research Council, Economic and Social Research Council, the European Union and industry. She is experienced in qualitative and quantitative methodologies for the assessment of attitudes, values, perceptions and barriers associated with food, health and sustainable living.

traditional role of responding to disease on farms, they play an active part in providing advice on best herd health management practices and with that, information on best antibiotic practices and the mantra, 'as little as possible, but as much as necessary'. For this role to work successfully, they must be able to deliver information successfully and where necessary, promote behavioural changes in farmers through motivating them and facilitating collaborative decision making." Moira added: "We underpinned our research in behaviour change theory, which enables us to assess a person's ability, motivation, and opportunity to act and how all these factors can influence their behaviour. These findings fed into practice-ready, evidence-based interventions which combine the voice of both farmers and veterinarians." One of the behaviour-change interventions designed by the project was a specialised training programme for animal health professionals, such as vets and farm advisors. The provision of technical animal health advice and information using specialised communication strategies can improve awareness and understanding of

antimicrobial resistance, and influence motivations and confidence in ability to reduce antimicrobial use in the farming community. As a result of this research project, additional funding has been received with pilot projects being delivered by psychologists in Animal Health Ireland and Teagasc in order to trial the interventions. "Behaviour-change recommendations from the *safe*food project have been embedded into veterinary training and consults for both the CellCheck national mastitis control programme and the Pig Healthcheck programme" continues Alison Burrell, Health Psychologist at Animal Health Ireland. "This is a new approach for many, which has been well received. There has been a lot of interest in a new training programme funded through the AMU-farm project which is in collaboration with Teagasc and Queens University Belfast. This will deliver training to both vets and farm advisors in communication and behaviour change to support collaborative herd health consults with herdowners around tailored animal health management and prudent antibiotic use on farm."



# VITAL VITAMIN

**NEW RESEARCH INDICATES THAT IMPROVING VITAMIN D LEVELS IN CATTLE COULD HELP THEM TO BETTER FIGHT OFF TUBERCULOSIS**

**Are we more similar to cows than we realise? One of the learnings from the pandemic was the importance of vitamin D to the human immune system during Covid-19 infection.** And it would seem that cattle are no different. Associate Professor Kieran Meade, UCD school of Agriculture and Food Science, has been researching the effects of low levels of the sunshine vitamin on cattle and newborn calves\*. He speaks to us about his findings.

Ireland's inclement weather may have gifted us our lush green pastures, but the lack of sunshine may be influencing our cattle herds. Associate Professor Kieran Meade has been measuring vitamin D levels in Irish cattle and it appears they are coming up short when compared to their international counterparts. "Vitamin D levels in Irish cattle are very low, particularly in spring-born calves. They are, 'deficient at birth' and 'insufficient' until maybe three or four months of age, and similar sub-optimal concentrations were also observed during winter months in cows on many farms too.

Vitamin D is made from sunlight on the body, and like humans, cattle are often exposed to less light in northern climates and when housed. "From an evolutionary point of view, cattle evolved in areas that were more

exposed to intense sunshine, but now we farm across more southerly and northerly areas of the world. We're also changing our management strategies: animals are being housed and we are putting jackets on them in spring, which is good welfare but their skin is less exposed to sunlight. It is possible therefore that vitamin D deficiency is contributing to disease susceptibility in Irish cattle."

## NOVEL FOCUS

With little historical data to rely on, Meade turned to human research for guidance. "We know that about 30 per cent of Irish adults are deficient in vitamin D, and there's a huge body of research in human literature, including in relation to COVID-19. This is the first analysis that's been done in Irish cattle and there are a lot of caveats associated with it: we don't know exactly how much vitamin D an animal needs, so we're taking a lot of our information from the human literature which is much more advanced than it is in livestock." Meade carried out a number of experiments to understand how much vitamin D cattle actually need and the consequences of vitamin D deficiencies on the animal's welfare. "We've carried out experiments in vitro in the lab and in vivo in the animal by

supplementing cattle cells with additional levels of vitamin D. One of the studies we did in 2020 was a supplementations trial where we boosted the amount of vitamin D given to calves, both in the milk phase initially and then after weaning in the ration that the calves were eating."

The results showed several changes in the immune system of the animal. "When we added vitamin D to the blood of cattle and stimulated their immune cells, the cells were significantly better able to kill the mycobacteria which causes bovine tuberculosis so this is quite exciting." Improving the vitamin D status of calves resulted in changes to their immune cells which impacted other areas of their wellbeing. "We saw changes to the microbiome, and we know from recent research that the microbiome is critically important for lots of different traits. It seems to reduce the abundance of a particular bacterial species called *Clostridium* which is associated with negative health outcomes." "We're trying to understand the consequences of those immune changes, but we know that when we boost the levels of vitamin D, we see lots of changes in the cells of the immune system including the production of host defense peptides. These

host defense peptides are natural antibiotics and if an animal produces more of them, they are better able to fight infection. There's lots of evidence now that vitamin D drives the expression of these host defense peptides."

#### WORK IN PROGRESS

Meade is quick to point out that while these results are encouraging, the research is ongoing. "We need additional work, so I'd like to move onto the UCD Lyons research farm and supplement cows – transition dairy cows – during the entire duration of their pregnancy. In May, they'll be supplemented on a higher

plane of vitamin D until they calve in the following February." This research will study the effects of vitamin D the cows immune system but also the effects on the immune system of the calves born to those cows with high vitamin D.

#### SUPPLEMENTS REQUIRED

Our reliance on the afore-mentioned lush green pastures may be a reason for this vitamin deficiency. "We are trying to maximise our intake of the cheapest food source which is grass so as a result we're less dependent on concentrates. In other areas of the world, in

the more intensive dairy systems where they feed more concentrates, those concentrates have vitamin D added to them."

Where Irish farmers include concentrates at certain times of the year, he says the levels tend to be quite low: "About 2000 international units per kilogram of feed. We are restricted in the EU about how much we can add, but we can go up to 4000 international units. That's what we did in the experiments, and it showed benefits."

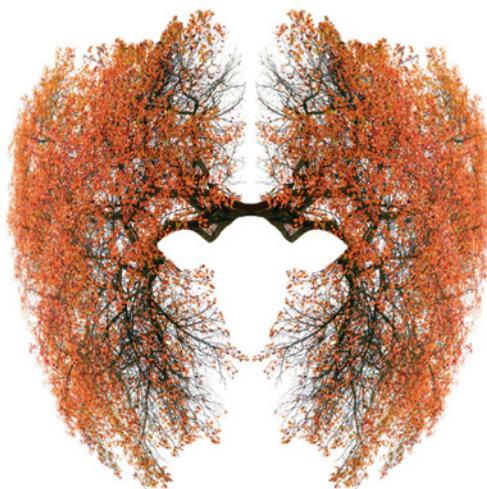
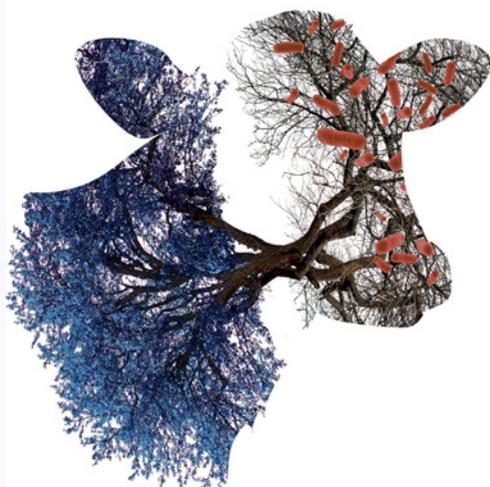
Mineral licks, he believes, may not be an adequate solution: "From our analysis, across a subset of dairy herds and from the calves

that we've assessed, the levels are still below what we could consider to be optimal for animal health." Applying this knowledge to the farm should be relatively easy and economical. "It's actually very cheap to supplement vitamin D so it is a practical solution." Our results tie in with what we're seeing in human medicine but cattle are not humans and so I'm looking for research funding and research partners to study different administration methods. For example, you could give an animal a vitamin D bolus, an injection, or we could give extra vitamin D in their feed, subject to the EU cap." Then we will also supplement the cows for longer. We've shown the beneficial effects of a six month-implementation in calves but future work will assess how the immune system develops in the dam and its impact on the calf during pregnancy. We are hoping to see a concept called programming – where vitamin D boosts immune system development of the calf during pregnancy."

## IS BRD BOTHERING YOU?

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**HIPRABOVIS SOMNI/Lkt**: Inactivated vaccine with *Histophilus somni* and *Mannheimia haemolytica* leukotoxin in injectable emulsion for cattle. **INDICATIONS:** For the reduction of clinical signs and lung lesions caused by *Mannheimia haemolytica* serotype A1 and *Histophilus somni* in calves from 2 months of age. For more information about side-effects, precautions, warnings and contra-indications please refer to the packaging or product leaflet. Further information available from SPC or on [www.hipra.com](http://www.hipra.com). **MARKETING AUTHORIZATION NUMBER:** UK: Vm 17533/4205; Ireland: VPR N 20840/095/001. **MARKETING AUTHORIZATION HOLDER:** LABORATORIOS HIPRA, S.A. Avda. La Selva, 135. 17170 Amer (Girona) Spain. Tel. (972) 430660 - Fax (972) 430661. **LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE:** HIPRA UK&IRELAND, Ltd. Foxhall Business Centre, Foxhall Lodge, Foxhall Road, Nottingham – NG7 6LH - UNITED KINGDOM. **LEGAL CATEGORY:** UK: POM-V, ROI: POM. Use medicines responsibly. Under veterinary prescription, consult your veterinary prescriber for further advice.

Safety and efficacy of these products together have not been evaluated. A decision to use either of these vaccines before or after any other veterinary medicinal product therefore needs to be made on a case-by-case basis.



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# USING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE ANIMAL HEALTH

**AS LIVESTOCK HERDS INCREASE IN SIZE, MORE FARMERS ARE TURNING TO NOVEL TECHNOLOGIES TO MONITOR PERFORMANCE, FERTILITY AND GENERAL HEALTH OF THEIR ANIMALS. THIS IS ESPECIALLY THE CASE IN DAIRY HERDS, THOUGH MONITORING TECHNOLOGIES ALSO HAVE A ROLE IN SUCKLER HERDS TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND FERTILITY AS WELL AS TO MONITOR HEALTH.**

We have seen the increasing popularity of neck collars and ear tags, equipped with electronic signalling systems that send a constant stream of data to a computer or i-phone. Thousands of algorithms have been developed to provide data on cow movements, grazing patterns, heat status, lameness and ill-health. In addition, these monitors are capable of linking in with dairy parlour technology to provide immediate information around milk yield, mastitis and other relevant data as well as allowing automated feeding systems to identify individual cows and feed to yield if desired.

## **CALF HEALTH**

In early animal life, automated calf feeding systems are now well developed and widely adopted across the dairy sector and increasingly so among calf-to-beef producers. The systems deliver pre-determined milk replacer volumes, usually on a little and often

basis, mimicking the cow-calf profile. The data provided by automated calf systems also provide health feed-back as any interruptions or fall-off in a calf's feeding pattern is highlighted and often indicates a health challenge in the calf.

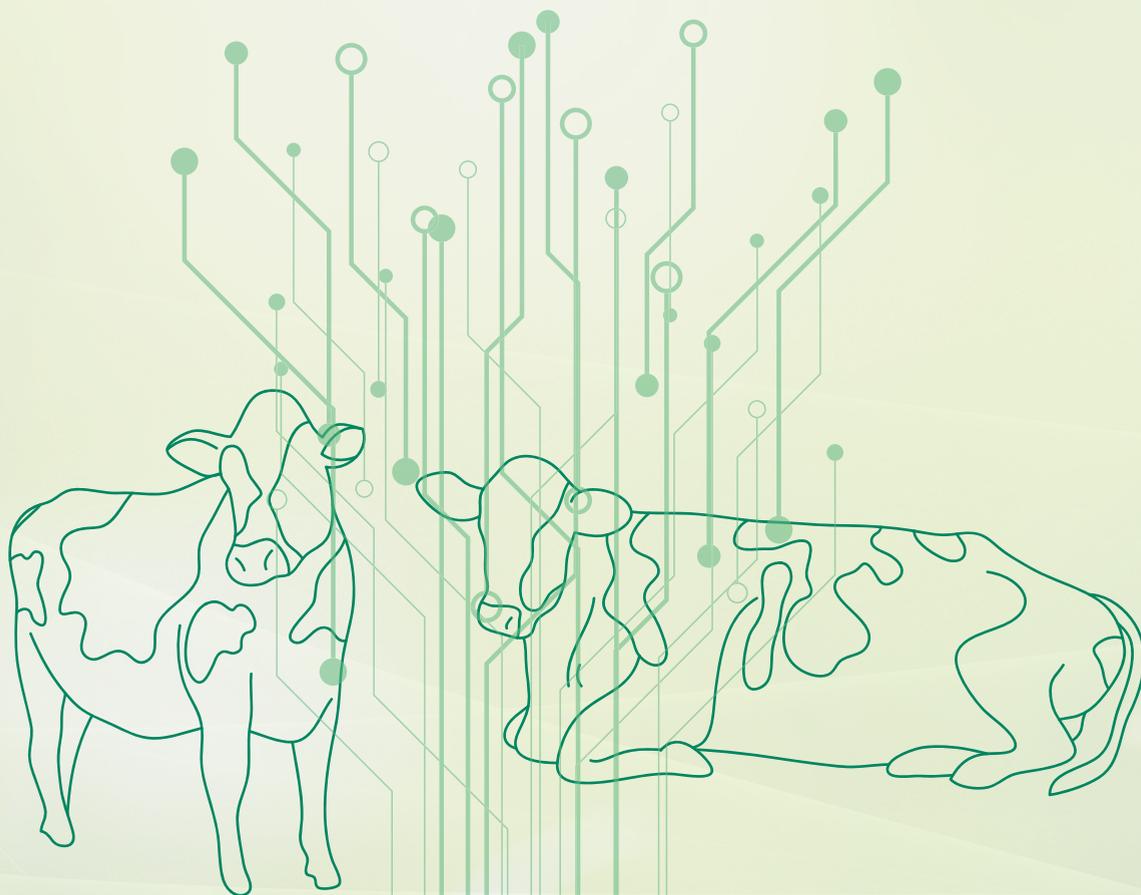
## **SOFTWARE UPDATES**

Dr John Daly, Head of Research at Dairymaster, says the interruption in normal business caused by the Covid pandemic was used to good effect by the company: "We used the time over the past two years to go back to basics with our software. That included our herd management software, where we are recording all the data from the cows in the parlour, and we rebuilt that software from scratch. The intention was to optimise it and future-proof the systems in terms of connecting the data provided from other technologies including our MooMonitor and for third party requirements including

milk recording operators. Our aim was to bring all the data onto one platform so that the information is there in the parlour when the farmer is milking the cows and also accessible externally in the farm office or on the phone for the farmer to study in his or her own time. That allows the data to be analysed and better decisions to be made around productivity and health issues in the herd."

## **SIMPLIFYING THE SYSTEM**

There is a wide range of these technologies available across the dairy market and they are becoming more sophisticated, simpler to use and more powerful. Two of the biggest benefits of the updating of Dairymaster's system were simplification and increased data availability, as John explains: "It is much simpler to use and it is much more powerful in terms of what it can do. We have streamlined what is happening in the parlour where the cow is there in front of the farmer



and then what can be achieved afterwards in terms of analysing the information and making longer term decisions around individual cows as well as herds. Health and fertility data is fed in from the MooMonitor collars and that is allied to information coming from the parlour software around cow productivity.

With that data it is possible to correlate cow performance based on health, fertility, yield and overall productivity status."

#### **BUSINESS BENEFITS**

All of this, of course, has long term positive potential for herd and farm management as the Dairymaster Head of Research says: "Our aim in developing this technology is to help farmers improve productivity on farms as well as assisting farmers in reaching their carbon emission goals in the years ahead by focussing on breeding strategies, matching calving dates more closely with grass growth patterns in Spring and generally ensuring that the herd size and productivity is optimised. Take a six-year-old cow as a practical example of making decisions based

on health information gathered from our systems. She already has four full lactations in place. Analysing her fertility data, her yield, including milk solids, her overall health status, allows objective decisions to be made around her future in the herd."

#### **ENERGY AND LABOUR SAVINGS**

All of Dairymaster's technology research and development is in-house which has benefits: "All research is done within the company and we cooperate closely with Teagasc and UCD and other research partners to fully access all available advances that can be built into our systems to ultimately benefit our customers. We get independent field trials completed to ensure that the technology is fully fit for purpose. Allied benefits include energy savings and increased labour efficiency on farms, two very important aspects of a dairy farm business now. We are involved in providing milking parlour technology that allows one operator to milk three hundred cows in one hour while ensuring that the cows are in good health and are able to return to grazing quickly."

#### **THROUGHPUT OPTIONS**

Dairymaster, in common with other milking parlour providers, is seeing increasing interest in high throughput systems, including rotary: "If a farmer goes above two hundred cows the rotary is becoming increasingly popular. It has definite benefits in productivity terms. It often depends on the farm, herd size, farm structure, labour availability. There is a range of options including swing-overs, double up, quick exit, that allow high throughput without necessarily going down the rotary route. The rotary provides continuous production so increased productivity can justify the investment. We tend to discuss the personal situation with the farmers in terms of labour, herd size future plans on scale and what they want a parlour and monitoring system to achieve for themselves and their cows. Ultimately, a faster, more efficient milking system is beneficial to all concerned including the cows. They don't have extended periods standing on concrete, there is no hassle entering and exiting the parlour and their health status, including lameness occurrence improves."

# Sustainability Week

## *'Farming for a Better Future'*

14<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>  October 2022

Teagasc Signpost Sustainability Week will take place from 14 - 21 October. The theme of Sustainability Week 2022 is *'Farming for a Better Future'*, and a series of public in person and virtual events will take place.

### What is happening during #SustainabilityWeek?

Sustainability Week will kick off on Friday, 14 October at 9.30am on the weekly Teagasc Signpost webinar series, with Dr Seamus Kearney from the Teagasc Signpost and Dr Deirdre Hennessy discussing the 1<sup>st</sup> step to reducing emissions on all farms – reducing emissions from chemical N with Signpost Dairy Farmer Edwin Thompson.

On Monday, 17 October, the Teagasc Rural Economy programme will publish the annual Teagasc Sustainability Report for 2021, which is based on data collected from farmers through the National Farm Survey. The reports tracks the economic, social and environmental sustainability of Irish farms.

### Other highlights for the programme for Sustainability Week will see a number of farm walks along with a daily focus on a particular issue:

Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Enhancing Farm Biodiversity; Improving Soil Health; Improving Water Quality finishing up with the Teagasc Signpost Series Webinar on Friday, 21 October, when Professor Frank O'Mara, Teagasc Director, will launch the Signpost Sustainability Report and discuss the progress being made on the Signpost farms.

Find out more information and register for the farm walks/webinars at:

[www.teagasc.ie/sustainabilityweek](http://www.teagasc.ie/sustainabilityweek)



#SustainabilityWeek  
[www.teagasc.ie/sustainabilityweek](http://www.teagasc.ie/sustainabilityweek)

## MESSAGES

- Planning for 2023 starts in October.
- Assess the BCS of your cows and act.
- Carefully manage the last grazing rotation to targets.
- Avoid soil compaction/damage at all cost.
- Reduce your tax bill by talking to your accountant now.
- How good are your replacements? Weigh them now.
- Silage and soil analysis will drive your winter feed management.



By Matt Ryan

## PLANNING FOR 2023 STARTS NOW

- » We know 2023 will be very challenging with all farm input costs gone through the roof and uncertainty as to the availability of some, particularly fertiliser.
- » Many of the decisions and actions you take in October will have a big influence on how profitable 2023 will be for you.
- » What are the key decisions?
  - To 'forward buy' fertiliser or not, even if it is very expensive now? The answer is 'yes' because you can't farm without fertiliser unless very lowly stocked. So, give yourself that mental security by having Nitrogen (not protected Urea), phosphorous and potash stocks on hand to 'get you' to May next year.
  - Body condition (BCS) of herd.
  - When and which cows to dry off in October.
  - Building and maintaining autumn grass until November.
  - Investment steps needed to minimise your tax bill.
  - Analysis of silage for DMD and mineral levels.
  - Soil analysis so as no field has a pH of less than 6.3 or below Index 4 for P & K.
  - Are replacement heifers on target?

## BODY SCORE COWS NOW AND ACT

- » Each cow's body score is worth €96 – that's the approximate cost of putting on 40kgs (= one BCS) of body fat with meals if she is thin. But it is worth a lot more in lost income.
- » Cows should be body condition scored (BCS) six times in the year and this is the first and probably the most important. Why? If cows calve down thin, they will not readily go back in calf and neither, will they milk well next year. For every 50 kgs (1 condition score = 40-50kgs) below target, a cow will milk 450 litres of milk less than her potential.
- » If you have thin cows identified in October, you have a few

## management options to rectify it:

- Dry off now to allow her have a long dry period to put on weight.
- With 120 days to calving for February calvers, no meals will be needed with good silage.
- Go on once-a-day milking (OAD) now.
- Feed low a low protein ration and milk on until December, monitoring her all the way. This is an interesting suggestion as it takes 71mj of energy to put on one kg body weight during the dry period whereas it takes only 50 mj of energy during herd milking period. This is a risky option with 'milky cows'.
- » If you wait until November to deal with thin cows you have only one option, which is to feed a lot of meals during the dry period which is inefficient and expensive.
- » To get an accurate assessment of BCS put all cows through the cattle crush to handle them on tail head, ribs, short ribs and backbone.
- » If you don't know how to do it (simple – assess body fat on the cow) or need an update, get your Adviser or Discussion Group to show you. There are people out there who do it for a fee.
- » The target BCS at drying off is 3.0 – 3.25. Generally, they will calve down in same condition as dried off.
- » Cows with a BCS of 2.75 or less now, must be 'earmarked' for special attention.
  - As she has a deficit of 0.5 BCS, at least 25 kg below target condition, therefore, she will have to be fed an extra 130kg meal (5-6 time the weight required) if meal feeding is the option you choose.
  - This means feeding 2 kgs ration/hd/day for 10 weeks; discount the first two weeks after drying off and the last two weeks before calving.
  - Therefore, she needs 14 weeks dry period.

- » Which cows should be dried off from 15th October on?
  - Cows in BCS less than 2.75
  - 1st lactation cow calving in January/February with 270 days lactation done.
  - Cows milking less than 7-8 litre or 0.6kgs MS/hd/day.
  - Cows with SCCs greater than 250,000.
  - All these cows should either be housed, sold or moved to outside blocks, but off the grazing platform to allow all available grass for milking cows.
- » Remember, the only way to improve the body condition of high genetic merit cows, who are thin the whole year, is to give them a long dry period, starting now.

### HOW TO MANAGE THE LAST ROTATION

- » The last rotation management is crucial in setting up the farm for next year's grazing:
  - Grazing very heavy covers and/or leaving too high covers at closing will result in very poor growth until May of next year.
  - Its management will influence the amount of meal you will feed this side of Christmas and the first half of next year.
- » Every extra kg DM cover left at closing increases grass availability by 12kg DM. in the spring. Therefore, operate closely to the farm covers recommendations in Table 1.
- » Every day extra the cows graze in autumn delivers €2.20 per cow per day extra profit. This year, because of the drought in August - early September many farmers are making the excuse that they will have to house early. No, the spring rotation plan will allow you have grass, it may be less than other years, in the cow's diet as per usual so that you still get the profit benefit from including grass in the diet.
- » As the last rotation will be 45-50 days from start to finish, you must decide on your closing date. If closing is the 20th November, then the last rotation should start on 10th October. The closing date will be early November on wet and/or northerly farms.
- » Too many farmers are completing the last rotation too early and losing significant profits. This is particularly so for farmers who have wet land and are not committed to wet weather grazing techniques because they have inferior infra-structures.
- » The last rotation must begin on 1-16th October, earliest (and probably earlier) on wet land farms.
  - If that doesn't happen you won't have grass next spring.
  - Spring is when you need grass most, as you will be trying to maintain milk yield and increase body condition as cheaply as possible.
  - Therefore, plan your paddock grazing strategy now.
- » The first paddocks to be grazed next spring must be dry, be near the milking parlour and have 1400 - 1600 Kgs DM/ha of grass cover.
- » Therefore, they must be the first paddocks to be grazed on the last rotation.
  - If they haven't enough grass on them, skip other paddocks so as to graze them in early October.
  - A simple exercise but it will save you a lot of hassle next February.
  - Clover swards must be the last to be grazed in the autumn

- rotation so as to carry over low grass covers on those swards.
- » You are now on last rotation, to finish on dry land on 20-25 November (2-3 weeks earlier on wet land). Each paddock must be well grazed out to 3.5 - 4.0 cms (if you leave too much grass it will result in poor pastures next year because of lack of tillering).
- » You must have at least 60% of the grazing block grazed by the 1st November on dry land; and 70% on wet land and highly stocked milking blocks; otherwise, you will be short of grass next February.
- » Table 1 highlights the target covers (kgs DM/ha) for different milking platform stocking rates.

Table 1: Target Covers per cow and Total farm cover (AFC)

Date	2.5 Cows/ha		3.0 Cows/ha		3.5 Cows/ha	
	Cover/Cow	AFC	Cover/cow	AFC	Cover/Cow	AFC
1st Oct	400	1000	380	1150	335	1175
15th Oct	350	880	340	1020	285	1000
1st Nov	280	700	275	820	240	830
Closing	550 - 700		700 - 800		750 - 850	

- » If you don't hit these covers in early October, then you will have to house earlier than 20th November and the allocated area will not have near enough grass daily. The following suggestions

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should be considered:

- Sell off cull cows now – a financial waste if feeding meals with cull cows eating grass. Cull cows are unlikely to be any more valuable in Dec than now.
  - Destock by drying off thin cows and heifers during the month and moving away from milking platform.
- » Donal Patton's (Ballyhaise) plan is:
- Peak cover at 1100kgDm/ha (380/cow) on 1st October,
  - Closing cover on 10-15th November is 650; this is achieved by carrying over a few 1500kg cover paddocks,
  - With compact calving and stocked at 2.5 cows/ha, they need 750-900kg DM in spring to minimise meal input.
  - They start the last rotation on 1st Oct and must have 70% of farm grazed by 1st November.
  - Some paddocks they carry over will be grazed on 25th September, depending on October growth so as to meet the AFC target of 650kg.
  - Wet farms should not peak above 900kgs (maybe 1000 if operator is good and with good access to paddocks), while dry farms could go as high as 1250 kgs.

- » If you are now doing 24-hour grazings you should let cows into the tall grass after the evenings milking because it will be higher in sugars.

#### LAST ROTATION PLAN: SIMPLIFIES MANAGEMENT!

- » This planner is available through PastureBase and surprisingly few use it to full advantage.
- » This planner will make life extremely simple and easy to keep cows out until late Nov while at the same time ensuring adequate grass is carried over to spring. It outlines the number of hectares you allocate to your cows each day from 6th Oct to 25th Nov.
- » It works on the following principles:
- At least 60% of the grazing area must be grazed by 1st Nov. The target is 70% for wet/late or overstocked farms.
  - This is essential so as to have a long rest period for those fields to grow grass before winter, because over 90% of the grass available for cows next Feb will have grown this Oct/Nov/Dec.
  - If the area allocated doesn't give enough grass, indicated by very low post-grazing height, then cows must be supplemented

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with meals or, preferably, very good quality baled silage. If silage is tight, consider feeding more meal, either soya hulls or palm kernel.

- If there is a lot of grass in the area, high post-grazing residuals, you either measured the area incorrectly or you have not enough cows for the farm or you are feeding too much silage and/or meals.
- » By measuring grass weekly and recording on PastureBase the computer will 'map' the area eaten against the plan. It will be very easy to see if you are 'on track'.
- » If for any reason, a wet week for instance, you cannot graze then you will go 'off target' and you must graze double the amount the next week so as to finish the last rotation on the planned date.

### SOIL COMPACTION REDUCES GRASS YIELD

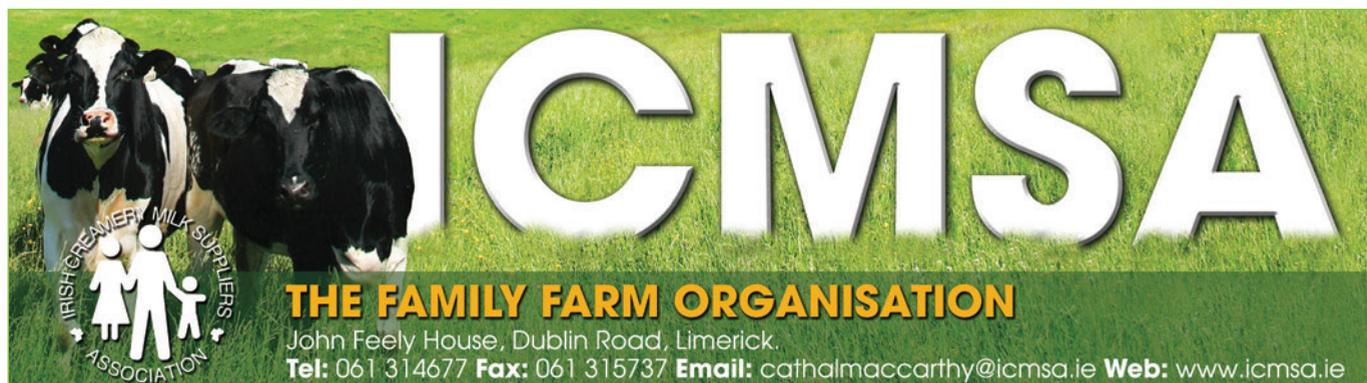
- » Soil compaction is widespread on Irish farms because of: overuse and bad use of machinery, such as vacuum tankers; livestock grazing on wet weather – 100 cows weighing 550 kgs each, is 55 tons of weight compacting the soil for a full day.
- » Soil compaction results in the soil not being able to grow as much grass as it can or should. And in the "new environment" they are not good "carbon sinks".
- » Soil structure is made up of soil, air and moisture. By poaching you squeeze out the air, so it cannot grow grass and they will also be wetter on the surface, hence more poaching. See for yourself how poorly crops grow on headlands.
- » With these facts you should decide on grazing options:
  - In October, as soils are retaining more moisture, it is vital to graze carefully.
  - Do not graze damaged fields in the wet, as it will compound the structural damage.
  - Some fields may have to be "rested" until March or April.
  - Practice on/off grazing, i.e. three hours grazing after each milking and then remove to the house. They will eat 95% of their grass allowance in this period if they come out with a "sharpness" to their appetite.
  - Follow all other recommended practices for grazing in difficult conditions.

» To meet the new environmental requirements, precision management of grazing must be practiced.

- "On/off grazing" involves bringing in the cows twice per day but at a totally different time (3 hours after let out) to our usual times.
- This "bringing-in" time can be made sociable by milking at 7.00 in the morning and again at 3.00 in the afternoon.
- This means that the cows will be able to be brought in off the paddocks at 6.30-7pm in late evening. They will just have finished that "bout" of grazing and won't have done any walking damage.
- » Never, ever let cows out when it is raining and always bring them in when it starts to rain as they do a lot more walking in the rain, and consequently more poaching. Use the weather forecast to plan 'let-out' times. It might be raining in the morning but the forecast might tell you it will be dry in the afternoon. Therefore, wait to let out but don't give them any silage.
- » I am not a fan of spreading slurry with a vacuum tanker because of the wheel compaction damage it does to the soil.
  - Use the umbilical system with a 'trailed and shoe' spread. This is necessary because with the "new" grazing wedge system there is always grass of varying heights on the farm. Spreading slurry on grass greater than 600-700kgs DM causes huge losses due to rotting.
  - The last day for slurry spreading is 7th October this year.
  - It is wasteful planning if you have more than 10% of your slurry to spread in autumn.

### TALK TO YOUR ACCOUNTANT NOW

- » Your accountant's advice is key to avoid paying unnecessary high tax.
- » You must bring your accounts up-to-date and talk to your accountant. He will project forward and inform you of your likely tax bill.
- » If it is going to be high you can consider investments that will pay in the future. Such as:
  - Spread lime and extra P & K to increase soil Indices to 4. This will give 150% return on investment in the future, and it is vital this year to carry inventory stocks of fertiliser over the winter in



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light of the fact that fertiliser might be scarce next year.

- Improve grazing infra-structures, such as roadways, fencing, and water supply to paddocks for a 58% return on the investment. Batch latches and AstroTurf are very good investments to reduce lameness.
- 'Collars' have merit in identifying cows on-heat, sick or lame and are an investment worth considering.
- Pay off all bills in current year.
- Can you make a contribution towards your pension?
- Can you set-aside a "rainy day" fund? No doubt milk price will decrease faster than costs.
- If short of slurry, housing accommodation, milking units (1 for every 8 cows is required) or calf accommodation consider the investment. Irrigation systems for disposing of soiled water are a great investment as they reduce heavy traffic on roadways and help to prevent soil compaction on fields.
- Consider forward buying some of the big "inputs", such as fertiliser, meal, mineral and dairy requirements, for next year before year end, having got 2-3 quotations for each.

### HOW GOOD ARE YOUR REPLACEMENTS?

Replacement heifer weights compared with their targets (Table 2) now determine how to manage them this autumn.

**Table 2: Target weights (kg) for Replacement Weanling (R1's) and In-calf Heifers (R2's) in October.**

Cow Type	Mature Weight	Weanling Wt. (37% cow Wt.)	In-calf Heifer (77% of cow)
Holstein	580	215	445
Holstein X Nor. Red	550	205	425
Holstein X Jersey	530	195	410

- » Remember, autumn grass doesn't give good weight gains in cattle.
- » Under-weight R1's should get 1 - 1.5 kgs meal (16-18% P) so as to meet target weights on 1st May.
  - All animals below target weights must be taken away from main mob and given priority treatment.
  - For every 20kg animals are below target they will need to be fed an extra 100kgs meal (16+%P).
  - It must be remembered that animals that are much greater than target weights are also a liability as they will underperform when milking and will be culled out of the herd sooner. Therefore, don't feed them meal!
  -
- » Small R2's need 1-2 kgs meal (12-14% P). Otherwise, they will calve down too light, resulting in 450 litres lower milk yields for every 50 kgs below target weight at calving. Fewer of them will go in-calf during the first 3 weeks of breeding next year.
- » If you haven't scanned yet do so now and sell off heifers that are

not in-calf. If more than 7-8% are not in-calf ask yourself; why?

- » Have you injected cows and heifers for Salmonella to prevent abortions? If any weanlings show symptoms of hoose (coughing), stomach worms (sticky dung on tail head) or fluke (scouring + other signs) have them treated as they will not maximise weight gain.
- » This same advice has to be applied if checking up on your heifers that are reared by contract.

### SOIL AND SILAGE ANALYSIS VITAL!

- » Silage should be analysed now, both for DMD and minerals.
  - The DMD will inform you now as to your feeding programme for the winter, particularly the dry matter (DM) this year - advantages are obvious!
  - The mineral analysis will identify the mineral status of 40-50% of the grass on your farm in May/June, and will alert you as to the minerals that might be deficient in your silage for winter and the grassland in April-May.
- » Consult your Vet as to the necessary animal test; but they will be dung samples, blood samples and milk samples so that you can plan the various dosing programmes,
- » Take soil samples, so that you can build up soil Indices to 3 and 4. Make lime application your priority investment for the next year.

### BRIEF NOTES

- » Use soiled water and/or slurry at 1000 - 1500 gallons per acre up to 7 Oct to get grass growth from the Nitrogen contained therein.
- » It is uneconomical to feed more than 2-3 kgs meal (15% P) to produce milk now.
- » You should get the Farm Relief Service to examine your herd for lameness, particularly, if you have a history of it.
  - At the very least, walk the cows through a footbath for 3 consecutive days once per week.
  - Also, there is merit in doing a locomotive survey of the herd as they walk from the parlour.
- » Make out a list of maintenance work to be done by either one man or for two-man tasks. Essential investments will reduce your tax bill.
- » Assess the amount of forage you have relative to requirement:
- » This is one of your most important tasks now,
  - The following is the requirement/animal/day in Dry Matter (the best way to do it):
    - Cows =1kgs; R1's = 4.7kgs and R2's =9kgs
    - If you are short of winter feed, decide on your options NOW.
    - If you have plenty of feed and you are planning to sow clover next year, keep it so that you cut less silage and sow more clover next year.

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# THE NEW GENERATION OF THE FENDT 700 VARIO

**With the launch of the seventh generation of the Fendt 700 Vario, Fendt brings a completely new ground up design and expands the power spectrum to up to 300 hp for versatile applications.**

The new engine, the optional 60-inch track width, FendtONE onboard and offboard and a new generation of the Fendt Cargo front loader distinguish the series as an all-rounder in the world market. For the first time, the 700 Vario is available with up to 60 km/h. Technical innovations from the large tractors, such as VarioDrive and the innovative cooling concept, lead to ground breaking manoeuvrability in this class. And so, the Fendt 700 Vario sets new standards once again.

Since its launch in 1998, the Fendt 700 Vario has won numerous awards and has been Fendt's best-selling range ever since. Customers all over the world rely on these tractors – whether in arable farming, grassland, on the road or in front loader

applications. Models of the previous 700 Vario generations are present on medium and large farms as well as with contractors in Europe, North America, South Africa and also in Australia and New Zealand.

In its seventh generation, the new range with five models (Fendt 720 Vario, 722 Vario, 724 Vario, 726 Vario and Fendt 728 Vario) occupies the power range from 203 to 283 hp (147 - 206 kW) (ECE R120). The Fendt DynamicPerformance (DP) extra power concept releases up to 20 hp of extra power in the Fendt 728 Vario DP via a demand-dependent control system precisely when it is needed. The top model thus achieves a maximum performance of up to 303 hp. The extra power concept is not tied to driving speed or special application pick-ups and functions purely dynamically, even when PTO work is carried out at a standstill. The 6-cylinder AGCO Power engine with 75 litre capacity has been completely redesigned for the power spectrum. Exhaust

gas after-treatment takes place via a diesel oxidation catalytic converter (DOC), diesel particulate filter (DPF) and with selective catalytic reduction (SCR) without exhaust gas recirculation. It meets the required exhaust emission standards in all regions worldwide. In Europe, this is the Stage V exhaust emission standard. In addition, maintenance-free hydraulic tappets are installed in the engine. The single-stage Fendt VarioDrive driveline is made up of the engine and the matching Vario transmission. Intelligently controlled all-wheel drive management is one of the advantages of Fendt VarioDrive. The drive train eliminates the need for manual switching when changing between field and road operations. It drives the front and rear axles as needed and distributes the power dynamically. In the field, the full tractive force is available and stresses are avoided when driving on roads or curves. The so-called pull-in-turn effect pulls the machine into the curve during turns.

The result: a particularly small turning circle with full tractive power and less soil compaction.

The innovative low-speed Fendt iD concept is already familiar from the larger tractors. All components, such as the engine, transmission, hydraulics and cooling system, were designed according to the so-called "high torque - low engine speed" principle. In this way, the Fendt 700 Vario achieves high torque even at low engine speeds and saves fuel. The rated engine speed is only 1,700 rpm. In the main working range, the speed is a quiet 1,400 to 1,700 rpm. The new Fendt 726 and 728 Vario reach a top speed of up to 60 km/h at just 1,450 rpm. At 50 km/h the engine speed is 1,200 rpm, at 40 km/h it is only 950 rpm. The maximum torque of 1,450 Nm on the top model Fendt 728 Vario is achieved at just 1,300 rpm and ensures high tractive power and acceleration strength with minimal specific fuel consumption.

With a power-to-weight ratio of just 30.5 kg per hp and compact external dimensions, the Fendt 728 Vario is particularly manoeuvrable and exerts as little pressure as possible on the ground. Depending on the work application, the range can be flexibly ballasted at the front, as well as at the rear on the rear wheels. A gross vehicle weight of up to 15 t allows it to be used as a heavy towing tractor.

The exclusive Concentric Air System (CAS) ventilation and cooling concept is familiar from the Fendt 1000 Vario and has been consistently designed for low engine speeds, compact construction and fuel efficiency. It is driven by its own hydraulic motor and is thus decoupled from the engine speed. The system is controlled flexibly according to demand and operates quietly and efficiently. Numerous tyre options are available for the Fendt 700 Vario. The Fendt 726 and 728 Vario models are equipped with large 650/85R38 tyres (2,050 mm diameter) as standard. For medium-sized farms, customers can choose tyres with the dimension 650/65R42 (diameter of 1,950 mm) for the rear tyres, among others. The Fendt 720, 722 and 724 Vario models are equipped with this dimension as standard.

The machine has an optional top speed of up to 60 km/h at only 1,450 rpm, a comprehensive chassis and safety concept as well as numerous options for rear hitching. The safety concept includes a dual-circuit brake system, Fendt Reaction Steering, as well as a brake light and deceleration assistant and Fendt Stability Control (FSC). FSC reduces side lean at speeds above 25 km/h and minimises roll.



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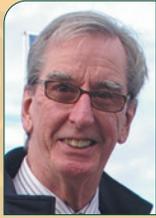
## A WELCOME RETURN

'God speed the Plough!' I say and roll on 2023 - that's my war cry coming off the back of an excellent week at this year's Ploughing Championships and the World Ploughing Championships 2022. The first two days we had exceptional weather and even though the third day was damp it didn't deter the crowds flocking to Ratheniska; sure, if you didn't have rain at the Ploughing you would feel as if you were cheated! Twenty-six countries ploughed in the World event, seeing two Irish winners emerge: Eamonn Treacy and John Whelehan. Three hundred competed in the Nationals over the three days. Record numbers of people attended the event, making their way through the maze of trade stands and products that were on display. There was a high level of business carried out according to traders, with machinery from €100 to €500,000, top breeds in the livestock section and the usual hive of activity around the consumer stands. I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to all the staff at the National Ploughing Association, both front and back room and on the ground, for running such an excellent event and retaining the title of the biggest agriculture outdoor event in Europe. It is clear that there is still a huge demand and appetite for the Ploughing - allowing people an opportunity to get out and about to meet people face-to-face again is vitally important.

Now, down to business... The Turkish market is set to reopen to Irish weanlings - a great boost for the sector. Beef trade remains steady as we go to press and milk prices are strong, while the sheep sector is stable. On the machinery front, 151 new tractors were registered in August. There were 1,840 new tractors sold in the first eight months of this year, which is down from 2,084 on the same period last year. The effect of global supply is a key factor in the slowdown of tractors being sold in Ireland and across Europe. The Tractor of the Year Competition (ToTY) is drawing to a close as we go to print and winners will be announced at the EIMA show in Bologna, Italy, in November. We will report on this in a later issue. So, until next month, farm wisely farm safely,



### Main mode of quad bike deaths in agriculture over the last 10 years 2008-2017:



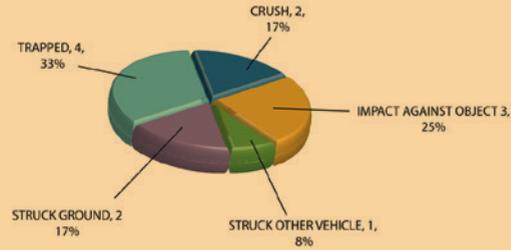
**Tom Murphy**  
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## ATVS NEW LAWS

For many years there has been concern at the number of fatalities and serious injuries that occur during the use of Quad Bikes/All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs). The HSAs Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee, a statutory body appointed by the board of the HSA on which I have served since its inception, has over the years called for more training in the use ATVs and for operators to be aware of the dangers. There is no doubt an ATV is a useful farm machine, but they are also a very dangerous piece of equipment if not handled properly. Very few owners consider it necessary to undertake training or to purchase personal protective equipment when acquiring an ATV. In recent years, ATVS have been bought as presents for young people and used as a run around on public roads and sadly serious injuries and fatalities have occurred. There are now strict requirements in place for on road use of ATVs, details of which can be found on the Road Safety Authority website. New legislation has also been signed off by Minister of State Damien English, which will come into law on the 20th November 2023. This will make it a legal requirement for anyone using a ATV in the workplace on Irish farms to:

- ▶ Successfully complete an ATV Safety Training course given by a registered training provider.



- ▶ Wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment i.e. helmets etc.

### CONDUCT A RISK ASSESSMENT

Between 2017 and 2021 there were forty vehicle related fatalities on Irish farms of these 21 involved Tractors, 7 involved ATVs (2 were children and 5 were over 60). Fifty per cent of fatalities were caused by being trapped or crushed (see chart; source Health and Safety Authority website). Passengers should never be carried on ATVs and it is illegal to carry children. Having acquired an ATV, it is vitally important to survey the land and terrain where it will be used and plan routes that will avoid areas that are uneven, ensuring at all times that speed is controlled. Special awareness is required when mounting any equipment onto an ATV, especially when carrying liquids when the ATV can more easily become unbalanced and overturn. As with all machinery regular maintenance is a must. The HSA intend to vigorously police the new legislation to ensure compliance and in order to save lives and will pay particular attention to ATVs when carrying out farm inspections.

Don't wait until the last minute to book onto a course; to be compliant with the law everyone who uses an ATV must take a training course.

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## QUICKE LAUNCHES NEW RANGE OF SILOCUT IMPLEMENTS

Leading agricultural manufacturer, Quicke, has released the new range of Silocut implements to increase efficiency and safety when managing silage. Quicke has provided the farming industry with innovative solutions for seven decades with Front Loaders and associated Implements. With the launch of the Silocut they continue to be the leaders in innovation and digitalization within Agriculture whilst maintaining unrivalled performance, quality and versatility.

The Silocut range comes with various options to ensure it matches the requirements of the user and is available for purchase as of beginning of September 2022 in three different sizes:

**Silocut M+:** Available as a forged featuring high quality, replaceable bolt on tines or profile tine implement, a forged tine version which has profile cut "tuff tines" welded in the tine carriage providing excellent wear capabilities. The Silocut guarantees a smooth and clean cut from silage stock pit to ensure high quality silage. The width and capacity are ideal for front end loaders, compact wheel loaders and mid-sized telehandler use. Various accessories, such as bolt on screens will allow end users to customize the implement to suit their personal needs. **Silocut L+:** Available with forged or profiled cut "tuff tines" but also a highly versatile bucket. The L+ is a highly efficient implement for both cutting clamp silage and splitting bales, no need for a second implement! It allows handling of different silage types, silage bales with the bucket also handling loose fodder and feed, again without changing implement when feeding animals saving valuable time. Powerful cylinders and a large opening allow most common silage bales to be split with ease, ensuring a complete cut with our unique



Push out mechanism in action on a Silocut L+ tine version.

cutting system incorporated into the side gables of the Silocut L+. **Silocut XL+:** This model is a high-capacity shear grab that can be used for cutting clamp silage and splitting bales. It is offered in the same three versions as the smaller L+. The robust and well-tested design grants long service life and peace of mind.

Both the Silocut L+ and XL+ are available with two additional innovations. A bale wrap handler as well as a push out mechanism. The bale wrap handler makes it possible, after splitting the bale, to grab the wrap and net and retain it, meaning no need for removing the wrap by hand anymore, increasing operator safety. The bale can be opened, split and placed into the two separate feeder units or directly into the diet feeder or mixer in one process giving substantial time savings. The profile cut "tufftine" versions can be equipped with a push-out mechanism which facilitates the unloading into diet feeders or feeding in passage ways with limited space. Push out mechanism in action on a Silocut L+ tine version.

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# CAYROS

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## DO IT ALL IN A SINGLE PASS

### In future, it will be necessary to deploy resources worldwide even more purpose-specifically and efficiently.

That is why Pöttinger has teamed up the trailed TERRIA stubble cultivator with the AMICO F front hopper solo for resource-saving work. The tillage and simultaneous fertiliser application steps can now be completed in a single pass. The aim of the combined method is to loosen the soil and at the same time apply fertiliser, as it can be made best available to the crop by direct placement in the soil. Nutrient depletion is prevented as a result. Nutrient deficiencies can be precisely compensated in different soil layers using this process. This promotes targeted root growth because the roots are attracted to the fertiliser. A strongly developed

root system promotes plant growth and crop density. The TERRIA with fertiliser equipment can be used for both stubble cultivation as well as deep loosening work. The wide tine spacing of TERRIA stubble cultivators ensures reliable operation even with high volumes of organic matter. The incorporation of harvest residues and cover crops is carried out using different types of share and is possible with wings, the fertiliser boots remain permanently mounted. Different deposit depths for the fertiliser allow different levels of soil to be supplied as needed. A total of three different depths can be set as follows. The outlet on the fertiliser boot is set to 100 percent on top so that the seed is mixed directly into the upper layer of soil approx. 0 to 5 cm deep. The application point is right

behind the tine leg for fertilisation, this can be used in the spring when preparing the seedbed. Emission losses are avoided because the fertiliser is immediately covered. With 50 per cent applied on top and 50 percent at the bottom - placed near the surface and at the point of the coulter. The fertiliser is distributed over the entire working depth, this ideally suited for phosphate compensation fertilisation. The method is suitable for primary tillage in autumn with working depths from 15 cm.

The outlet on the fertiliser boot is set to 100 percent at the point of the coulter. This means that fertiliser can be placed further down at up to 35 cm deep. The soil is deeply loosened during this process. Preferably, stabilising nitrogen fertilisers should be used and emission losses are avoided. Additional nutrient deficiencies can be compensated in this way. The capacity of 1,700 or 2,400 litres and a division of 60:40 ensures a wide range of applications for the front hopper. To ensure convenient operation, the AMICO front hopper is equipped with ISOBUS as standard. The material is applied using a single shoot process with a pressurised hopper system. One or two metering units can be controlled site-specifically by the intelligent control system. Furthermore, the hopper can also be used no problem together with third-party equipment thanks to the ISOBUS control system.



## Two steps ahead

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# CLAAS LEXION:

**Three years after their market launch, the LEXION combine harvester series from CLAAS has received a major technology upgrade.**

From model year 2023, the construction program will be supplemented by the LEXION 8600 as a high-performance hybrid machine with a drum width of 1,700 mm, in addition to new MONTANA versions of the LEXION 5500 and LEXION 7700. In addition, all LEXION will have a new cab, as well as some increased engine power and greater grain tank volume.

With the launch of the latest LEXION series with APS SYNFLOW WALKER and APS SYNFLOW HYBRID threshing mechanism in the summer of 2019, CLAAS once again has set pioneering standards. Now the four LEXION series are being expanded and tailored to top performance once again with new equipment and performance features. From model year 2023 two new models, the LEXION 8600 and LEXION 8600 TERRA TRAC, will be added to the CLAAS European hybrid combine harvester product range.

With a drum width of 1,700 mm and powered by a highly efficient MAN D26 six-cylinder Stage V engine with a displacement of 12.4 l and an engine output of 549 hp, the new LEXION 8600 is positioned directly above the LEXION 7700, which has a drum width of 1,420 mm. Thanks to DYNAMIC POWER, as with

the other LEXION models, the engine output is automatically adapted to the operating conditions, thus saving up to 10 percent fuel in the partial load range, for example when swathing. Already successfully introduced in North America in 2019, the LEXION 8600 has proved itself in internal performance comparisons, including under European conditions in the 2021 and 2022 harvests, showing not only excellent throughput thanks to the wide threshing mechanism and powerful cleaning, but also unrivaled efficiency in its class. The grain tank volume is 12,500 l on the LEXION 8600 and 13,500 l on the LEXION 8600 TERRA TRAC.

At the same time, the LEXION 8800 and 8700 models are also getting more engine power. The LEXION 8700 gains 41 hp to 626 hp, while power output for the LEXION 8800 has been increased by 47 hp to 700 hp. In addition, the 16.2 l MAN D42 six-cylinder from the 8900 will now also power the LEXION 8800. The increase in output and optimized torque curves mean that a greater power reserve is available, which keep the engine speed constant, particularly under difficult harvesting conditions.

The new cab generation introduced with the TRION in 2021 can also be found on all LEXION combine harvesters from the coming season. The generous space around both the head

and foot area, as well as the optional leather seat, which can be rotated by 30 degrees on both sides, are particularly noteworthy for the optimal seating position at all times. Footrests are fitted for various relaxed sitting positions. The wider command center offers a premium view of the header and the surrounding area thanks to larger front and side windows, thinner A-pillars and a split mirror design. The 360 degree wiper ensures a wide field of vision ahead in wet and dusty harvesting conditions. The 12-inch CEBIS terminal with a high-resolution, high-contrast HD display guarantees excellent readability under all lighting conditions and offers three individually adjustable main display areas. The optional CEMOS DIALOG and CEMOS AUTOMATIC are also fully integrated here. It is operated by touch and the rotary/push control. In addition, all threshing and cleaning settings can be accessed quickly using direct access buttons on the right-hand side of the operating armrest. The CEBIS terminal and armrest can be individually adapted to the driver independently of one another. Thanks to the CMOTION multifunction lever, the driver always has the most important functions under control and can save up to seven individual settings.

A 30 l cool box and a 360-degree LED light package are optionally available, as is a



# INCREASED POWER AND INTELLIGENCE

multimedia package with subwoofer and gooseneck microphone.

When equipped with GPS PILOT for automated steering, the new CEMIS 1200 terminal is positioned on the right-hand side of the cab. In addition to purely automated steering, this enables online order management and documentation. Thanks to the CEBIS operating logic, drivers can immediately find their way around the functions and settings.

Another comfort highlight is DYNAMIC STEERING, which has been available for years in CLAAS ARION and AXION tractors, in addition to the JAGUAR forage harvester. Available as an option, it reduces the number of turns of the steering wheel by 40 percent when the steering wheel is fully locked, and makes it easier for the driver to cross back into the next run up the field while turning on the headland.

From next year, all LEXION reversers will have a "slow retraction" function. After the reversing process, the direction of rotation of the reversing motor can be easily reversed at the push of a button, so that the crop is transferred slowly and more evenly to the threshing mechanism. This allows peak loads to be avoided after reversing.

From model year 2023, the LEXION 8800 can be optionally fitted with a 18,000 l grain tank, which was previously exclusively available

on the LEXION 8900 flagship, while a 15,000 l grain tank is also now available for the LEXION 8700.

In order to control the transfer process even more precisely, both the 330 and 420 mm diameter grain tank unloading augers can be fitted with a pivoting spout to allow precise control of the grain stream in a range of up to 60 cm. It is operated via the favorites management on the CMOTION multifunction control lever. The pivoting spout is equipped with an integrated cap that prevents grains from trickling out.

For model year 2023, CLAAS is expanding the CEMOS environment with additional functionalities. A new dialog-based loss measurement in CEMOS DIALOG enables the loss sensors to be calibrated more precisely. CEMOS DIALOG guides the driver step by step through the entire calibration process so that measurement and input errors are prevented. CEMOS AUTO HEADER is a further innovation for LEXION and TRION that automatically optimizes the table length, reel height and horizontal position of the reel based on the crop height measured by the FIELD SCANNER installed in the cab roof. In addition, a sensor records the layer thickness of the crop flow in the feeder housing. The driver can therefore fully concentrate on checking all machine data and quality parameters in

CEBIS and on the crop in front of the combine harvester, as well as on the transfer process when unloading while driving. The FIELD SCANNER has an additional cleaning function for extreme operating conditions, so that reliable optical detection of the crop is always guaranteed both for automated steering by detecting the crop edges and for CEMOS AUTO HEADER.

As a supplement to the previous LEXION product range and six TRION MONTANA models, from 2023 the LEXION 5500 straw-walker and 7700 hybrid models will be available with MONTANA chassis slope compensation. Starting at 258 hp in the five-walker segment up to 549 hp in the mid-range hybrid class, CLAAS can now offer farmers and contractors an unrivalled choice of eight MONTANA machines for use on steeper slopes. Lateral slope compensation of up to 18 degrees and longitudinal inclinations of up to 6 degrees can be achieved via the hydraulic adjustment of the chassis. POWER TRAC all-wheel drive, electrically selectable differential lock for the front axle and AUTO SLOPE cleaning increase forward speed and optimize cleaning performance with automated adjustment to slopes and inclines.



## FARM PROFILE

**AS THIS YEAR'S HARVEST STARTED TO DRAW TO A CLOSE, NOEL DUNNE CAUGHT UP WITH TILLAGE FARMERS DAVID AND BILL CARROLL WHO FARM IN PARTNERSHIP IN COURTWOOD, CO LAOIS.**

On the day, they were harvesting a crop of peas that had been planted in April. Conditions for harvesting were ideal and were yielding 2.5 ton to the acre. David felt that peas were an ideal rotation crop in a dry year and was happy about how the crop performed this year.

Early on in the harvest, their winter barley crop yielded between 4/5 ton per acre at 12-14 per cent moisture.

The winter wheat crop came in at 5 ton per acre with moisture at 14 per cent. All straw was sold off farm to regular customers, both north and south, and the rest went to Carbery Mushrooms who they have a long standing relationship with.

This year they also sowed 60 acres of oilseed rape for seed only, which remained to be cut at the time of my visit along with some spring barley. Both brothers feel that the cutting back on nitrates will cause long-term problems. The rising costs of fertiliser and inputs in general, against a backdrop of volatile markets, will make tillage farming tougher in the future. Small things make a difference when years are dry, like this year, so drying costs will be down and this adds to the bottom line. The loss of beet had a major impact on their farming enterprise as they were sowing beet on a large scale. They now compensate by growing peas beans and oilseed rape. They both feel rape is also a fantastic break crop.



**Left to right: Bill Carroll and David Carroll.**

Bill and David have the machinery bug and the machinery fleet consists of a DEUTZ FAHR 7206 6 Walker Combine complete with a 6.5 meter BISO variable header. Traditionally, they operated two smaller DEUTZ combines but some years ago they decided to go for a single, larger high output combine. David said: "The DEUTZ is easy to operate and maintain. It is our seventh DEUTZ combine in 32 years. I can't see us moving brands. We aim to change our combine every five to six years: it depends on the markets, if they're good we change, if not we hold on." Also in the fleet are 10 FORD GENESIS, all which are in full working order. The brothers are collectors and restorers of FORDS. They

run two six-furrow Kverneland vari-width ploughs along with a Väderstad 400s trailed drill, a BARGAM trailed sprayer and a trailed Fertiliser spreader... and much more besides. When it comes to machinery, Carroll's do all their own services and repairs in their fully equipped workshop. When I put the question to David about new machinery versus second-hand, he just smiles and says: "There is better value out there on the second-hand market and we can maintain it." Putting the question to Bill on the future for tillage farmers he concludes: "There is a good future in store for tillage farmers. There are challenges but I would be confident in the future."



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John Rowe, Co. Wexford, May 2022

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**CLAAS**



# PLOUGHING 2022 – A SNAPSHOT



From left to right; Tommy Heffernan, Colm O'Loughlin, John Paul Ennis at Precision Microbes



Noel Dunne, Irish Farmers Monthly Machinery Editor with Tadgh Furlong, Leinster and Ireland Rugby player, discussing tractors.



Fada and son: Irish Farmers Monthly Editor Matt O'Keefe beside the Tirlán poster featuring his son, Rory.



Seven-year-old Odhrán Drea from Carlow, excited for the Strong Women Science show on the AXA Ireland stand



Aoife Raleigh and Maria Corcoran, scientists-turned-circus performers at the AXA Ireland stand



Pat McCormack,  
President, ICMSA

## GOVERNMENT MUST EXEMPT FARM ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRUCTION FROM MICA LEVY

One of the most damaging aspects of the implementation and execution of public policy in Ireland is the steady emergence of the phenomena that has different arms and agencies of the Irish State not so much taking different angles of approach towards the same end, as actively working against each other. Occasionally this moves from puzzlement to outright farce and our own area of farming and agri-food is the scene for very many manifestations of this policy Multiple Personality Disorder.

Who can forget the chain of events that had several arms of the Irish State giving permission for the Belview Plant to proceed while simultaneously – and very lavishly – funding the very agency that fought a legal action against the decision to permit the plant. Effectively, the Irish Government funded the challenge to a decision by the Irish Government.

There is doubtless some alternate reality where all this makes sense and can be cited as examples of ‘consultation’. Unfortunately, most of us do not have access to this view and it all looks merely like the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing. Last week’s Budget 2023 provided yet another example of this ongoing puzzle in the Government’s decision to impose a 10 per cent levy on concrete products in an attempt to try and recoup some of the billions it is predicted will be required to make good the damage caused by use of substandard blocks by building contractors under the indifferent supervision of several

state agencies charged with ensuring proper building standards. That the State has a right to recoup some of the billions of taxpayers’ funds that will be required seems beyond question. The state employees who were charged with ensuring the use of proper materials failed abjectly to do that and the houses built are usually deficient past the point of repair.

But why a levy on all new concrete products that we know the manufacturers will simply pass on to their customers? What was wrong with a measure that targeted the profits of the builders and quarries?

That’s a question for others to ponder. As a farmer, the very first result of this Mica levy is that the environmental work – improving concrete slurry storage, for instance – that the Irish Government is demanding that I carry out has now just become 10 per cent more expensive with, almost literally, ‘the stroke of a pen’. And we see vividly this ‘left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing’ when we consider that this Mica levy was announced in the same Budget as the same Government accelerated capital allowances for farmers carrying out exactly this kind of improved slurry storage. So, the message that we feel that farmers got from Budget 2023 was ‘Hurry up and get going on those environmental construction jobs and we’re going to improve the basis on which those works are allowable against income tax’ more or less immediately followed by ‘We’re going to put a 10 per cent surtax on the costs of those environmental construction

jobs’. We’ll be generous and describe this as a ‘mixed message’. A more accurate description is shoddily sequences policies that effectively cancel each other out. Even if the Government wants to proceed with the 10 per cent Mica levy, why can’t they make a distinction between farm building projects – aimed at contributing towards the spectacularly ambitious 25 per cent reduction in agri-emissions that they have announced – and other building projects? We don’t think it would tax any legislator or civil servants’ ingenuity to make the distinction between these environmental projects and other general building work. Increasing slurry storage capacity and other on-farm environmental improvements aimed towards meeting the 25 per cent reduction should be immediately announced as exempt from the Mica levy.

Through a lack of contractors and double-digit materials inflation, farmers were already struggling to get the building done and the Government through this Mica levy have – by the terms of their own Budget – effectively made their own goal of on-farm environmental improvements impossible. We think that the Government should certainly revisit this and ‘get their policy ducks in a row’. There wouldn’t be any serious objection to it because – as the Government itself says – environmental improvements to farms are an absolute requirement if we are to even consider achieving the 25 per cent reduction in agri-emissions that they have deemed a national priority.



# PREPARE YOUR FARM FOR WINTER



**GOOD PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS WILL HELP ENSURE YOUR SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF OTHERS ON THE FARM. HERE FBD'S RISK MANAGER, CIARAN ROCHE, TAKES A LOOK AT SOME OF THE AREAS THAT NEED TO BE CONSIDERED TO ENSURE YOUR SAFETY ON THE FARM THIS WINTER.**

**Lighting:** Adequate lighting is invaluable, especially during the winter months when most activities are carried out during the dark evenings. You should only replace lights around the farm if you have a safe way of doing so. If not, it's always best to call in a certified electrician who has the right safety equipment to carry out the work. When checking lights, make sure that all the fittings are at least splash-proof, IP44 and the protection level for fittings in milking parlours and dairies should be IP45. Check that all lights are working and that they provide adequate light.

**Electrical Safety:** It's always a good idea to check how electrically safe your farmyard is. Electrical fittings can become damaged due to wear and tear and some electrical fittings are not suitable for the outdoors. Now is the time to have them repaired or replaced with fittings which have the correct IP ratings.

Always use an electrical contractor for this work. Check that your RCD (Residual Current Device) is working correctly, both mechanically and electrically. This test button should be pressed at regular intervals, approximately once a month.

Remember to reset the switch after testing. Using portable electrical tools and equipment such as a power washer can cause electrocution. Always visually check that leads are not damaged. Never handle electrical equipment with wet hands or near water.

**Farm Building Maintenance:** Farm buildings and facilities should be inspected regularly, especially before and after extreme weather conditions. For example, if roofs are subject to excessive weight, the joists can give way. In very heavy snow storms accompanied by acute snow accumulation of roofs, it is advisable to monitor the roofs and observe the integrity of the joists and the roofing material. On foot of building inspections, maintenance and repair work should be carried out as appropriate.

Remember building maintenance work can be very dangerous, especially work at height and because of this, it is essential that all work is properly planned, organised, supervised and carried out in a safe manner. Appropriate equipment for work at height should be carefully selected. Scaffolding and Mobile Elevated Work Platforms should be used as required. Never take chances and where necessary employ a specialist contractor.

**Keeping the yard tidy:** Keeping the farm tidy and free from clutter makes a huge difference in terms of safety. By making sure that the yard is tidy, you are ultimately reducing the likelihood of slips, trips and falls. Clear drains regularly, particularly in anticipation for stormy weather.

**Snow and freezing conditions:** Farmers should be prepared for potential freezing and snowy conditions that the winter often

brings. Ensure water supplies are protected by insulating exposed water pipes. During freezing conditions milking equipment must be fully drained down after milking and frost protection heaters should be provided to ensure that milking equipment and other critical plant does not freeze up. Ensure anti-freeze levels are adequate in farm vehicles and de-ice all windscreens and mirrors before operation.

Remember to grit pathways and yard surfaces during icy spells, so as to prevent the risk of falls on icy surfaces.

**Manual Handling:** Farming, by its very nature, is a physically demanding occupation. This can especially be the case during the winter months, when the housing of livestock can lead to increased workload around the farm, whether it be carrying meal bags, forking silage or rolling bales. Always plan work activities in order to avoid and reduce manual handling activities. Ask yourself if it can be done differently in order to eliminate the manual handling, or to minimize the distance travelled, or the weight of the load, or the twisting movements required. Where manual handling cannot be avoided use manual handling aids where possible, get help if required and always use a safe lifting technique.

**Always Think Safety First!**

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# AGRI KIDS FOR SAFETY

**ALMA JORDAN FOUNDED AGRI KIDS IN 2015. HER AIM WAS, AND CONTINUES TO BE, TO PROMOTE FARM SAFETY, ESPECIALLY AMONG CHILDREN LIVING ON WORKING FARMS. HERE, SHE TALKS TO MATT O'KEEFFE ABOUT HER VISION.**

"It is a farm safety education platform for children. I grew up on a farm in Kildare and I'm now living on a farm in Meath with a young family. It was the death of two young children in August 2014 that had a profound effect on me. I was filled with such overwhelming sadness for the family. There was nothing to say that our own farm practices were any safer or any different than on other farms. I came to believe that we needed to create more of a safety culture on our farms. So, I began to investigate those areas that were really affecting families and children and farmers themselves in relation to farm safety,

I realised that many of the resources already in place were full of jargon and very much targeted at farmers. The wording and text, I found to be not family friendly and especially not children friendly. We are all effected and impacted by farm accidents, so I sought to create a platform aimed at the farm family and especially children, who are the common thread. They are at home; they are at school; they are out and about in the community, but more importantly, they are our future farmers. I began to create story books and resources such as digital games and workshops, on an interactive website, all based around the topic of farm safety where parents and children could work together on the topic. When I launched the series of farm safety storybooks for children back in 2015, I was approached by a librarian to do an event on site. That really was the kickstart for the Agri Kids message in schools and libraries. So far nearly seventy thousand children have taken part in Agri Kids workshops."

#### **CHILDREN ARE MOST VULNERABLE**

The Agri Kids founder has a specific target for her messaging: "We have lost almost

two hundred people over the past ten years through farm accidents. Ten percent of those were children with another high proportion over the age of sixty-five. So, we do have two really vulnerable parts of our farm population. I hate to use statistics because we tend to leave out the emotion and personal aspects involved. These are one hundred and ninety-seven people, with families and friends and communities all involved and affected. Increasing awareness is hugely important. It is not, however, translating sufficiently into changing practices or changes in our behaviour or attitudes. This is the missing part of improving farm safety. That's why I believe children can be so influential. We can bridge the gap by involving children in this conversation and bringing the message home, literally. I have seen grandparents a little lackadaisical when it came to rearing their own children on farms. They have a completely different attitude when it comes to their grandchildren. So, we have an opportunity to bridge a generational gap by involving more and more people. The whole family unit can be involved. Livestock and machinery are the main areas of concern



when it comes to the type and rate of accidents involved. Only six percent of our population work in a farm setting but fifty percent of workplace fatalities happen on farms. That has been the case for many years and is time we started addressing this from the ground up as well as from the top down. We need to make farm safety instinctive rather than something we are just aware of."

#### CHILDREN CAN INFLUENCE CHANGE

The Green Schools Programme is another area that Alma has become involved in to assist in getting the farm safety message across: "I worked on the Green Schools Programme during my time with Repac and I saw how influential children are in taking that reduce, reuse, recycle message from a classroom setting and bringing it home where they were pestering their parents to adopt the motto. As a result, we saw recycling rates grow. If children can be that passionate about recycling, then they can be equally as passionate about safety on farms. The workshops I deliver are very positive because with the knowledge I provide, I allow children to feed off that and bounce back positive

ideas. Children are very influential. They are natural learners and like to share the information they gather with others. I have had five and six year-old children become very aware and articulate on topics ranging from slurry spreading to cattle handling. They quickly identify that a tidy farmyard is a safer yard. They fully appreciate why and where they should wear hi-viz vests. Our children are more capable than we give them credit for. I like to harness that capability in my Agri Kids messaging, because children are the ones that are going to help us get on top of the awful reality of farm accidents.

#### A VALUABLE FARM EXPERIENCE

When children go onto a farm they are learning about science, maths, animal care and husbandry. They are learning so many key skills, but it really is about exposing children on an age-appropriate basis, on a competency basis. Are they aware of dangers? Do they understand the dangers? Exposing them to jobs appropriately and over time works. A love of farming will be built up and stay with them. Far too many children, however, are being placed in situations where

they have not got adequate experience or mentoring and are far too young. We need to chance that. Not only is it encouraging others to follow the example, it is also triggering awful memories for those already affected by farm accidents and fatalities. We have to be mindful. It is a highly emotive topic and we need to change practices as well as raising awareness through discussion and training. There is absolutely no room for complacency."

#### AN INTERNATIONAL ISSUE

One of the webinars Alma ran during Covid attracted over four thousand children to the site, many of them from abroad, showing that farm safety is a global issue, not just an Irish one: "There is no overnight solution to improving farm safety. It will be gradual and incremental. We have to support each other and when anyone sees a neighbour engaged in a potentially dangerous activity we have to be able to point it out. We can't afford to be afraid or reluctant to speak up. It could save a life, a limb or a lot of suffering for a lot of people. We must take control of the situation if we are to succeed."



# MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

**As we head into the closing months of 2022, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the ambitious targets set for carbon emission reductions by 2030 are not going to be achieved.** That includes the targets set for electricity generation, transport, agriculture, industry and residential. The barriers to achieving these goals in this timescale are related to both 'can't be done' and 'won't be done' factors. Let's take car transport electrification as an example. The aim to have one million electric-powered cars on our roads within eight years will not happen because these cars are too expensive for most purchasers and will remain so for some time to come. That is also a practical barrier to increasing the electric fleet. Many car buyers opt for second hand models. There are and will be too few of those available to meet the target. As momentum builds and electric and combustion powered car prices converge, it may be possible to anticipate half a million electric cars in the country by 2030. Energy production is another example of 'can't' and 'won't'. With much emphasis now on off-shore wind energy production, the reality is that a quadrupling or even quintupling of off-shore wind turbines built and operating within eight years would go

nowhere near meeting the 75 per cent target set for renewable energy production by 2030. Meanwhile international backers are running away from a ponderous and complex planning process for these constructions. Land-based turbines are facing increasing challenges as local communities intensify their opposition to their erection in their backyards.

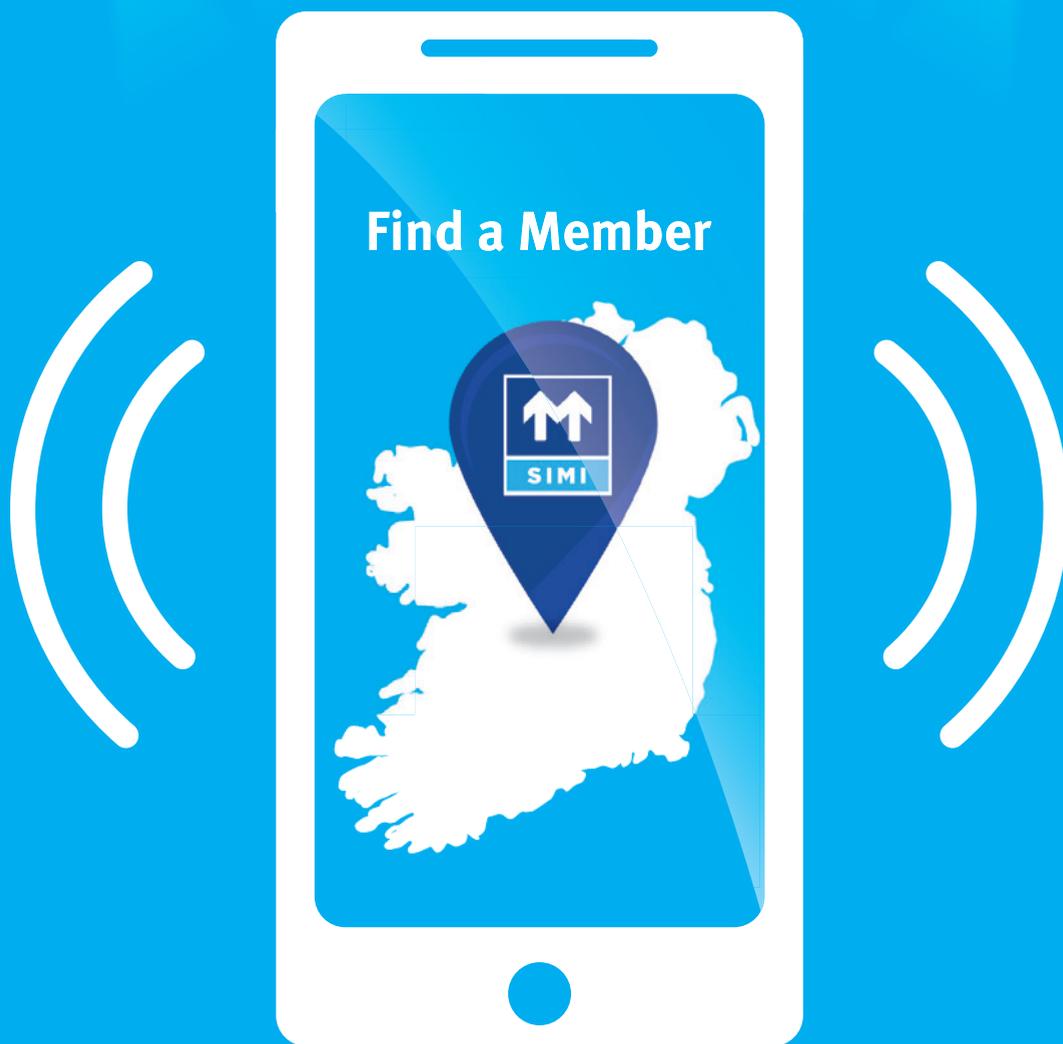
Solar is another renewable being touted. It has potential and will be increasingly adopted at small scale, especially on the roofs of domestic and business premises. Solar farms are gaining traction even though covering productive land with vast arrays of solar panels seems counterintuitive at a time of global food insecurity. In any case, the sun only shines for an average twelve hours per day and, as with wind generated energy, massive battery or hydrogen storage facilities will be required. That will also take time and finance. Add in objections and the whole process will be mired in the glacial planning process for far longer than the tight 2030 timescale. Other renewables including anaerobic digestion have potential to contribute towards our renewable energy targets but have long lead-in times. The debacle that is our forestry planning process

is slowly being reformed. Time will tell as to whether even the 8,000 hectares planted per annum can be restored not to mention the 18,000 hectares per annum cited by Professor Cathal O'Donoghue in these pages as necessary to reduce our agricultural carbon footprint. Confidence is difficult to build and even more difficult to restore when lost. Right now, there is very little confidence in planting forestry. Multiple planning applications for each forest life stage and inordinate delays in securing those permissions can be solved but farmers, especially, have lost confidence that the effort involved is worth the perceived hassle no matter how generous the financial rewards. Further increases in carbon taxes in the years ahead are immaterial to achieving our carbon reduction goals. The cost of fossil fuels, including coal, oil and gas, is now so high that no further price increases are required to persuade people to reduce consumption. They are already unaffordable. That does not mean that people will readily adopt alternative energy sources, simply because there are constraints on the availability of viable alternatives which will not be relaxed in the near or medium term. The mission to meet our 2030 targets seems impossible.

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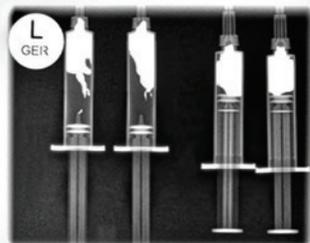
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