

www.irishfarmersmonthly.com

OCTOBER 2025

IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY

HERD HEALTH FOCUS

DRY-COW MANAGEMENT; TREATING LIVER FLUKE; IBR AND JOHNE'S DISEASE UPDATES

BIG INTERVIEW

ROSE OF TRALEE,
KATELYN CUMMINS

FORESTRY SECTOR

A FARMER'S VIEW ON
PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

ORGANIC ROADSHOWS

DRIVING INTEREST IN A
GROWING SECTOR



McHale

SILAGE FEEDER &
STRAW BLOWER
RANGE



CALL TODAY

Finance*
Available

Up to
40%
Straw Savings**

Designed to Blow Straw & Feed Wet Silage & Haylage

C430

LOADING VOLUME

2.2m³



1.3m
CONVEYOR LENGTH

C460

LOADING VOLUME

3.65m³



1.7m
CONVEYOR LENGTH

C470

LOADING VOLUME

4.65m³



2.2m
CONVEYOR LENGTH

C490

LOADING VOLUME

6.85m³



3m
CONVEYOR LENGTH

CALL TODAY

Irish Sales Rep.- James Heanue- 087 247 2399

McHale Superior Forage Solutions



www.mchale.net

OCTOBER 2025

EDITORIAL



Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

GOVT HEDGING ITS BETS ON MERCOSUR

There are times when politicians and others must determine which way the wind is blowing before making critical decisions. It is all very well sticking to immutable principles, but if the result is likely to be contrary to what you hoped for, there is little point in holding out for the unachievable. Mercosur is a case in point. There may or may not be adequate opposition to the trade deal with the South Americans among EU Member States. Given the current turmoil in trade, driven mainly, though not exclusively, by President Trump's tariffs, the EU must prioritise alternative and expanded opportunities with other countries and trade blocs. Germany sees the Mercosur countries as offering significant trade opportunities and the German economy badly needs to increase exports from its manufacturing sector. The country's loss of competitiveness in recent years will not be solved by one trade agreement but it will be seen as a potential trigger for increased output and profit. The French farm lobby is still as a major force to be placated by French Governments. Nevertheless, with huge and deteriorating financial challenges, including unsustainable debt levels, the French president will be tempted to grasp at any straws available to improve France's economic prospects. The Irish Government has been coy about its stance on Mercosur. It will, presumably seek further protective measures for Irish beef producers, allowing for the fact that there are considerable safeguards already in place to offset any precipitous price falls in European beef prices. The conundrum in that regard is a determination of the price base at which safeguarding measures would be triggered. Would it be based on last year's prices or this year's prices, or somewhere in between? Right now, Irish and European beef prices are at historic highs and need to remain there to deliver sustainable incomes for

producers. While a turnaround in cattle output is not expected in the immediate future, higher prices usually beget higher outputs eventually, whether that's in the production of coffee beans or prime steaks. Producers react to the potential for profit, just as milk producers globally reacted to higher milk prices, resulting in the current price retreat for producers. The lead-in time for increasing beef output is slower but, with grain prices remaining low, it is reasonable to suggest that a reversal of current reduced output levels will materialise relatively quickly. The input/output margin for grain-fed beef means that heavier carcasses have the potential to offset a proportion of the beef deficit currently being experienced. All this points towards an agreement finally being achieved between the European Union and the Mercosur countries comprising Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia. Recent engagements between China, India, Russia and others point towards the potential for new political and trade alignments being developed globally, which will only place further pressures on the European Union. Several of the Mercosur countries already have significant trade engagement, especially in meat products, with the Asia-Pacific region and European strategists will be conscious of the need to strengthen ties, political and economic, with the South Americans. It's not all about trade. There are global power dynamics at play of which we in Ireland may not be fully aware. The difficulties for the EU in achieving coherent and cohesive policies in relation to Russian aggression as well as the Israel/Gaza conflict show how important the completion of the Mercosur trade deal is in boosting the EU's status as a global trader. Any risk to Ireland's cattle producers may be considered acceptable collateral damage in the greater scheme of things.

CONTENTS

4 Upfront

8 News

9 Letter from Brussels

Damien O'Reilly, ICOS

10 Farm Safety

Ciaran Roche, FBD Risk Manager

12 Agri-economics

Ciaran Fitzgerald

14 Interview

TJ Flanagan, Chief Executive, ICOS

16 Interview

Katelyn Cummins, Rose of Tralee

20 Agri-finance

Eoin Lowry, Head of Agri.,
Bank of Ireland

36 Interview

John Murphy, IFA

38 Feature

A Farmer's View Of Forestry

40 Interview

Joe Healy
Chair, Cultivate Credit Union

43 Management Hints

46 Machinery

55 ICMSA Opinion

President Denis Drennan

56 Rural Life

Roadshows Driving Organic Growth

58 A Word In Your Ear

FOCUS Herd Health

26 Johne's Disease -

New Reporting Structure

29 Managing The Dry Cow Period

32 IBR National Eradication Plan - Update

34 Getting It Right With Liver Fluke



Editor: Matt O'Keeffe Deputy Editor: Bernie Commins Machinery Editor: Noel Dunne Production: Martin Whelan Advertising Manager: Brian Murphy Commercial and Advertising Manager: Anna Douglas Accounts: Tricia Murtagh Administration & Subscriptions: Eleanor Connolly Chief Executive: Rebecca Markey Printing: W&G Baird Publishers: IFP Media Subscription: €46 per annum Irish Farmers Monthly, Castlecourt, Monkstown Farm, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, A96 XE77. Tel: +353 1 7096900 Email: berniecommins@ifpmedia.com www.irishfarmersmonthly.com Copyright IFP Media 2025. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any material form without the express written permission of the publishers.



WWW.IRISHFARMERSMONTHLY.COM



JURY MEMBER FOR IRELAND



FTMTA ANNOUNCES 2026 SHOW DATE



FTMTA executive director,
Michael Farrelly and FTMTA
president, Maurice Kelly.

The Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association's (FTMTA) biennial machinery show will, once again, be held at Punchestown Racecourse from November 10-12, 2026.

The 2024 instalment was extremely successful and well attended, according to current FTMTA president Maurice Kelly, speaking at the 2026 launch. The 150,000 square feet of covered indoor space sold out well in advance last year and interest in exhibiting at the 2026 gig is likely to be even higher. The venue is perfect for exhibitors and visitors alike, with ample space to show off the latest innovations and models in agricultural machinery. This dedicated FTMTA Machinery Show allows committed machinery-minded farmers and contractors ease of access to view the products on

display, engage with traders and even strike deals after comparing and contrasting alternative purchase options. For exhibitors, there is ample space to showcase a wide array of their brands, products, services and general offerings. Maurice pointed out that the machinery market is very vibrant and upbeat in Ireland this year, with tractor sales in May 2025 up 55 per cent, compared to the same month in 2024. This month (October), the FTMTA holds a conference for the farm machinery industry, hosted by Ivan Yates. Titled 'Navigating the Evolving Agricultural Machinery Landscape' it is an opportunity for attendees to network and prepare for the changes and innovations that will drive the sector in the coming years. Ahead of the conference, FTMTA executive director,

Michael Farrelly reported that membership of the association has grown by 15 per cent over the past four years. This year alone, the FTMTA has run more than 10 training courses for members, highlighting the appetite throughout the industry for upskilling, boosting in-house knowledge, improving operations and increasing profitability. The conference's keynote speaker is Donegal football manager, Jim McGuinness. Among the main sponsors are the *Irish Farmers Journal* and Kramp, the European agricultural, horticultural, and construction parts and accessories supplier which acquired the leading Irish agri-spares outlet Genfitt in 2023. The conference is also supported by Local Power, AIB, PTSB, DLL, IBCOS, *AgriLand*, Eventus, Experlogix and InsightHR.

DOUBLE WIN FOR ABBEY

The second outing of the FTMTA Golfing Society for 2025 was held at Gowran Park Golf Course. The overall winner of the men's competition was Charlie Cavanagh from Abbey Machinery, while the overall winner of the ladies' competition was Ber Cavanagh also from Abbey Machinery. Pictured with both winners are Pat O'Neill and Robert Kidd representing the sponsors, First Citizen Agri Finance.





One of the main highlights of the event each year is the prestigious Machine of the Year award. This year, that honour went to Paul Quinn from Mastek.

MACHINERY INDUSTRY DELIGHTED WITH PLOUGHING

The Ploughing had a fantastic turnout with over 230,000 people attending over the three days last month. The weather cooperated, though there was frantic activity after heavy rain on the Tuesday night to ensure that any areas with pools of water were drained and resurfaced with woodbark to accommodate vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The professionalism and sheer endurance of the National Ploughing Association's (NPA) voluntary workforce – before, during and after – was quite incredible. The feedback from the machinery industry representatives who exhibited at Scraggan was very positive. The outdoor event is the biggest in Europe,

with around 1,400 exhibitors. The Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena was a showcase for Ireland's cutting edge agri-tech innovations and is now recognised as a focus for inventors, entrepreneurs and pioneering machinery developers across the country. What was most impressive was the array of technologically advanced machines on display. Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept. It is well embedded in the Irish farm sector, from fertility detection and management to precision farming equipment and everything in between. The Ploughing would not be the Ploughing, without the politicians coming out in droves. This year was no exception, with presidential

candidates pressing the flesh, and even 'The Traitors' got in on the act with characters from the successful TV reality show, popping up everywhere and anywhere. President Michael D Higgins made one of his last public appearances before his term ends in November. He waved regularly as he was ferried through the Scraggan crowds. We wish him well in his retirement. His would-be replacement was among the trio of Jim Gavin, Heather Humphries and Catherine Connolly, all meeting and greetings potential voters at the Tullamore venue. While none of them is likely to set the Irish political world on fire, maybe that is not what we should be looking for in a largely impotent titular head of State.

POPULISM IN THE REAR WINDOW – HOPEFULLY

This month's Budget for 2026 provides firm indications of the Government's approach to Ireland's long-term financial wellbeing. A relatively conservative Budget shows that the message is finally getting through that much of the tax largess of the 'spend-spend' policy from previous years is by no means guaranteed to last indefinitely. The Irish Fiscal Council along with other advisory bodies have given ample warnings, even harking back to the stamp duty dependency in the early years of this century, which, when the housing boom collapsed, showed a government with no tax-income clothes, leading in turn to a humiliating bail-out for the country. We have full employment, even a jobs deficit in some sectors, including the farming and building sectors. We have year-on-year increases in tax revenues, albeit from an ever-narrowing tax base, so what is there to worry about? Just about everything, actually. The Trump-led pressures to reclaim both revenue and domicile for US

multinationals, many of them based in Ireland, will lead inevitably to slower growth in the Pharma and IT sectors in Ireland and even, potentially, a reduction in jobs and activities in the sectors for Ireland. That is just one potential danger for the Irish economy. Add in global political and military disruptions, climate change challenges and the classic 'unknown unknowns' and any responsible government should be wary. Many of our biggest customers for our exports, most notably Britain, France and Germany, have huge economic and financial challenges, which will inevitably eat into their buying power. We cannot take our present economic stability for granted. There is also the need to expand and improve our economic infrastructure. Water, energy, transport and sewage infrastructure deficits are going to be costly investments, which Ireland must make if we want to be competitive and safeguard jobs in the coming years. The time for populist Budgets should be firmly in the rear window.



InTouch

CATHAL BOHANE
HEAD OF INTOUCH NUTRITION

WORKING ON THE CONDITIONS

September can be like a bonus month for many farmers. A stretch of good weather and steady grass growth, without the need for winter feeding, is a real win. Unlike 2024 we didn't get that this year and 2025 has delivered double and, in some parts, treble the rainfall levels of September 2024. Regardless, feeding continues right up to and including the winter, especially as we try and build grass covers.

On many farms, milk yield has dropped. Some might say that this is down to the lack of grass and reliance on silage. In reality, the energy gap between good silage and good grass is equivalent to about two litres of milk. Any further drop signals an energy shortfall, which must be offset with extra silage and concentrates. As highlighted in previous articles, the guiding principle for any autumn feeding regime is simple: protect animal intake, and everything else will follow. A loss of just 2kg of dry matter intake (DMI) now can lead to four litres less milk. Once it is lost, it is hard to recover.

The response to feeding now goes beyond milk yield; body condition or cow weight are just as important. With only six weeks left until dry-off for January-calving cows, we need to be getting cows into the correct body condition score (BCS) for this time. Examine cows, especially in the thurl region – see image below – and you should see a more U-shaped than V-shaped definition. This is not a complete BCS technique but if you are seeing U-shaped then you are around BCS 3 or above. If you are seeing V-shaped, then you have work to do.



Remember, animals are more efficient at putting on condition when they are milking than when they are dry and you have the extra bonus of getting a return of some high-value milk as well. When calculating the return on investment of feeding milking cows you need to subtract the cost of feeding them when they are dry. This is the actual cost of getting 10-12 litres of milk. Heifers and cows under pressure might need extra TLC as they begin to lose a lot of gut fill in late lactation and will have the appearance of their gut being higher than their udder.

KEENAN
an Alltech company

Alltech

ACRES TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Participants who entered the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES) under the first tranche can now avail of a voluntary training course under the ACRES Training Scheme (ATS).

According to Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon TD, farmers who entered the scheme in 2023 are eligible for the training, which will aid them in the ongoing management of their land in ACRES. Tranche 2 participants will be able to avail of the scheme in 2026. Commenting, the minister said: "More than 97 per cent of all ACRES participants are now fully paid in respect of their participation in the scheme in 2023 and 2024 and, for those in receipt of results-based payments, this is an opportunity for them to learn more about the scorecards used to assess their lands when scoring and to learn about ways to improve overall score. For those in the ACRES Co-operation approach, it is also a timely opportunity for them to get information on Non-Productive Investments and/or Landscape Actions which may also assist them to improve the overall score of their holdings."

Tranche 1 farmers are urged to contact an approved ACRES trainer, as listed on the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's website, to arrange attendance at a voluntary ACRES training course which will be available to them up to December 31, 2025.



The 2024 John Feely Scholarship recipients: Tommy Ryan, Limerick; Lydia McGrath, Cork; Andrew Graham, Wexford; and Cian Commons, Meath; with Denis Drennan, president, ICMSA (centre).

APPLY NOW FOR JOHN FEELY SCHOLARSHIPS

The Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA) is calling for applications to the John Feely Foundation. The ICMSA is committing €6,000 – in four payments of €1,500 – to farm students from each of the four ICMSA administrative areas. The names are selected by open draw at the ICMSA's AGM, which is provisionally scheduled for November 28. To qualify for the draw, individuals must be enrolled in year one of an agricultural course at one of the following agricultural colleges – Clonakilty, Kildalton, Pallaskenry, Gurteen, Mountbellew and Ballyhaise – or studying an agriculture-related or veterinary course in a third-level institution. Applications can be made by any ICMSA member who nominates a named individual, including a child/relation, and confirms the college/course the nominee is attending. They must also provide their own name, phone number and membership number. Nominations must be received at ICMSA head office by 5pm on Friday, November 14.



**MILK
SOLIDS
GROWTH**

UNLOCK MORE PERFORMANCE FROM YOUR HERD

PARTICIPATE

Track your milk solids
with the Milk Solids
Tracker in real time.

PROGRESS

Use insights to
implement targeted
improvements.

PROFIT

See measurable gains
in milk solids and your
bottom line.



Be part of the future,
join the movement.

LET'S GO!

Visit: Tirlanfarmlife.com



IRBEA CALLS FOR PILOT SCHEME FOR 15 FARM-SCALE BIOGAS PLANTS

The Irish BioEnergy Association (IrBEA) has stressed the need for Government to introduce a range of targeted measures to support the development of the bioenergy sector. One such measure would see the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine introduce a €2-3m pilot scheme to support the construction of up to 15 farm-scale biogas plants. This scale of production can contribute to farm emission reductions and to farm income, while also raising awareness within rural communities of the positive benefits of biogas plants, IrBEA said. Representing the biomass, biogas, biofuel, biochar, wood fuel and energy crops sectors, IrBEA said there is an opportunity for Government to recognise bioenergy's role in addressing Ireland's climate, energy security, and rural economic challenges. IrBEA CEO, Sean Finan described bioenergy

as the largest source of renewable energy globally and said it had a vital role to play in Ireland's energy transition. He is adamant that, with the correct support measures, the Government can stimulate investment, create rural jobs, displace fossil fuels, and deliver meaningful carbon reductions. He also noted that other countries are further ahead in terms of bioenergy development and Ireland needs to play catch-up quickly. The key requests from IrBEA include a Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH) extending it to the emissions trading system (ETS) sector, along with the removal of the 1MW cap. Support for the replacement of older biomass boilers is another IrBEA proposal. Planned increases in carbon tax should also be maintained with revenues earmarked to support bioenergy and biomethane developments, it says. And the

long-awaited renewable heat obligation must be introduced without delay, with other dedicated supports and measures to develop the sector.

The extended list of actions requested by IrBEA include: fair treatment of biomass equipment in line with other mobile machinery in terms of road taxation, and the use of marked gas oil; €3m in capital grants should be available to help wood fuel producers meet new Air Pollution Act moisture content requirements; support for eco-design heating appliances, with domestic grants covering the replacement of fossil-fuel appliances with biomass stoves and boilers; low-cost Government-backed loans to assist bioenergy companies support forestry owners affected by storm damage; and dedicated funding for renewable energy training programmes.

TEAGASC SUPPORTS NEW MEN'S HEALTH REPORT

Premature death among males in Ireland is 40 per cent higher when compared to females, according to a recently published report by Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI), in association with the Movember movement.

The report, titled *The Real Face of Men's Health, 2025 Republic of Ireland Report* contains a number of strategies to improve men's health here, and it is supported by Teagasc.

According to the report, the five leading causes of premature death among males in 2022 were: cancers, diseases of the circulatory system, external causes of injury and poisoning, diseases of the respiratory system, and diseases of the digestive system.

The report focuses on the connections between gender and health. On average, globally, men die younger than women, while women spend a greater portion of their lives in poor health and with disabilities compared to men. Underdiagnosis of coronary heart disease is one area where woman's health is underserved. Trans people have disproportionately worse health than the general population. Accordingly,

health promotion is crucial throughout the population. The conditions which lead to premature death or poor health are largely avoidable through improved screening, earlier diagnosis and treatment, lifestyle modifications (e.g. improving diet, weight control and exercise, reducing tobacco and alcohol use) together with adopting health promotion messages and utilising disease prevention services.

Dr John McNamara, Teagasc health and safety specialist, pointed out that while the report does not deal with any specific occupational group such as farmers, Irish studies consistently indicate that farmers have poorer mortality outcomes than other occupational groups. A recent ERSI report titled *Unequal Chances? Inequalities in Mortality in Ireland* found that farmers and agricultural workers have by far the highest standard mortality ratios of all socioeconomic groups.

The MHFI-Movember report provides data indicating that health status varies significantly with levels of economic deprivation for both men and women. The leading risk factors for poor health include limited access to timely healthcare or early

detection healthcare, poor diet, smoking or excessive alcohol use.

Dr McNamara said assisting farmers to gain economic sustainability is a major objective of advisory services, which can have a positive knock-on effect on farmer health. Additionally, he says, Irish research studies show that poor farmer health and disability lead to farm income reduction and lower levels of off-farm employment, resulting in farm household income reduction.

In MHFI-Movember report a series of 'What Works' features are provided including the On Feirm Ground project where the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)/Department of Health sponsors training of farm advisors and service providers to farmers to help them direct farmers towards health services. It also features the Farmers have Hearts cardiovascular health-check programme operated at marts and shows.

Report authors are Dr Noel Richardson, director of the National Centre for Men's Health (NCMH) at Southeast Technological University (SETU), Dr Ashling McGrath, lecturer in health promotion at SETU and Colin Fowler, director of operations, MHFI.



Damien O'Reilly
EU Affairs and Communications Manager, ICOS

LETTER FROM BRUSSELS

Brussels is buzzing again after the summer slumber. It kicked off in earnest on September 10 with EU Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, delivering her annual State of the European Union to the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

In a wide-ranging speech, which spanned many topics including Ukraine and defence, she also touched on food and farming. It included a promise of a new 'Buy European Food' campaign. Addressing MEPs, she referenced EU farmers and fishers. "They are the custodians of our lands and oceans, our biodiversity, the key to our food security. However, they are facing headwinds from high input costs to red tape or unfair competition," she pointed out. "We are acting on all those fronts, farmers' need fair competition and a level playing field."

Echoing the mantra of European Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, Christophe Hansen, she said: "We also need to strengthen the position of farmers in the food chain. For too long their hard work has not paid off as it should. Farmers have a right to a fair price for their food – and a fair profit for their families."

There is a feeling in Brussels that the trade deal with the US is not good for Europe and the Commissioner acknowledged this: "I do not believe in tariffs as tariffs are taxes," she said. But she went on to stress that the agreement 'provides crucial stability in our relations with the US at a time of grave global insecurity'. She continued: "Think of the repercussions of a fully-fledged trade war with the US. Picture the chaos. This is why we did a deal to keep market access for our industries and we ensured that Europe got the best possible deal out there."

President von der Leyen also touched on the controversial Mercosur trade agreement, which does not sit comfortably with Irish beef farmers, but pointed to shifting sands of global trade. "At a time when the global trading system is crumbling, we are securing the global rules through bilateral agreements, like with Mexico or Mercosur, or finalising negotiations on a historic deal with India by the end of this year," she said.

Despite the tenor of her words, still, the huge cut to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) proposed in the Multiannual Financial Framework announced in July is the overriding concern. The fight is already underway within COPA COGECA against the stringent cut in the budget coupled with the restructuring of the CAP to one pillar. We will soon see if the Commission is really committed to EU farming concerns.



The beginning of the end: Lactation 2025

Maeve Regan,
Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

For spring calving herds, the end of the lactation is now in sight and there are important decisions to be made over the next few weeks that will dictate how stress-free calving 2026 may be. This month, we'll highlight a few important boxes to be added to the 'to-do' checklist prior to drying off.

Milk recording

As a rule of thumb, four milk recordings a year should be carried out to allow you to make well-informed decisions throughout the year. At this point the final milk recording should be organised close to the onset of drying off, to help review dry cow plans regarding selective dry cow therapy (ideally within 30 days of drying off). In the current climate, milk recording will play a vital role in identifying our most profitable cows.

BCS

It is always best practice to dry off cows at, or very close to same condition that she should calve down in (Target 3.0-3.25). Therefore, the nutrition of the dry cow should just maintain condition over the 60-day dry period (thin cows should be dried off early to allow for recuperation of condition). Where large variation in the herd arises with BCS, a tailored plan is advisable.

Silage analysis

Nutrition for the dry cow will centre around what quality silage is available (Silage analysis on forage available over the dry period is crucial!). High quality silage will need dilution with straw to avoid over-conditioning or where quality is very poor, some level of supplementation will be required.

Where issues have occurred on farm regarding milk fever, retained afterbirth and/or slow calvings, a silage mineral analysis is advisable to establish K% in the dry cow silage being offered. Preventative plans can then be put in place to avoid such issues reoccurring.

Selecting a dry cow mineral

Feeding a high-quality dry cow mineral for 60 days is central to allowing the cow to calve down without issue. Most Irish silages lack the required mineral levels to get the cow through the dry period. A high inclusion of a highly soluble source of Magnesium will be essential to overcome milk fever risks, which in any good mineral, will be coupled with a high inclusion of chelated/protected trace elements to overcome antagonist issues, and a strong all-round vitamin pack (A, D3 & E).

For more information contact your local Agritech Sales Advisor or visit www.agritech.ie.



www.agritech.ie





GET WINTER READY

THE WEATHER IS CHANGING, AND THE DAYLIGHT HOURS ARE STARTING TO GET SHORTER. NOW IS THE TIME TO START THINKING ABOUT GETTING YOUR FARM READY FOR THE WINTER SEASON AHEAD, WRITES CIARAN ROCHE, FBD RISK MANAGER

Good planning and preparedness will help ensure your safety and the safety of others on the farm. Farm building maintenance, lighting, electrical safety, housekeeping, weather conditions and manual handling are all areas that need to be considered to ensure your safety on the farm this winter.

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 snowstorms accompanied by acute snow accumulation on 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.

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 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.

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 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 to avoid and reduce manual handling activities. Ask yourself if it can be done differently to eliminate the manual handling, or to minimise 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.

For more winter-specific farm safety information, scan the code



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2025 FBD YOUNG FARMER OF THE YEAR



CATEGORY WINNERS:

- Best Young Entrant:
Sarah Kelly
- Land Mobility Award:
David Heraty
- Drystock Award:
Amie Coonan
- Farm Management Award:
Brian Fitzpatrick
- Other Enterprises
Award / Runner Up:
Isaac Wheelock
- Dairy Award /
Biodiversity Award:
Aileen Sheehan



**FBD Young Farmer
of the Year 2025:
Aileen Sheehan**

SUPPORT.

IT'S WHAT WE DO.





Ciaran Fitzgerald
Agri-food economist

A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

Agri-food economist, Ciaran Fitzgerald, exposes a major contradiction in the role that Ireland's livestock sector plays in managing global emissions

Beef prices and demand for beef locally and globally are thriving but a systemic shrinking of the national herd means that the Irish beef sector may fail to benefit fully from the improved price profile of the sector. This outcome would reduce the economic contribution of the sector to the Irish economy and, perversely, see global emissions from beef production increase.

Irish livestock profile

Ireland has 67,000 beef farmers, with an additional 12,000 people employed in meat-processing facilities across the country. The Irish beef sector produces just over 650,000 tonnes of beef annually. Exports valued at just over €3.2bn account for 95 per cent of that production, amounting to almost 620,000 tonnes, with the remainder consumed locally. That export tonnage makes Ireland the sixth biggest beef exporter in the world. Moreover, livestock farming and meat and dairy processing in Ireland represent 80 per cent of our national agricultural output with a combined total ex-factory revenue of almost €10bn. However, the beef herd in Ireland has been decimated over the last 10 years with beef suckler cow numbers down by 400,000 head, principally in response to a domestic onslaught that has demanded reductions in livestock numbers, initially in regard to carbon emissions but now also in the context of the Nitrates Directive.

Policies and prejudices

This latest politicisation of regulatory requirements means that livestock numbers, supplies to Irish meat factories and, inevitably, the ability of the beef sector to continue to provide a unique regional and rural contribution to the Irish economy, are being threatened through

incessant downward pressure, largely deriving from constraining domestic policies and prejudices. As illustrated in figure 1 and highlighted in greater detail later on in this article, Irish beef cow numbers have declined dramatically with dairy cow numbers now also showing some decline. It should be noted that all of this decline is before any impact from the potential loss of or further reductions accruing from our nitrates derogation.

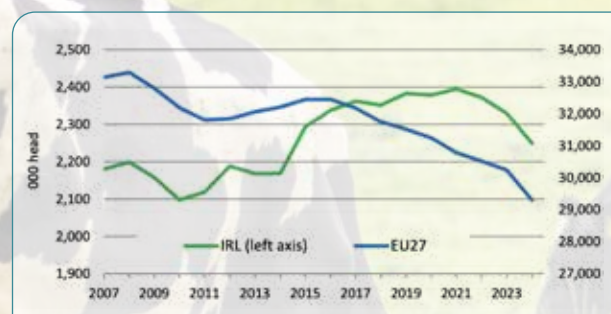


Figure 1: Irish and EU27 cow inventories December 2007-2024.

Source: Eurostat.

Beef farming, unlike milk production, has a multi-enterprise profile both in terms of the origin of animals and the number of stages in the calf to finished beef farming processes.

The 1.8 million average annual meat factory throughput of the last four or five years comes from two sets of breeding stock. Our beef-herd component has declined quite dramatically with beef suckler cow numbers reduced, as previously stated, by over 400,000 head from a decade ago. Meanwhile, the other contributor to Irish beef output, the dairy herd, having grown with the abolition of milk quotas in 2015, has now stabilised.

Moreover, beef cattle may have gone through four to five farming enterprises involving calf to beef, calf rearing, pure beef finishing and all the other intermediary stages that form the rather unique Irish livestock production chain. Importantly all of these farming interactions

involve multiple social and economic experiences that are not replaced when livestock numbers decline. This decrease in cow numbers, especially in the suckler herd, is in contrast to the economic signals from the EU beef market and indeed the global marketplace where demand for Irish grass-fed beef is increasing. Indeed, as shown in figure 2, beef prices to farmers over the last number of years have increased quite substantially.

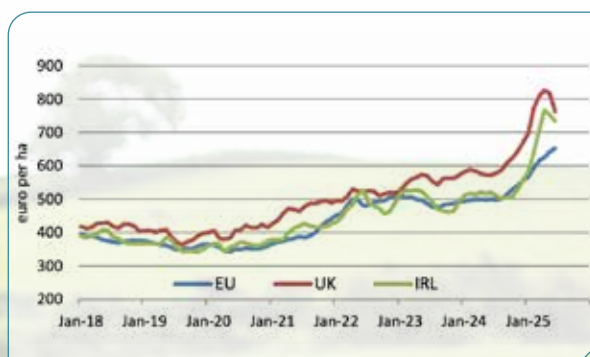


Figure 2: Monthly EU, UK and Irish finished cattle prices 2018-2025 (excl. VAT). Source: DG Agriculture and Rural Development, AHDB and ECB.

A perverse anomaly

Perversely, the relative importance of agriculture and livestock production across the Irish economy currently and historically has created an emissions management and reduction anomaly. This has allowed what I consider to be, an anti-agriculture prejudice to dominate the public narrative so that reductions in Irish livestock numbers (rather than reductions in livestock emissions) are now entrenched at the core of a national climate action process. Moreover, when this weaponisation of IPCC accounts is challenged, a blunt repost that Ireland signed up for the Paris Agreement of 2006 conveniently ignores and dismisses the very specific statement in Article 2 of the Paris agreement: 'Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner

that does not threaten food production'.

As confirmed by the December census of 2024, the decline in beef cow numbers is continuing, with a year-on-year fall of 50,000 head by December 2024 versus December 2023. The total loss in beef cow numbers is almost 400,000 head since the peak of 1.16 million suckler cows in 2012, according to the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation.

The great suckler cow exodus

A key element of this reduction in suckler cow numbers is the regional spread, with the chart showing that suckler cow numbers in Connacht, where dairying is not a mainstream of livestock production, have declined by over 100,000 head. There is no real sign, despite better prices for beef cattle along the supply chain, that this rush to exit suckler cow farming has halted in any way, with the 50,000 head reduction in 2023/24 being the highest in recent years. Very clearly, the legal challenges to both the Nitrates Directive and dairy expansion, led by An Taisce, encapsulate this anti-livestock farming lobby view that promotes dramatic reductions in livestock numbers as the sole 'policy' solution to any and all environmental challenges. However an additional part of this bias against the beef sector and Irish agriculture in general derives from a place of ignorance concerning the unique and substantial economic impact of the agriculture sector across the rural and regional Irish economy. This is manifested as indifference to the consequences of a diminished Irish Agriculture sector based on a superficial view that because we have a large multi-national sector we don't need Irish beef or indeed Irish agricultural activity to any great extent beyond supplying the domestic consumer economy. Even in that context, there is a demand from some environmentalists that Irish farmers redirect their activities from livestock production based on a competitive grass-based system towards plant-based production, in which we have neither the soils, expertise nor scale to compete. As is well illustrated by the current and very raw experiences of our close neighbours in the UK from Brexit, no good tends to come from economic self-harm.

SUPPORTING FARMERS & THEIR FAMILIES FOR OVER 50 YEARS.

*Talk to us today to find out why 9 out of 10 customers stay with FBD.**

Visit your **local branch**
or call us on **0818 18 18 18**

SUPPORT.

IT'S WHAT WE DO.



*Based on all FBD Insurance direct renewal data from Jun '24 – Dec '24.
FBD Insurance Group Ltd trading as FBD Insurance is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.



CO-OPERATIVE BY NAME CO-OPERATIVE BY NATURE

THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY DECLARED 2025 THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF CO-OPERATIVES (IYC), RECOGNISING THEIR ROLE IN DRIVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. **MATT O'KEEFE** SPOKE TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE IRISH CO-OPERATIVE ORGANISATION SOCIETY (ICOS), **TJ FLANAGAN**, ABOUT THE SUCCESS OF THE MOVEMENT HERE

The theme of the IYC is 'Co-operatives Build a Better World' and while TJ would obviously agree with this observation, he also knows that this is no easy feat, nor does he take the success of Ireland's co-operative movement for granted: "It has had a real impact, and it continues to have an impact. It's in very good health. Obviously it's stronger in the dairy sector and in certain parts of the livestock industry. That suits people's needs, but you can't take this success for granted. "It takes a lot of work to keep a co-op healthy and relevant and to keep members engaged and involved. That doesn't happen by accident. It takes committed leadership and members who will go to meetings and get involved by standing for election, attending AGMs, and challenging the board by holding it to account. They are all signs of a healthy democratic co-operative movement."

TJ believes in the inherent dynamism of co-operative endeavour: "From the outside, co-ops may not appear to be super dynamic, but to be fair, farmers are conservative people who make long-term investment decisions and they're not going to be swayed by flash-in-the pan decision-making. Their co-operative businesses have to match the needs of the farmer and their business and their commitment and long-term investment in farming. Co-op operations are reflective of that long-term business view."

A REFRESHING APPROACH

There have been a number of significant developments in ICOS over the last few years, TJ explains: "Our co-ops initiated a huge body of work over the last five or six years, which culminated in significant rule and policy changes. They looked far and wide across Europe and the world to see how other co-operatives had developed, what was tried and tested and what worked best for attracting and keeping members involved. Reaching out to young farmers, including female farmers who, unfortunately, hadn't been involved enough in the industry, was a particular priority."

This approach, he says, is starting to pay dividends already. He

continues: "We are seeing some really strong and impressive females make their way up through the co-op, particularly up to the governance structure. Refreshing the membership register has also been a priority and we have seen significant rationalisation and updating in recent years. It's a perennial challenge, with retiring farmers, and the need to continuously recruit active farmers. At the same time, you must respect the commitment of those people through a lifetime of farming and co-operative membership. But ultimately you have to concentrate decision-making among the people who have skin in the game."

"It takes a fair bit of work, particularly by the secretary, the management and board of a co-op in keeping the share register updated regularly, getting new members involved, getting them to buy shares and, ultimately, coming up with mechanisms whereby you can ultimately concentrate the power and control among those people."

THE NEXT STEPS IN CO-OPERATION

Will the evolving farming sector in Ireland lead to further rationalisation of marts and co-ops here, does he think? "When I joined ICOS, we were told the marts were finished, that there were too many in the country. There's only a handful of fewer marts now than 30 years ago. They have probably had the best couple of years they've had in a long time. But yes, there will be more rationalisation in time."

"Farmer numbers are reducing. Farmers trading needs are changing. Meanwhile, marts are probably more relevant now than they were 10 years ago. Online trading has created a new dynamic in livestock sales. It was something people thought couldn't happen, but the Covid-19 pandemic made it happen overnight and now it's just part of the normal trading system."

It is the dairy co-ops where the biggest rationalisation changes have occurred, TJ says: "In terms of the dairy co-ops, which have the highest profile, we've seen huge changes including amalgamations and mergers – Tipperary and Arrabawn being the most recent example of that, but not the last."



CEO of ICOS, TJ Flanagan.

THE CO-OP'S CO-OP

Owned by Irish co-ops, Kerrygold is a huge standout success for the Irish dairy industry. It is a very valuable brand and Ornuia is a very valuable business. TJ says: "If we keep producing milk in the way that we do – off grass – then the Kerrygold platform is a fantastic one from which to monetise that unique selling point. We have lots of other routes to market whether it's infant formula inputs or co-ops in joint ventures or subsidiaries across the world. They all work in parallel, but Ornuia is a key business within the Irish co-op structure."



IT TAKES A LOT OF WORK TO KEEP A CO-OP HEALTHY AND RELEVANT AND TO KEEP MEMBERS ENGAGED AND INVOLVED

"Looking at some statistics recently, I saw that in 1914, there were 1,000 general dairy co-op societies in the country. There are probably 20 at the moment, eight of whom have broad-based processing facilities. With new technologies and practices, it's a constant process and there'll be ongoing consolidation within the sector, but it'll happen in its own time."

THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

ICOS has a long history of European involvement, TJ explains: "Cooperation and co-operatives, are not a uniquely Irish structure. There's a big European dimension and ICOS is fully involved in that. We have had an office in Brussels since we joined the EEC in 1973. It's very important to have a presence in Brussels. That's where the big decision making takes place. We have a lot of involvement at the moment in terms of the common market organisation, which is a regulation around the relationship between farmers and their co-ops. Obviously the nitrates piece is red hot at the moment in Brussels. The general policy emphasis in Brussels changes all the time and it's always important for us to monitor and influence those ongoing policy developments."

COMPETITIVE CO-OPERATION

Competition between dairy co-ops here is 'red hot' says TJ, and that is no bad thing. It keeps them on their toes, he says: "To be fair, they have to compete with each other. They constantly chase efficiency to give the best value to their members. Sometimes the milk price debate gets really contentious, perhaps too much so. But on balance, it's probably a good thing that co-ops have to compete with each other to demonstrate to members that they are the most efficient that they can be."

At the end of the day, the model it has worked. "Our co-op structure is among the strongest in the world and serves farmers well. Some co-ops had their dalliances with public limited companies and other structures. They have now decided the core business of processing milk is best based in a co-op structure."

A DIVERSE ORGANISATION

The ICOS chief explains the diverse activities of the organisation: "Our core focus is on the co-ops, their rules and governance and their structures and the health of the Irish co-op movement. We have lots

of other operations. We administer a couple of pension schemes for the industry, for instance. We run a Skillnet that delivers up to 15,000 person days of training a year. We have our Brussels office, along with key representation at national level on animal health and welfare bodies, and animal transport. Our lobbying role is very active, including on the Nitrates Directive. We run a European Innovation Project on generational renewal. They're all complementary and core to a healthy co-op."

MooMonitor+

BETTER FERTILITY, HEALTHIER COWS AND MORE CALVES...

Complete farm management platform that records, analyses and displays herd data in one single place.



f i n x v d
call now: 0818 124 124
www.dairymaster.com

BERNIE COMMINS MET THE 2025 ROSE OF TRALEE, KATELYN CUMMINS AT THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS WHERE SHE LEARNED ABOUT THE APPRENTICE ELECTRICIAN'S AMBITION TO BREAK THE STIGMA OF WOMEN ENTERING TRADITIONALLY MALE DOMINATED PROFESSIONS

COMING UP ROSES

They say that good things come to those who wait but they – whoever they are – never provide the fine-print details of what ‘wait’ actually means. In the real world, good things come to those who pursue, persist and persevere, with a healthy serving of determination on the side. This is what comes to mind having met Katelyn. Coming from a dairy farm on the Laois-Kilkenny border, the Ploughing is no stranger to Katelyn, nor her to it: “I have been coming here every year since I was five or six,” she says, agreeing that this year, however, was a very different experience. “It is mental; so, so different. Every other year, you are parked in a field and walking 25 minutes to get to a gate, dragging through the dirt. This year we were given a pass for the car, collected by a buggy, brought straight to HQ, and given a really warm welcome.”

BREAKING THE STIGMA

Katelyn's persona has been amplified by her recent Rose of Tralee victory and she is embracing and using that spotlight for the most worthy of reasons: “I enjoy having the opportunity to advocate for things that are important to me, and talking about those things, and I feel like the Rose of Tralee is a very good baseline for that.”

Elaborating on this, she says: “I want to advocate for young girls and young lads in Ireland who aren't so sure about their future and maybe don't know what they want to do. I think it is important to explore all options and to try not to go the traditional route, such as maybe doing your work experience in the local primary school because it is the easier thing to do. I think it is very important to try different experiences because they teach you so much.

“When I did my work experience with a local electrician, it taught me so much about what I really want to do, which is to be an electrician. So, you need to cover all your bases and really try to understand what there is out there. You don't have to go to college. You can if you want to, obviously, but there are so many other paths to so many careers, and I think that is so important to advocate for women in Ireland who may be afraid to go into male dominated trades. I think women might worry that there would be some element of judgement and that it might be difficult to get into the area.”

Katelyn is very well placed and experienced to make this point. At just 20, she is in the third phase of her four-year electrical apprenticeship. But securing it was not easy: “I do know that it is very difficult to get into a male-dominated trade – it took me four months to get a job to do the



Homegrown for the world stage.

As Ireland's largest exporter of Irish dairy products and the proud owner of Kerrygold, we understand what Irish dairy means to consumers across the world.

It takes great passion, care and commitment to produce a world-class product, which is why we're proud to support Irish farming families.



@Ornua | www.ornua.com

Ornua
THE HOME OF IRISH DAIRY



Katelyn Cummins, the 2025 Rose of Tralee.
Photo: Rose of Tralee.



I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO EXPLORE ALL OPTIONS AND TO TRY NOT TO GO THE TRADITIONAL ROUTE BECAUSE IT IS THE EASIER THING TO DO

apprenticeship, and there is such a stigma there that women can't do it or shouldn't be allowed to do it because we are not the same as lads, or we are not strong enough. I think that is so unfair and I really want to break that stigma."

'DIRTY JOBS'

She shares the challenges she faced when trying to pursue her dream apprenticeship. These challenges, she states without hesitation, came about because of her gender. After her Leaving Certificate, Katelyn and her Dad commenced the search for a job with a company that would accept her onto the apprentice electrician scheme. She heard it all: it was tough work; there were dirty jobs, unsuitable for a girl; there were 'tight spaces' that she 'wouldn't be able for'; her lack of work experience – remember, she had just

On winning the Rose of Tralee, Katelyn's employer, Alpha Drives & Switchgear said: "Katelyn contributes genuine skill and a strong, can-do attitude to her work. Katelyn sets an example whether she's using the equipment, picking up new skills, or embodying the principles we value most: professionalism, teamwork, and camaraderie. She serves as a reminder that desire, talent, and genuineness are valued and rewarded in addition to serving as an inspiration for young women considering technical occupations."

completed her exams – was cited as a reason, despite her transition year placement with an electrician.

"I grew up on a farm, I am well able and have no problem getting my hands dirty," she says. "It was very, very disheartening and very difficult to keep going on but I am very persistent, and I knew that this was the career I wanted, so that empowered me," she said. Eventually, Katelyn was accepted at Alpha Drives & Switchgear in Co. Laois. She is the only female apprentice, but she hasn't looked back since.



Anna Marie McHugh, assistant managing director of the National Ploughing Association; 2025 Rose of Tralee, Katelyn Cummins; and Noel Dunne, machinery editor, *Irish Farmers Monthly*.

FUTURE AMBITIONS

When she qualifies, Katelyn says she hopes to travel around America, Europe, New Zealand and Australia – and work as an electrician – for a few years before returning home to do an engineering degree. She thinks about her future a lot: "I am always thinking about what lies ahead. I might want to start a family at some stage so I might be able to work from home, or maybe I will set up my own business and just hire women. Women need to be highlighted in this industry and if that is something I could do, I would absolutely love that.

"From a very young age, I have always thought about setting up my own business, just never knew what way I would do that, but it has always been a passion."

GROWING UP ON A FARM

"If you said the words, 'I am bored, you would have 10 jobs lined up for you,' says Katelyn of growing up on a farm. "We were always outside and not afraid to work, and not afraid of dirty work."

Connect with
expert advice



Whether you're looking to access funding, export to new markets or seize on a new opportunity – our team has the expertise and approach to ensure you achieve your potential at every stage.



Find out how our team can help your business to plan for the future.

Call our Food & AgriBusiness team on **1800 33 44 22** or visit **www.ifac.ie**



HARNESSING INNOVATION FOR SMARTER LENDING

LENDERS NEED A NEW APPROACH TO RISK ASSESSMENT WHEN MAKING AGRI-FINANCE DECISIONS AND THIS IS WHERE INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY CAN BE TRANSFORMATIVE, WRITES EOIN LOWRY, HEAD OF AGRICULTURE AT BANK OF IRELAND

The future of agriculture depends on more than just growing food. It also depends on financing the transition to sustainable, climate-resilient systems. Banks have a critical role to play, but to unlock their full potential, they must leverage innovation and technology not only to de-risk lending, but also to enable and empower farmers. It is well acknowledged that farming is different to other businesses. Not only is it complex and driven by global dynamics, farming is defined by volatile yields, climate uncertainty, and limited transparency. We know that a sustainable farm is a more efficient and productive farm – a farm that uses fewer resources for a similar level of output.

FARM-FINANCE BASIS

Banks can enable the transition to a more sustainable agri sector, but only if they can get more comfortable around the increasing and new risks the sector faces. It used to be that past performance was a strong indicator of future performance. That is no longer the case as the indicators that drive financial performance are changing. The best example of this being stocking rate. Right now, the majority of farm finance does not consider the unique location of a farm, the fields that are being farmed, the soil type across that particular holding or even the farm's proximity to water bodies of poor ecological status. While these indicators can directly

impact farm financial performance, they can have a much more significant impact on the environmental footprint of an individual farm and, therefore, the environmental impact of the finance associated with it.

NEW APPROACH

Traditional credit models can also often overlook farmers who lack collateral or formal financial histories. By using yield mapping, geospatial data, and satellite imagery, banks can create fairer, more accurate risk assessments. This opens access to finance for a broader pool of farmers, especially those demonstrating strong environmental performance. As such, lenders need a new approach to risk assessment. This is where innovation and technology can transform the future of agri-finance. The key areas that lenders are focussed on to support farmers on their sustainability journey include:

► Geospatial mapping

This takes publicly available data and creates transparency on land use, soil health, and deforestation risks, aligning financial flows with environmental stewardship. It also can measure biodiversity along with proximity to special areas of conservation or national heritage areas.

► Yield mapping

While this is more common in large arable growing regions of the world, it allows

farmers and lenders to capture real-time, field-level productivity data, giving banks and investors' confidence in a farmer's capacity to repay.

► Data-driven climate-risk models

These are becoming increasingly common, particularly when financing global agri-commodity value chains. These provide forward-looking insights, helping lenders and policymakers anticipate shocks and build resilience into financing structures.

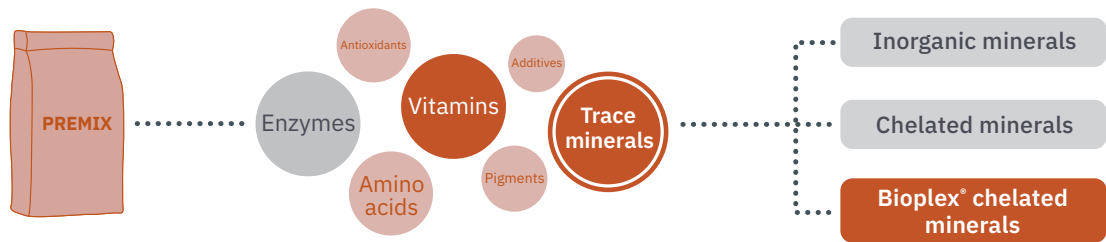
When combined, these tools don't just de-risk agricultural lending for banks, they also help farmers make better decisions, to optimise inputs, reduce waste, improve soil health, or biodiversity, and better prepare for regulatory environmental shifts. Essentially, it puts the power back in the hands of farmers. This creates a virtuous cycle: stronger resilience at the farm level, reduced risk at the institutional level, and greater alignment with sustainability goals at the national level.

PARADIGM SHIFT

So, we are witnessing a paradigm shift in how banks will finance and support farmers in the future. For example, banks can connect loan terms directly to sustainability improvements such as better soil health or reduced emissions – verified through digital monitoring – which can unlock lower interest rates or more flexible repayment terms. This creates direct financial incentives for farmers

CHOOSING BIOPLEX®

Why is Bioplex superior?



Chelated minerals

Unstable complex/chelate

(Amino acids bound weakly to metal ion)



Performance

By providing a stable chelate structure, more mineral is available for absorption, allowing for utilization and maximizing performance



Bonds

The types of bonds present determine the chelate's properties, including its strength and stability

Not all chelated minerals are created equal

Bioplex® chelated minerals

Stable chelate

(Peptides and amino acids (AA) bound to metal ion)



Bioavailability

The strength and stability of the bonds will impact how much mineral reaches the absorption site



Structure

The raw materials and manufacturing processes utilized impact the type and quality of the chelating bonds

Poor stability
+
Reduced bioavailability

BIOPLEX®

Designed to improve the absorption of essential trace minerals

Improved stability
+
Enhanced bioavailability



+ 1.7kg
More milk
per day

21%
Reduction in
SCC

Increased performance
and productivity



Reduced waste

Contact your local Alltech representative or email KnowYourMinerals@Alltech.com to learn more about Alltech Mineral Management.

Alltech®

Source: Pomport et al., Journal of Applied Animal Nutrition, 2021; 9(1): 23-30

to invest in regenerative practices.

Through partnerships with agri-tech platforms aligned with Bord Bia's Origin Green programmes and the AgNav platform (initiative of Teagasc, Bord Bia, and the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation), banks can drive participation and adoption, thus, offering farmers access to carbon calculators, sustainability benchmarking, and tailored action plans. Farmers gain actionable insights to improve productivity and resilience, while banks track progress against sustainability goals and can communicate this to investors.

Such initiatives show how environmental health reviews can provide farmers with a digital sustainability profile, a living record of practices, performance, and potential. These passports can travel with the farmer, making it easier to access green loans, other financial supports, and access new market opportunities.

Technology is not just about reducing risk for banks, it's about creating shared value. By embedding innovation into agri-finance, banks can build resilience, enable sustainable practices, and accelerate the transition toward food systems that work for farmers, consumers, and the planet.

CASE STUDY: SENUS AND BOI PARTNERSHIP

The recent partnership between Senus, an Irish agri-tech company, and Bank of Ireland offers a proof point that data and technology can be embedded into financial products in agriculture to support sustainability, de-risking, and impact.

- Senus is providing farm environmental health reviews to a cohort of the bank's agri customers. These reviews use publicly available environmental data to assess each farm's current sustainability status, capturing practices, environmental footprint, and high-level insights.
- The output is not just a scorecard; it includes a bespoke action plan tailored to each farm, showing where improvements are possible. That helps farmers identify concrete steps.
- From the bank's perspective, this kind of insight builds confidence in the agri portfolio: it helps with risk



Eoin Lowry, head of agriculture at Bank of Ireland.

assessment, monitoring environmental and regulatory exposure, and aligns lending with sustainability-linked products. For example, Bank of Ireland's Enviroflex loan product rewards farmers who improve environmental footprint (biodiversity, emissions, water quality, etc.) with more favourable finance terms

WEBSITE



IFM

DIGITAL

In addition to the print magazine, *Irish Farmers Monthly* is available in a range of award-winning digital formats.

APP

The *Irish Farmers Monthly* app is available for download on Apple and Android devices.

EZINE



The *Irish Farmers Monthly* e-zine features a round-up of the leading news stories every week.

Latest issues



Advertisement



FLIPBOOK

Readers can opt to receive the *Irish Farmers Monthly* flipbook via email.



For the latest farming news and information, visit the *Irish Farmers Monthly* website, www.irishfarmersmonthly.com stats (average per month)

Unique visitors 119,441 Hit rate 521,311

Transferring the Family Farm Clinics

A farm succession plan is essential for the future viability of your farm business!

Our upcoming Transferring the Family Farm clinics are designed to help farm families through the process of and all aspects that need to be considered when transferring the family farm.

Tuesday, 30 September | 10am

Lady Gregory Hotel, Ennis Road,
Gort, Co. Galway. H91 KN2N

Wednesday, 1 October | 10am

Abbey Hotel, Galway Road,
Roscommon. F42 F992

Tuesday, 7 October | 10am

Cahir House Hotel, The Square,
Townparks, Cahir, Co. Tipperary

Wednesday, 8 October | 10am

SETU Arena, West Campus, Woodstown,
Carriganore, Co. Waterford, X91 XD96

Thursday, 9 October | 10am

The Parkway Hotel ,
Park Road, Dunmanway, West Cork

Tuesday, 14 October | 10am

Hillgrove Hotel, Old Armagh Rd,
Latlorcan, Monaghan, H18 RK15



Scan the
QR code
to book a
place!



or visit

www.teagasc.ie/farmtransfer



AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



Tractor insurance to drive you forward

**You can now insure your tractor
separately to your farm insurance.
Plus, there's no excess on tractor claims.**

Get a quote today
axa.ie/farm
0906 435 070 | In Branch

AXA Insurance dac is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. Policy terms & conditions apply.

FOCUS



HERD HEALTH



JOHNE'S DISEASE: A NEW APPROACH TO BETTER CONTROL OUTCOMES

DR LIAM DOYLE, MANAGER OF ANIMAL HEALTH IRELAND'S (AHI) IRISH JOHNE'S CONTROL PROGRAMME (IJCP) SPOKE TO BERNIE COMMINS ABOUT CURRENT ISSUES AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PROGRAMME, INCLUDING A NEW REPORTING SYSTEM THAT CAN BRING ABOUT MORE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OUTCOMES

The IJCP in its current form was launched in 2019, having started out as a pilot programme in 2013. The structure of the IJCP is based on an AHI technical working group (TWG) that provides scientific advice and an implementation group (IG) made up of industry stakeholders including farm organisations and processor representatives. The IG is the decision-making body for the programme. Phase two of the IJCP ran from 2019 to 2022 and funding for any new herds joining it ended in 2024. Current discussions

are focused on enhancing the IJCP by developing disease reports, which, along with veterinary interpretation, can have a direct positive impact on the impact of Johne's disease, says Dr Doyle. "The focus for the future is to provide farmers and vets with practical disease reports to combat what is a serious animal health issue on many Irish farms. The value of a disease report is that it can be used to tailor veterinary advice to the individual farm and bring about more effective Johne's control outcomes," he says.

ON-FARM TESTING

There are two different tests used on cattle within the IJCP – the ELISA test, which looks for the presence of antibodies in the blood or milk sample, and the faecal test (ancillary), which looks for the presence of DNA from the Johne's bacteria in a dung sample. Dr Doyle explains that one of the advantages of being part of the IJCP is the funding of the faecal testing. When a Johne's milk or blood ELISA herd test is completed, any positive result (in a herd which has never disclosed Johne's disease previously) will be eligible for a fully



Funding

The current funding situation for the IJCP is that any herd in the programme that has received four years of payments from phase two of the IJCP no longer receives funding towards their milk or blood herd testing. Crucially, however, the funding of faecal testing in herds which have not disclosed infection previously is still in place.

funded faecal test. The advantage of faecal testing ELISA-positive animals is the provision of a stronger reassurance about the true infection status of the animal. In phase two of the IJCP, much of the programme structure was based around funding of herd testing. However, the future development of the programme will likely

structure it around disease control based on providing quality disease reports. Dr Doyle explains: "All of the tests used in the IJCP generate a large quantity of really important data about individual animals in the herd. Given the quantity of data that exists about any herd in a John's programme, putting it together and interpreting it from direct test results can be time-consuming. Through considered design, large quantities of data can be turned into reports that are focused on disease control."

"These reports can be effective when placed in the hands of vets who understand the mechanisms of disease action. Real benefits come from steady provision of this report information over time in association with professional veterinary risk assessment advice to break the cycle of disease on a farm." Initial presentation of the new IJCP reporting structure, developed in association with the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation was made at Vet25, a major annual conference of veterinary practitioners, which took place earlier this month. The new IJCP report was displayed as a poster at the conference.

Some examples of what the new reporting system will provide are:

1. A yearly trend of the John's disease prevalence allowing an assessment of disease progression over time.
2. Percentage of the herd on a yearly basis which are high-risk animals due to their test readings, and which should be listed as priority-cull animals.
3. Percentage of the herd on a yearly basis which are repeat positive animals. This allows an assessment about the level of retention of high-risk animals on a farm and thus potential for internal disease spread.

BEST PRACTICE

In the UK, the third phase of its National John's Management Plan (NJMP) was implemented in March of this year. Similar to the IJCP, the NJMP has focused over the past number of years on delivery of quality disease reports. In the NJMP, farmers and vets can use reports to benchmark John's control

and provide a solid basis for progress. Given our common experiences collaboration has the potential to provide benefits to farmers everywhere in the quest to apply ever more effective control strategies against John's disease, says Dr Doyle.

JOHNE'S IMPACT - A REMINDER

Last month, Dr Doyle published a monthly update on John's disease which referred to a review of scientific literature highlighting the disease's wide-ranging negative effects on farm operations, including:

- ▶ Decreased milk yield;
- ▶ Premature culling, increasing replacement costs;
- ▶ Lower market value of culled animals;
- ▶ Elevated lameness levels;
- ▶ Reduced feed conversion efficiency, leading to higher feed costs;
- ▶ Compromised herd fertility;
- ▶ Increased somatic cell counts in milk; and
- ▶ Elevated veterinary expenses and antimicrobial use.

One specific area impacted by John's disease, according to Dr Doyle is milk production. "An international scientific study, which included data from Ireland alongside other countries (Rasmussen et al., 2021), estimated that approximately 1 per cent of gross milk revenue is lost annually in John's infected dairy herds. These losses are primarily driven by reduced milk yield and tend to be higher in regions with above-average milk prices and production levels," he wrote. According to the same study, the estimated economic loss to the Irish dairy industry ranged from €11.24m to €23.85m. Dr Doyle explains: "A key factor influencing these losses in all scenarios was the prevalence of John's Disease within herds. Specifically, higher infection rates within herds significantly amplify the economic impact." He continued: "This evidence strongly supports the implementation of national John's Disease control programmes. Lowering the infection prevalence within herds can lead to substantial economic benefits across the industry, alongside improvements in animal welfare."

IF COWS COULD CHOOSE, THE CHOICE WOULD BE NEOMILK

To give your farm a healthy tomorrow, your calves need the right start today. The Neomilk® range uses a balanced formulation designed for cost effective rearing and a resilient, productive herd, to help set your calves, and your farm, up for success.



Contact your
Cargill Animal Nutrition
expert for more information

Cargill Animal Nutrition Ireland
00353 45 975726
www.provimi.eu/uk-neomilk
f @CargillAnimalNutritionIreland

NeoMilk®
FOLLOW-ON MILK

PARTNER PROMOTION



Sarah Maher, Alltech Ireland.

THE ACTIONS YOU TAKE NOW IN THE RUN UP TO DRYING OFF, AND IN THE WEEKS AFTER, WILL HAVE A DIRECT AND SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON CALF HEALTH AND WELLBEING LATER IN THE SEASON, WRITES SARAH MAHER, KEY ACCOUNT MANAGER FOR ALLTECH IRELAND

FROM LATE LACTATION TO CALVING – MANAGING THE DRY COW PERIOD

This article offers practical guidance on managing cows in late lactation, optimising the dry period, and avoiding common challenges that can affect health and productivity

The dry cow period is a crucial stage in a dairy cow's production cycle, often underestimated in its importance. Rather than being a 'resting phase' it is a time to prepare cows for a successful next lactation. Decisions made in the weeks before and after dry-off, from feeding and nutrition to housing and management, have a direct impact on udder health, metabolic stability, calving ease, fertility, and the vitality of the calf.

WHY THE DRY COW PERIOD MATTERS

The typical dry period lasts 45-60 days. This window allows:

- Udder recovery: Secretory cells regenerate for the next lactation.

- Nutrient rebalancing: Cows restore reserves for calving and early milk.
- Foetal growth: Calf growth is fastest in the final trimester.

Short dry periods (<40 days) reduce yield, while long ones (>70 days) risk fat cows and metabolic issues. Extended lactations can be successful in certain herds, but careful planning is still essential.

PREPARING COWS IN LATE LACTATION

1. Body condition

- Target BCS: 3-3.25 at dry-off.
 - Over-fat cows (>3.5) face higher risks of ketosis, milk fever and calving difficulties.
 - Adjust condition in mid-late lactation, not once cows are already dry.
- Practical tip:** Score cows monthly, and separate thin or fat animals into different groups to tailor feeding.

2. Feeding strategy

- Reduce concentrates seven to 10 days before dry-off to lower yield, reduce udder pressure and mastitis risk.
- Maintain a forage-based diet with adequate long fibre for rumen health.
- Protein should be 14-16 per cent crude protein to support udder repair and calf development.
- Make ration changes gradually to avoid digestive upset.

Practical tip: If cows are still producing >15L/day close to dry-off, reduce starch and energy density earlier.

3. Dry-off management

- Use abrupt dry-off; once-daily milking increases mastitis risk.
- Lower yield before dry-off by stepping back concentrates.
- Protect udders with internal teat sealants and apply selective dry cow

PARTNER PROMOTION

therapy where suitable.

- d. Provide clean, comfortable housing – freshly dried-off cows are highly vulnerable to infection.

Practical tip: Disinfect each teat carefully before sealant application. This single step makes or breaks mastitis control.

NUTRITION AND MINERALS

Dry cow feeding is best divided into two stages: the far-off dry period and the close-off period.

1. Far-off dry period (first four to five weeks)

- a. Control energy to avoid fat cows.
- b. Base diets on bulky forages such as grass silage, diluted with straw if possible.
- c. Supply 12-14 per cent crude protein for calf growth.
- d. Avoid high-calcium and high-potassium forages.

Practical tip: If cows are putting on weight while dry, dilute high-energy silage with straw or use lower-energy forage.

1. Close-up period (last two to three weeks)

- a. Transition cows gradually onto the feeds they'll see after calving, being sure not to add any supplemented calcium.
- b. Adding yeast (such as the yeast found in Yea-Sacc), will help stabilise the rumen during the diet change at calving, support fibre digestion, and reduce risk of acidosis when cows move on to higher-energy lactation diets.
- c. Keep dietary calcium below 0.45 per cent DM unless using DCAD (dietary cation anion difference) diets.
- d. Ensure magnesium at 0.35-0.40 per cent DM. This is essential for calcium metabolism, to help reduce the risk of milk fever.
- e. Keep potassium at <1.5 per cent DM, and ideally <1.2 per cent in silages. High-K silages are one of the biggest milk fever



OVER-FAT COWS FACE HIGHER RISKS OF KETOSIS, MILK FEVER AND CALVING DIFFICULTIES

risks, as they reduce the absorption of magnesium.

- f. Provide balanced trace minerals for immunity, fertility and calf vigour.

Practical tip: Test your dry cow silage now. Know exactly what minerals are present, or missing, before it's too late.

THE ROLE OF ORGANIC MINERALS

Even with balanced rations, not all minerals are absorbed equally well. Organic chelated minerals, such as those in Bioplex (organic copper, zinc, manganese) and Sel-Plex (organic selenium from yeast), are more bioavailable than traditional inorganic forms.

- ▶ Better uptake: Less affected by high iron, sulphur or molybdenum.
- ▶ Stronger immunity: Sel-Plex selenium supports colostrum quality and healthier calves; Bioplex minerals support udder health and minimise mastitis risk.
- ▶ Fertility support: Organic copper and manganese optimise cows' ability to return to heat more reliably after calving.
- ▶ On-farm results: Herds using Bioplex and Sel-Plex minerals often see fewer retained cleansings, healthier calves, and lower mastitis levels in early lactation.
- ▶ Include these minerals four to six weeks before calving to build cow reserves and maximise colostrum quality.

EXTENDED LACTATIONS - KEY WATCHPOINTS

1. For herds deliberately extending lactations:

- ▶ Avoid overfeeding energy while maintaining cow condition.
- ▶ Monitor somatic cell counts and udder health closely.
- ▶ Remember, the transition period still

matters. Calving challenges remain the same regardless of lactation length.

2. Housing and management

- ▶ Provide at least one cubicle per cow and 0.75m of feed space each.
- ▶ Use deep, clean bedding to promote lying time and prevent mastitis.
- ▶ Avoid stressful regrouping in the final two weeks pre-calving.
- ▶ Ensure unlimited access to clean, fresh water.

Practical tip: Observe cows daily; reduced intakes or abnormal dung can signal issues early.

PRACTICAL TAKE-HOME POINTS

- ▶ Target BCS 3-3.25 at dry-off.
- ▶ Step down concentrates seven to 10 days before dry-off.
- ▶ Keep calcium <0.45 per cent DM pre-calving (unless using DCAD).
- ▶ Supply magnesium at 0.35-0.40 per cent DM close-up.
- ▶ Keep silage potassium <1.5 per cent DM, ideally <1.2 per cent.
- ▶ Test dry cow silages for minerals before problems arise.
- ▶ Supplement with organic minerals, like those found in Bioplex and Sel-Plex, for reliable absorption and optimal immunity.
- ▶ Provide comfort, clean housing and consistent diets.

CONCLUSION

The dry cow period is the launchpad for the next lactation. By managing body condition, controlling energy intake and focusing on mineral balance, particularly calcium, magnesium and potassium, farmers can dramatically cut transition problems. Forage testing highlights where silages fall short, while organic minerals such as those found in Bioplex and Sel-Plex ensure that cows and calves absorb the nutrients they need. Done well, the benefits are clear: smoother calvings, healthier calves, fewer metabolic issues, and stronger, more productive cows in the next lactation.



**PREMIER
MOLASSES**
Delivering Solutions

Nutri thrive

PRECISION FORMULATED TO
MAXIMISE ANIMAL PERFORMANCE

- Improves Dry Matter Intakes
- Excellent source of Energy and Protein
- Fits multiple diets
- Reduces ration sorting

Contact us or your local Co-op/merchant today:

Premier Molasses Co. Ltd.
Harbour Road, Foynes, Co. Limerick.
Deepwater Berth, Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork.

t: 069-65311
e: info@premiermolasses.ie



www.premiermolasses.ie



IBR ERADICATION PLAN — UPDATE

BERNIE COMMINS CAUGHT UP WITH MARIA GUEL BENZU, WHO IS INFECTIOUS BOVINE RHINOTRACHEITIS (IBR) PROGRAMME MANAGER WITH ANIMAL HEALTH IRELAND (AHI) FOR AN UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL PLAN TO ERADICATE THE INFECTIOUS DISEASE, AND WHAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH A PLAN WILL LOOK LIKE

Bernie: Can you please provide an update on the national plan to eradicate infectious bovine rhinotracheitis?

Maria: Animal Health Ireland's IBR technical working group (TWG), which is made up of leading academics, researchers and scientists from across the industry, has developed a strong proposal for a national plan to eradicate IBR. The outline plan for national eradication programme has been brought to the IBR implementation group as well as the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. While discussions remain ongoing, there is currently no national eradication plan in place, but we believe that one can be made operational in due course. We believe it is hugely important for the continued success of our industry that an IBR eradication programme is delivered without delay.

Bernie: What does that eradication programme look like? What phases are envisaged, what challenges must be addressed, and how realistic is full eradication in Ireland given current levels of infection?

Maria: The proposal developed by the IBR TWG was designed to follow European rules so that, in time, Ireland could get official recognition for its programme and eventually be recognised as IBR-free. The proposal starts with a reduction phase to lower the number of infected herds in the country, while giving 'free' status to those that meet certain requirements.

In dairy herds, the entry test would usually be a bulk tank milk test. In suckler herds, blood samples from a proportion of the herd (like the sampling done as part of the National Beef Welfare Scheme) would be used instead.

Initial tests give an indication of the IBR status of the herd and provide useful information to assess the risks and review the biosecurity to control IBR or to prevent re-introduction of the disease.

After the reduction phase, the plan would move to an eradication phase, with regular reviews and improvements. Vaccination, biosecurity, and testing would be the key tools used throughout. Full eradication is possible, as there are other examples of countries that have been able to achieve it also starting from a high level of disease as we currently have in Ireland. But it would be a long-term programme seeking to deliver incremental improvements towards pathway to freedom.

Bernie: The Dutch postponed its IBR rules (to source animals from countries that have



IN HERDS THAT DID NOT VACCINATE, INFECTION RATES INCREASED STEADILY

a national eradication programme) from January 2026 to July 2026. Will Ireland be able to continue to export to the Netherlands come July 2026 – will the eradication plan be in place and implemented in time?

Maria: Regardless of the status of calf exports, AHI believes it is very important to press ahead with developing and rolling out an IBR eradication programme. This will benefit the health of animals in the national herd. AHI is aware that the Dutch Government has been seeking to introduce rules regarding the importation of calves from countries with an EU-recognised IBR eradication programme. If this mandate was fully enforced, it is important that Ireland would have a programme in place to support the continued export of calves to this market assuming that economic and regulatory conditions support it.



ONE OF THE INTERESTING OUTCOMES WE SAW WAS THAT MOST OF THE IBR- POSITIVE RESULTS WERE IN OLDER CATTLE

Bernie: IBR testing was part of the National Beef Welfare Scheme (NBWS). Was this beneficial to farmers, AHI and vets, and national herd health?

Maria: The IBR testing done as part of the National Beef Welfare Scheme was very useful to assess the IBR status in beef herds in Ireland. This is key information for developing any control/eradication plans and to advise individual herds. One of the interesting outcomes we saw was that most of the IBR-positive results were in older cattle. This shows that, by focusing on replacing those positive older animals, farmers could work towards having an IBR-free herd. At farmer level, the testing gave important information regarding the IBR status of their farm and the tested animals, allowing them, in conjunction with their vets, to better manage risk, improve biosecurity and inform decisions on vaccination.

Bernie: When IBR testing was removed from the NBWS did you see it as a retrograde step?

Maria: AHI was very happy to see this step included in the NBWS at the time. While it is up to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to devise schemes to ensure the maximum uptake at farm level, I personally think there are many benefits to including such an action in similar and subsequent schemes. I think it did improve the understanding of IBR in general among farmers as it prompted many discussions.

Bernie: What is the current estimated prevalence of IBR-positive or latently infected herds in Ireland?

Maria: The IBR testing done as part of the NBWS highlighted that 48.8 per cent of tested herds and 11.4 per cent of tested animals gave a positive result for IBR. However, the level of disease found is much lower than previous studies, which estimated that up to 90 per cent of beef herds were infected. We have recently carried out a study looking at the levels of IBR in Irish dairy herds. Bulk tank milk samples from almost 8,000 herds – about half of all dairy farms in Ireland – were tested several times for IBR antibodies. The results showed that IBR is still very common, with 83 per cent of herds testing positive in 2024. Vaccination use went up a little, from 69 per cent of herds in 2018 to 73 per cent in 2024. In herds that did not vaccinate, infection rates increased steadily, making it harder for those farms to stay free of IBR.

Bernie: Once a herd's status is known (negative, low prevalence, or higher prevalence) what are the biosecurity and vaccination strategies recommended

Maria: If a herd has very few positives (for example, a clear bulk tank milk test or only one positive animal in a blood test), it may be worth testing all cattle to find and remove carriers if the goal is to keep the herd IBR-free. These herds should also tighten up biosecurity, for example, by being careful when buying in stock and, together with their vet, consider using vaccination across the herd to protect against re-introducing the virus.

In herds with a lot of positives, removing all infected animals is not practical. In this case, whole-herd vaccination, is the best option. Vaccination helps reduce the chance that latently infected animals will shed virus, and it lowers the risk that young or unprotected cattle will get sick and spread it. Over time, with good biosecurity, infection levels should fall as older carriers leave the herd and are replaced with healthy cattle.



ONCE AN ANIMAL IS INFECTED WITH IBR AND RECOVERS FROM THE INFECTION, THE VIRUS STAYS HIDDEN, SO THEY BECOME LATENTLY INFECTED

Bernie: How do latently infected animals affect herd health, productivity and welfare, especially under stress? What role do they play in disease spread?

Maria: Once an animal is infected with IBR and recovers from the infection, the virus stays hidden, so they become latently infected. The animal will test positive for IBR antibodies and crucially, can spread the virus again when stressed, for example at calving, during transport, or when mixed with other cattle. The virus is usually shed from the nose and eyes, infecting other cattle. These latently infected animals are the main reason why IBR stays in herds and spreads between farms.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

There are many reasons to control and eradicate IBR, says Maria: "The disease affects herd health and production, which means it hits farm profits, and it also affects trade and the environment. The economic effects have been studied most in dairy herds. In Ireland, one study showed that IBR-positive cows in herds bulk tank milk IBR positive, gave about 250 litres less milk per cow each year compared with cows in herds that were clear of IBR."



GETTING IT RIGHT WITH LIVER FLUKE

DECIDING IF, AND WHEN, TO TREAT FLUKE INFECTION IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR RESPONSIBLE USE OF ANTHELMINTICS, WRITES MAURA LANGAN, NORBROOK TECHNICAL ADVISER. HERE, SHE OUTLINES A RANGE OF DIAGNOSTICS THAT CAN SUPPORT THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS WHEN TREATING LIVER FLUKE

The complex lifecycle and environmental impact of infection with *Fasciola hepatica* (liver fluke) in cattle and sheep makes management and treatment a challenge for farmers and vets. As the industry adopts a more responsible approach to the use of anthelmintics, the role of diagnostics will play a more prominent part.

THE TROUBLE WITH LIVER FLUKE

The liver fluke is a remarkably resilient parasite. This is, in part, due to its complex lifecycle involving an intermediate host, the mud snail. The complete fluke lifecycle takes between around four to five months in total, with 10-12 weeks spent within the primary host's liver. Cattle and sheep do not acquire protective immunity to liver fluke and so are at constant risk of reinfection when grazing. Adult cattle are better able to tolerate a low to moderate burden due to some partial immunity and their larger, more fibrous liver. Cattle are most at risk of chronic infection, leading to impaired productivity such as weight gain, fertility and milk yield.

Sheep are much more likely to develop acute fasciolosis as a result of immature fluke damaging the liver parenchyma. Year-round grazing in the western parts of the country also makes exposure to larger number of fluke larvae more likely. The risk of acute disease outbreaks is relatively common, especially in autumn/early winter after high

challenge, with sudden deaths due to liver haemorrhage a consequence of acute disease. Environmental factors, including rainfall and mean temperature, play a large part in the liver fluke life cycle and risk of infection. As a result, particular attention should be paid to the seasonal fluke risk and the specific conditions on each farm, even down to individual paddocks.

TEST, DON'T GUESS

Deciding if, and when, to treat fluke infection is essential to our responsible use of anthelmintics. There have been no new flukicides for many years and resistance has been demonstrated in some actives. Prescribers should adopt the principles of 'as little as possible, as much as necessary,' before recommending treatment. Accurate diagnosis is essential to the prescribing pathway. Vets will use their specific knowledge of a farm, its history and management practices, as well as observing clinical signs to diagnose liver fluke infection. There are a range of diagnostics that can support the decision-making process.

► Post-mortem examination

Liver condemnations, factory checks, and examination of fallen stock provide definitive confirmation of liver fluke. Although it gives an indication of the presence of fluke on-farm, it cannot identify the infection level in living livestock.

► Faecal egg examination

This is a relatively cheap test that many vet practices perform in-house and is also beneficial in picking up other parasitic infections, such as roundworms. It can be unreliable for liver fluke as egg-shedding is sporadic and occurs at least 10-12 weeks post-infection, meaning that the absence of eggs does not mean absence of infection.

► Copro-antigen ELISA

This detects fluke antigens in faeces (individual, not pooled) from around six to 10 weeks post-infection. It detects active infection earlier and more accurately than faecal egg exams. Samples are sent away to the lab, so results may be delayed.

► Antibody ELISA (serum or milk)

Confirms exposure to infection two to four weeks post-infection. However, as antibodies persist after infection and treatment, they don't always indicate current infection especially in older animals. Bulk milk samples can be taken by farmers and sent to the lab via a milk processor, or blood samples are taken by the vet and sent to the lab.

► Antibody lateral flow

This new test confirms exposure from two weeks post-infection. It can be used by farmers or vets on farm using a pin prick of blood with results in around 10 minutes with interpretation of the results by their vet (figure1). Separate test kits exist for cattle

and sheep, one single use device per animal available in packs of 10. The test is of most use in first grazing season animals.

TREATMENT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TIMING

There are two parts to the timing of treatment: when, and what with. When to treat depends on the prescribers being confident that there is active infection. None of the flukicides licensed for use have any persistency. If cattle or sheep are treated unnecessarily, it has wasted the farmer's time and money. Cattle that graze in the summer and are housed in the winter rarely need treatment more than once a year. This usually takes place at housing/during housing as it is easier to gather and treat the group and farmers can be confident that they will not pick up any new infections post treatment.

Dairy cattle are usually treated at the start of the dry period. It is important to read the summary of product characteristics (SPC) carefully as many products have limits on use in cattle producing milk for human consumption even during the dry period. Sheep may need multiple treatments per year

CATTLE AND SHEEP DO NOT ACQUIRE PROTECTIVE IMMUNITY TO LIVER FLUKE AND SO ARE AT CONSTANT RISK OF REINFECTION WHEN GRAZING

depending on environmental factors such as weather, pasture quality and grazing pressure. Because of the risk of acute infection, prompt treatment in the face of significant pressure is recommended.

The choice of what to treat with is that of the veterinary prescriber. There are various flukicides available on the market and they have a spectrum of efficacy depending on the age of fluke that they kill. Treatment should be timed to maximise the fluke kill where possible, although in serious cases it may be more appropriate to treat promptly and retreat later if necessary.



Figure1: The lateral test requires a pin prick of blood.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

LIVER FLUKE RAPID ANTIBODY TEST

- **On farm** lateral flow test
- Early antibody detection of liver fluke (**from 2 weeks**)
- Accurate results within **10 minutes**



for **CATTLE**



for **SHEEP**



SCAN THE QR CODE
TO WATCH THE
HOW TO USE
VIDEO

Contact
your vet
to learn
more

Distributed in the UK by: Norbrook Laboratories Limited, Carrbane Industrial Estate, Newry, Co. Down, BT35 6QQ, Northern Ireland.
Distributed in ROI by: Norbrook Laboratories (Ireland) Ltd, Rossmore Industrial Estate, Monaghan, County Monaghan. | 6087-LA(C/S)-v1a-NI/ROI-29/09/25

Norbrook
www.norbrook.com

UP FOR THE CHALLENGE

MATT O'KEEFFE SPOKE TO THE CHAIR OF THE IRISH FARMERS' ASSOCIATION'S (IFA) ENVIRONMENTAL AND RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, JOHN MURPHY, ABOUT THE CHALLENGES FACING, AND BEING EMBRACED BY, FARMERS TO MEET ONGOING ENVIRONMENTAL DEMANDS

The IFA's environment committee has a very broad remit, as John explains: "It varies from the nitrates regulations to the Nature Restoration Law, biodiversity and our climate targets, as well as issues such as tyre and plastics recycling. The workload has increased over the past decade with almost every farming activity now viewed through the prism of environment and sustainability. That's a challenge we have to face head on because it's not going away. Everybody in the industry and in society generally is making a conscious effort to deal with these issues."

ADDED COMPLEXITIES

Securing a new nitrates derogation has become more complicated, as John acknowledges: "We have a lot of positive things going on including very good water quality results. For the last number of years, the emphasis has been on improving water quality, which will put the derogation on a stronger footing. A raft of measures is in place from previous nitrates action programmes and there will be more measures to come. Farmers – and the agriculture industry

generally – are more engaged now. We have the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme, and we have water-related European Innovation Partnership schemes which support actions on farms. "The Habitats Directive does add further complexity in that we must show that granting a derogation will not have a negative impact on these areas. We are really concerned about how it's going to work. I don't think the authorities know how it's going to work either. The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine has told us that they're going to develop a plan that will take several years to execute. There will need to be an application to the European Commission requesting that the derogation continues while this plan is being implemented over an agreed timescale." However, in the meantime, a very important judgment awaits from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in relation to Ireland's fifth Nitrates Action Programme (NAP). John explains: "An Taisce decided to take the Department of Housing and Environment to court on their 2022 Nitrates Action Programme. The case was around the assessments allowing a derogation to include special areas of conservation and special protected areas. This case is now in the European court awaiting judgment. Considered opinion is that these assessments may be an issue in the outcome, given previous legal outcomes from a Dutch case. We won't have the European Court's

judgment until at least quarter one of 2026. That's too late for the derogation decision because it must be renewed by January 1, 2026." It is imperative that this issue is resolved, he said.

A VERY DIFFERENT FARMING MODEL

John emphasises the unique nature of Irish livestock farming: "We're looking to assess something that's going to be a continuous activity within a catchment or in an area but we have a very different model of farming. It is diffused around the landscape with cattle outside grazing most of the year. We need recognition of that. We are saying that the Commission must recognise the system we have and it must, in some shape or form, accommodate what we're doing. Everybody understands that there's going to be more impositions on farmers to facilitate a renewed derogation," he said. And the reality is that many of the 'asks' of farmers are good for business, explains John. "Reducing your environmental footprint, adopting better nutrient management, more clover, improving cow breeding and welfare, fewer antibiotics use and more vaccines, all improve productivity and profitability." But transferring all the knowledge required to meet all these demands is a significant task. "It's a huge job of work to do in transferring knowledge and farmers have fears about coping with all this regulation and management change. The IFA is working very hard to ensure that the changes required are workable. We need to have regulation that's appropriate and achievable and that has measurable outcomes. In fairness to the Department officials and the Agriculture Water Quality Working Group, of which IFA is a part, there is general understanding around what is achievable. The political ask is that the derogation continues while this change



process is going ahead."

Monitoring slurry storage capacity has been ongoing for several years and the figures suggest increased storage will be required. John adds: "Additionally, over time, swards will need more clover inclusion as well as other means of reducing artificial fertiliser dependency, and farmers will be asked to get more involved in the Agnav structure."

PROTECTING THE TILLAGE SECTOR

Moving to the tillage sector, the challenges continue: "There's going to be a substantial look at what's happening in the tillage sector. To maintain it we need to provide farmers with measures that they can achieve and that are affordable. Autumn land management for green cover crops and organic nutrient application is an issue. Likewise, on cattle-finishing farms, slurry spreading late in the season is a problem, when we need to reduce the nitrogen loading to prevent losses during the high-risk October to February period. The easy thing to do is just reduce the load completely. That's very damaging in two ways. If we reduce organic fertiliser, it means we must cut our stock numbers. And if we reduce the artificial fertiliser inputs further, it means we grow less grass."

"There are optimum levels, as research is confirming, where farmers can make the most gain while at the same time reducing environmental risk. Blanket advice will not work. We are now told we need to take it down to catchment and sub-catchment level. This is going to bring everything into the spotlight. When they start doing assessments of catchments and sub-catchments, all the pressures on water quality and on the SACs will be looked at. It will bring all farming into view, as well as wastewater treatment plants, industrial and human activity. This has the potential to up the ante for everybody to improve. To my mind that's a good thing because for this to work in the longer term, every player on the pitch has to improve."

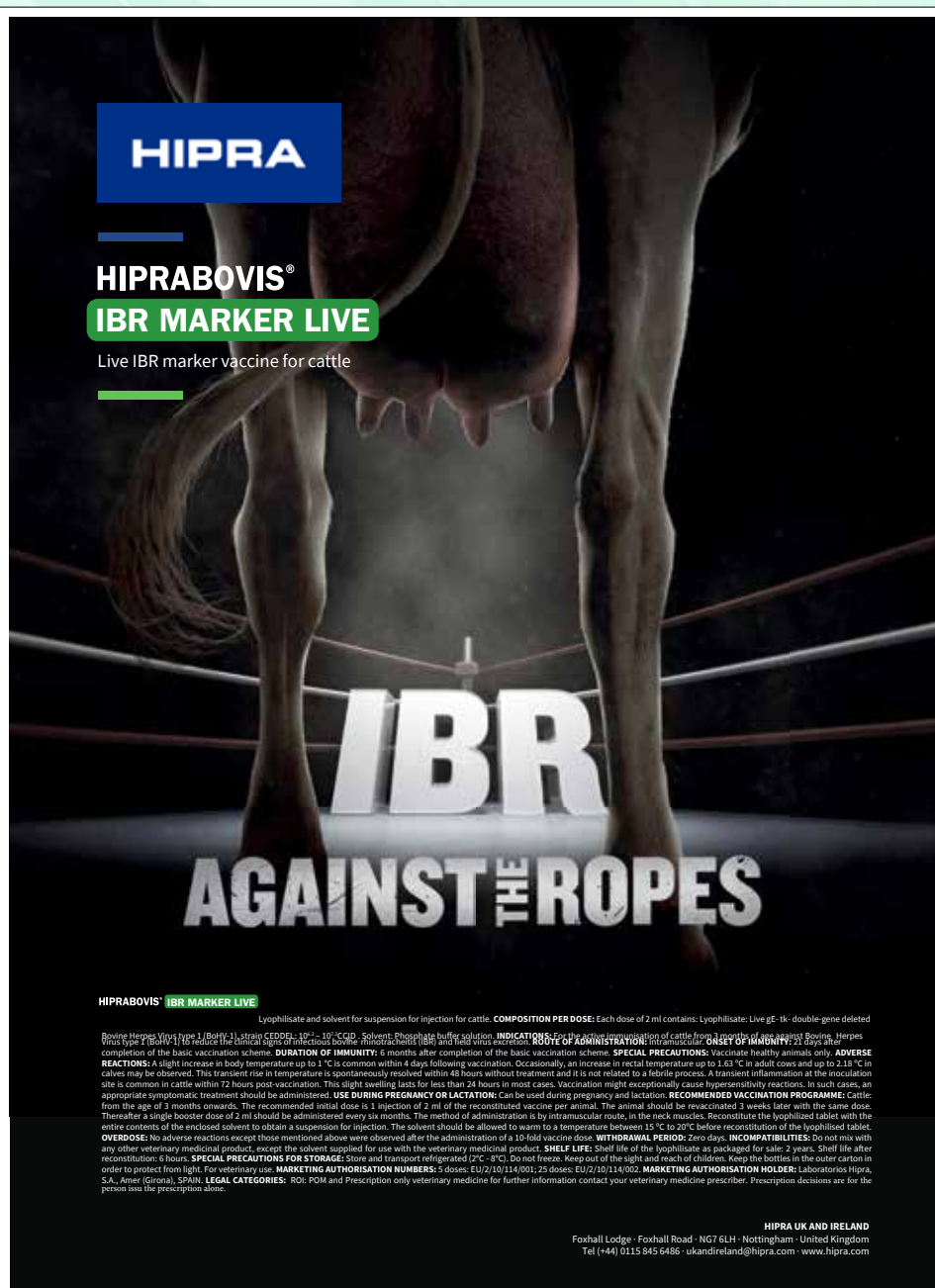
LAND USE

The Cork-based farmer discusses diverse land use in the coming years: "I believe we can manage the environmental, biodiversity and conservation requirements in terms of land use. There is concern around converting some of the best land in the country into solar panel installations. It is a very difficult one to

deal with. If you say you can't do it, you are restricting what people want to do with their farms and impeding the ability of the State to reduce its overall climate impact.

"I believe there is enough State-owned land to implement the rewetting requirements under the Nature Restoration Law for at least the next 20 years. We need farmer engagement to satisfy biodiversity demands while accommodating farming activity. You can have targeted biodiversity with intensive agriculture by dedicating certain percentage of farms for it. Overall, it is harder to have really high status biodiversity if there's a lot of intensive farming going on. At the same time, just abandoning land does not secure a biodiverse environment.

It needs to be managed to prevent invasive species encroachment, for instance. There's a lot of work required to educate farmers to make good use of their biodiversity space. "One of the serious issues we have is this is going to involve effort and money. We already see the CAP under attack. The difficulty we see is that the CAP budget is being continuously attacked. There is no dedicated fund for biodiversity and nature restoration. We need certainty. If you're going to ask farmers to implement a biodiversity plan on their farms, they need assurance over a very extended period that supports will remain in place. You must remember this is for society in general and should be rewarded."



HIPRA

HIPRABOVIS®
IBR MARKER LIVE

Live IBR marker vaccine for cattle

IBR AGAINST THE ROPES

HIPRABOVIS® IBR MARKER LIVE

Lyophilisate and solvent for suspension for injection for cattle. **COMPOSITION PER DOSE:** Each dose of 2 ml contains: Lyophilisate: Live gE⁻ tk-double gene deleted Bovine Herpes Virus type 1 (BoHV-1), strain CEDEP-10²⁴ - 10⁶ CCID₅₀. Solvent: Phosphate buffer solution. **INDICATIONS:** For the active vaccination of cattle from 3 months of age against Bovine Herpes Virus type 1 (BoHV-1) to reduce the clinical signs of infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) and milk virus syndrome. **ROUTE OF ADMINISTRATION:** Intramuscular. **ONSET OF IMMUNITY:** 7-21 days after completion of the basic vaccination scheme. **DURATION OF IMMUNITY:** 6 months after completion of the basic vaccination scheme. **SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS:** Vaccinate healthy animals only. **ADVERSE REACTIONS:** A slight increase in body temperature up to 1 °C is common within 4 days following vaccination. Occasionally, an increase in rectal temperature up to 1.63 °C in adult cows and up to 2.15 °C in calves may be observed. This transient rise in temperature is spontaneously resolved within 48 hours without treatment and it is not related to a febrile process. A transient inflammation at the inoculation site is common in cattle within 72 hours post-vaccination. This slight swelling lasts for less than 24 hours in most cases. Vaccination might exceptionally cause hypersensitivity reactions. In such cases, an appropriate symptomatic treatment should be administered. **USE DURING PREGNANCY OR LACTATION:** Can be used during pregnancy and lactation. **RECOMMENDED VACCINATION PROGRAMME:** Cattle: from the age of 3 months onwards. The recommended initial dose is 1 injection of 2 ml of the reconstituted vaccine per animal. The animal should be revaccinated 2 weeks later with the same dose. Thereafter a single booster dose of 2 ml should be administered every six months. The method of administration is by intramuscular route, in the neck muscles. Reconstitute the lyophilized tablet with the entire contents of the enclosed solvent to obtain a suspension for injection. The solvent should be allowed to warm to a temperature between 15 °C to 20 °C before reconstitution of the lyophilized tablet. **OVERDOSE:** No adverse reactions except those mentioned above were observed after the administration of a 10-fold vaccine dose. **WITHDRAWAL PERIOD:** Zero days. **INCOMPATIBILITIES:** Do not mix with any other veterinary medicinal product, except the solvent supplied for use with the veterinary medicinal product. **SHELF LIFE:** Shelf life of the lyophilisate as packaged for sale: 2 years. Shelf life after reconstitution: 6 hours. **SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS FOR STORAGE:** Store and transport refrigerated (2 °C - 8 °C). Do not freeze. Keep out of the sight and reach of children. Keep the bottles in the outer carton in order to protect from light. For veterinary use. **MARKETING AUTHORISATION NUMBERS:** 5 doses: EU/2/10/114/001; 25 doses: EU/2/10/114/002. **MARKETING AUTHORISATION HOLDER:** Laboratorios Hipra, S.A., Amer (Girona), SPAIN. **LEGAL CATEGORIES:** RO: POM and Prescription only veterinary medicine for further information contact your veterinary medicine prescriber. Prescription decisions are for the person issuing the prescription alone.

HIPRA UK AND IRELAND
Foxhall Lodge - Foxhall Road - NG7 6LH - Nottingham - United Kingdom
Tel (+44) 0115 845 6486 - ukandireland@hipra.com - www.hipra.com



Andrew O'Carroll.

A FARMER'S VIEW OF FORESTRY

ANDREW O'CARROLL AND HIS BROTHER FRANCIS RUN A SUCKLER FARM IN CO. KILKENNY. IN ADDITION, ANDREW HAS A 47-ACRE SITKA PLANTATION, WHICH HE PLANTED IN 2005. SADLY, HE HAS LOST 30 ACRES OF HIS 20-YEAR-OLD FOREST TO STORM DAMAGE OVER THE PAST YEAR. DRAWING ON HIS EXPERIENCE, ANDREW OFFERS UNIQUE INSIGHTS INTO THE SECTOR, HIGHLIGHTING ITS FLAWS AND PROPOSING POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Some people say not to look back, but if you are not moving forward you must learn from the past and make changes to progress. As it stands today, from a farmer's perspective, confidence in the forestry sector is at an all-time low. We need more trees to be planted for environmental reasons – to reduce emissions, sequester carbon, and provide renewable materials for the building industry, which can lock in carbon for generations. We need more trees to be planted for the increased demand within the construction sector. Where is the timber going to come from for this, especially when Coillte has released figures showing that 30 per cent of its forests are already dedicated to trees for nature – four months earlier than its end-of-2025 deadline? Longer-term, that percentage will increase to 50 per cent. Increased farmer planting is the key to sufficient future supply of commercial timber. But things will have to change drastically if the target of 8,000 hectares (ha)/annum is to be achieved. Land is a finite resource; we are not making any more and there is huge demand and competition for that limited resource. Farming is a business, and we must do our best to generate an income to sustain ourselves and our families while also respecting the responsibility we have as custodians of our environment. We aim to pass it on to future generations in as good or better condition than when we inherited it.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIER

Agricultural land is our income-generating resource and, from a purely economic long-term view, forestry is not ticking all the boxes. Farmers are very reluctant to make decisions that will affect future generations. The replanting obligation is a major psychological barrier to farmers growing trees. Twenty years of premium for a permanent change of land use is not an attractive proposition for a lot of people. Removing the replanting obligation might seem to be a risky strategy for future entrants but, in reality, only a very small percentage of land is committed to other agricultural activities. The benefit accruing from a change in the rules would far outweigh the risks. If our children or, in the case of broadleaf, our children's children could decide at the maturing of a forestry plantation what to do with the land next it would ease the conscience of those making the initial decision to plant. No other farm enterprise is expected to make a legal commitment to the permanent use of a parcel of land, as set out in the Forestry Act 2014.

THE ONE-THIRD RETURN DEFICIT

On a positive note, for the forestry programme, if your intention to plant is based solely on environmental benefits, then the conditions attached are not discouraging and it is a win-win situation. Let us also

look at the reality of farmers looking for a long-term economic return from a parcel of land. Under the present programme, a farmer looking to plant 100 acres will be required to plant 20 per cent broadleaves and set aside 15 per cent for biodiversity (cumulative 35 per cent). Since the sad demise of our Ash, there is realistically no commercial broadleaf species, so a farmer is expected to donate a third of their parcel of land to the state, long-term, with no prospect of a return from it. Let's transfer this scenario to other enterprises. What tillage farmer would set aside around one third of their 100-acre farm for biodiversity/commercial use with only a possibility of a 20-year payment and nothing after that? The farmer takes all the risks with disease and effects of climate change. Would a shop owner be expected to permanently sacrifice one third of their available shelf space to a combination of a nice visual display and a product they make no money on for a short-term payment. These analogies are clearly non-runners commercially, yet that is what is expected of Irish farmers engaged in, or considering developing, a forestry enterprise. The reality is that landowners have options as to what to do with their land. Tax incentives around long-term leasing of land and renewable energy uses are all contributing to a very lucrative land market. Nitrate rule changes have increased, and will possibly inflate further, the returns available to farmers who wish to change their farming systems. Long-term leasing gives farmers a tax-free income while also having the benefit of retaining the flexibility of what they do with their land at the end of the lease. There is no permanent commitment beyond the lease term.

HOW TO RESTORE CONFIDENCE

A good place to start restoring confidence in planting trees would be the establishment of an independent forestry agency to oversee and promote the forestry sector. The removal of the replanting obligation for reasons already stated would be another considerable confidence booster. There should be a big push to certification for private forests. At present only 6 per cent of private forests are certified (Source: *A Study on Private Forest Certification in Ireland* by Coford in 2022). This is an impediment to market access and must be addressed urgently due to the increased production forecast to come from



AGRICULTURAL LAND IS OUR INCOME-GENERATING RESOURCE AND FROM A PURELY ECONOMIC LONG-TERM VIEW, FORESTRY IS NOT TICKING ALL THE BOXES

LEGACY ISSUE OF ASH DIEBACK

Many Ash plantation owners are not able to get forestry companies to clear their dead ash, because it is not a commercially viable operation. This needs to be addressed.

private forests. We need to address the issue of carbon credits, environmental payments, and societal-benefit payments to provide long-term income security for a permanent change of land use to forestry. Risk sharing is another issue to be considered. As it stands the farmer is taking all the risks associated with threats from diseases, pests and weather events associated with climate changes. Some form of national insurance is required which may involve contributions from forest owners, industry, and the exchequer to help reduce losses when adverse events affect plantations, such as the storms we experienced last spring with plantation owners suffering huge losses. Storm damage insurance is not available on plantations

over 20 years old. Reform of the licensing system should be enacted, whereby in future the issuing of a license to plant will imply permission to carry out proper management of the growing crop, including thinning and constructing forest roads to facilitate ongoing forestry management. As a broader perspective, we need to pursue an all-island approach to biosecurity to maximise the benefit of our island status. It's imperative that we do as much as practically possible to keep out disease and pests like the bark beetle which could decimate our industry further.

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

A decision to plant a parcel of land is a long-term commitment. To reach the planting target of 8,000 ha/annum the farmers' commitment must be matched by Government commitment. The environmental elements of the programme, with the emphasis on broadleaf and native species, are very welcome. In order to achieve the planting targets, long-term commercial returns have to be introduced.

Let's Talk Trees Adding value to your farm



**Planting and Fencing
Grants Available**



**Generous Annual
Premiums**



Income Tax-Free

Join us at our
FREE information events



For more information scan
QR code or visit link below

Are you interested in a complementary income stream for your farm?

Join **Minister Healy-Rae** to explore how forestry can support your land, your income, and your future. These events are **FREE** and open to all. These 4 **Let's Talk Trees** events will include:

- Two short presentations from DAFM and Teagasc on:
 1. Afforestation grant and premium details;
 2. How forestry complements other farm enterprises and support measures
- Followed by a conversation between Minister Michael Healy-Rae and a forest owner on the forestry journey.
- Individual clinics with professional forestry staff.

Tuesday October 21

7pm – 10.30pm

Shearwater Hotel

Marina Point, Dunlo,
Ballinasloe, Co. Galway.
H53 F5P9

Tuesday November 4

7pm – 10.30pm

Ardboyne Hotel

Dublin Road, Balreask
Old, Navan, Co. Meath.
C15 C9YA

Thursday October 23

7pm – 10.30pm

Brehon Hotel & Spa

Muckcross Road,
Poulnamuck, Killarney,
Co. Kerry.
R32 VE24

Tuesday November 11

7pm – 10.30pm

Newpark Hotel

Castlecomer Road,
Newpark Lower,
Kilkenny.
R95 KP63

gov.ie/dafmevents



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

LAST MONTH, CULTIVATE CREDIT UNION ANNOUNCED THAT IT WAS INCREASING ITS UNSECURED LOAN LIMIT IN RESPONSE TO FARMER DEMAND. MATT O'KEEFFE CAUGHT UP WITH ITS CHAIR, JOE HEALY, TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE MOVE, AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS AT THE FARMER-FOCUSED LENDER

RAISING THE BAR AND THE LIMIT

The unsecured loan facility offered by Cultivate has proven to be very popular since its launch. Loan amounts have grown, alongside the number of Credit Unions now offering them. And there have been some recent developments in other areas, Joe explains: "Two of the biggest changes we've made is that we've taken on a new CEO at the same time as we are expanding the scheme both in terms of borrower numbers and the size of loans extended to our clients in the farming sector. "In September we increased our unsecured loan limit from €75,000 up to €100,000. We've also increased the number of Credit Unions offering Cultivate loans. There are 60 Credit Unions now facilitating these loans, with those unions providing 200 outlets across the country. Comparing the last six months with a similar period two years ago, our loans have more than doubled."

Cultivate is an initiative of a group of credit unions in the Republic of Ireland that provides short- to medium-term loans built specifically for its farmer members.

MAKING THE MOVE

Farmers' willingness to access Cultivate for its loan requirements upended a perception that farmers would be reluctant to move from traditional lenders: "The idea that farmers don't move around hasn't proven the case. We were expecting that we'd have to work on it but we identified a huge gap in the market through an EU-funded study on the agri-lending sector in Ireland. That gap was between €800m and a €1bn. We decided if we did it right, there was space for a specialised Credit Union loan service for farmers. Increasingly, we're seeing farmers who would've traditionally

been with the pillar banks, using us as an alternative. What I say to farmers is, if you're taking out finance – and we all do that over the years – shop around, see what's on offer."

And if they do shop around, what will Cultivate offer them? "There are four or five things that Credit Unions have going for them," says Joe. He continues: "You're talking to a person in the locality. It's very flexible, quick, and simple to complete."] And then there is that raised loan limit. Having started out with a €75,000 loan limit, the recent increase has driven farmer interest: "The increase is €25,000 and that's a 33 per cent increase in the loan offering. It's also a psychological figure, in terms of scale, even though our average loans would be much lower than that at about €40,000. That figure has increased in the past two years from €31,000. That confirmed the need to increase the threshold to accommodate

Highlights at Agritechnica 2025

Your Gateway to the Next Level of Farming

This year, LEMKEN presents **innovations** designed for farmers worldwide. Join us at **Agritechnica**, meet our experts, and experience the power of our latest solutions firsthand.

Agritechnica
Hall 11, Stand B 51



Solitair MF



Onyx



Diamant 18 / FlexPack



Solitair PT

[lemken.com](https://www.lemken.com)

 **LEMKEN** THE AGROVISION COMPANY

higher requirements. Costs have increased for machinery, sheds, livestock and everything else and we were encouraged by our customers to increase the loan ceiling."

BROADENING THE CUSTOMER PROFILE

Cultivate initially attracted mainly drystock clients but that has evolved, says Joe: "Increasingly it's developing out towards dairy farmers, tillage farmers, and all the sectors. We've seen a huge increase in applications and borrowings from tillage farmers over the last few years. Seventy per cent of our loans are to the drystock sectors, sheep, beef and suckler farmers. That pretty much reflects the sectoral percentages of farm enterprises. The livestock sectors have had a fairly good year, long overdue and very welcome. Unfortunately, tillage is under pressure. The only saving grace was that the weather allowed them to harvest in good conditions with good yields and quality but the prices aren't near where they need to be."

CALL FOR CAUTION

Joe calls for caution around borrowing: "With reasonable profits across the drystock and dairy sectors, farmers are more willing to invest in their enterprises. If you're going to a Credit Union, the people that you meet there are well trained to engage in the Cultivate loan scheme. They are well informed on prices, margins and future prospects for the different sectors. They advise farmers and the first thing they ask is, 'do you need this investment loan'? One of the key things is to go through a farmer's repayment capacity. The last thing you want to do is put extra pressure on a farmer if they're already under financial pressure. Good advice is well received and it's not just a sales pitch from Cultivate representatives. Profits might be up or there's an opportunity to take out a loan through Cultivate or the banks, but we still advise caution. It's not just about lending money. It has to work for everyone involved."

PROTECTING WEAK LINKS IN FOOD CHAIN

Joe Healy is also chair of the board of the Agri-Food Regulator and he reminds us of



Joe Healy, chair, Cultivate Credit Union.



GOOD ADVICE IS WELL RECEIVED AND IT'S NOT JUST A SALES PITCH

that office's remit: "One of the messages we had to get out from the very start is that we are not involved in making price. That's not our job. Some farmers thought we would have a role there, but that was never our remit. Our job is to ensure that unfair trading practices are punished. That's where, for instance, the buyer might leave the producer or the seller without money for payment for 30 days or more."

"There are about 16 different areas of unfair trading practices ranging from the seller being charged for shelf space or advertising, to goods being returned at short notice. Our work involves bringing more transparency to the marketplace. We correlate publicly available information with data that we gather from talking to the various stakeholders, whether that's the retailers or the factories, or the wholesalers, and assemble all that

information. We put it into a straightforward formula and publicise it through the various media outlets and on our website so that the producer, and others along the chain selling their product, have a lot of information to draw from that's easily understood. They are then in a stronger position to strike a harder bargain with buyers."

EXTRA POWERS

Joe gives some insight to the two years since the Regulator has been in existence: "Over the past year, we've had our first court case where we brought a company that hadn't paid producers to court, and won that case. The Regulator is two years established and is building on expertise, reputation and powers to act. Transparency in the marketplace is a big issue. Up to 90 per cent of those we approach talk to us and provide the information we request. One or two significant players refused to give the information and that's why we went back to the minister requesting additional powers."

Last September, the Agri-Food Regulator wrote to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon, requesting additional powers that would allow it to compel businesses in the agri-food supply chain to provide price and market information for reporting purposes. Joe continues: "We've worked on that over the last number of months. Our understanding is that it's with the Attorney General. We do need those extra powers to carry out the job that we were set up to do. It can be a bit demoralising, doing a survey or trying to issue a report, if a few key players refuse to engage. Additional powers will compel them to talk to us."

"It is also very important to highlight our independence. We are there to represent everyone involved in the food chain so that there's fairness in the system. It's about building trust and respect with all the stakeholders. It's a two-way street. It's important for farmers to realise that we are not at the behest of the producers. We have a responsibility to everyone involved in the chain to ensure fairness and transparency. We're independent of each sector along that food chain."

MESSAGES

- Grassland management for 2026 starts in October – make the plan.
- Assess BCS of cows and act.
- Do the Grass Rotation Plan and autumn/spring grass budget.
- A big tax year – take steps to manage it!
- Act if replacements are not meeting target weights.
- Analyse soil and feed and assess your winter feed requirements.
- Be aware of the new EBI changes.



By Matt Ryan

GRASS MANAGEMENT STARTS NOW

Many of the decisions and actions you take in October have a big influence on how much grass you will grow next year, and consequently, your farm's profit.

Key decisions

- ▶ What are the autumn and spring targets?
- ▶ When to start and finish the last grazing rotation?
- ▶ How to build and maintain autumn grass until November?
- ▶ Planning closing cover to hit the 1st December target.
- ▶ Soil analysis to ensure no field has a pH less than 6.3 or is below Index 3 for P and K.

Principles that drive the 'autumn grass engine'

- ▶ Every extra day cows are at grass in autumn results in an extra €2+ profit per cow per day.
- ▶ Delaying closing by a week in autumn results in 100kg DM/ha less grass in spring.
- ▶ More grass in spring diet results in better milk yields and improved cow condition.
- ▶ Every spring grazing day results in €2.80+ profit per cow per day.
- ▶ Autumn/spring rotation planners ensure efficient grass use up to housing.
- ▶ If grass supply is low in spring, plan now. Silage supplementation should be fed in February if needed, not in March, as this will seriously harm milk yield.
- ▶ Having a lot of clover paddocks requires careful planning.
- ▶ Low autumn covers allow white clover recovery.
- ▶ Spring average farm covers (AFC) should be 900-1,100kg DM/ha by early February, depending on stocking rate and land type.
- ▶ Winter growth from December 1 to February 1 ranges from 100-400kg DM/ha. Use PastureBase to calculate what yours has been over the last three to four years, and subtract your winter growth from your spring opening cover requirement to establish your target December 1 cover.
- ▶ Target autumn AFC for 1st Dec: 650-850 kg DM/ha.
- ▶ By November 1:
 - ▶ Dry farms should have 60-70% of the milking platform grazed.
 - ▶ Heavy soils should have 80% grazed.
- ▶ Current rotation length: 40-45 days.
- ▶ Last rotation should start:
 - ▶ Around September 20 for wet/heavy farms.
 - ▶ Between October 5-10 for dry farms.
- ▶ First paddocks to be grazed next spring must:
 - ▶ Be dry, near the parlour, easily accessible, with covers of 700-900 kg DM/ha.

- ▶ Many farms are below target covers for September, and ground conditions are poor. Be proactive to stretch grass as long as possible.

Paddock groups for autumn closing:

Group 1 – 30% grazed before October 20:

- ▶ Will be grazed March 1-15.
- ▶ Further from yard, good access, dry.
- ▶ Must hit spring cover of 1,200+ kg DM/ha.

Group 2 – 30% grazed October 20-31:

- ▶ Grazed in February at 700-900kg DM/ha.
- ▶ Dry, ideally near yard, multiple access points, recently re-seeded, quick growing, some clover paddocks.

Group 3 – 40% grazed during November:

- ▶ Grazed from March 15 to early April when the second rotation begins but it may be delayed until the cover on the first three paddocks on the second rotation have at least 1,200kg DM cover per hectare.
- ▶ Clover swards, slower growing, poorer infrastructure, etc.

Table 1: Target October and closing grass covers per cow and average farm cover

	2.5 cows/ha	3 cows/ha	3.5 cows/ha	Heavy land	Rotation
Date	Cover/cow - AFC	Cover/cow - AFC	Cover/cow - AFC	Cover/cow - AFC	Days
Oct 1	400 -1,000	380 -1,150	340 -1,180	330 -850-950	40-45
Nov 1	60%+ closed	65-70% closed	70-80% closed	80-90% closed	
Housed	650kg DM/ha	750-800kg DM/ha	800kg + DM/ha	550kg DM/ha	
AFC Dec 1	700kg DM/ha	800kg DM/ha	900kg DM/ha	600kg DM/ha	

Grazing tips for October

- ▶ Use 12-hour grazing blocks.
- ▶ Avoid regrowth damage – don't allow animals back into the previous day's grazed area.
- ▶ Graze out to 4cm.
- ▶ Use on/off grazing in wet weather (2.5-3 hour blocks).
- ▶ Develop a spur road to access difficult-to-reach paddocks.
- ▶ Silage should be fed on low-grass cover farms. Feed silage early in the night – none after midnight – to ensure cows have an appetite for grass.

Apply potash (K) now – here's why

- ▶ 30-40% of fields are below target K levels (Index 3-4).
- ▶ No restrictions to using it (unlike with N and P).
- ▶ Autumn is best for applying K:
 - ▶ Improves nitrogen efficiency in spring.
 - ▶ Reduces spring grass tetany risk.

- ▶ Reduces luxury uptake of K.
- ▶ Grazing maintenance level: 25-30 units/acre.
- ▶ Raise low Index fields: +30-50 units/acre. An extra 30-50 units/acre will be required to raise low index fields to index 4 levels.
- ▶ Two-cut silage removes 160-200 units K/acre. Apply slurry (30 units/1,000 gal) to help.
- ▶ With good cashflow, investing in K will increase grass yield by 2-3t of DM/ha.

Lime Is the number one investment

- ▶ Highest ROI (up to 200%).
- ▶ Improves P and N availability, soil biology, worm activity, and supports clover.
- ▶ Aim for pH 6.3+.
- ▶ Soil test now and apply this autumn.

DO THE LAST ROTATION PLAN!

- ▶ Use PastureBase – most farmers are already doing this.
- ▶ It allocates daily hectares from October 6 – November 25.
- ▶ **Goals:**
 - ▶ Graze 60-80% by November 1.
 - ▶ Long rest period ensures February grass – over 90% of the grass available for cows then will have grown this October/November.
 - ▶ If the area allocated doesn't give enough grass, indicated by post-grazing height, then cows must be supplemented with meals or, preferably, very good quality baled silage.
 - ▶ If there is a lot of grass in the area, post-grazing, you either measured the area incorrectly or you do not have enough cows for the farm, or you are feeding too much silage and/or meals.
- ▶ Weekly measuring and PastureBase tracking means you will stay on target.
- ▶ If you cannot graze (e.g., after wet week) you will go off target and you must double area grazed the next week.

BODY CONDITION SCORE (BCS) COWS NOW

This is the first of six BCS assessments annually – and probably the most important.

- ▶ Thin cows won't calve or milk well.
- ▶ For every 50kg BCS deficit (one condition score is 40-50kg), a cow will produce 450l less milk.

Management options if thin cows are identified in October

- ▶ Dry off now for a long dry period so she can put on weight.
- ▶ With 120 days to calving for February calvers, no meals will be needed with good silage.
- ▶ Once-a-day milking (OAD).
- ▶ Feed low-protein ration.

Waiting until November means that the only option is expensive meal feeding.

To assess BCS accurately

- ▶ Run cows through the crush, feel tail head, ribs, short ribs, and backbone.
- ▶ If unsure, ask advisor, raise it with your discussion group, or hire someone to do it for you.

BCS targets

- ▶ Drying off: 3.0-3.25.

- ▶ Generally, they will calve down in same condition as dried off.
- ▶ Cows below 2.75 must be earmarked for special attention.
 - ▶ A 0.5 BCS deficit, at least 25kg below target condition means she will have to be fed an extra 130kg meal.
 - ▶ Feed 2kg/day for 10 weeks (excluding first/last two weeks of dry period).
 - ▶ Therefore, she requires a 14-week dry period.

Which cows should be dried off from October 15:

- ▶ BCS < 2.75.
- ▶ First lactation cows calving early.
- ▶ Cows milking < 7-8L/day.
- ▶ SCC > 300,000.
- ▶ Consider selling, housing, or moving these off grazing platform.

Remember, a long dry period is the only way to improve condition in high-merit thin cows.

CHANGES TO EBI (Sept 2025):

- ▶ New base year – 2015.
- ▶ Overall EBI has decreased by €65.
- ▶ The following Sub-Indices have decreased:
 - ▶ Milk: -€38
 - ▶ Fertility: -€28
 - ▶ Calving: -€15
 - ▶ Management: -€3
- ▶ The following Sub-Indices have increased:
 - ▶ Carbon: +€3
 - ▶ Beef: +€4
 - ▶ Maintenance: +€8
 - ▶ Health: +€3

New base cow averages:

- ▶ Milk: 6,287 kg (6,104L)
- ▶ Fat: 264 kg (4.2%)
- ▶ Protein: 226 kg (3.6%)
- ▶ MS: 490 kg (7.8%)
- ▶ Avg. calving interval: 385 days
- ▶ Avg. survival: 85.6%

Use new maintenance figure to predict cow liveweight

- ▶ Cow weight formula (Table 2):

$$\text{Weight} = 601.67 + (\text{Maintenance} \times -1.7349) = \text{cow weight}$$

Table 2: Predicted liveweight of a Holstein-Friesian cow based on new maintenance sub-index (2025).

New predicted liveweight (kg)	New maintenance SI (from Sept 2025)	Old maintenance SI (up to May 2025)
525	€44	€23
550	€29	€16
575	€15	€10
600	€0	€4
525	-€14	-€2
650	-€28	-€8
675	-€43	-€15

ICB makes the following observations:

- ▶ Milk PTA is a good predictor of milk litres but not a good predictor of milk solids or Milk Value (current milk price 475c/l used),
- ▶ Milk SI is a very good predictor of milk value per cow.
- ▶ EBI is the best predictor of profit.

ICB makes the following challenges:

- ▶ The majority of herds are negative for milk kg/L.
- ▶ Farmers need to focus on milk sub-index and not milk kg.
- ▶ Address the maintenance changes and implications.

BIG TAX BILL YEAR – ACT NOW!

- ▶ This year will be a big tax bill year, therefore, take steps to minimise by making worthwhile autumn investments.
- ▶ Talk to your accountant – project 2025 tax now.
- ▶ Make wise investments:
 - ▶ Spread lime and extra P/K to boost soil indices = 150% return on investment (ROI).
 - ▶ Improve grazing infra-structures such as roadways, fencing, water = 58% ROI.
 - ▶ Pay bills before year-end.
 - ▶ Pension top-up?
 - ▶ Rainy-day fund.
 - ▶ Invest in slurry storage, calf sheds, extra milking units.
 - ▶ Forward-buy fertiliser, feed, minerals before year-end (get 2-3 quotes).

Replacement checks and actions

- ▶ Replacement heifer management revolves around their actual weights relative to targets.

Table 3: Target weights (kg) for replacement weanling (R1s) and in-calf heifers (R2s) on October 1.

Cow type	Mature weight	R1s' weight (37% of cow weight.)	R2s' weight (77% of cow weight)
Holstein	580	215	445
Holstein X Nor. Red	550	205	425
Holstein X Jersey	530	195	

Actions:

- ▶ Small R1 calves below target should get 1-1.5kg meal (16-18% P) to meet target weight on April 1.
- ▶ All animals below target weights must be taken away from main mob and given priority treatment.
- ▶ For every 20kg below target, animals must be fed 100kg extra meal.
- ▶ It must be remembered that animals that are much heavier than target weights are also a liability as they will underperform when milking and will be culled out of the herd sooner. No meal for them!
- ▶ Small R2s need 1-2kg meal (12-14% P), otherwise they will calve down too light, resulting in 450L lower milk yields for every 50kg below target weight at calving.

- ▶ Fewer of them will go in calf during the first three weeks of breeding in 2026.
- ▶ Scan now and sell any heifers not in-calf.
- ▶ If >7-8% not in-calf, investigate why.
- ▶ Have you vaccinated for salmonella?
- ▶ If any weanlings show symptoms of hoose (coughing), stomach worms (sticky dung on tail head) or fluke (scouring and other signs) have them treated as they will not maximise weight gain.
- ▶ Same applies to contract-reared stock.

SOIL & FEED ANALYSIS – DO IT NOW

- ▶ Silage: test DMD and minerals.
 - ▶ Helps plan winter feeding.
 - ▶ Mineral analysis gives insight into April-May grass deficiencies.
- ▶ Vet tests: dung samples, blood samples, milk samples.
 - ▶ Plan dosing schedules.
 - ▶ Do dry cow sensitivity testing now.
 - ▶ Consult your vet in relation to dry cow treatment and a sensitivity test.
- ▶ Soil samples: build indices to 3 & 4.

Brief notes:

- ▶ Use soiled water (1,000–1,500 gal/acre) on clover/new reseed.
- ▶ It is uneconomical to feed cows more than 2-3kg meal (15% P) now.
- ▶ Lameness:
 - ▶ Consider Farm Relief Service assessment.
 - ▶ Use footbath three consecutive days once or twice a month.
 - ▶ Observe cow movement from parlour.
- ▶ Make a job list – a stitch in time saves nine.
- ▶ Forage needs (kg DM/animal/day):
 - ▶ Cows: 11kg
 - ▶ Weanlings: 4.7kg
 - ▶ In-calf heifers: 9 kg
- ▶ Feed surplus? Consider finishing beef weanlings for April sale.
- ▶ Avoid compaction:
 - ▶ No grazing or machinery in wet conditions.
- ▶ For your information, in trials in Clonakilty, Moorepark and Athenry in 2025 protected urea (9.4 t DM/ha) outyielded CAN (9.2 t DM/ha) at all application rates in six rotations.

Quote of the month

"High achievement always takes place in the framework of high expectations." - Charles Kettering



ICMSA

THE FAMILY FARM ORGANISATION

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



FENDT 300 VARIO: FIFTH GENERATION REVAMPED AND RARING TO GO

THE FIFTH GENERATION OF THE FENDT 300 VARIO HAS BEEN REVAMPED. DYNAMIC PERFORMANCE IS NOW AVAILABLE ON ALL MODELS, AND NEW FEATURES INCLUDE A REDESIGNED DRIVER'S SEAT, A HEATED FRONT WINDOW, AND MUCH MORE. IT'S THE STAR OF THIS MONTH'S FROM THE CAB

Tractors in the performance class up to 150 horsepower (hp) are commonly found on grassland farms, smaller operations, vegetable farms, and in municipal use.

The latest generation includes the new Fendt 310 Vario Dynamic Performance (DP) model and extends the Fendt DP concept across all models.

Additional features include a Cat. 4 cab, an updated driver's seat, a heated front window, and separate valves for the front loader. Modern exterior updates include daytime running lights and rear lights with dynamic turn signals.

This generation includes five models ranging from 103-152hp (76-112 kW). The Fendt 310 Vario, with a base output of 103 horsepower, or 113hp with DP, extends the lower end of the range. The DP concept was introduced with the Fendt 314 Vario at Agritechnica in 2019 and is now standard across the lineup. The intelligent system automatically provides up to 10 additional horsepower (7kW) when needed by secondary systems such as the PTO, air conditioning, or compressed air supply.

The four-cylinder AGCO Power engine is approved for HVO100 and other fuels under DIN 15940. Using HVO significantly reduces the machine's CO2 footprint.

The Fendt 300 Vario series is used in a variety of settings. For example, the 300s work on smaller structured farms in grassland and arable farms, while on larger farms they are used as farm tractors with a focus on front loaders. They are also used in vegetable cultivation and by municipalities. These diverse applications lead to equally diverse equipment needs. Buyers can choose between the Power, Profi, and Profi+ equipment lines, with more than 230 available options and 100 choices for tires and track widths. A basic model can be configured with a guidance system, telemetry, and numerous comfort features. Its ease of maintenance and limited number of accessible lubrication points contribute to a lower cost of ownership over time.

STRONG PERFORMANCE IN ARABLE FARMING

In areas with small plots, the agile Fendt 300 Vario excels. Optimised speed ranges at rated PTO speeds help reduce fuel consumption and increase efficiency. For the first time, a 1000E PTO option will be available for the Fendt 300 Vario (order availability expected in autumn 2026). The standard FendtONE driver's workstation includes all smart features of larger Fendt tractors. Fendt Guide enables precision down to 2 centimetres (cm), and Isobus makes it easy to manage complex implements. Customisable, colour-coded buttons simplify operation and an added holder on the A-pillar with a USB-C socket (available from autumn 2026) will be a welcome feature.

The new ventilated, rotatable driver's seat improves ergonomics for tasks requiring frequent rear visibility, such as planting work or harvesting potatoes. A rear camera and GroundVision drawbar lighting enhance





FOR THE FIRST TIME, A 1000E PTO OPTION WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR THE FENDT 300 VARIO

safety and make hitching implements easier.

Optional K50 hitches enable use with implements featuring forced steering, such as a slurry tanker with tandem axles, improving control on side slopes.

Apple CarPlay will be integrated into the Fendt infotainment system starting in June 2026, operable via armrest terminal and compatible via cable or Bluetooth.

PRECISION IN VEGETABLE CULTIVATION

Vegetable cultivation requires precise, low-speed operation. The Fendt 300 Vario can be equipped with all FendTONE Smart Farming features, including a guidance system with automatic headland management, telemetry, and Isobus features like tractor implement management (TIM). With a payload of approximately 4 tonnes (t), it can operate effectively with heavy implements like planters. The comfortable Titanium seat improves ride quality and the swivelling design supports ergonomics during jobs where operator communication is frequent. The seat also includes three-stage heating and ventilation.

LIGHT AND AGILE ON GRASSLAND

Grassland farmers favour the Fendt 300 Vario for its low weight, compact design, and high ground clearance. With Fendt DynamicPerformance, it provides added power when needed, which is ideal for tasks like mowing with large mower combinations. The Vario transmission allows PTO speed and forward speed to be managed independently, protecting soil structure. The expanded hydraulic system now includes five valves – four at the rear and one at the front – so that mower combinations with additional functions, such as hydraulic folding of the safety curtain can also be used conveniently. Its low centre of gravity and steady traction improve safety on slopes. High ground clearance enables smooth passage over swaths, preserving the crop structure.

Optional GroundVision drawbar lighting illuminates the space between the tractor and implement, aiding visibility during tasks like baling or forage pickup even in low-light conditions.

The fifth-generation Fendt 300 Vario delivers a smart, efficient, and highly adaptable solution for modern farming, according to the company. With enhanced power, advanced technology, and improved comfort, it's ready to meet the demands of diverse operations today and into the future.



Noel Dunne
Machinery editor

AS GOOD AS EVER

Well, my friends, the Ploughing is well and truly over but what a Ploughing it was! We had good weather, good vibes, good business, good crowds, good organisation and logistics. And, importantly, a very good site. Screggan delivered in every respect: the location; the access and egress; and the soil for the ploughing contests. It had it all. Roll on Ploughing 2026 when all roads lead to Screggan once again! On the subject of agricultural shows, we really are spoiled for choice in this country. Announced recently were details for the next Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Machinery Show which will be held in Punchestown in November 2026. Michael Farrelly, executive director of the FTMTA, said returning to the wintertime dates has proven to be popular with both exhibitors and attendees. The FTMTA show books out very quickly and I know that companies are now looking to increase their stand sizes, so I recommend they call the FTMTA without delay to express interest in exhibiting even before the exhibition packs come out early next year. Demand for space will be high.

I have been away on my travels again. I spent a few days in the UK with JCB last week where I got a chance to drive the all-new Fastrac 6000 series. It comes in two models topping out at 335hp and is the most advanced Fastrac yet with a host of new features, including a fully integrated tyre inflation/deflation system and a twin receiver satellite guidance package complementing the long-established all-round suspension. The two new models of the Fastrac 6000 will be available next year but will have their first public viewing at Agritechnica next month in Germany.

As I write this month's column, I am in Case IH Europe's headquarters taking a look at its machinery line up for 2026 including the new Steiger 785 and the new Quadtrac 645, along with the all-new Optum and Magnum ranges. We are getting a chance to test the ranges ahead of their launches which are also taking place at Agritechnica in November. It has been a very busy time over the past few months in the European machinery market as manufacturers are holding pre-Agritechnica press events across Europe to highlight their latest machines. It gives agri-journalists a chance to experience the machinery firsthand and brief farmers and contractors ahead of official launches. I will be there as usual and I am really looking forward to it.

Before I finish up this month, I just want to comment on rural life and how the GAA brings communities together. My local football club, Courtwood, has reached the senior county final for the first time in its history. Courtwood has won several junior and intermediate titles over the years, but a senior football title has eluded the club. Last Sunday, I watched a mass celebration on the hallowed turf of O Moore Park with grown men crying with joy as they hugged the players. Courtwood supporters of every occupation, religion and political outlook donned the club colours to support their parish team. At this exact time of year, these scenes are repeated all over the country. This is part of the rich and diverse fabric of rural Ireland. And isn't it just marvellous?

Until next month, farm wisely and farm safely!



Don Holland with his daughter Tina Holland outside their depot in Tralee, Co. Kerry.



MARKING A MILESTONE: KERRY TRACTORS CELEBRATES SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY

WITH AN EXCITING LINE UP OF MASSEY FERGUSON (MF) TRACTORS AND MACHINERY, BUSINESS AT KERRY TRACTORS LTD IS VERY STRONG, BOOSTED BY EXCELLENT COMMODITY PRICES FARMERS ARE RECEIVING. THIS YEAR IS A SPECIAL MILESTONE FOR THE DEALERSHIP OWNERS, TINA HOLLAND AND HER DAD DON, AS THEY CELEBRATE A VERY SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY THIS MONTH, HOLDING AN OPEN DAY TO MARK THE OCCASION.

Kerry Tractors Ltd is the main Massey Ferguson dealer for Co. Kerry, and is based in The Mart Complex in Tralee, just outside the town.

Kerry Tractors Ltd was originally established in 1985 as the main MF dealer in Limerick, known as Limerick Farm Machinery, and then added the Kerry branch in 1995. During the early 2000s the Hollands decided to amalgamate their operations and move everything to the Kerry branch, to service an ever-expanding customer base there, while still serving Limerick customers. Don Holland is the owner, and 40 years on he is still very much an integral part of the business, while also enjoying a little bit of well-earned time off. His daughter Tina, managing director, said: "I joined the family business 15 years ago and became managing director in 2020, taking on the overall responsibility of running the business, while allowing Dad to step back a bit after over 40 years of running it himself.

"With an additional eight full-time staff, we cover the entire county of Kerry as our assigned territory, but we have retained a small number of loyal legacy customers in Limerick."

MF PORTFOLIO

Kerry Tractors Ltd sells a full range of MF products including tractors, balers, mowers, tedders, rakes and telehandlers. In addition, they sell Quicke loaders and implements, Rossmore implements and vacuum tanks,

Trioliet diet feeders and Plant-Mec equipment such as Q-Beds, yard scrapers and brushes. Increases in machinery prices and finance interest rates, together with falling commodity prices paid to farmers, meant overall machinery sales worldwide fell during the past year.

Tina said: "I think there's no denying that all businesses across all industries are facing a lot of tough challenges at the moment.

"Rising costs is definitely one of the biggest challenges we are facing currently. The cost of business has increased significantly and continues to do so on a regular basis. "Trying to manage these rising costs, while also keeping the cost of products and services at an affordable level for our customers and keep the business profitable is a constant battle.

"In addition, interest rates on business borrowing have significantly increased, making the management of cash flow another challenge for us at the moment."

POSITIVE SALES OUTLOOK

While Kerry Tractors Ltd also experienced a fall in sales, it is now noticing an upturn in business boosted by high beef and dairy prices.

Tina said: "We have noticed an improvement of late and find ourselves in a strong position again going forward. Our sales are picking up and the outlook is a lot more positive.

"Prices are much better, so farmers and contractors are buying again. Our forecast is good for the remainder of this year and next season. We've seen an increase of activity



Kevin Lynch, head of the service department, with technicians Joseph Clifford and Ciaran Sheehy.

in the order books and the outlook in the industry is generally more positive.

"As we have significantly high numbers of dairy and livestock farmers within our customer base, the MF 5S range of five models is definitely our bread and butter."

"Kerry Tractors Ltd has been MF main dealers for over 40 years, 30 of them in Kerry, and we plan to be around for at least another 30. This is a family business, now on second generation, and we hope to see it on third, fourth and so on," she said.

CELEBRATION EVENT

This year sees Kerry tractors Ltd celebrate 30 years of business in Co. Kerry and to mark the milestone, there is a very special event planned to thank its customers over the years. Tina said: "We have a host of exciting things planned to celebrate the last 30 years and kick off the next 30. And also, to thank our customers who have supported us during this time.

"We're going to hold an open day on October 25, which will be a great event with special offers and family fun. Plus there are a number of amazing giveaways, and some cool stuff with tractors that are sold next year, to mark them being retailed in our 30th year of business.

"Further details will feature in local and national media, so we encourage people to keep an eye out for these, and as always to keep an eye on our social media accounts for information," added Tina.

THE EASY TO HANDLE ALL-ROUNDER



MF 5S | 105-145 HP

**A NEW ERA FOR DEPENDABLE DAIRY AND
LIVESTOCK TRACTORS**

HIGH OUTPUT - LOW RUNNING COSTS

The sector benchmark for engine power and torque

THE BEST-IN-CLASS VISIBILITY

Down to just 4m ahead of the tractor

UNRIVALLED MANOEUVRABILITY

Tight 4m turning radius



SALES
SERVICE
PARTS

PROUDLY SUPPORTING KERRY TRACTORS

MASSEY FERGUSON® is a global brand of AGCO Corporation.

WWW.MASSEYFERGUSON.CO.UK



MASSEY FERGUSON

BORN TO **FARM**



ABBEY RETAIL NAMED OFFICIAL MANITOU UK DEALER

Manitou UK has appointed Abbey Retail as an official dealer, expanding its presence across Ireland.

The partnership will see Abbey Retail represent Manitou in Clare and Galway (agricultural range only), as well as Tipperary and western Kilkenny (construction, agricultural, compact equipment and industrial ranges). The move is part of Manitou's ongoing strategy to strengthen its dealer network and improve access to its handling solutions across key regions, the company says.

Abbey Retail is a division of Abbey Machinery, one of Ireland's oldest agricultural machinery manufacturers, established in 1947 by the Cavanagh family. Headquartered in Co. Tipperary, Abbey Retail serves farmers and contractors throughout the region and has built a reputation for service, reliability and a wide product offering.

In addition to stocking the full Abbey Machinery lineup, Abbey Retail is an authorised dealer for several major brands,



Sean Kinane, retail manager; Peter Smyth, Manitou UK sales director; Clodagh Cavanagh, managing director, Abbey Machinery; Kieran Creedon, Manitou UK area sales manager.

including Massey Ferguson, Kverneland, Rauch, Quicke, Prodig and McConnel. The dealership also supplies tools, filters, oils, hardware and a large range of parts and accessories.

Peter Smyth, sales director at Manitou UK, said Abbey Retail was a strong addition to its dealer network. "We are delighted to partner with Abbey Retail. Their long-standing reputation for premium offerings, commitment to innovation and strong customer relationships make them an excellent fit for Manitou," he said. "With Abbey's reach across Clare, Galway, Tipperary and West Kilkenny, we are confident this partnership will provide

real value to customers in the region."

Sean Kinane, retail manager at Abbey Retail, also welcomed the opportunity: "We're proud to have been awarded the Manitou franchise. The Manitou range for construction and agriculture is extensive, from forklifts to the MRT rotating telehandler series. We'll be stocking the full lineup at our Nenagh and Ballyclerihan depots and are committed to offering the highest levels of service and support." To meet demand, Abbey Retail has expanded its team and invested in parts inventory, technical resources and demonstration equipment.

Expanding access

As an official dealer, Abbey Retail will offer Manitou's full portfolio of construction, agriculture, compact equipment and industrial (Con/Ag/CE/Ind) products. The range includes forklifts, telehandlers, loaders and warehouse equipment – all designed for performance, reliability and operator comfort. Abbey Retail also continues to focus on sustainability, incorporating renewable energy and environmentally responsible practices into its operations, while supporting farmers with machinery that promotes efficiency and reduces environmental impact.

Quicke

SILOCUT

Cleaner Cuts – Better Feeding



M+ 125



M+ 200



L+ 175

SIZES AVAILABLE IN M+, L+ & XL+ TO SUIT EVERY FARMER

- 80X80 BOLT ON HOOK SYSTEM TO SUIT ANY LOADER
- CHOOSE FROM FORGED OR HEAVY DUTY PROFILED TINES
- SPEAK TO YOUR LOCAL DEALER ON THE LATEST SPECIAL OFFERS

For more info on Quicke implements call Jack on +353 87 052 2820



www.fastparts.ie



LEMKEN INTRODUCES NEW SUBSOILER

Lemken has introduced the Onyx subsoiler, expanding its lineup of tillage equipment with a professional-grade solution for working depths of up to 60cm. The Onyx is available in two rigid models: the Onyx MR/300 with a 3m working width and the Onyx MR/400 with a 4m working width. Designed for durability and ease of use, the frame structure is not assembled but carefully welded together. A notable feature is the 90cm underframe clearance, which provides ample space to the base frame even at the maximum working depth. The frame also features a very clear design with two beams spaced 84 cm apart, ensuring easy access for inspection and maintenance. The core of the Onyx is its share system, which is available in two variants spaced 42.5cm apart: the OM (Onyx Mixing) share and the OL (Onyx Loosening) share. Both are hard-faced as standard and optionally available with carbide coating for high-wear conditions. The OM share is designed for medium-depth



tillage between 25cm and 40cm. Mounted on a curved stalk with a guide plate, it lifts and mixes the soil to improve structure and prepare fields for subsequent passes. The OL share, mounted on a straight stalk, is built for deeper soil loosening between 40cm and 60cm. It lifts compacted layers, such as plow pans, helping to create micro-cracks that improve water infiltration and root development. Both shares can be equipped with optional

wings for broader, more uniform soil loosening and better mixing of organic matter. To ensure effective reconsolidation and leveling of the tilled soil, Lemken offers two roller options tailored to the Onyx: the DSW 580 double spiked roller and the RSW 600 tube bar roller. A quick-change roller system allows for fast transitions between roller types, making the Onyx adaptable to varying soil conditions. The Onyx subsoiler will be available in limited quantities starting in 2026.



MONTHLY FIELD REPORT



A very happy Noel Dunne pictured with the Claas Jaguar 1200 in Germany recently.



THE BIG FOUR

CLAAS HAS INTRODUCED FOUR NEW FORAGE HARVESTERS FROM THE JAGUAR 1000 SERIES, ENABLING THROUGHPUT CAPACITIES OF UP TO 480T/H WITH THE WIDEST CROP FLOW ON THE MARKET, NEW FRONT ATTACHMENTS, AND PIONEERING DRIVER ASSISTANCE SYSTEMS. NOEL DUNNE RECENTLY TRAVELLED TO GERMANY, WHERE HE SAW THESE MACHINES IN ACTION AND EVEN GOT BEHIND THE WHEEL HIMSELF. THEY ARE THE FOCUS OF THIS MONTH'S FIELD REPORT



The pre-compression rollers ensure a uniform crop flow regardless of the layer thickness.



With a roller diameter of 310mm, the Multi Crop Cracker XL is the most powerful grain processor on the market.



For harvesting with the new Orbis 10500 with maximum manifold length, the end piece can be folded hydraulically for safe road transport

Short chop lengths and tough harvesting conditions pose challenges for forage harvester crop flow. With this in mind, Claas has developed the widest crop flow channel on the market for the Jaguar 1000, alongside a new pre-compression system. The four pre-compression rollers work with a fully hydraulic system, enabling uniform crop flow regardless of layer thickness. This guarantees consistent feeding of the V-Flex chopping cylinder, ensuring maximum throughput, homogeneous chop quality, and optimum machine efficiency.

POWERFUL CONDITIONER

Throughput levels of up to 480t/h require effective centre punching and residual plant processing in silage maize harvesting. The Jaguar 1000 is ideally equipped for this thanks to the Multi Crop Cracker XL. Available either as the MCC XL Classic with a sawtooth profile with various teeth and a 40 per cent speed difference or as the MCC XL Shredlage with a 50 per cent speed difference, it offers a very large contact surface between the rollers with a 310mm roller diameter, ensuring excellent conditioning across the entire available chop length range and even at the highest throughput capacities.

POWERFUL THROWING ACCELERATOR

The throwing accelerator has been upgraded to match the Jaguar 1000's increased output. Whether operating with a wide throw or during short transfer distances to transport vehicles, a hydraulically adjustable gap of up to 60 mm allows operators to optimise throw

and improve machine efficiency. A new discharge manifold design further supports flexibility. By swapping the manifold end piece, the machine can be configured for various front attachments from grass to maize. During maize harvesting with the Orbis 10500 and maximum manifold length, the end piece can be folded hydraulically for safe road transport.

INNOVATIVE PICK-UP CONCEPT

Claas has developed new front attachments for the Jaguar in the form of the Pick Up 3000, 3800 and the new 4500 with independent variable drive of pick-up and intake auger speed. With Cemos Auto Header, the auger and pick-up speeds are automatically adjusted to the length of cut and the driving speeds during harvesting. The models cover working widths of 3m, 3.8m and 4.50m, and are characterised by several innovative features. Instead of chain drives, mechanical power is transmitted via PTO drive shafts and gearboxes. With its constant hydraulic pre-press pressure, the intake auger ensures an even crop flow to the feeder unit. The two cam track gears of the five-row pick-up are oil-lubricated, encapsulated and therefore operate with low wear. In addition, the strippers between the tines are made of robust plastic and, thanks to the clip system, can be removed individually and easily using just a screwdriver. Last but not least, the Active Contour control in combination with the swingarm-mounted pick-up ensures optimum ground contour following and thus loss-free harvesting even at high forward speeds.

NEW ORBIS GENERATION

In maize harvesting, the new Orbis series with working widths of 9m and 10.50m (12 and 14 rows) is impressive. Another new feature here is the independent variable drive of the knife and transport discs as well as the feed drums for the best chopping quality in all harvesting conditions and lengths of cut. From the comfort of the cab, the operator can use Cemos Auto Header to adjust the speeds of the crop flow elements in harvesting mode to the length of cut and the driving speeds. The unique ground tracking is achieved with the well proven Auto Contour system for all working widths.

OTHER FEATURES AT A GLANCE

- ▶ Premium Line wear parts as standard for reduced wear.
- ▶ Further developed, efficient direct drive with transversely mounted engine and intelligently arranged pump transfer case and hydraulic motors.
- ▶ Large tyre equipment (up to 2.15m on the front axle), four-wheel drive and differential locks.
- ▶ Tyre pressure control systems on both axles for ground-protecting traction even under difficult conditions of use.
- ▶ Hydraulically lowerable third axle for legal road transport in certain operating regions.
- ▶ Noise-reduced cab with swivelling driver's seat.
- ▶ Optional joystick steering for precise steering with thumb and index finger.
- ▶ Full details available on the Claas website.

IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY

Subscribe to
IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY



Subscribe at www.irishfarmersmonthly.com

IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY



Denis Drennan
President ICMSA

THIS IS NOT POLICY; THIS IS COMEDY GOLD

It's a precondition of sensible national policy on any issue that it is (A) constant and (B) coherent. That is, it firstly must be applied wherever and whenever is possible to give it the force of momentum and, secondly, it must make sense.

It must be coherent and developed logically from some indisputable starting fact. We defy anyone to instance a greater single contradiction in any aspect of current Irish Government policy than our official approach and treatment of emissions from agriculture and emissions from aviation – and specifically aviation for tourism and leisure. The ICMSA would contend that the contradictions are, at this stage, so self-evident and overwhelming that official policy is on the verge of impossibility and absurdity.

SCIENTISTS CRITICISE

Recently, in the immediate aftermath of the National Ploughing Championships, it was reported that a scathing attack had been made on the Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) by scientists from four Irish universities. The scientists had accused the Government of interpreting the requirements of international agreements in a way that gave Ireland the 'leeway' to keep agri-emissions high. The scientists made the accusation at the Oireachtas Committee on Climate, Environment and Energy, during which they asked the Committee to write to climate minister, Darragh O'Brien to seek an independent expert review of the CCAC's proposals.

It's important to acknowledge that the scientists had also queried the State's failure to factor any flight or shipping-related emissions into official carbon calculations. But we should all still be very struck by our arrival at the lunacy that has Minister O'Brien – who recently signalled the Government's intention to effectively bypass the passenger cap at Dublin Airport – being urged to take another critical look at the emissions from farming and agri-food. These are emissions from a farming and the agri-sector, it's well worth remembering, that Ireland has already legislated to reduce by no less than 25 per cent by 2030. The idea that Ireland can legislate for reducing food-related emissions by 25 per cent while simultaneously swerving its own passenger cap at its major airport and trying to increase passenger numbers and related aviation emissions by a similar percentage is now moving well beyond puzzlement and into the realms of satire. This is not policy, this is 'comedy gold'.

CONTRADICTION COMEDY

There's a point where you have to pinch yourself as you contemplate this set of conflicting ideas and certainly most farmers – and anyone else that can do the calculations – will have passed that point some time ago. How is it even possible that we've ended up here where a group of academics are urging a government minister to stop what he's doing right now – which is frantically attempting to bypass the passenger cap on Dublin Airport in a move that will massively increase the emissions

connected with transport – and go back and re-draw the criteria so he can drop the blade again on emissions connected with farming and food production? This is where contradiction becomes comedy.

Are we now in the surreal situation where airline executives decide Ireland's policy – or non-policy – on aviation emissions while scientists with expertise in emissions urge the State to double-down on the single most vital economic and social factor outside our cities, farming and agri-food sector? Again, a reminder that this is a sector compelled to meet a 25 per cent reduction in emissions within five years – and is making great strides in this regard – while the aviation sector has, thus far, escaped any emissions-reduction targets.

There's an 'Alice-in-Wonderland' feel to this debate and the way it's being presented. It's simply not tenable for these scientists to press a minister to increase the amount by which farming will have to reduce its emissions while that same minister is working away on a strategy that will massively increase the number of flights into and out of Ireland with the proportionate rise in emissions that must entail.

The ICMSA strongly urges the Government to begin making its national emissions policy somehow coherent because this is 'comedy gold' stuff with the joke very definitely and unfortunately first on the Irish farmers and second on the consumers paying higher prices for their food as the emissions restrictions work their way through and production volumes fall.



ROADSHOWS PROMOTE TAKING THE ORGANIC ROUTE

A SERIES OF SPECIALIST ORGANIC ROADSHOWS ARE TAKING PLACE THIS MONTH TO CREATE AWARENESS OF MARKET DEMAND FOR ORGANIC BEEF AND LAMB. BERNIE COMMINS SPOKE TO PADRAIG BRENNAN, CHAIR OF THE ORGANIC STRATEGY FORUM, ABOUT THE ROLE OF THESE ROADSHOWS IN BUILDING FARMER CONFIDENCE IN ORGANIC FARMING AS A REALISTIC AND PROFITABLE OPTION

According to Teagasc, there is a significant shortage of finished organic livestock here and it is reflective of a 'fragmented production system'. The results of a

feasibility study on producer organisations in the organic sector carried out by Teagasc, and published earlier this year, revealed that 84 per cent of organic sheep products were sold into non-organic streams in 2020. It also revealed that weak links between producers – particularly between store livestock producers and finishers – exacerbate this issue. This fragmentation, the reports stated, contributes to a sense of isolation among organic farmers and limits the trading of inputs and outputs, while the leakage limits the availability of organic produce for processors and consumers, contributing to the sense of uncertainty about market opportunities.

Cue the Growing Prospects for Organic Livestock series of roadshows, which aims to inform current and potential organic farmers of the market demand for organic

beef and lamb, outlets for organic stock, and the positive financial performance of organic livestock farming.

There is a national target to have 10 per cent of land farmed organically by 2030.

Ireland's National Organic Strategy 2024-2030 has six key priorities with the overall aim of growing the wholesale output value of the sector to €750m by 2030 – this represents a fourfold increase on 2022 levels. Among the priorities is a national target to have 10 per cent of land farmed organically by 2030 – approximately 450,000 hectares. In 2021, 1.6 per cent of agricultural land was organic, while this year that percentage has more than tripled to 5.5 per cent. In terms of farmer numbers, they, too, are positive. In 2023, there were 2,000 organic farmers, and this year that number has almost tripled to 5,700. The trajectory is moving in the right direction. "We are very happy with the numbers of

organic farmers and if you look at where they are coming from, over 80 per cent of new entrants are livestock farmers," says Padraig. In fact, the organic livestock sector is the largest and fastest-growing segment of organic farming, with cattle and sheep production being the most common enterprises, accounting for around 4,000 farmers. Tillage, too, is performing well. Within this sector, there is an openness among farmers to explore other options for their enterprises, says Padraig: "Organics is one of those. We have seen with the current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), there are higher payments for Organic Farming Scheme participants, and other supports." Farmers are exploring new farming systems, and ways to make an income from them, says Padraig: "And what they have found is that organic can give them more income and they can successfully farm a model that can keep the family farm going." A higher proportion of younger farmers, and female farmers, are opting for this route, he says, which may be



Pictured at the roadshow launch (clockwise from centre): Tom Dunne, farmer; John Purcell, Good Herdsmen; Elaine Leavy, Teagasc; Paschal Walsh, Irish Country Meats; Tara Bane, Bord Bia; and Padraig Brennan, chair, Organic Strategy Forum.



FROM TALKING TO THE VARIOUS PROCESSORS ON THE ORGANIC SIDE, THEY ARE NOT ABLE TO MEET THE DEMAND THAT IS THERE

reflective of the number of first-time or new entrant farmers being more open-minded about what they want to do. "The other side to that is the growing market demand for organic food. There has been a premium in place for organic food over the last number of years and I think farmers are maybe more aware of that now."

COST OF LIVING IMPACT

Latest research by Kantar Worldpanel highlighted a 6 per cent year-on-year increase in grocery inflation here. How concerning is this for organic demand when people are choosing carefully what to buy based on price and value for that price? Padraig comments: "Organic food has always been a premium food product, so it has always been more expensive than the conventional equivalent on the shelf. What we have seen over the last 12 months or so is a narrowing in price in the relative price between conventional and organic. There is still some premium there for organic but not the same level that would have been there traditionally. When it comes to the results of research undertaken by Bord Bia, for example, Irish consumers appear to be willing to pay somewhere in the region of 5-10 per cent more for organic food at any particular point in time."

So while the cost-of-living challenges are very real, they do not negate the fact that external demand exists for an Irish organic product, Padraig explains: "I think the real opportunity from an organic livestock and an organic meat point of view is in the export market. From talking to the various processors on the organic side, they are not able to meet the demand that is there. There is a lot of interest

Growing Prospects for Organic Livestock is a campaign supported by: Bord Bia, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Teagasc, Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association, the IFA, Organic Trust, National Organic Training Skillnet, ICOSA, ABP Meats, The Good Herdsman, and Leitrim Organic Farmers.

in organic meat from Ireland and a lot of interest in increasing the purchases, and at the moment, the biggest issue preventing that from happening is insufficient numbers of animals available to be processed." Certainty of supply is key, however: "There is real opportunity to grow a stronger preference across Europe for Irish organic meat as long as we can give certainty of supply. From a customer point of view, they want to be sure that if they are buying organic from here, be it beef or lamb, that they are going to be able to buy it for 52 weeks of the year and not just 10 weeks of the year, and that is what we have to develop and improve."

MOMENTUM

Padraig says that the growth in organic farming here shows that there is momentum within the sector. He is hopeful that this momentum will help us reach the 10 per cent target by 2030: "We have gone from 2 per cent to 6 per cent but I think that going from 6 per cent to 10 per cent is probably going to be a bit more challenging because those who were thinking about it have probably made that conversion over the last few years. We will have more farmers in the coming years so

I would be very hopeful that we will reach the 10 per cent, but it will be more incremental than it has been." He says he would like to see more dairy farmers and horticultural enterprises making the conversion, also. "That is also where we will be focusing a bit more on as part of the strategy implementation. We will be looking at how we can get a slightly better spread across enterprises."

At time of print, the organic livestock roadshows had already taken place in Co. Laois and Co. Galway, with another taking place on October 8 in Limerick and October 15 in Co. Donegal.

Padraig says he hopes that the roadshows can capitalise on the momentum: "The series of four regional roadshows will inform and educate interested farmers and help to grow the sector. For the newer farmers to the sector, they will be able to hear from other farmers about their own experiences and any advice they might have. They will get a better understanding of the financial performances of different financial systems. And from a finishing point of view, Teagasc has done some interesting work with cattle and sheep on different ways of finishing animals and the performance you can get. We will try to demystify the technical side, give confidence on the financial side and bring the market that is there to life. And when I say 'market' I mean another farmer, a processor, or a mart – having processors and Bord Bia involved, of course, but also answering the question 'where can I sell my organic livestock to?'"

In next month's issue, we will feature an interview with Tara Bane, newly appointed organic sector manager with Bord Bia.



MATT O'KEEFFE
EDITOR



NED HARTY – A TRUE VISIONARY

Building internationally successful businesses from a Kerry base is nothing new. Kerry Group and Fexco are just two examples of what can be achieved, whatever the location.

The advent of fast, affordable and efficient broadband has only added to the ability to grow businesses in geographical locations not always best served by all the transport and other infrastructure components deemed necessary to facilitate successful business development.

The death of Ned Harty, founder of Dairymaster, last month reminds us that entrepreneurs and pioneers can succeed no matter what challenges or disadvantages they face. Ned was, in so many ways, a pioneer back in 1968 when he founded Dairymaster in Causeway, Co. Kerry, almost 60 years ago. He preceded the development of Kerry Co-op into Kerry Group, an international player in the taste and ingredients sector, having gestated from fairly standard milk-processing activities. Ned's Dairymaster developed in much the same way, from basic milking equipment to being a world-class manufacturer of advanced milking systems and ancillary technologies. We need only look at the diverse talent profiles of Dairymaster employees to get an insight into the highly developed business model that owes its creation to Ned. Data analysts, engineers, designers, fabricators and researchers, along with service technicians and advisors, provide proof that not all of the employment opportunities for well trained and highly educated people are necessarily located on the east coast of Ireland. The 'vision thing' is sometimes exaggerated and hyped out of proportion to reality. Not



The late Ned Harty.
Photo: Dairymaster.

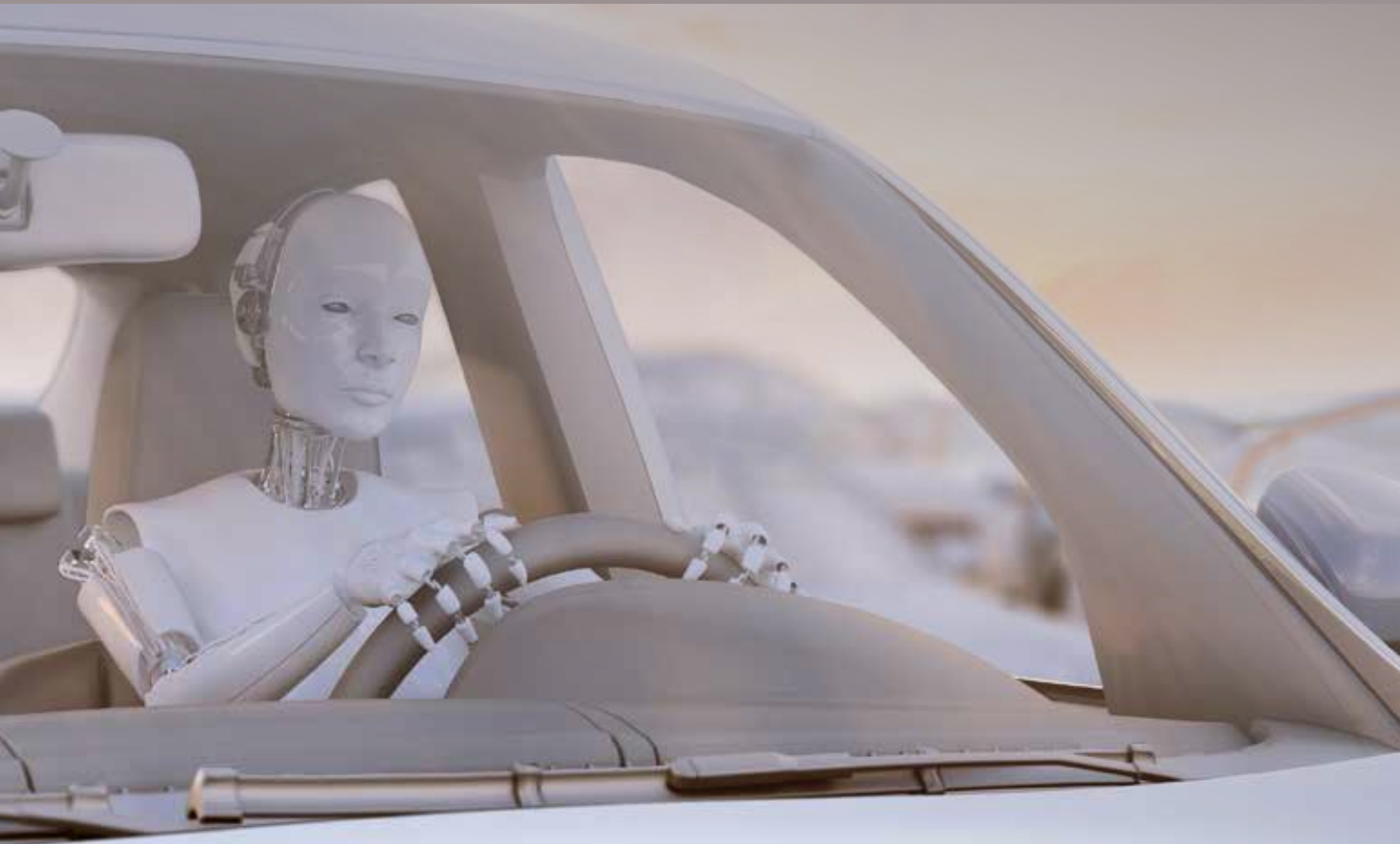
so in the case of Ned. His engineering skills, as excellent as they were, are only one part of the story. With drive, positivity, and vision, Ned developed and drove an idea into an international business with footprints across the globe from Australia and New Zealand, to the US and the Middle East. He surrounded himself with imaginative and skilled associates. His family contributed enormously to the success of Dairymaster in recent decades and continues to offer advanced solutions to the global dairy sector. Ned Harty and his like are among the real heroes of rural Ireland. They have facilitated employment opportunities where few existed before. They – and I include the string of pearls of other agri-related businesses right across

the country – have allowed communities to thrive, and have brought wealth and prosperity to so many parishes, villages and towns up and down the country. Some have focused on local and national opportunities, while others have broadened their ambitions to a global scale. Being able to compete with often larger multinational players, both at home and abroad, should be a cause of ongoing celebration. We rightly welcome multinational corporations into Ireland. At the same time, we – and I single out Enterprise Ireland in this regard – have rightly financially supported, mentored and encouraged our own businessmen and women to develop nationally and internationally competitive businesses. At the National Ploughing Championships last month, we witnessed this indigenous business support structure in action. Both business acorns and oak trees were on display at the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena. Those who denigrate our agricultural sector would do well to ponder the full implications of winding down our grass-based livestock production model in favour of a command-economy type agricultural model focused almost entirely on a domestic market of five million people. Ned Harty and others have shown how well we can perform on a world stage, competing against the best with the best of our own.



**NED HARTY AND OTHERS HAVE SHOWN HOW WELL WE CAN
PERFORM ON A WORLD STAGE, COMPETING AGAINST THE BEST
WITH THE BEST OF OUR OWN**

DO CRASH TEST DUMMIES WORRY ABOUT THE REPAIRS?



ACCIDENTS HAPPEN – BUT YOU'RE NO DUMMY!



**Look for the Certified Steel Standard (CSS) mark
for assurance in vehicle body repairs in Ireland**

CSS Certifies:

- ✓ Staff Qualifications
- ✓ Repair Systems & Specifications
- ✓ Equipment and Parts
- ✓ Repairer's Insurance Cover
- ✓ SIMI Complaints Coverage

Visit: www.cssrepair.ie



✓ CSS Standard created by the Society of the Irish Motor Industry

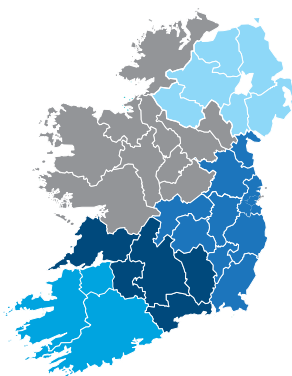
SenseHub®

Ecosystem



Your trusted partner in on-farm animal monitoring and labour saving technology

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE TEAM TODAY



- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|  | John Laughlin | +44 7989 723967 |
|  | Kevin Graham | +353 87 349 7886 |
|  | Matt Thompson | +353 87 348 4495 |
|  | Simon Delaney | +353 87 691 2413 |
|  | Ciaran O'Sullivan | +353 87 689 9801 |



Visit Website

X @SenseHubIrl



IE-SHB-250900009 SEPT 2025

