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SEPTEMBER 2025

IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY



PLOUGHING 2025

THE PLOUGH FACTOR: WHAT, WHEN, WHERE

COMPANY PROFILE: 40 YEARS OF CROSS ENGINEERING

PLOUGHING PROWESS: MACHINERY STANDOUTS

FIELD REPORT

+ SEAN O'BRIEN TACKLES HARVEST 2025

BIG INTERVIEW

+ JOHN DONOGHUE, CEO IFAC



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SEPTEMBER 2025 EDITORIAL



Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

CONSUMER WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR BEEF

Sustainability, as we are regularly reminded, comes in many guises. Economic, environmental and social sustainability make up the familiar three-legged stool. That's enough theory. Let's bring this sustainability thesis down to practical dimensions in relation to the price of cattle. A global, European and Irish cattle deficit has driven up prices in the past 12 months. It has been suggested that consumer demand dampens with high prices; thus far this has not happened, at least not to the extent that it has put downward pressure on prices at the farmgate. Livestock producers have always been lectured that prices are determined by what consumers are willing to pay. That was when beef prices were €4 per kilo and lower. It seems the willingness of consumers to pay higher prices is a lot more elastic than previously assumed. When beef is in balance or surplus, buyers pay as little as possible, while the producer exists on life-support margins and EU supports. Equally, when supply is in deficit, buyers will still pay, naturally, as little as possible for product. That's just business. To suggest, then, that beef prices touching €8 per kilo are above what the market can bear, is open to contradiction. At every stage along the production line, prices have risen, in some cases, to a quite extraordinary extent. The prices on offer for calves, weanlings and stores mean that beef prices must stay at current elevated levels if a reasonable margin is to be secured for finishers. Price is relatively incidental to livestock producers. It is margin that is important. It's 'the bit in the middle' that determines whether a profit is made or not. There is an erroneous belief that, because prices are higher than they have ever been, huge margins and profits are being made by producers. With all the

intermediary prices along the production chain at historic highs, the margins are not as impressive as one might have expected. In any case, one season of higher prices and, hopefully, higher margins and profits, is of permanent benefit to producers only if those higher prices are sustainable. We have discussed the consumer aspect of the equation. The supply end is equally important. With breeding stock numbers reduced, especially in the EU and US, the momentum, if any, towards higher finishing numbers will be slow at best. Neither is Australia, one of the major beef exporting countries, likely to add substantially to supply in the foreseeable future. South America would seem to be the region with the greatest potential to ramp up production and exports quickly. Given the increasingly likely agreement on an EU/Mercosur trade deal in the near future, the resultant increase in low and no-tariff beef imports to the EU from the member states of Mercosur, must put some pressure on European and Irish beef prices. That will, however, take time and, given the relatively small tonnages involved, in the context of total EU beef production and consumption, producers will probably not be negatively impacted for some time. That's as much as Irish cattle producers can expect in terms of assessing the immediate and intermediate sustainability of beef pricing. While nothing is permanent in food production, a major aspiration must be that the longer higher beef prices last, the more sustainable they become. Consumers, processors, butchers and supermarkets simply accommodate a higher price threshold, and it becomes embedded in the cost of doing business and buying food. That's the theory. We will await the market reality as the first full season of higher beef prices approaches.

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JURY MEMBER FOR IRELAND

CHURNING IT OUT ALL THESE YEARS LATER

Last month, the opening of a time capsule in the form of an old milk churn, buried in the Mansion House in 1988, proved to be quite the eye opener for those who attended the very special event. The Guild of Agricultural Journalists of Ireland was responsible for 'burying' the capsule way back then, and for 'digging it up' again, recently.

While many names have changed and agricultural journalism has transformed in the intervening years, the business of food production has remained remarkably stable as a perusal of the milk churn contents confirmed. Ornuia has undergone two name changes since a 1987 Bord Bainne annual report was placed in the churn. Likewise, both Avonmore and Waterford, newly emerged milk-processing Plcs, had annual reports included. Not only did the two later merge, but the resultant entity is now very much an international ingredients and nutrition provider, with no involvement in the Irish dairy industry.

Names of such Irish agricultural journalism giants as the late Joe Murray, Larry Sheedy, Michael Dillon, Paddy O'Keeffe, Willie Ryan and Des Maguire are still well remembered by farmer readers of the various agricultural publications of four decades ago. They all made insightful contributions to the time capsule, which we will explore in greater detail in our October edition. Another leader in agri politics who had a huge impact on the course of Irish farming since 1988 was the late Pdraig Walshe. His letter as then Macra president was included in the churn contents and provides a prescient analysis of farming over the almost four decades since then. Liam Downey, who attended the opening of the capsule, had just been appointed as TB supremo in 1988 with a mandate to eradicate the dreaded disease from Irish livestock

herds. Almost 40 years later, the resurgence of TB has alarmed everyone concerned and is, again, a priority issue for the current Minister and his Department. Teagasc had yet to be formed in 1988 but today its remit is all encompassing across research, education

and advice. The RDS president, John Dardis, who had a previous life as an agricultural journalist and senator, was on hand to welcome the Guild of Agricultural Journalists members and their guests to the RDS as they travelled back in time.



David Markey, Michael Patten and Michael Miley discussing the contents of the milk churn. Photo: Philip Doyle.



A full house – friends and colleagues – reading over some of the churn's contents that were distributed around the room. Photo: Philip Doyle.

GERMANY CALLING

The annual exodus of Irish farmers, machinery traders, and manufacturers to Germany in November is already well planned.

Upwards of 3,000 attendees at the biannual Agritechnica Machinery Show will travel from Ireland to an event where innovation, novel machinery and high-profile launches make for an enjoyable experience for anyone interested in farm machinery. It is not for the faint-hearted, however. Ignoring the inevitable socialising that accompanies these machinery shows, the sheer size of the Hanover-based Exhibition

Arena demands stamina and staying power. On a visit to Agritechnica some years ago, I could only reflect on the potential benefit of a bicycle to travel through the seven largest exhibition halls, each one the size of Croke Park. Another 16 slightly more modestly sized halls bring the total to 23, with almost 3,000 trade stands to be visited should time and energy allow. Irish farm machinery manufacturers will be well represented at Agritechnica with McHales, Abbey and Malone Engineering among those exhibiting.

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* Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine - Beef Welfare Scheme 2025.

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BEEF BANTER AT TULLAMORE

Tullamore Show was the place to be last month with a range of movers and shakers from the Irish agri-food sector to be seen at the event. There was some criticism of an absent Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, though. A little unfair, perhaps? Everyone needs a break and there will be plenty of battles ahead for Martin Heydon as we head into the autumn. The exhibitor profile was of particular interest. Tirlán had a busy stand, obviously pleased with their choice of Tullamore Show above this month's Ploughing Championships. The main meat processors were well represented. Dawn Meats had a prominent site on the main thoroughfare, with discussion points on the stand probably split between cattle prices and the Waterford-based beef processor's foray into the New Zealand meat processing market, presuming that the farmer shareholders of Alliance Group provide the necessary 75 per cent vote in favour of allowing Dawn to invest €128m in the New Zealand meat processor in return for a 65per cent majority shareholding. Further along the Tullamore Show walkway, Larry Goodman was seen deep in conversation with Michael Berkery outside the ABP pavilion. No stranger, either, to international meat-slaughtering acquisitions, the ABP owner may or may not have been reminiscing with Michael on historical beef price clashes between Berkery's IFA and the processing sector. Any hatchets have obviously been well buried at this stage with the old warriors having stepped back from frontline duty somewhat. Former Glanbia MD John Moloney is now chair of the ABP board, presumably reducing some of the workload for the meat industry veteran Larry. Michael Berkery has an equally less pressurised role as chair of the philanthropic FBD Trust.

HAS PRINT A FUTURE?

At the recent Guild of Agricultural Journalists of Ireland event, where a milk churn time capsule was opened and discussed, the topic of print journalism and its future arose. With the arrival of social and digital media some years ago, many predicted that print would be dead in the woods. But that is not entirely the case. Specialist press is still relevant and in demand – less so, yes, but still very much in the mix, especially in the agri-media world. Print continues to be popular in Ireland, with the Irish Farmers Journal, *Irish Farmers Monthly*, Farming Independent and Irish sExaminer Farming. And, there is a great deal of provincial newspaper coverage of agriculture, too. In the UK, farmers continue to have a strong appetite for agricultural newspapers and magazines. The arrival of digital-only agri-media publisher, Agriland, is a welcome addition to the marketplace, and it has quickly established itself as the leading online agricultural site in Ireland. But it will be interesting to see how print evolves over the next decade, especially as commercial farmer numbers will be substantially reduced.

CHECK IN FOR A CHECK-UP

All credit to Irish Farmers Association (IFA) for their ongoing series of health checks being conducted around the country since July and continuing until the end of October. The initiative, run by the IFA, supported by Croí and funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, offers free health assessments, targeted specifically at farmers and their families. Over a half hour check-up, an overview of your health, including heart disease risk, early diabetes detection, mental health as well as information on prostate and skin cancer are provided. The medical and lifestyle assessments provide reports on blood pressure, waist circumference, cholesterol and blood sugar levels, while lifestyle health factors including smoking and dietary habits as well physical activity and alcohol consumption levels are all monitored and advised on. Using marts mainly as location points, the Farmer Health Check will also be operating at Screggan during the Ploughing later this month. Hundreds of farmers have already availed of this service, which can, literally, save lives. Well done to the organisers and supporters.



Damien O'Reilly
EU Affairs and Communications Manager, ICOS

LETTER FROM BRUSSELS

The 'EU quarter,' as it's known, in Brussels is like a wasteland during the summer months. If you were ever looking for a reasonably priced hotel around here, then book for next August. The main institutions – EU Parliament and EU Commission – all but shut down as do the various NGO and lobby organisations with offices here. But the claxon has sounded, and the tens of thousands of people immersed in the turning wheels of the European Union are back in town. That includes our MEPs who are beginning the second year of their five-year term here, having used the first year to find their bearings. Out of sight, out of mind means that the work that goes on in Brussels tends to go unnoticed at home. When the politicians are running for re-election in 2029, no doubt they will be greeted on the canvass with voters wondering where they have been for five years and what have they been doing in Brussels.

I will leave the politicians to defend themselves, but it is fair to say observing them up close here, they are constantly on the move. It can be a gruelling schedule and when I host groups of farmers looking to meet with our MEPs, while always obliging they tend to be running from one meeting to the next. They do welcome engagement and feedback because they need to be informed. The committees are where the heavy lifting is done. For instance, there are over 70 MEPs from the EU27 of all hues sitting on the agriculture committee who discuss, debate and propose amendments to the clunky reams of detailed legalistic EU Commission proposals which are churned out daily regarding various aspects of the food supply chain.

That is where we – the farm and co operative representative organisations – come in, liaising with MEPs and governments with our own views and opinions on what would work best for farmers and the environment. Other interest groups are also in the mix giving their opinions, which often differ greatly from the needs of farmers. It's democracy at work but it can be exhausting in the aim of reaching compromise. Compromise is at the heart of EU legislative proposals. With 720 MEPs representing 450 million citizens, it is not often that straightforward and can take years to accept or reject. It is probably why ordinary citizens take little interest in what goes on. But go on it will and here's hoping the MEPs had a good rest because there is an agenda of work awaiting them (most importantly the next Common Agricultural Policy) which, arguably, will have the biggest impact on farming and food production for a generation to come than at any point in recent years.



Preparation is Everything

Maeve Regan,
Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

No two years are the same. This year, first-cut silages should be of better quality than 2024 and second cuts have yielded well. Winter will inevitably arrive, so a little preparation now can help us make informed decisions.

Year-on-Year grass silages can be extremely variable in nutritional qualities. May weather in 2025 allowed many to take their first cut slightly earlier than in recent years. Before the housed period, it will be important to test the silages available in the yard and plan accordingly.

For dry cows, silage quality will dictate the condition of cows at calving, and dilution/corrective feeding may be required.

The target Body Condition Score (BCS) is typically 2.75–3.0 at dry off and 3.0–3.25 at calving. To achieve this, we aim for a maintenance-type diet over the 60-day dry period. Silage with a DMD of 68–70% will generally suffice.

For thin cows, drying off early is the preferred option. If dried off early (e.g. 10–12-week dry period), cows fed average quality silage (68–70% DMD) should have an increase in BCS of approx. 0.5 units before calving.

For youngstock, feeding rates will also be dependent on silage quality results. If we take the same silage used for dry cows above with our youngstock, offering a silage-only diet, a weight gain of only 0.3kg/day can be expected over the winter from a 70% DMD silage. Approximately 1.5–2 kg of concentrate would be needed here to achieve target winter growth rates. Is there a higher quality forage available for youngstock?

Fodder Budget

Conducting a quick fodder budget to highlight reserves or deficits is crucial, and the sooner it's done, the more options there are to bridge the gap. Having surplus silage on farm is a strong position. Housing could come early, or spring 2026 may be harsh. Removing surplus grass now improves quality and provides more options later.

For further advice, contact your local Agritech Sales Advisor or visit www.agritech.ie



www.agritech.ie



InTouch

CATHAL BOHANE
HEAD OF INTOUCH NUTRITION

Autumn is upon us, bringing shorter days and lower temperatures. While the season will, no doubt, produce some unpredictable weather along the way, grazing quality, growth, and supply are reducing. The extended dry period over the last few weeks has seen some farms feed silage as they are very short on grass.

This will become a more common occurrence, even if the weather changes, as farms will try to maximise intake of grass while also beginning to extend the autumn rotation. The target is to have a 30-day rotation by the beginning of September, rising to 40 by the end of the month, and build farm cover from approximately 750kg now to 1,000kg in that same period. This will ensure grass remains part of the diet for the future, with an autumn planner keeping one eye on springtime grass availability. If you have autumn calvers, the single most important target here is intake. Like in the springtime, it starts low but needs to be increased rapidly to support production, condition, and fertility later. Grass can continue to provide part of the diet, but quality, quantity, and weather are working against us, and cows need the required concentrate level for peak milk yield. Don't be afraid to bring in a buffer feed like silage to support intakes when required. While quality will still be behind grass, the secret ingredient is dry matter (DM) percentage, as you are probably adding a 30 per cent dry matter (DM) feed to replace a 12 per cent DM feed in grazed grass, depending on weather. They need guaranteed dry matter intake every day, and sacrificing some quality, if grass is inconsistent, is required to achieve this.

Also, for those finishing bulls for beef, now is the time to get these animals housed. Grazed grass, as good as it looks, will not be sufficient for the thrive of these animals. The lifetime cost of these animals is important, and every day they are on the farm is a cost, no matter what diet they are consuming. It is important to keep them moving forward quickly, which will also take advantage of feed efficiency, as this reduces as the animal gets older. While price is excellent for beef at the moment, the same level of planning needs to be involved regardless covering health and vaccination, diet makeup, adaptation, rumen health, and minerals. Once they are on a finishing diet, it must be powerful, rumen-friendly, and focused on achieving a short, sharp finishing time.

Don't forget to visit us at the Alltech and Keenan stand at the National Ploughing Championships this year if you have any nutrition-related questions or queries.

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Launching Irish Rural Link's new Farm Safety Community Champion (FSCC) programme are: FSCC, Ned Kearney; FSCC, Maura Canning; Alma Jordan, Irish Rural Link (kneeling); FSCC, Bernie Wade; FSCC Geraldine Delaney; FSCC, Mary Oakley; FSCC, Niamh Monahan; FSCC, Robert Lally; and FSCC, Aisling Kelly (kneeling). Photo: Finbarr O'Rourke.

NEW INITIATIVE TO CHAMPION LOCAL FARM SAFETY

Irish Rural Link has launched a new farm safety programme to combat labour and social isolation concerns for Irish farmers.

The Farm Safety Community Champion programme will equip local communities with a representative to act as a champion for farmer safety and wellbeing. Funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), this initiative was spurred on by the growing decline of local farming networks in Ireland, leading to a lack of social connection and workforce shortages, according to Irish Rural Link. By offering rural citizens an opportunity to reach out and support the initiative, this project will help ensure that the safety and well-being of the farming community is always a priority.

The programme consists of the training of nine regionally spread farm safety community champions from various backgrounds including farming, teaching, and community mentoring. These champions will develop networks in their regions to connect farmers to their communities, delivering farm safety and wellbeing talks at local marts and community centres. To support this, a manual has been created to guide these talks, which will include resources for local individuals to learn more about the programme and the steps they can take to encourage connection with farmers in their society.

Your champions are:

- ▶ Bernie Wade – Wexford;
- ▶ Maura Canning – Galway;
- ▶ Mary Oakley – Tipperary;
- ▶ Mark Riordan – Kerry;
- ▶ Ned Kearney – Waterford;
- ▶ Robert Lally – Mayo;
- ▶ Niamh Monahan – Monaghan;
- ▶ Aisling Kelly – Kildare; and
- ▶ Geraldine Delaney – Galway.

THE FARMER'S HAGGART

To further bolster this initiative and assist with growing workforce concerns, Irish Rural Link is calling on rural communities to organise a 'farmer's haggart' as part of this programme. This will be led by a local farm safety community champion, and will encourage farmers to assist one another in simple tasks on the farm. The goal of this is to foster local connections between farmers to further develop rural farming networks, and support community wellbeing.



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MICHAEL BERKERY AWARDED A UCD HONORARY DOCTORATE

Michael Berkery has received an honorary doctorate from University College Dublin (UCD) for his 'outstanding contributions' to the agri-food sector, the UCD community, and Irish society, according to the university.

He was the Irish Farmers' Association's (IFA) leading strategist and negotiator for over 25 years. He was appointed general secretary of the association at the age of just 35, and held the position until 2008. He led the IFA's most significant campaigns, from the pivotal milk quota campaign of 1983-84 to shaping CAP reform and securing the introduction of the beef premium and area aid payment system. His leadership extended through critical trade negotiations, including the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the 2001 beef blockade, and the IFA's strategic



Professor Karina Pierce, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science; Michael Berkery; and President of University College Dublin, Professor Orla Feeley. Photo: Fennell Photography.

approach to the World Trade Organisation. He now serves as chair of the FBD Trust, a charitable organisation supporting Irish farmers, farm families, and the agricultural sector. Since its establishment in 1975, the FBD Trust has contributed over €50m to philanthropic initiatives to serve the common good of Irish agriculture.

Michael's relationship with UCD dates back to

the 1960s when he worked as a research technician under Professor JB Ruane at Lyons Farm, the teaching and research farm operated by the university, which was also the first project ever supported by the FBD Trust. He has remained a strong supporter of UCD ever since. His official citation was read by Professor Karina Pierce, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science.

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John Donoghue,
chief executive, Ifac.

JOHN DONOGHUE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
AND MANAGING PARTNER OF IFAC,
TALKS TO MATT O'KEEFFE ABOUT THE
EVOLUTION, AND FUTURE EXPANSION
OF, THE BUSINESS AS IT CELEBRATES
ITS 50TH YEAR IN 2025

IFAC — 50 YEARS ON

Ifac – Irish Farm Accounts Co-operative – was founded in 1975 with a specific purpose, explains John: “We were founded in 1975 by seven forward-thinking people who got together with a view to developing a specialist accounting firm for farmers, and that’s exactly what they did. We started out with a handful of people, very little funding, and unsure about whether the market would actually adopt an accounting firm focused primarily on agriculture and farming,” says John.

In the intervening decades, Ifac has evolved into a leading accounting, tax, and business advisory firm encompassing farming, food, agri-business sectors, and the SME space. And, earlier this year, it unveiled ambitious plans for further expansion including the creation of 400 new jobs over the next three years.

“Today, we have 30 locations around the country, with 600 people, servicing 30,000 clients, and we continue to grow,” says John. “Every year we’re achieving significant growth statistics. We grew by about 21 per cent last year and we’re in double-digit growth again this year. We provide a broad set of services to farmers and clients in the agri-food industry, generally, and in family businesses as well. It’s a high integrity model built around really good people delivering independent advice and operating in a highly effective manner with our clients. People are joining us every week which reflects well on the services we offer.”

Ifac’s 30,000 clients include 18,000 producers, 3,000 clients in the agri-food sector, and 7,000 SMEs with a full suite of professional services, including accounting, tax, audit, corporate finance, consultancy, corporate recovery, payroll, financial planning, company secretarial, and business valuations.

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BEST BUSINESS PRACTICES

John emphasises the importance and value of the services that Ifac offers: "We always prioritise best business practices and what we need to do, for instance, to make sure that our clients are getting maximum tax savings and the best possible return on their money where they're placing investments with us." With commodity prices higher than previous years, John reflects on the state of farming in 2025: "It's a really good year for farming. Commodity prices are strong across milk and drystock. There are built-in costs over the last couple of years – no question about that – inflation is still present and we're still seeing increases in costs but those increase in costs are at a slower pace than they were at previously, and that's definitely contributing to a good year for farming. We're going to see significant profits across the dairy and beef sectors and that will come with its own challenges in terms of tax management," says John.

There are many ways to manage those taxes, and that's where Ifac's expertise comes into play, he explains. "We are experts in tax management and we'll certainly be working very closely with our clients to make sure that their tax bills are minimised, even though they're going to be in a good profit situation. Cattle producers, for the first time in a very long while, are going to be in a good profit position and our aim is to preserve as much of that profit as possible for the benefit of our clients.

"With dairy also doing very well, the other major commodity is grain production and that is heavily challenged by low global grain prices. This year, at least the weather was favourable, with good yields and quality generally, and that has helped the mood in the tillage sector," John says. But there are challenges down the road for all farming sectors, he adds. "These include big issues around the Common Agricultural Policy and international trade barriers as we have seen, for instance, with the Trump tariffs. EU trade negotiation outcomes are also on our radar but it's too soon to make definitive statements on the impacts on Irish farmers.

Weather will always be a major factor in economic outcomes every year and that's something we have very little control over. At the moment, however, the economic outlook for Irish farming is favourable."

MANAGING HIGHER PRICES

John had timely advice for those involved in the cattle sector: "It is a time to be monitoring it closely if you're a cattle producer at any stage along the production chain. For instance, a lot of people have been taking the opportunity of high prices to let off forward stores, instead of finishing them, and then turning around and wondering should they restock. That brings its own set of challenges, not least the potential tax implications," says John. He explains: "That's a very serious circumstance, particularly if you're not an income averaging system, and where each year is independently assessed on its own merit. You have to be careful about creating bumper profits by disposing of stock in that way. I think if you're maybe heading towards an exit or a reduction in stock programme anyway, particularly if you are heading towards some sort of a succession piece, it's very important to look at all of the potential implications involved. Our pre-year-end review allows us to manage tax implications for the year. Post-year-end, there are options including pension investments that can be useful."

Ifac's options to reduce your income tax bill:

- ▶ Stock relief
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LONG-TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING

Some farmers are pro-active in their long-term financial planning, others less so. John comments on this: "It's down to the individual, whether regarding succession planning, land-use options, or long-term

investments in their farms. It is often down, too, to the family circumstances. Farm transfer reliefs are important and should be protected. We saw what has happened in the UK. Often, in terms of planning over the longer term, a balance has to be found between long-term income and succession. If there isn't a successor then the thinking can revolve around monetising the assets in whatever way works best for everyone concerned. That can include leasing, solar, and so on.

"Often the most important factor is the family dynamic. Not all families or individual family members are willing or able to have the necessary conversations. It's often the things that aren't discussed that create the biggest problems. It must be understood that these conversations and efforts at agreement often involve very valuable assets. That has implications for everyone involved, whether they will benefit or not in the longer term. It can be challenging to reach amicable solutions."

PLOUGHING ON

Ifac will be at the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) once again this year. Attendance is very worthwhile, according to John: "The Ploughing is still a huge week for us. We bring down a team of people and we're present for the whole week. We meet many of our clients and lots of people in the industry so it's a great opportunity for networking and getting to talk to people in that informal setting. "Most of our interactions with our clients are very formal; you're in an office or you're out visiting a client, but the context is purely business. The Ploughing offers a more relaxed format. It's an opportunity to be a bit more social and have the chat and get a good sense of what people are doing and the particular challenges they face as well as the potential opportunities at any given time."

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PARTNER PROMOTION

ACTIONS TO PRIORITISE AS AUTUMN APPROACHES

EMMA SWAN, MIDLANDS REGIONAL BUSINESS MANAGER AT ALLTECH IRELAND HIGHLIGHTS SOME VERY IMPORTANT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES TO PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO AS THE SEASON TURNS IN THE COMING WEEKS



Emma Swan, Alltech.

Favourable weather conditions this year have helped to drive strong grass growth across much of the country. Pastures

have held quality well into late summer, and many farms have reported better utilisation compared to last year. The good growing conditions have also supported a timely and efficient harvest, with most winter fodder secured, and of good quality.

As the year moves into its latter months, autumn presents both challenges and opportunities for dairy and beef farmers. The decisions made now can have a direct impact on herd health, production levels and farm

profitability over the winter and into next spring. With the season turning, these are the essential management actions to focus on in the weeks ahead.

MAKING THE MOST OF AUTUMN GRAZING

Autumn grazing is about balancing two objectives: keeping cows at grass for as long as possible; and protecting sward quality for the spring. With shorter days and slowing growth, careful planning now will help maximise grass utilisation. One of the most effective tools is the autumn rotation planner. This simple system helps allocate grass over the closing weeks of the grazing season so that the farm is closed off in time for an early spring start. As a guideline:

- ▶ Aim to have 60 per cent of the farm grazed by the first week of November.
- ▶ The remaining 40 per cent should be

grazed by housing or when ground conditions deteriorate.

- ▶ Earlier closing of wetter paddocks can help protect them from damage and ensure an early bite next spring.

Walking the farm weekly to measure covers is essential, as growth can drop quickly once soil temperatures fall.

USING BUFFER FEEDING TO EXTEND GRAZING

Grass growth rates are slowing and days are getting shorter, but grazing remains the cheapest feed source. To keep cows out longer while supporting milk yield and condition, consider the strategic use of buffer feeding.

This can:

- ▶ Reduce the risk of cows dropping back in milk production.

Table 1: Guideline daily feeding rates based on silage quality (DMD) for beef

76 DMD	74 DMD	72 DMD	70 DMD	68 DMD	66 DMD	Target avg. daily liveweight gain	Animal type
0.4kg	0.6kg	0.9kg	1.2kg	1.5kg	1.8kg	0.6kg/day	Weanling
4kg	4kg	5kg	5.5kg	6kg	7kg	1kg/day	Finishing steer
4kg	4kg	5kg	5.5kg	6kg	7kg	0.9kg/day	Finishing heifer

Source: Teagasc.

IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY



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PARTNER PROMOTION

Table 2: Guideline daily feeding rates based on silage quality (DMD) for dairy

75 DMD	70 DMD	65 DMD	Milk yield
3kg	4kg	5.5kg	20L
5.5kg	6.5kg	8kg	25L
7.5kg	8.5kg	10kg	30L
10kg	11kg	12.5kg	35L

Source: Teagasc.



WALKING THE FARM WEEKLY TO MEASURE COVERS IS ESSENTIAL, AS GROWTH CAN DROP QUICKLY ONCE SOIL TEMPERATURES FALL

- Maintain body condition as grass quality declines.
- Allow pasture to be managed more effectively in the final rotations.

When managed well, buffer feeding can help stretch the grazing season by two to three weeks, reducing reliance on housed feeding and making the most of grass as the cheapest feed source.

PLANNING WINTER NUTRITION NOW

A well-prepared winter feeding plan begins with accurate data. When reformulating diets for the winter, we need to know what we are feeding. We must quantify the feed value of the silage to formulate diets accurately, such as balancing energy and protein. Analysing silage for quality will allow farmers to supplement animals with the appropriate rate of concentrate to meet the animals' dietary requirements and subsequent performance targets.

Testing silage for minerals is also particularly important where the silage is being used for the dry-cow diet. Most Irish silages does not supply the required amount of minerals to get the cow through the dry period. As a result, these minerals need to be supplemented. If you have not already done so, test your silage for minerals.

It is important to note that the mineral status of our soils and forages varies tremendously from farm to farm and year to year. The simplest and most accurate way of knowing the current mineral status is by testing the forages being fed to cows, whether it be grass, grass silage, maize or whole-crop silage. Based on this updated information, informed

decisions can be made on the most effective way of supplementation.

MAXIMISING RUMEN HEALTH

Good rumen health is fundamental to supporting feed efficiency, which in turn supports immunity. The nutrients provided to the rumen bacteria must be adequate and well balanced in terms of fermentable energy and protein supply. Sufficient nitrogen and rumen-degradable protein must be supplied to maximise bacterial fermentation, energy digestibility and feed intake. If the diet is energy deficient, dietary protein will be used inefficiently as another source of energy instead of being converted into body protein. Dairy and beef cattle require protein for two main reasons: for the animal itself and for the microorganisms in the rumen which are responsible for breaking down hard-to-digest plant parts. Fibre-degrading organisms are the most sensitive in their requirements and need a continual source of non-protein nitrogen (NPN). Traditional sources of NPN are rapidly degraded and disappear from the rumen environment, making them unavailable to these microbes.

SUPPLEMENTATION

Using an alternative nitrogen-rich feed ingredient such as Optigen (Alltech) ensures a constant release of NPN and a steady rumen ammonia concentration. This provides ideal growing conditions for fibre degraders, promoting fibre digestion and maximising forage utilisation.

The nitrogen in Optigen is released in the rumen in a similar way to soya protein;

therefore, Optigen can be used to replace part of the soya – or some other protein concentrates, like rapeseed meal – in the diets of dairy, beef and youngstock cattle to ensure that the animals meet their protein requirements. The most extensive research into Optigen took place over 17 years (2002-2018). A recent meta-analysis of 17 published beef studies revealed significant production benefits of Optigen inclusion.

Optigen was proven to:

- Increase daily liveweight gain by 8 per cent.
- Improve feed conversion efficiency (FCE) by 8 per cent.
- Reduce days to slaughter.
- Reduce the carbon emission intensity of beef production.

Studies have also shown the positive impacts of Optigen on dairy production. A similar increase in feed conversion efficiency has been demonstrated, translating into an increased milk yield of 1.3-1.4L per cow, therefore reducing milk's carbon footprint. Filling gaps in forage quality or quantity with a balanced supplementation plan is vital to a successful nutrition program for the winter and will aid in the long-term profitability of your herd. It is important that Optigen is formulated into beef or dairy diets by a qualified animal nutritionist. Speak with your nutritionist or feed mill rep to plan accordingly for the winter ahead.

PLOUGHING 2025

Alltech and Keenan will be present at the National Ploughing Championships 2025, with teams on hand to advise farmers as they prepare for the winter feeding period.

NO STRESS: ARE YOU PREPARED FOR WEANING AND HOUSING THIS AUTUMN?

SARAH HIGGINS MVB MRCVS CERT AVP, RUMINANT VETERINARY AREA MANAGER, MSD ANIMAL HEALTH DISCUSSES THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON CATTLE, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO INCREASED SUSCEPTIBILITY TO DISEASES SUCH AS BOVINE RESPIRATORY DISEASE (BRD)

Autumn represents a critical risk period due to the routine weaning and housing of cattle. Environmental changes, dietary changes, and the potential mixing of cattle may induce a stress response.

These stressors compromise the immune function of cattle, leading to increased susceptibility to diseases, particularly BRD. BRD is a complex disease entity involving an interaction between the animal, environment, and infectious agents. Pneumonia is a common clinical manifestation of BRD. There are multiple infectious agents such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites associated with BRD. Frequently a primary viral infection (e.g. RSV) compromises lung defence mechanisms, predisposing to bacterial infection (e.g. Mannheimia haemolytica) of the lower respiratory tract.

ON THE LOOKOUT

Clinical cases may present with all or some of the following clinical signs:

- Nasal discharge;
- Ocular discharge;
- Increased rate and effort of respiration (pant);
- Fever – temperature greater than 39.5°C; and
- Poor appetite and coughing.

Interestingly, however, the cases you see on your farm are only the tip of the iceberg as there are often subclinical cases. BRD is a significant disease as it is the most frequently diagnosed cause of death in cattle greater than one month of age in Ireland. Economic implications of the disease are not only restricted to mortalities and treatment but long-term implications on productivity.

Notably, it can take 59 days longer to finish cattle that presented with overt clinical signs of pneumonia. Therefore, it is vital to mitigate stress and implement control measures at weaning and housing. A multifaceted approach to controlling BRD must be taken which includes management, parasite control, hygiene, biosecurity measures and vaccination.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT PRE/POST-WEANING:

- Castrate at least four weeks prior to weaning or two weeks post-weaning;
- Introduce concentrates to calves four weeks prior to weaning, gradually increasing to an allowance of at least 1kg/day at weaning;
- Conduct a two-stage weaning approach (anti-suckling device with fence-line contact);
- Remove cows and leave calves in familiar surroundings;
- Avoid abrupt weaning/group disruption by removing several cattle;
- Implement a strategic worming programme during the grazing season particularly for lungworm; and
- Carry out a vaccination programme for respiratory disease (voluntary action of the Beef Welfare Scheme 2025).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOUSING:

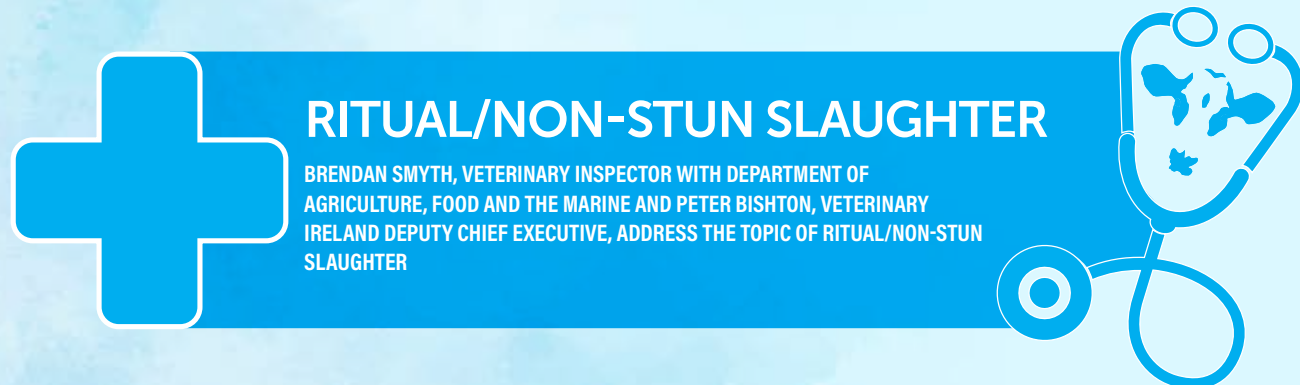
- Avoid overcrowding or mixing age groups in the same airspace;
- Leave a period of at least two weeks between housing and weaning;
- Quarantine newly purchased animals;
- Provide a supply of fresh clean water;
- Dose animals after housing with an

appropriate anthelmintic and consider fluke control if this is relevant to the animals' risk profile;

- Vaccinate all animals in a group pre-housing and newly purchased when settled;
- House on a dry day;
- Have adequate lighting in sheds so sick animals can be detected early;
- Isolate sick animals and treat appropriately as directed by your veterinary practitioner;

VACCINE SELECTION

Vaccines incorporated into a vaccination regime will vary from farm to farm and should take into account the farm system, history of disease, risk factors associated with the farm in question, previous diagnostic laboratory results and/or postmortem results. Vaccination programmes will vary depending on the product used. It is recommended to vaccinate in advance of weaning and housing to enable the animal to respond as each vaccine takes a certain period to become effective. It is important to note that vaccination alone is not sufficient to prevent disease but should be in conjunction with good husbandry practices. Implementing the recommendations outlined above will aid in reducing the risk of pneumonia and ultimately positively impact health and welfare of cattle. Take a proactive approach by vaccinating to minimise potential losses. It is highly recommended to consult with your veterinary practitioner to determine the most appropriate management and vaccination programmes for your weanlings this autumn.



RITUAL/NON-STUN SLAUGHTER

BRENDAN SMYTH, VETERINARY INSPECTOR WITH DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND THE MARINE AND PETER BISHTON, VETERINARY IRELAND DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ADDRESS THE TOPIC OF RITUAL/NON-STUN SLAUGHTER

Veterinary practitioners working in slaughterhouses may encounter the practice of ritual slaughter.

Dhabihah is the practice prescribed for slaughtering all halal (lawful) animals (goats, sheep, cattle, chickens, etc.) according to Islamic law, and Shechita is the Jewish ritual slaughter of animals for food according to Kashrut, the dietary laws of Judaism. Under both religious rites, slaughter is carried out with a single cut to the live animal's throat, without prior stunning. The animal suffers loss of consciousness caused by the simultaneous and instantaneous severance of the carotid arteries, generally within seconds, but in the case of cattle, this may take several minutes.

CONDITIONS

There are a number of conditions attached to both practices – Dhabihah and Shechita – including who undertakes the slaughter. Shechita is undertaken by a shochet ubodek (slaughterer and inspector), a Jew of good standing in the community who has undertaken a period of considerable study and training on which animals (species and individual), are Kosher (fit or proper) under Kashrut, and how to prepare and slaughter Kosher animals. Under Islamic law, the butcher must be 'of the book', ie. of Muslim, Christian, or Jewish faith. Whereas it was previously a requirement to say the name of 'Allah' when slaughtering, it is now acceptable among some Muslim communities, especially when slaughter is being undertaken by a Christian or a Jew, that nothing is said at all. While Orthodox Jews uphold the prohibition on stunning before slaughter without exception, there is acceptance among Reform and Conservative Jews for pre-stun slaughter.

Similarly, a number of Islamic clerics and academics have stated that as head-only electrical stunning does not kill the animal, and is 'reversible', it does not make the practice un-Islamic and so is permitted under Islamic law. Nonetheless, non-stun slaughter for religious purposes is still common across the world.

EU PERSPECTIVES

Veterinary Ireland welcomed the introduction by the European Union of the Council Regulation (EC) No.1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing, which came into force on January 1, 2013. However, this legislation continues the EU tradition of allowing for slaughter without prior stunning as prescribed by religious rites and leaving it to each Member State to legislate as to how religious slaughter should be controlled.

Several European countries do not allow derogations from the general requirement of prior stunning. These include Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Slovenia and two of the three regions of Belgium. Switzerland and Lichtenstein require prior stunning except for poultry. Finland has recently passed its Animal Welfare Act 693/2023 and apart from some exceptions for poultry, slaughter without stunning is completely banned. However, an exception is allowed for religiously slaughtered animals where bleeding is started simultaneously with stunning, but only in slaughterhouses in the presence of a veterinary inspector. That said, in practice, halal meat is produced in Finnish slaughterhouses only from animals which have been stunned before bleeding.

Some countries mandate post-cut stunning, including Austria, Estonia, Greece, and Latvia. Religious authorities in many countries have accepted that certain methods of stunning are in accordance with their religious rites and may be performed on animals prior to ritual slaughter, eg. many Muslim authorities accept head-only electrical stunning of animals prior to ritual slaughter.

In a number of Irish slaughterhouses where ritual slaughter of sheep takes place, the sheep are subjected to head-only electrical stunning prior to slaughter. EU legislation allows for slaughter without prior stunning as prescribed by religious rites and leaves it to each Member State to legislate as to how religious slaughter should be controlled.

FVE POSITION PAPER

In 2002, the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) issued its position paper on the *Slaughter of Animals without Prior Stunning*, in which FVE expressed the opinion that the practice of slaughtering animals without prior stunning is unacceptable under any circumstances. The paper clearly sets out the evidence that slaughter without prior stunning causes the animal avoidable pain, distress and suffering, in direct contravention of animal welfare principles. Veterinary Ireland is a member of FVE and supports and endorses this FVE position. In 2013, FVE issued its position paper on slaughter without stunning and food labelling, which stated that as long as slaughter without stunning is permitted for religious reasons, then any meat or meat products from these sources should be clearly labelled to enable all consumers to make an informed choice based on welfare, ethics, or personal belief when purchasing

such products. The document also stresses that it is important to differentiate between 'religious' and 'non-stun' slaughter, and to focus not on the expression of religious belief, but on the practice of killing by throat-cutting without pre-stunning. FVE therefore advocates that labelling should refer to non-stun slaughter rather than a method of religious slaughter.

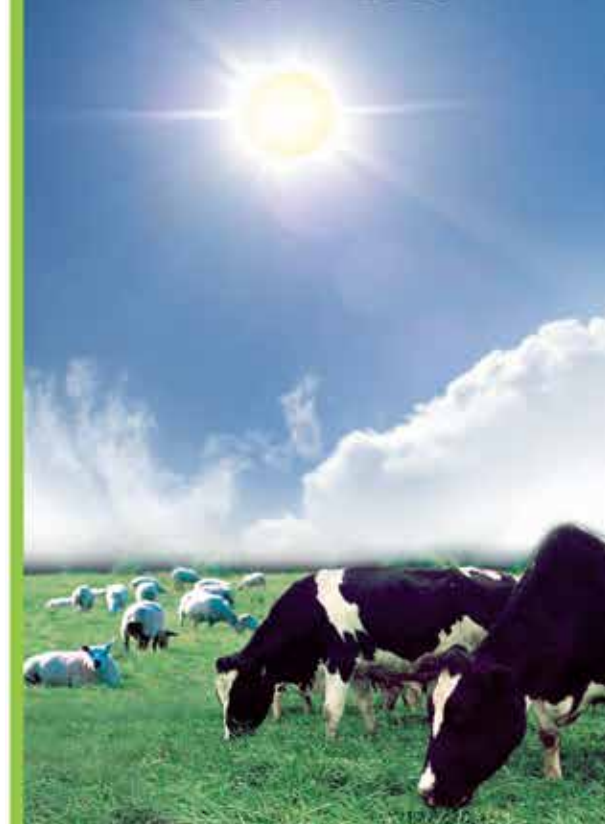
VETERINARY IRELAND POLICY

Veterinary Ireland supports the statement of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) that 'the slaughter of animals without prior stunning is unacceptable under any circumstances' but understands that such slaughter is still legally permissible in Ireland.

As such, the Veterinary Ireland Policy on Welfare of Animals Slaughtered Without Prior Stunning 2019 calls for a number of actions:

1. That the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine engages with local and national religious authorities in order to identify methods of stunning that are acceptable to these religions that will spare the animals all avoidable pain, distress, and suffering, and ensure that these stunning methods are used on all animals slaughtered as prescribed by religious rites.
2. That the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine introduces national rules to ensure the protection of animals slaughtered without prior stunning. These rules must state, at a minimum:
 - Slaughterhouses wishing to carry out slaughter according to religious rites must be specifically approved for this purpose by the competent authority, and this approval must be subject to suitable equipment being available.
 - An official veterinarian must be present continuously to observe and supervise the slaughtering process.
 - Only animals destined for consumption by the religious community concerned should be subjected to slaughter without prior stunning.
 - Bovines must not be inverted for the purpose of slaughtering.
 - For poultry, the speed of the line must be adjusted to guarantee that each bird can be slaughtered manually.
 - The knife used for cutting the animal's throat must be razor sharp and its length must be at least twice the width of the animal's neck.
 - Animals must not be restrained until the slaughterman is ready to slaughter them.
 - The throat cut must be carried out immediately after restraint and must consist of one uninterrupted movement in which both carotid arteries and both jugular veins are cut.
 - Animals must be stunned immediately following the cutting of the animal's throat.
 - The wound edges must not come together, and the animal must remain in the restrained position until death ensues.
 - All meat derived from animals slaughtered without prior stunning must be clearly labelled as 'produced from an animal that was not stunned prior to slaughter.'
3. In support and endorsement of the FVE position on this matter, that the EU introduces legislation requiring the labelling of meat to identify if it has come from an animal that was not stunned prior to slaughter.

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Aerial view of cattle herd on the South Island.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

MATT O'KEEFE RECENTLY INTERVIEWED NEW ZEALANDER, PAUL MARTIN, WHO RUNS A DAIRY FARM CONSULTANCY IN NEW ZEALAND – AMONG OTHER THINGS – TO GET A FLAVOUR FOR THE SECTOR THERE AT THE MOMENT

Running a dairy farm consultancy in New Zealand is one of a number of roles that Paul has. He is also chair of the Intellect Group, a company that includes consultancy, on-farm technology, feed blending and maize seed businesses. In addition, the New Zealander runs a farm together with his wife. In terms of his consultancy, Paul explained what it involves: "I've got 25 farms on my books in Northland, which is north of Auckland. The region is warmer than most of New Zealand, semi-tropical even. It's still grassland farming, but we have Kikuyu, C4 grasses that thrive there. Our soil temperature gets well up over 20 degrees, so ryegrass struggles."

END OF SEASON REPORT

New Zealand had just completed its production season when Paul was interviewed. He gave us a taste of what it offered: "It started off with a low milk price and not a great spring. We had a drought in the summer over most of New Zealand, but with milk price rising dramatically during the second half, the higher payout helped us cope with the cost of buffer feeding. Most people managed to keep their cows milking well and ended the season with good profits. Compared to two decades ago, most producers now buffer feed to keep cows

producing during droughts or poor weather or growth conditions. Back in the 80s and 90s, our buffer was the cow's back. That wouldn't be tolerated now by farmers or the public. Running the old system with relatively low production, meant extreme profit variability each season. You can't run a business like that now. Buffer feeding, or small amounts of supplement through most of the year, is the route to consistent profitability."

COW TYPE

Paul described the type of cow favoured by New Zealand milk producers: "The average cow in New Zealand is a Kiwi-cross; a blend of Friesian and Jersey, tending slightly more towards Jersey, with an average weight of around 480kg. The average cow will touch 400kg of milk solids per lactation. The South Island figures are higher than the North Island, and that bumps up the overall average. Cows usually deliver four lactations. Most well-run farms are getting that, bringing in about 20 per cent of heifers annually."

MALE CALF ISSUE

Paul commented on how the New Zealand dairy industry is developing solutions to the surplus male calves problem: "The crossbred males have limited economic value, and that's a problem. Many of my clients have moved

towards a greater percentage of Friesian in their breeding programmes, delivering a more viable male calf. Fonterra doesn't allow euthanasia of calves. They must go into a value chain, with some calves slaughtered young, but with an economic value. Public perception is an issue and how we deal with that is important to the reputation of the sector. There's not enough land in New Zealand to rear every male calf and every male calf is not going to become a viable mature beef animal."

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Paul is conscious of the responsibilities that the sector faces to reduce emissions: "We've been moderately proactive. Our previous Government was forcing us to be very proactive. They were going to bring in methane emissions reductions at considerable cost to us from 2026. That's now being pushed out to 2030. We want to deliver on reductions, but we don't have all the solutions available yet. It's all very well saying 'deal with methane', but what do we do? There are those who want us to remove all cows but that doesn't help the economy or farm sustainability. We do have options coming along. Realistically, until there's a cost on methane, it's hard to justify putting in a methane inhibitor, for example, unless that's



also giving you a production advantage. "The developing technologies have potential. There's not, ultimately, one answer from a methane perspective. It's about stacking up various solutions. We're focusing on actively breeding for higher cow efficiency. Productive cows with high feed conversion efficiency are far more methane efficient than the current average. We can manipulate methane production slightly with feeds and that's also something we need to look at. We will probably end up with some farms reducing stocking rates, slightly pushing per-cow production. And there'll be methane inhibitors in there. By stacking those solutions, we should be able to get to a position of long-term sustainability."

WHO WILL MILK NEW ZEALAND'S COWS?
New Zealand has long been a popular choice for young Irish people to work and experience large-scale milk production. At a time when it is increasingly difficult to attract employees to work on New Zealand dairy farms, Paul Martin expanded on the challenge: "There is still an Irish inflow. It's quite common to meet Irish people working on our farms. Labour availability is now our most serious challenge. I'm starting to sound old, but the new generation don't appear to want to work, or work particularly hard, or at one thing for an extended period. We are struggling to attract

people and I frequently have conversations with my clients around who's going to own and manage our farms. We can manage the workload and physicality, but the slightly unsocial hours are more difficult," he said. Expensive technology is one option, he adds and some farmers are adopting automated milking systems. Paul added: "That doesn't reduce the labour demand, only the type of labour required. New Zealand is currently in a huge growth phase on cow ID technology, not necessarily reducing labour requirement, but reducing the workload during mating. That delivers more productivity from our more skilled people without increased physical input."

PRICE OUTLOOK
Paul insisted that higher milk prices are a necessity: "New Zealand producers had a \$NZ10 per kilogramme of milk solids (kg MS) payout and that is the expectation for the new season. If you take inflation into account, that's equivalent to \$NZ7.58kg MS long-term average, which would've been a good milk price, but not through the roof. Margins have not grown significantly, and you'd be a brave man to say price will stay up. The global dairy industry has always responded to high prices by higher production, saturating the market and reducing price to the producer. I don't expect price to

remain at current levels." Routes to farming stymied The New Zealand consultant explained the reduction in opportunities to farm: "There are fewer share-milking opportunities. Some of that is down to the profitability of a dairy farm, it's not a gold mine. Unless farm owners have low debt levels, the exit and entry strategies are difficult to manage. Corporate farming has been blamed as well. Most of them haven't used share milking, although some of them are starting to move towards that because they've realised that they too need succession. They need people that want to run and own their business in the future. I don't think we've got the right answer yet. It's always been hard to buy your first farm."

FLAT-LINING GRASS PRODUCTIVITY
Paul conceded that New Zealand grass productivity has diminished in recent years: "The pasture harvest on New Zealand dairy farms has stalled, if not slightly retreated over the last decade. Have we hit the ceiling? Is it climate change or is it our lack of R&D? When I started consulting, we had up to 15 new grass cultivars launched annually. Now, you'd be lucky if it was one or two. Have we hit a grass genetics ceiling without using gene technologies that are currently not available in New Zealand?"

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Ciaran Fitzgerald
Agri-food economist

TARIFFS AND TURMOIL

This month, agri-food economist Ciaran Fitzgerald criticises what he regards as a severely flawed and oversimplified analysis of the causes of food-price increases

Volatility – either in price or product supply – is a fundamental characteristic of food production. But the current plethora of global and local volatility factors, from tariffs to war to food inflation, all against a backdrop of attempts to define ‘sustainable food’ production, means the global food sector has rarely experienced a more challenging time. In terms of food inflation, it is hard to see the imposition of US tariffs at 15 per cent across a range of foodstuffs, including Irish butter, as being anything but inflationary. Ultimately, the American consumer will bear some share, at least, of the tariff imposition. This realism-based sense of how an effective tax on imports will lead to higher prices contrasts with the nonsense we heard about food inflation in Ireland last month from both

the Irish competition authority and *The Irish Times* that food inflation in Ireland is all about increased farmer margins. The flawed economic analysis reflects ‘the comfort of prejudice without any of the discomfort of thought’ to paraphrase John F Kennedy, and is very much the conclusion of a D4-minded newspaper with no agricultural correspondent and a minimal understanding of real-world economics.

The devilish detail

In terms of the Trump tariff outcomes, there are still some key details to be announced in terms of exemption of ‘certain agricultural products’ which, unfortunately, is unlikely to include Irish butter. It is likely that the standard/single 15 per cent tariff rate for EU exports will apply to Irish butter exports to the US. Despite defensive statements from EU president, Ursula von der Leyen on behalf of the Commission, that the 15 per cent rate ‘is a clear ceiling with no stacking and provides much needed clarity for business’ a 15 per cent tariff is a significant

cost. And that has to be reflected either in the price of Irish butter and other products in the US or through a cut in margin on behalf of the Irish exporters, butter processors and primary milk producers.

Bringing production back to the US

The intent from the US perspective behind the introduction of tariffs, we are told, is both to ‘equalise’ alleged tariffs on US products exported to the EU and, more broadly, to favour increased production/import substitution in the US across a broad range from cars to pharma products to food. Beyond the politics and the posturing the most likely outcome has to be increased prices in the US, with the question of how much of the 15 per cent tariff is absorbed versus passed on immediately being a matter of negotiation. In the short term, the timing of any inflationary impact is dependent on how much product will have gotten through US customs before the first tariffs were imposed at 10 per cent in April. Increases in Irish whiskey and butter exports to the US in the first quarter of 2025 are an example of this targeted front-loading of exports to avoid any immediate impact of increased tariff impositions. The true reality here is that while the increased tariffs will act as a disincentive to import butter from Ireland or wine from France, they will not and cannot mean that grass-fed Irish butter or French wine will now be made in the US. So unlike some of the other tariff categories like automobiles or IT or even pharma, the most likely outcome for American consumers is a significant increase in US food price inflation, which has been relatively high anyway over the last two to three years.

More instability

This conundrum around inflationary impacts is behind yet another Trumpian battle – his row with

the US Federal Reserve over interest rates. The normal response to increased inflation is for interest rates to be increased to cool the economy. The Trump administration is, however, in denial about any inflationary impact and wants US rates to come down. A wrong move here whereby a new head of the US Fed cuts rates against an inflationary surge could mean a significant move out of US bonds or a fall in the value of the dollar, or both. Any further fall in the value of the US dollar against the Euro will make EU products even dearer in the US, adding to the whole inflationary volatility mix. Already in 2025, in response to the chaos caused by the US tariff regime, the Euro has increased in value from \$1.02 in January to \$1.16/17, currently, and is forecast by US banks to reach \$1.25 by January 2026. The concern here for the Irish agri sector is not just the increasing challenge of US tariffs but the possible decline in the return on global food exports which are dollar denominated.

The rise of protectionism

Beyond speculation as to where this new, unstructured, non-rules-based approach to trade ends, the key question, I would suggest, is what actions will the EU take to protect its own interests, including agriculture and food production. This may not and should not necessarily be manifested in terms of retaliatory tariffs which might only cause further escalation in response, but more specifically, perhaps, in terms of a considered rethink as to what stabilisation supports might best protect EU interests in this period of volatility. Certainly, in view of the changed trading circumstances caused by the Trump tariff impositions, the key tenets of the EU Green Deal of 2020 are very much out of date and the next Common Agricultural Policy and EU trade policy generally, need to be more flexible to be effective in an ever more volatile global economy.

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UNDERSTANDING QUAD BIKE SAFETY

CIARAN ROCHE, FBD RISK MANAGER, HELPS US NAVIGATE REGULATIONS REGARDING THE SAFE OPERATION OF QUAD BIKES AND ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

In November 2023, significant changes in regulations regarding quad bike operation under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations came into effect. These new regulations were in response to concerns over the number of fatal and serious work-related accidents involving quad bikes or all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), particularly in the agriculture and forestry sectors.

NEW REGULATIONS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The new regulations mandate that all quad bike operators in the workplace must complete a quad bike training course provided by a registered training provider to a QQI Standard or equivalent. Additionally, operators are required to wear appropriate head protection while operating a quad. Understanding quad bike safety Quad bikes are an extremely useful piece of equipment for farm work, designed to handle diverse terrain types. It is important to remember though that improper operation can pose significant risks of death or severe injury to operators. Key safety concerns include training, experience, personal protective equipment (PPE), maintenance, and terrain knowledge.

COMMON CAUSES OF ACCIDENTS

The main causes of deaths or serious injuries involving quad bikes include vehicle overturns, collisions with structures or objects, being trapped under an overturned machine, and accidents involving

pedestrians. These incidents often stem from factors such as lack of formal training or experience, excessive speed, carrying passengers or unbalanced loads, and poor maintenance.

PRACTICAL SAFETY MEASURES

1. Get training

All quad bike operators must undergo training to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for safe operation. Training should cover the use of any towed equipment or attachments.

2. Wear appropriate PPE

Head protection, in the form of an approved helmet, is essential to reduce the severity of head injuries. To ensure that you are correctly protected, reference the manufacturer's recommendations for the ideal helmet, ensuring it fits snugly and securely. Helmets with face shields or goggles not only protect the eyes but also enhance visibility. Operators should also consider additional PPE such as gloves and safety footwear.

3. No passengers

Quad bikes are designed for single riders. Carrying passengers increases the risk of accidents and should be avoided. The extended seat is designed for active riding, allowing operators to shift their body weight for various slope conditions. It is not intended for carrying additional passengers.

4. Avoid overloading

Overloading can disrupt weight distribution and impair braking. Operators should

adhere to manufacturers' towing capacity and loading limits.

5. Maintain your quad

Regular maintenance checks ensure that the quad bike is in good working order, minimising the risk of accidents due to mechanical failures.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY TIPS

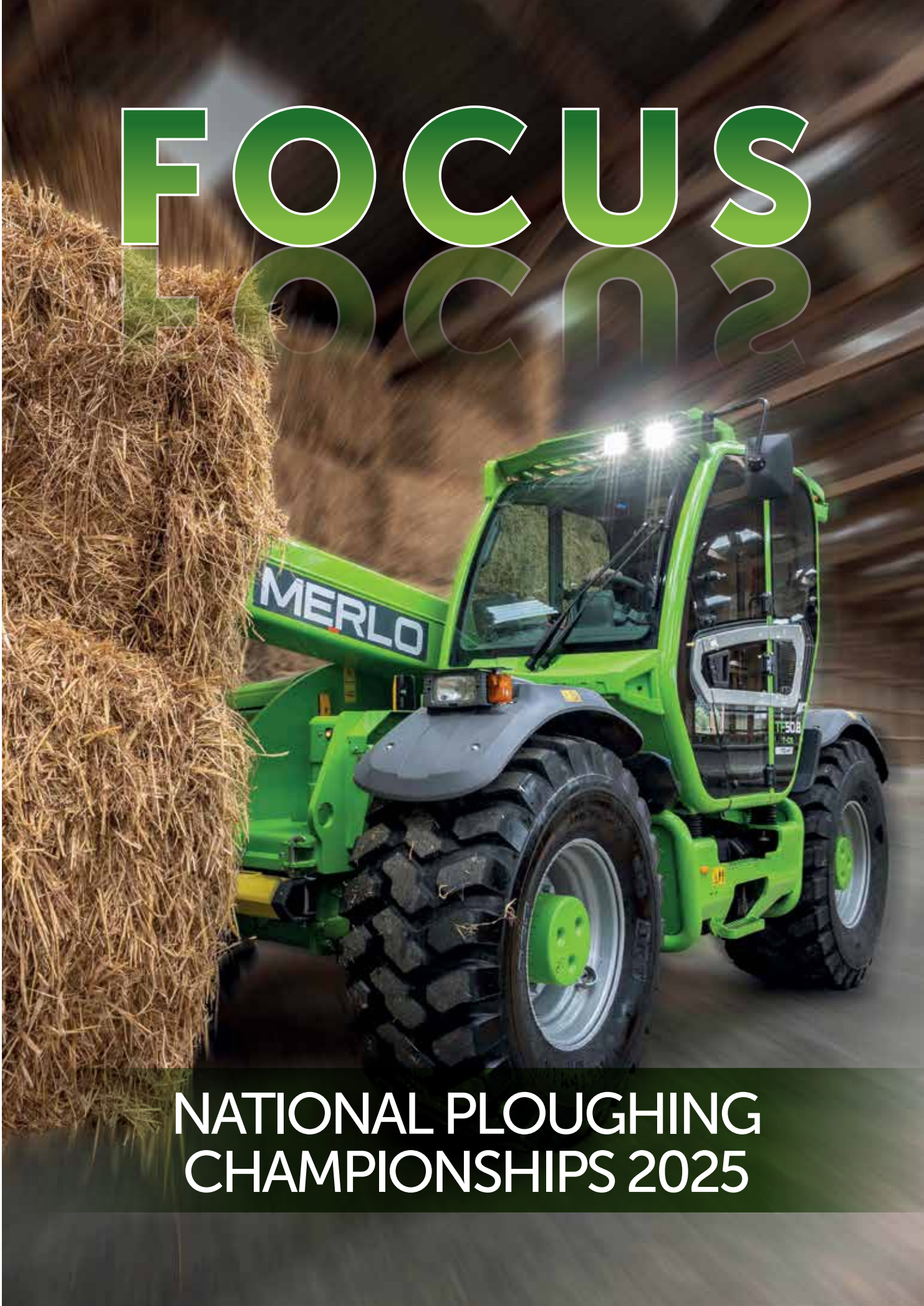
- Familiarise yourself with the terrain to mitigate risks associated with slopes, obstacles, and unfamiliar terrain.
- Adhere to road-use regulations if operating quad bikes on public roads.
- Remember the minimum age for operating farm type working quad bikes is at least 16 years of age, it is usually clearly stated on the quad.

Quad bike safety is paramount in preventing accidents and protecting lives. By adhering to regulations, undergoing training, and implementing practical safety measures, operators can ensure a safer working environment. Remember, safety should always be the top priority when operating Quad Bikes.

For more information:



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NPA assistant managing director, Anna-Marie McHugh with Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon. Photo: Jeff Harvey.



Inspector Paddy Guinan, Superintendent John Lawless, Chief superintendent Tony Lonergan, with NPA director PJ Lynam, site manager Tom Kelly, exhibition manager Sean Byrne, and Trina Connolly. Photo: Jeff Harvey.

THE COUNTDOWN IS ON

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon was guest of honour at the recent launch of the **National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing)**, which took place at the **Scraggan site in Tullamore**. The launch featured prize-winning animals, tractors, sheep, ponies, brown bread bakers, musicians, crafters and a whole lot more, which gave guests and media a preview of the exciting attractions set to take place across the three-day event.

"Preparations are in full swing as this green field transforms into the bustling hub for the National Ploughing Championships," said managing director of the National Ploughing Association, Anna May McHugh. "Just weeks ago, it was open countryside, now it's set to welcome hundreds of thousands. The Ploughing showcases the very best of Ireland, uniting rural and urban communities for three days of country living, innovation, and enterprise. It's always a race against the clock, but the result is a one-of-a-kind celebration."

There will be millions of euros worth of agricultural and plant machinery on display, featuring an extensive range of cutting-edge agricultural technology and equipment, with huge interest in the prestigious 'Machine of the Year' competition, say organisers. The livestock section will be a major highlight with over 100 entries in the Irish Aberdeen-Angus Association All Ireland Finals, the Shorthorn Calf Competition and the Certified Irish Angus Schools Competition as well as many other breeds on display, with 12 sheep breeds on display in the sheep tunnel this year. Visitors will not only have the chance to admire the exceptional quality of animals on display but also to gain insights into livestock management, genetics, nutrition, and animal healthcare, say the organisers.

A record number of diverse and exciting businesses are set to exhibit at this year's Local Enterprise Village. In addition, the Local Enterprise Offices have announced a partnership with Google, which will be on-site, helping SMEs upskill in digital tools and AI. The Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena also makes a welcome return, showcasing groundbreaking technologies and cutting-edge ideas. Visitors can also enjoy the new Midlands Flavours, highlighting the very best local producers from Longford, Laois, Offaly, and Westmeath with cookery demonstrations every morning and afternoon.

GROWVITE ALL-IRELAND FINALS

This year's Growvite All-Ireland Finals (Irish Aberdeen-Angus Association) take place on **Tuesday September 16, on day one of the National Ploughing Championships**. Animals can enter the show either the evening before the event or on the morning of the event. All competing animals must be registered in the herd book of the Irish Aberdeen Angus Association (IAAA) or the herd book of the Irish Angus cattle society. All young stockperson entrants must have competed in a YDP workshop during the summer of 2025 and be signed up as a junior member of the IAAA.

A key attraction the Ploughing is the National Brown Bread Baking Competition, and this year, eight finalists will compete live in Scraggan for the coveted title of Ireland's best brown bread baker. The Ploughing is a haven for foodies, as all sectors of the food chain are represented from producer to retailer, artisan foods, craft beers, celebrity chefs, cookery competitions and much more. The Dome and Hub marquees are returning, creating the largest retail pop-up in the country. The national championships ploughing stakes features a particularly strong programme this year, attracting entries from all over Ireland and Northern Ireland, with more than 350 competitors taking part. All of the firm favourite attractions are set to return this year such as fashion shows, meggers, sheep shearing, hunter trials, fun fair, food fayre, craft demonstrations, pony games, a great cultural programme of local musicians and dance troops, threshing, loy digging, and baking competitions.



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► Paddy Daly, Certa depot area manager with Aodhán the friendly dragon; Anna May McHugh, managing director of the NPA; Orla Stevens, managing director of Certa; and Dubrawa Bujakowska, marketing manager of Certa, pictured at the launch of Certa as the official fuel supplier for Ploughing 2025. Photo: Alf Harvey.



OFFICIAL FUEL SPONSOR
DRIVING DOWN EMISSIONS

The National Ploughing Association (NPA) has confirmed that Certa will, once again, serve as the official fuel sponsor for this year's National Ploughing Championships. Certa's renewable hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) will be used at the championships and it will supply the event fuel requirements for the three days, including fuelling all the generators for powering the site, and the lighting towers.

Speaking ahead of the event, NPA managing director, Anna May McHugh, said: "It is fantastic to have their support again, particularly with the use of HVO, a sustainable diesel that aligns with our commitment to greener practices." Certa managing director, Orla Stevens said: "With its blend of tradition, skill, innovation and community, the National Ploughing Championship is a celebration of Ireland's

rural heart. We at Certa are proud to support the event once again this year. As part of our ongoing commitment to sustainability, we're helping to reduce its carbon footprint through the use of HVO. This renewable fuel helps to cut carbon emissions by up to 90 per cent." Throughout the event, Certa will also be showcasing a range of energy solutions for customers, including solar, HVO, lubricants, and other liquid fuels.

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HSA: WORKING-AT-HEIGHT DEMO COMES TO PLOUGHING FOR FIRST TIME

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) returns to National Ploughing Championships this year with a focus on the safe handling of livestock, tractor and quad safety, farmer health and wellbeing, and work at height/construction appointments.

As usual, there will be a busy external demo zone highlighting the dangers of a range of typical work activities on a farm and advising

of steps to take to avoid a serious incident. The external demos will include tractor blind spots and safe driving of quad bikes. In addition, and for the first time this year, there will also be a practical demo of safe working at height. There will also be a wide range of useful guidance and information for farmers to take away and read in their own time. Freely available publications will cover a range of

diverse topics such as slurry safety, working with hay bales and farmer fatigue. Inspectors from the HSA will also be on hand to chat with visitors and answer any questions or discuss any safety issues they might be having. The HSA is inviting everyone to visit their stand to find out more information about how to better protect yourself and your loved ones on the farm.



FARMER ADVICE AND FEEDERS AT THE ALLTECH/KEENAN STAND

Experts from Alltech and Keenan are making the trip to Tullamore this year for the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing), where advice will be dispensed to farmers preparing for the winter period, and a selection of diet feeders will be on display.

The Alltech team will be talking all things diet and nutrition, from supporting dairy cows as they continue to produce high-solids milk in late lactation and prepare for the dry period, to ensuring beef cattle are gaining weight efficiently while prices remain strong. Getting feeding right is central to animal health, farm returns and sustainability. A well-balanced diet helps cows and cattle perform better while also supporting their well-being during the colder months, when grass growth slows and animals rely more heavily on conserved forage and concentrate feed, according to Alltech. "As cows enter late lactation and the drying-off period, their feed demands decrease, but this is a crucially important time to get cow nutrition right," said key account manager for Alltech, Eddie Phelan. "This transition period sets them up for calving and their next lactation. Getting minerals and energy balance right now will pay dividends in the spring."

On the diet feeder side, Adam Hanratty, Keenan sales manager, and his team will be on hand to discuss machine options for all sizes and types of operations. "We have seen more and more farmers turning to Keenan this year to complement their grazing systems and give them flexibility when conditions are against them, as they were for large parts of this year," Adam explained.

IAM: AN EXTENSIVE LINE-UP AT LARGEST EVER STAND

Visitors to this year's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) will experience IAM Agricultural Machinery's (IAM) largest ever stand. Its display, according to the company, will feature an extensive line-up of machinery from leading brands including Strautmann, Hardi, Bomford Turner, FarmDroid, Topcon Agriculture, and the company's newest franchise, Sky Agriculture.

Sky Agriculture and IAM recently announced a strategic distribution partnership in Ireland and Northern Ireland, which positions IAM as exclusive importer and distributor of the full Sky Agriculture range across the Irish market. This follows Sky Agriculture's recent transition to a single unified brand combining Sulky, Sky, and Prolog under the Burel Group. The partnership marks an important new chapter for Sky Agriculture and IAM – the latter having over 70 years of experience in agricultural machinery distribution. Dealers and farmers in Ireland will now benefit from enhanced access to Sky Agriculture's full product line, including: fertiliser spreaders, combination drills, power harrows, shallow cultivators, and trailed drills. You can find out more about the partnership, the machinery range, and all other brands at IAM's stand.



Sky Agriculture machinery will be on display at the IAM stand.

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'KEEPING YOU SAFE' INITIATIVE RETURNS

'The Ploughing and FBD: Keeping You Safe' child-safety wristband project will be an important feature once again at this year's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing). More than 40,000 wristbands will be available on which parents can write their mobile phone number. The wristbands will be handed out at entrances or can be collected from the FBD Insurance stand. Alternatively, you can collect a wristband from the FBD Insurance stand. Anna May McHugh, managing director of the National Ploughing Association, commented: "We are very pleased to continue our partnership with FBD on this vital child safety initiative. The wristbands have become a simple but highly effective tool in keeping families safe and together during the event. With the enormous crowds we welcome each year, they offer invaluable peace of mind to parents and guardians. "The National Ploughing Championships is a celebration of community and family. With countless attractions to delight children and adults alike, from fun fairs and playgrounds to sporting stars and everything in between.



NPA managing director, Anna May McHugh (centre); Maureen O'Meara, Tomás O'Midheach and Carolyn O'Hara from FBD; with Chloe, Adam and Emer Mahon and Fergus, Liam and Sean Conroy launching the wristband initiative. Photo: Alf Harvey.

Safety is a key part of making sure everyone enjoys their day to the fullest." Tomás O'Midheach, CEO, FBD Insurance said: "At FBD, we are proud to be continue our longstanding relationship with the National Ploughing Association by supporting the valuable child safety wristband initiative at the National Ploughing Championships. The safety and well-being of our youngest visitors is a top priority and these wristbands offer families peace of mind as they explore and enjoy everything the Ploughing has to offer. Our hope is that all children will wear the FBD wristbands and have a fun, memorable and safe day when they visit Ploughing 2025." All under 12s are free of charge once accompanied by a paying adult.

TEA OR COFFEE, ANYONE?

FBD Insurance is inviting you to stop by for a complimentary tea and coffee station to unwind, recharge, and enjoy a friendly chat. According to an FBD spokesperson, there is something for everyone: "We haven't forgotten our younger visitors," they said. "The interactive kids' area offers a space where little ones can put their creativity into action. For those young (and young at heart), our Batak Board challenge will put your reaction times to the test - a bit of fun for all ages." Visitors to the FBD Insurance stand this year will also have the chance to enter an exciting competition to win a ride-on lawnmower. In addition, a team of farm-insurance experts will be on hand every day ready to answer any queries you may have.



PLOUGHING FIRST-TIMER GOOGLE PARTNERS UP WITH LEOs

Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) will partner with Google as part of the Local Enterprise Village at this year's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing). This is the first time that Google will have a presence at the Ploughing and its partnership with the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), as part of the Local Enterprise Village, aims to upskill SMEs in digital tools and artificial intelligence (AI). The Local Enterprise Village will accommodate 30 LEO-supported small businesses from across the country. They are working closely with the LEOs over the coming weeks on merchandising, sales, marketing and social media to ensure they maximise the opportunity to exhibit at one of the largest outdoor events in Europe. The dedicated Google area will host a series of AI training and demonstrations at the Local Enterprise Village. These will focus on

Christine Scully from Home Glow Soy Candles and Eniola Salami from Joyof at the launch of Google's partnership with the Local Enterprise Offices for this year's Local Enterprise Village at the National Ploughing Championships. Photo: Julien Behal Photography.

helping businesses learn how to incorporate AI to make their businesses more efficient with Google experts there through the week. The Local Enterprise Village showcases the very best of Irish entrepreneurship and will house businesses across all sectors from natural skincare and organic soy candles to sustainable fashion and eco-friendly 3D printed sensory toys. Cera Ward, managing director, Google Ireland, said: "Small businesses are at the heart of our economy, driving innovation, growth and creating jobs in communities across Ireland. This is especially true in rural areas, where these businesses are vital to local prosperity. At Google, we've always believed in the power of digital to help businesses thrive, and we're proud to partner with the LEO's as part of the Local Enterprise Village initiative. "From AI to smarter search tools, digital technology is transforming how small businesses grow, connect with customers, and compete on a global stage. We know that time is a business owner's most valuable asset, and we're excited to show how the right AI strategy can boost productivity and give them more time back. We look forward to meeting with business owners in Screggan and demonstrating how AI and digital can turn ambition into real growth."

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BOI/SENUSTO HIGHLIGHT SUSTAINABILITY FOCUSED PARTNERSHIP

Bank of Ireland’s expert team of agri-development managers and customer advisors will be present at this year’s National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) in Tullamore, Co. Offaly to guide farmers on a range of financial options.

A spokesperson for the bank said: “As the agri industry enters the final months of what has been a positive year overall for the sector, with total farm incomes expected to rise in 2025, farmers can consult with Bank of Ireland’s team in Tullamore to learn more about competitive deposit rates; exploring investment options; financing sustainability developments; tax planning; and understanding debt levels.” This year Bank of Ireland, through a

partnership with Senus (formerly FarmEye), will also highlight the unique environmental footprint specific to each farm in Ireland. Senus’s innovative technology maps the location of each individual farm nationwide and its proximity to landscape features, such as areas of special conservation and local water bodies, along with identifying the soil type across each farm. The Senus partnership aligns with Bank of Ireland’s Sustainable Finance Framework, with Enviroflex sustainability-linked loans now available to both dairy and tillage farmers. More than €30m in Enviroflex loan applications have been recorded since the product first launched. Eoin Lowry, head of agri-sector, Bank of Ireland said: “We are keenly aware of the

ebbs and flows of running a farm business, engaging with farmers on a daily basis to provide them with expert knowhow and tailored financial planning advice. I would encourage people to visit the Bank of Ireland stand where our dedicated team can discuss the latest updates in terms of buying machinery, constructing new farm buildings, or enhancing on-farm sustainability practices. “Farming is an industry embedded in the natural and local environment, so the more farmers can learn about improving soil health and water quality, as well as the biodiversity supports available to them, the better.” Bank of Ireland currently has 82,000 farm customers, with 80 per cent of agri-loans under €120,000 approved within one to three working days.

TEAGASC – EXPERTS, RESEARCH & DEMOS



At the Teagasc marquee, visitors can expect to meet Teagasc experts in education, farm management/ succession, farm health and safety, as well as receive advice on all aspects of practical farming. The National Prepared Consumer Food Centre (NPCFC) which has been established by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in consultation with Teagasc, will be represented and will highlight the research carried out in this important national centre.

In its extended outdoor exhibit area visitors can learn about organic farming, forestry, and maximising the effectiveness of grass/ clover swards. It will also demonstrate how Teagasc researchers are working to help farmers, for example, by using technology which employs infra-red beams to measure

ammonia loss from soils and slurry. Visitors will learn how to measure the health of a field’s soil by burying a cotton vest for several weeks! They will also learn how to prevent soil being eroded into nearby streams. There will also be a dedicated cattle and sheep area with tips on how to optimise your returns. The tillage area will demonstrate how Irish crops are being used to generate low-carbon-footprint rations. Organic farming, optimising biodiversity and, of course, dairying will also feature. A Teagasc spokesperson said: “We want visitors to have fun and there will be lots of ways to engage with Teagasc staff. There will also be a competition where visitors can win interesting prizes. Whatever aspect of farming you wish to discuss there will be a relevant person to talk to.

SWEET SUCCESS AT EUROPEAN PLOUGHING FINALS

Earlier this year, the Republic of Ireland ploughing team achieved great success at the 40th European Ploughing Championships, which incorporated the European Reversible Ploughing Championships.

Wexford native, Dan Donnelly, took the top prize in the reversible championships, while fellow county man, John Whelan was awarded reserve champion. With just two points separating both men, the competition was tight as John won on the opening day, with Dan winning on day two. The European Vintage Championships also took place at the European finals and James Stafford from Wexford placed third in the European Vintage Classic Class. Oliver Smyth from Co. Meath placed second overall in the European Vintage Mounted Class and Aeneas Horan from Kerry placed second in the Vintage Mounted Trail Class and third overall.

IFAC TO LAUNCH 2025 FOOD & AGRIBUSINESS REPORT

Ifac is set to launch its 2025 Food & Agribusiness Report at the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing).

Now in its eighth year, the report has become a key resource for Irish food and agri-business owners, offering insights, benchmarks, and strategies to navigate an increasingly complex business environment. This year’s edition addresses the turbulence of early 2025, exploring the impact of ongoing uncertainty on the sector. It examines pressing challenges, from shifting market conditions to resilience planning, and includes findings from Ifac’s nationwide survey of business sentiment across the agri-food community. Ifac will be based at the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena, where members of its team will participate in expert panels, share practical advice and thought leadership on topics ranging from financial planning to business strategy. These sessions will be an excellent opportunity to hear first-hand perspectives from industry specialists and gain actionable insights to take back to your business. A spokesperson said: “Whether you are seeking clarity on succession planning,



considering restructuring, or simply looking to connect with professionals who understand the agri-food sector, the Ifac stand will be a valuable stop on your Ploughing itinerary. With our mix of practical resources, fresh research, and expert insights, we aim to help you face the challenges of 2025 with confidence.” visitors can meet the team, collect free succession and business structures guides, and discuss tailored support for their businesses. Ifac specialists will also contribute to expert panel discussions throughout the three-day event, sharing perspectives on financial planning, business strategy, and succession. The Ifac stand aims to be a key destination for

those seeking clarity, guidance, and practical tools to strengthen their business in 2025 and beyond. Whether you are seeking clarity on succession planning, considering restructuring, or simply looking to connect with professionals who understand the agri-food sector, the Ifac stand will be a valuable stop on your Ploughing itinerary. “With our mix of practical resources, fresh research, and expert insights, we aim to help you face the challenges of 2025 with confidence. Make sure to visit the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena, meet the team and pick up your guides – we look forward to seeing you in Tullamore,” the spokesperson said.

MSD ANIMAL HEALTH: VACCINES AND TECH ON THE AGENDA

MSD Animal Health will showcase its range of vaccines and livestock-monitoring technologies at this year’s National Ploughing Championships.

Visitors will have the opportunity to meet members of the veterinary technical team, sales team, and technical and customer success team, who will be available throughout the event to provide guidance and answer queries from farmers. Vaccination will be a major focus at this year’s stand, according to MSD. Farmers can learn more about the scour vaccine range and how vaccination can help protect calves against scour. Information will also be available on vaccines that protect against bovine respiratory disease and clostridial diseases, which are eligible under the Beef Welfare Scheme 2025. Sheep farmers will also be able to explore vaccines that support flock health and qualify for the Sheep Welfare Scheme 2025. These vaccines play a vital role in protecting animal health and supporting farm productivity.



SenseHub technology will also be showcased including behaviour-monitoring technology, youngstock-monitoring technology, milk-monitoring technology and a drafting gate, which all connect back to the easy-to-use SenseHub app. A key focus at the stand will be on milk-monitoring technology. SenseHub’s Inline MilkPlus Sensor measures six key constituents – yield, fat, protein, lactose, blood and conductivity. In addition, the SenseHub Inline Somatic

Cell Count (SCC) Sensor provides a SCC reading for each individual cow within two minutes of cupping. The milk technology takes an individual animal milk recording at each milking, giving farmers a very accurate insight into each cow’s lactation performance. This level of detail helps identify individual cows that need attention and supports practical management decisions that improve herd health, efficiency and profitability, according to the company.



EASYFIX PUTS SPOTLIGHT ON NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Happier, more comfortable cows are healthier, more productive, and ultimately better for farmers and that belief has been at the heart of Easyfix for over 25 years.

From our base in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, we have been designing and manufacturing innovative agricultural solutions that improve animal welfare while boosting farm efficiency and profitability.

While our reputation was built on industry-leading livestock comfort products, our mission has always gone beyond the shed floor, we are committed to helping farmers achieve greater efficiency, productivity, and sustainability.

Our latest breakthrough, the Easyfix ePulse Aeration System (pictured right), is a prime example of that vision in action. Launched in Ireland in 2024, ePulse uses electro-photomagnetic treatment to improve slurry quality, reduce harmful emissions, and



increase nutrient availability, all without chemicals or complex machinery. "We wanted to create a solution that not only works for the environment, but also works for the farmer," says Ronan Boyle, business development director at Easyfix. "ePulse is about making slurry management

easier, cleaner, and more cost-effective and doing so in a way that's future-proof. It's the only solution on the market that is easily accessible for existing tanks. It can be installed quickly, with minimal disruption to the farm."

AWARD-WINNING INNOVATION

The industry has already recognised ePulse as a game-changer in sustainable farming. It has several accolades and achievements:

- ▶ Enterprise Ireland Green Impact Award for Innovation 2024;
- ▶ Top three finalist for the Innovation Award at DairyTech 2025 in the UK; and
- ▶ Silver Innovation Award at the Royal Highland Show 2025 in Scotland.

This recognition underlines the confidence agricultural experts have in ePulse's ability to help farmers meet environmental targets while improving efficiency and profitability.

WHY LIVESTOCK COMFORT MATTERS

- ▶ **Comfortable cows are more productive**
Studies show that reducing stress and improving lying comfort can increase milk yield and quality.
- ▶ **Better health, fewer vet bills**
Good footing and lying surfaces reduce lameness, mastitis, and injuries, leading to healthier herds.
- ▶ **Improved fertility**
Comfortable, stress-free animals have higher conception rates, supporting herd performance and longevity.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The benefits of ePulse go far beyond slurry aeration. By improving nutrient availability in slurry, farmers can reduce reliance on chemical fertilisers, cutting input costs while protecting water quality. The system also significantly lowers methane and ammonia emissions, supporting Ireland's climate action goals. Importantly, ePulse is eligible for TAMS 3 Farm Safety Scheme grants, with funding of up to 60 per cent available to qualifying farmers, making it both a smart environmental and financial investment.

PROVEN RESULTS ON FARMS

Since its launch, ePulse has been successfully installed on farms across Ireland, with users reporting improved slurry consistency, reduced odour, and easier agitation. Many farmers have also noted increased grass growth thanks to the enhanced nutrient profile

of treated slurry. John Jenkins, a beef and dairy farmer in Pembrokeshire, Wales, installed the system in September 2021. He had this to say: "We have seen a big difference, slurry is more uniform, easier to spread, we save a lot of time and that saves money, and we can see the results in the field, it was installed in a couple of hours and it works away automatically."

SEE EPULSE AT THE PLOUGHING

This month, farmers attending the National Ploughing Championships will have the opportunity to see the Easyfix ePulse Aeration System up close. Our team will be on hand to explain how the technology works, outline the grant application process, and showcase the other solutions that have made Easyfix a trusted name in Irish agriculture. Visitors can also explore our full product range, from premium slat rubber to cubicle systems and matting solutions, all designed to improve livestock comfort, health, and performance.



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MASSEY FERGUSON – EXTENSIVE RANGE ON DISPLAY THIS YEAR

Massey Ferguson returns to the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) this year and promises to display an extensive range of machinery. Here is a taster of what to expect in Tullamore.



MF 1M SERIES

Earlier this year, Massey Ferguson launched two new compact tractors. The new MF 1M series replaces MF 1500 models and comes with the latest MF family styling, which first featured on larger MF 8S tractors. Initially, according to Massey, there are two MF 1M series models, both with extra performance over the machines they replace. The 25hp MF 1M.25 replaces the current MF 1525, while the 20hp MF 1M.20 replaces the current MF 1520. As well as updated styling, which includes the distinctive MF sabre, new features include enhanced controls, a mid-PTO, external PTO controls for added convenience, more lighting options and new cutter decks. The MF 1M series also features: reliable and efficient three-cylinder engines with extra power and torque; new nine-speed, three-range transmission increases flexibility in a wide range of applications; a new factory-fitted, air-conditioned cab for MF 1M.25; new joystick hydraulic control for improved operation; powerful hydraulics with high flow rates for demanding applications; and generous hydraulic lift capacity up to 900kg, which allows use with larger implements.

RED DOT WINNER – MF 5M SERIES

In April, the Massey Ferguson 5M Series won the Red Dot Award: Product Design 2025 and you will have the opportunity to see why in person at this year's Ploughing. The MF 5M tractors feature the latest smart Massey Ferguson family design, now familiar on the higher specification S-Series models, according to the company. The brand's styling characteristics feature a diamond grey cab and the emblematic sabre line with the new model logo design on the side of the bonnet, fronted by a black, ribbed grille. The six models in the range are powered by the latest AGCO Power four-cylinder engines, that meet the strictest Stage V emissions regulations, with the award-winning 'All-in-One' emissions system. Located neatly beneath the cab, with the exhaust in-line with the front, right-hand cab post, this provides superb, all-round visibility. All tractors in the MF 5M Series come equipped with the highly efficient Dyna transmission, that provides clutch-free control of 16 forward and 16 reverse speeds, with a 40km/h Eco top speed. Additionally, the MF 5M Series is particularly efficient for tasks requiring a front loader and is fully compatible with a wide range of factory-fitted loaders. All MF 5M tractors can come equipped with full MF Guide, including the Fieldstar 5 terminal or as MF Guide ready. MF Guide provides fully automatic steering and is offered with Trimble, or a choice of other receivers that provide a range of positioning accuracies. This will prove especially helpful for vegetable growers.



MF 9S – THE FLAGSHIP

Massey Ferguson's flagship new 9S Series, which includes six models with powers from 285hp to 425hp will be a star attraction at the stand this year. The new large frame MF 9S are all equipped with the renowned Dyna-VT transmission as standard and come with a host of new features to boost productivity and performance. These include:

- Unique MF Protect-U design, which prevents vibrations while improving visibility and reducing in-cab noise levels to just 69dBa.
- Best-in-class visibility from new, spacious 3.4m³ cab with 6.6m² of glass area, which is kept clear by a new wiper covering 72 per cent of the area.
- Higher comfort and reduced operator fatigue from new levels of automation options including MF AutoTurn, AutoHeadland and TIM Isobus Tractor Implement Management.
- Capability to reduce compaction and fuel consumption with the new Central Tyre Inflation System option for all models, plus a wide choice of wheels and up to 2.18m diameter tyres (VF 750/70R44).
- Higher performance and lower running costs thanks to an economical 8.4L, six-cylinder AGCO Power engine with single turbo, straightforward Stage V emission control without the need for an EGR valve.
- Increased efficiency delivered by the easy to use, well proven, Dyna-VT continuously variable transmission fitted as standard.
- Efficient high-flow, load-sensing hydraulics offering up to 400L/min at 1,850 rpm
- Greater stability and traction delivered by 3.1m wheelbase, which maintains versatility with a 5.75m turning radius for excellent manoeuvrability.
- Maximum operating flexibility from a low, 10,900kg weight for unrivalled power to weight ratio, which can be increased to 18,500kg for maximum traction.



MF 8S XTRA

In July, Massey Ferguson announced the introduction of its new MF 8S Xtra series. The line-up features six models from 205hp to 305hp, with Engine Power Management (EPM) boosting power by up to 20hp. Since the MF 8S was introduced in 2020, continuous improvements have been made and new options increasing operator comfort, working efficiency and productivity have been added, according to Massey Ferguson. In the cab, these include a Dual-Motion seat option, electrically adjusted external rear-view mirrors, a rear window demister and a revised microphone position. Technology upgrades include MF AutoTurn, MF Section Control for automatic control of up to 96 sections and AEF Isobus certification. A Central Tyre Inflation System (CTIS) is available through MF By You, maximising traction for increased productivity while also protecting soils and reducing fuel consumption. An enhanced service and warranty package protects the investment and reduces costs of ownership.



► Also on the Massey Ferguson stand will be a comprehensive selection of its grass kit consisting of balers, mowers, tedders and rakes the very popular 5S, 6S and 7S models are also set for a return.



BEST OF OLD AND NEW AT THE FARMHAND STAND

Farmhand celebrates 25 years of the Krone BiG X at the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) this month. To mark the occasion, visitors will be treated to a display of one of the first BiG X 650s to be sold in Ireland alongside the flagship 2025 machine, the BiG X 1180. Although the harvesting concept remains the same between the old 650 and new 1180, the continuous development between the two machines is clear to see.



A 25-year history of Krone's BiG X forage harvesters.



In keeping with this theme of machinery progression, Farmhand also presents a 1960s Krone Optimat displayed alongside the impressive RX 370 forage wagon, and an original Quicke loader highlights the advances of the new Quicke N Series loader, designed with both practicality and price point in mind.

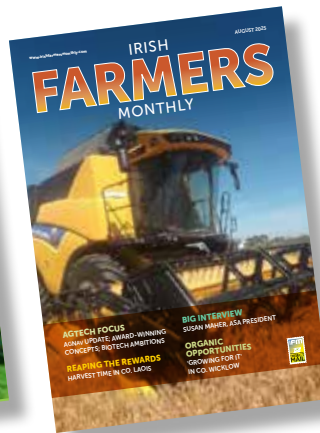


Also on the Farmhand stand will be a range of Krone and Amazone machinery, including the ECR 321 CV mower, Vendro 790 tedder, Swadro TC880 rake, ZA-TS spreaders, new Teres Plough, Centaya mounted drill and the Amazone Profihopper 1500. Rounding off this impressive display of modern technology is the huge 45M Pantera 7004, Amazone's state of the art self-propelled sprayer.

New design merchandise

A range of new merchandise will launch at the Ploughing featuring O'Neill's hoodies, half-zips and new design jerseys; including a limited-edition 25 Years of BiG X jersey and the first ever Amazone Pantera jersey, for both adults and kids. Workwear, jackets and other classic favourites, together with accessories such as hats, Krone sunglasses and water tumblers are also available alongside a limited edition 25 Years of Krone harvester and a wide selection of other Krone and Amazone models, the company says.

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MACHINERY LAUNCHES AND NEW SHOWCASES

The National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) promises a mix of heritage, progress, and future-focused design as machinery companies bring their A-game this year. We are profiling many of the top machinery companies in our special focus section, but here are some additional companies that are making waves with new developments and top-tier technology – be sure to stop by their stands.



CONNACHT AGRI SUPPLIES – TRIPLE LAUNCH

Connacht Agri Supplies will unveil three game-changing products at this year's Ploughing:

- RFID Solar Ration Feeder
- Ireland's first solar-powered, app-controlled feeder for up to 300 cattle.
- CALFLO Automatic Calf Feeder
- The 'most affordable' RFID feeder in Ireland, the company says.
- Eco-Rider Cubicle Bedding Machine
- A fully electric, German-built, ride-on solution for silent, emission-free bedding.

BLUEMOTION ENGINEERING – CNC PLASMA MACHINE

Bluemotion Engineering will showcase its new PT Series CNC Plasma Machine, designed to transform pipe and tube processing in workshops nationwide with faster, more precise and efficient cutting.



BENN AGRI – MOBILE SLURRY SEPARATOR

A first for Ireland and the UK, Benn Agri will launch the Criman Mobile Slurry Separator, giving farmers a flexible, mobile option for slurry separation.

IFOR WILLIAMS TRAILERS/ WEST WOOD TRAILERS

At the Ifor Williams Trailers/West Wood Trailers stand the CT178 car transporter will be on show. This is the CT177's bigger, wider brother. The extra bed width of 175mm found on the CT178 (versus CT177) caters for larger SUVs, electric vehicles, and supercars. Despite being wider and with the same length and gross vehicle weight as the CT177, it is only 25kg heavier at 830kg giving a fantastic payload of 2,670kg.



H FULTON TRACTORS – SCHÄFFER T-3 LOADER LAUNCH

H Fulton Tractors will debut the Schäffer 8620T-3 and 9640T-3 telescopic wheel loaders, offering greater comfort, safety and power with the new Comfort Cabin Plus. Both models deliver 4.2t lift capacity and heights of over 5m, while CE-certified weights and hitches from Pateer Group will also feature.

DAFM TO LAUNCH NEW ONLINE PLATFORM MYAGFOOD

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's (DAFM) stand will be located in the Government Village (block 3, row 13, stand 263) where officials will be present to discuss farmer supports, services and schemes, and where a new platform – MyAgFood – to replace AgFood will also be launched and demos given.

Advice will also be available on forestry and tree-planting options that might suit your farm, while bovine TB risk-reduction steps will also be shared, and .

A spokesperson for the DAFM said: "Throughout the Ploughing, we will be highlighting the importance of farmer safety, health and wellbeing. You are invited to talk to us about the supports, projects and initiatives promoting best practice and bringing about behavioural change to minimise the risks to the safety, health, and wellbeing of everyone on farms, including farmers, workers, farm families and visitors.

"We will also be launching MyAgFood at the Ploughing. This new platform will be replacing AgFood to provide you with an easy-to-use platform to receive important updates from the department and apply for schemes in one place. We will be providing demonstrations of MyAgFood at our stand, where you can try out this new platform."

SEEFA to host forestry hub

The Social, Economic, Environmental Forestry Association of Ireland (SEEFA), with the support of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), will host a forestry hub for the very first time at this year's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing). The centre will provide a space for visitors to learn about forestry, meet top industry professionals, and engage in informed discussions and Q&As on topics relevant to forestry in Ireland today. From students to foresters and landowners, there will be something for everyone.

The SEEFA forestry Hub will be a practical drop-in point for information and one-to-one conversations, with sector experts on hand to help people at every stage, from first planting to active management. It is designed for anyone curious about the role of trees in climate, rural incomes and nature. Additionally, there will be several panel discussions and question-and-answer sessions throughout the three days, covering topics such as agroforestry, biodiversity, afforestation, timber first policy, and opportunities after Storm Éowyn. Panel sessions will include:

Day one	Day two	Day three
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improving Forestry: Ireland's Path Forward• Forests & the Climate Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planting for Biodiversity: Protecting Ireland's Heritage• Eye of the Storm: Irish Forestry After Éowyn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bridging Fields and Fields through Agroforestry• Timber First Policy & Certification

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The all-new 3m Saterra one-pass drill makes its first Irish public appearance at the Ploughing.



WIDE-RANGING DISPLAY AT THE KVERNELAND STAND

Kverneland Group Ireland's stand at the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing), will reflect the demands of today's progressive Irish farmers, the company has said. The range on display will cover grassland, arable, crop-care, feeding and hedgecutting, with a mix of established machines and new arrivals offering visitors a chance to explore practical, high-output solutions. In the arable and crop-care section, Kverneland will show the latest generation 2300S four-furrow plough. Featuring updated clearance and aero-profile legs, the 2300S is designed for ease of use and efficiency in a wide range of soil conditions, according to the company. It will be joined by the all-new 3m Saterra one-pass drill, making its first Irish public appearance. The cultivator-mounted pneumatic seed drill is the perfect solution for medium-sized farms

looking for an efficient and straightforward seed drill, and is generating strong interest ahead of the seeding season. Also on display will be the iXter A12 mounted sprayer, equipped with iXspray software delivering simple, intuitive control. With easy attachment, a close gravity point, and robust booms in steel or aluminium, the iXter A12 combines user-friendliness with serious spraying capability. Fertiliser spreading is represented by the Kverneland Exacta CL – medium in size and volume, but can spread up to 28m and comes with the CentreFlow system as standard. It also comes with eight vanes per disc for the same spreading quality as the bigger spreaders. In the grass machinery range, the high output 85156C tedder will be a key attraction. With a working width of 15.6m, 14 rotors and the new, innovative TerraFlow ground following system providing a highly

adaptive frame connection allowing the tedder moving independent of the carrier for perfect contour following. The 85156 C is suited to larger operators looking to maximise output. Kverneland's 28 Series disc mower will also be shown – a robust, compact model well suited to smaller tractors. The 9443 rake and 8555 tedder round off the grass range, offering reliable swathing and tedding performance for mid-sized farms.

SILOKING

From Siloking, visitors will see the Compact 13 mixer wagon, ideal for smaller herds and tighter yards, and the larger 4.0 Premium, which offers fast mixing and robust construction for high output feeding operations. Both are designed to deliver consistent, high-quality rations and reliable long-term performance.

HEDGE CUTTING

Hedgecutting is also covered, with McConnel's new 72 Series hedgecutter taking its place on the stand. It represents the latest in design from McConnel, offering reach options from 5.5m to 7m, including Telescopic and Variable Forward Reach (VFR) models for greater visibility and operator comfort. Built around a heavy-duty mainframe, it features McConnel's in-house 70hp hydraulic system with a 180-litre tank, high-capacity oil cooler, and Soft-Start rotor engagement. Standard features include parallel arm geometry, 100° of Power Slew, and Hy-Reach arm design. With LED lighting, a new service-friendly rear guard, and optional debris blower, the 72-Series is a reliable, efficient choice for verge and hedge maintenance. The Kverneland team will be on hand across the three days of the Ploughing to meet customers, discuss machinery options, and provide support on everything from machine features to finance options and original parts. There will also be some limited-edition merchandise available on stand as well.



Visitors will have an opportunity to view the McConnel

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AGRI AND CONSTRUCTION MACHINES LINE UP AT MERLO STAND

After a successful debut in 2024, Merlo returns to the National Ploughing Championships with an impressive line up of machines that serve both Irish farmers and the construction industry. Supported by its network of Irish dealers, Merlo is bringing machines engineered for performance, safety, comfort, and the challenges of modern Irish work environments, according to the company.

AGRICULTURE

From Merlo's agricultural range, a selection of compact and medium-capacity telehandlers will be on display. From tight farmyards to silage clamps and bale stacks, Merlo's agricultural telehandlers are built for versatility, visibility, and precision handling:

- ▶ **TF27.6:** A nimble yard performer with a 2.7t lift capacity and 6m lift height powered by a 75hp Kohler Stage V engine. Ideal for traditional buildings and tight turning spaces;
- ▶ **TF33.7:** Offering a step-up in capacity with a 3.3t lift and 7m lift height, this handler balances footprint and power via a 115hp Deutz engine, making it a popular choice

on dairy and mixed farms; and

- ▶ **TF35.7:** A favourite among mid-to-large farms with 3.5t capacity, 7m lift, and a 136hp Stage V engine, ideal for intensive bale handling and grain loading.

EWORKER

Spanning both agriculture and construction, the Merlo eWorker 25.5 is an award-winning, compact, 100 per cent electric telehandler that delivers a 2.5t lift capacity, 5m lift height, and eight-hour runtime on a single charge. Quiet, compact and emission free, the eWorker is tailored for:

- ▶ Horticulture, livestock sheds and farm buildings; and
- ▶ Indoor and urban construction, warehouse logistics, and low noise or nighttime operations.

CONSTRUCTION

Merlo's growing presence in Irish construction is powered by machines engineered for lifting precision, job site safety, and all-day performance, whether you're working on infrastructure, structural steel, forestry, or multi-storey builds:

- ▶ **Roto 50.26 S Plus:** A high-performance rotating telehandler offering 5t capacity and 26m lift height, powered by a Stage V 170hp FPT engine. With 360° turret rotation, a unique tilting cab, dual hydraulic circuits, and automatic stabilisers, it's the go-to solution for complex lifts in construction, steel erection, tree work, and infrastructure maintenance.
- ▶ **P40.14 Plus:** This 4t, 14m stabilised model combines frame levelling, boom side shift, and Merlo's ASCS (Adaptive Stability Control System) for safe, pinpoint material placement at height. It's a top choice for housebuilding, roof installation, and tight-access projects where precision is essential.

These machines reflect Merlo's operator-focused approach, delivering exceptional visibility, spacious cabs, and ergonomic controls that reduce fatigue and boost productivity on busy construction sites. "Merlo's 2025 line-up delivers smart, high-performance handling solutions for farmers, contractors, builders, landscapers, and public works teams across Ireland," said a Merlo spokesperson. "Whether you're looking to modernise your fleet, increase site efficiency, cut emissions, or explore the latest in electric and rotating handling technology, the Merlo stand is your one-stop destination."

Expert support will be on hand, with the Merlo team and representatives from Merlo's dealer network available to walk you through machine features, options, and technical details: Jim Power Agri, Waterford; FJS Plant, Kildare; and Nunan Farm Machinery, Limerick.



Multifarmer 44.9

The Ultimate Telehandler-Tractor Hybrid



Look for the green booms
Block 4



Equipped with a 3-point rear linkage and PTO, the MF44.9 provides extra capacity during peak seasons. This versatile all-in-one machine combines the strengths of a telehandler and a tractor, making it the ultimate multi-purpose workhorse—the true Swiss Army knife of farm machinery! The Merlo team and representatives from the nationwide Merlo dealer network will be on hand to demonstrate key features and answer technical questions.

4.4 8.8 170

MERLO

Dealer Locator





VIRTUAL REALITY AND 'SHED TALKS' AT THE AIB STAND

The much-loved virtual reality (VR) tractor experience returns to the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) this year.

Also returning are AIB's Shed Talks, which bring together leading agricultural experts and high-profile guests to discuss a wide range of topics relating to the future of farming in Ireland, and much more.

AIB's team of agri-advisors will be available to provide expert guidance on farm finance needs. Key discussion areas will include social sustainability, mortgage guidance, the economic contribution of agriculture, advancements in farm-level sustainability, and strategies for generational renewal.



ICMSA EXTENDS OPEN INVITATION TO CALL IN FOR CUPPA

The Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA) extends an open invitation to all to call into its stand this year at the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) for a cuppa and to celebrate its 75th anniversary. This offers a great opportunity to look back on what has been, but to look forward also, according to ICMSA president, Denis Drennan. Things like farm succession and generational renewal are high on the ICMSA's priority list, he says, and he looks forward to

discussing this and more with visitors to the stand. Also on the topic of discussion list are nitrates, milk price, margins and live exports. "One of the lessons that ICMSA has learned over 75 years is that if you're not honest about the nature of the problem, you have no chance of arriving at the right solution. You can expect to hear that point being stressed at the November 28 AGM to the principal guest, Taoiseach, Michael Martin," he said.

Norma Dalton, Mary Fitzpatrick and Catherine Collins from Roscarbery visiting the ICMSA stand back in 2012.



The hefty WA380-8, aimed at contractors whose client needs require a larger, more muscular machine, will be at the Ploughing.

McHALE PLANT SALES TO SHOWCASE A 'COMPELLING CHOICE' OF MACHINES

McHale Plant Sales promises a 'compelling choice' of machines at its National Ploughing Championships stand this year with – perhaps – a few show-stopping surprises too.

Making its Irish debut at the event will be the all-new Komatsu PC220LC-12 excavator. With its 'I' version stablemate, the PC220LC-12 has been classified by Komatsu as 'the most-advanced excavator ever and a template for future generations of Komatsu diggers yet to come.'

Irish customers will have the opportunity to examine its many features close-up. The PC220LC-12 boasts 'breathtaking' aesthetics, intuitive ergonomics, extreme fuel efficiency, ultra-low emissions, effortless performance, and levels of digitalisation never-before-seen in a construction machine, the company says.

Other Komatsu machines on show will appeal to the wide community of farm and forestry contractors: those with the pressure of heavy-duty and demanding contracts to manage; those with ambitions to expand and open new avenues; and those content to work and build a client base within their niche.

From Komatsu, another model to watch for is the PC78US-11, which is new to the Irish market. Also on show, with a range of breakers, will be a PC138 digger from the Komatsu range of utilities machines, and a fully agri-specified heavy-duty wheel loader – the hefty WA380-8 unit, aimed at contractors whose client needs require a larger, more muscular machine. Also featuring will be a machine from the Komatsu forest harvesting range – likely a model 845 Forwarder.

From Prinoth, models will include a remote-control Raptor 100, and two excavator-driven mulchers: a new M350e-750 unit suitable for a 5t excavator, and a M450e-1090 unit for a 12-15t excavator.

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NEW MACHINES AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES
AT THE MCHALE STAND

At this year's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing), McHALE ENGINEERING will showcase a wide range of machinery such as a number of new additions including the McHale R80-90 centre delivery rake and the McHale V6-II and V8-II variable chamber balers along with the new TerraDrive Axle feature, which is now available on the McHale Fusion 4 Plus.

The McHale centre delivery rake range has been on the market for a number of years and for the 2026 season, McHale is expanding this range to include the new McHale R80-90. This machine will be the largest machine in the range with a working width of 8m to 9m. Like the rest of the McHale rakes, the new R80-90 is equipped with a number of novel features as standard such as rotor height adjustment, tine arm cam adjustment, hydraulic width adjustment, and individual rotor lift. These features ensure the clean gathering of crop to the swath and improves operator comfort, according to the company. McHale will also be launching the next generation of variable chamber balers

in the form of the V6-II and V8-II. These machines have proven themselves around the world and are now enhanced by the introduction of Isobus as standard across the V6750-II and V8950-II machines. These models also feature a new Iso-Play 6 console if required, which enables the machine to be operated using a non-Isobus tractor. These new features have added to the operator's comfort and user friendliness of the machine by allowing the operator to experience the highest level of customisation and machine performance, according to McHale. Aside from the new control functionality, the next generation of V6 and V8 machines also feature Load Cell Bale Shape Indicators for more accurate and responsive measurement of the bale shape, Active Density Control which varies the density pressure regulation at predetermined points of the process and these machines will be TIM ready to allow the baler to control certain functions of the tractor for improved operator comfort. McHale says it is proud to introduce the new TerraDrive Axle, which is available as an optional extra on the McHale Fusion

4 Plus. The TerraDrive option enhances your baler's performance in challenging terrain by upgrading the standard main axle to a hydraulic drive axle. This feature is particularly useful to assist the tractor when operating in soft, wet or hilly conditions and can reduce the risk of getting stuck. TerraDrive employs hydraulic motors in the axle which enables the baler's wheels to provide additional traction and in turn helps distribute the workload more efficiently by improving mobility and reducing the strain on the tractor. The TerraDrive axle is compatible with Isobus and non-Isobus tractors and intuitively pauses during the bale binding process. This axle also comes fitted on the V-Series 710 tyres that has an evenly distributed footprint and is designed for soil preservation and grassland friendliness. McHale sales and service personnel will be on hand at the Ploughing to discuss the latest products and technologies. The company is also recruiting for a number of positions so be sure to visit them to find out more information on machines and careers on offer.



Steep ground is no trouble for the Fusion 4 Plus with TerraDrive.



The new McHale R80-90 will be the largest machine in the range with a working width of 8m to 9m.



At the Ploughing, McHale will be launching the next generation of variable chamber balers in the form of the V6 750-II pic.

BBZ

BBZ 9000 WITH METATARSAL PROTECTION

WHEN DAISY PUTS HER FOOT DOWN

METZ PROTECTZ

Buckbootz BBZ 9000 with METZ™ metatarsal protection gets between you, Daisy's foot and a really sore one. And it's not just the metatarsal areas which are protected: BBZ 9000 has safety toe caps, NAIL STOP midsoles, real rubber outsoles which are slip resistance certified, fitted with ladder grips and are heat (300°C) and fuel oil resistant. That's all before you get to anti-static, electrostatic discharge, lightweight, 360° reflective, heat and cold insulation, pull on levers and cracking good looks. BBZ 9000 provides metatarsal protection in a host of outdoor working environments - even ones where Daisy wouldn't dare to tread.

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COME SEE US AT STAND 39 IN THE INNOVATION ARENA



€10,000 PRIZE FUND UP FOR GRABS FOR START-UP OF THE YEAR

Excitement is brewing as the 2025 Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena Awards return to this year's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing), offering Irish agri-tech innovators the opportunity to exhibit and compete at one of Europe's largest outdoor events.

Hosted in partnership with the National Ploughing Association (NPA), the Innovation Arena, is synonymous with Ireland's agricultural industry and is an annual must-see exhibition platform. There are three categories in this year's competition: The Start-Up Innovator of the Year Award includes a €10,000 prize, as well as mentoring and supports from specialist Enterprise Ireland advisors; The Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena Champion Award is for established companies with a focus on scaling and innovation; and The Green Impact Award is for a company whose innovation is focused on sustaining the



Pictured at the launch of the 2025 Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena Awards: James Maloney, Enterprise Ireland; Anna May McHugh, MD of the NPA; and Carol Gibbons, Enterprise Ireland.

development of food and farming for future generations. Nine finalists will be selected for this year's Innovation Arena Awards competition which is held on the first day of the Ploughing on September 16. They will be invited to participate in a pitching competition in front of a panel of judges and live audience at the Innovation Arena.

There will be an opportunity for participants

from the competition in recent years to apply for a spot in the popular 'Agritech Hub', which also returns to Innovation Arena at this year's NPC. This Enterprise Ireland hosted exhibition space gives Irish agri-tech entrepreneurs the important opportunity to exhibit within the Innovation Arena to an audience which includes domestic and international visitors and buyers, as the NPC typically attracts more than 240,000 visitors each year.



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THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED MCCORMICK CLEVER CAB, LAUNCHED RECENTLY AT GURTEEN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE IN NORTH TIPPERARY, IS DESCRIBED AS THE 'PERFECT BALANCE OF INNOVATION AND ERGONOMICS' AND IT IS OUR FOCUS HERE THIS MONTH

ARGO TRACTORS LAUNCHES PIONEERING MCCORMICK CLEVER CAB

Designed primarily with the operator in mind, the Clever Cab offers superior comfort with its semi-active suspension system and air-conditioned driver's seat.

Its intuitive controls and the DSM Plus display provide a user-friendly experience, according to McCormick. The company's digital solutions allow your tractor fleet and farm operations to be managed remotely, improving performance while increasing efficiency, safety and productivity. Available in the X7 model, and providing 8cm of additional headroom above industry standards, the Clever Cab's groundbreaking four-post configuration enhances all-round visibility while maintaining full compliance with roll over protective structures (ROPS) and optionally falling object protective structures (FOPS) standards.

Speaking at the launch, Kevin Phelan, general manager, Argo Tractors Ireland said: "In recent

The glazed area has been increased by 14 per cent and the cab is equipped with adjustable full LED lights that allow a clear, unobstructed view of the implements and work area, ensuring a more efficient and safer tractor operation, according to McCormick.

decades, the tractor cabin has experienced a significant evolution, having transitioned from a structure which primarily protects drivers from the weather to a fully functional and more highly customised operator environment. And through the design and roll-out of the Clever Cab, Argo Tractors has delivered a facility which provides a more comfortable space for today's tractor operator."

Kevin continued: "The modern tractor cabin is, effectively, the operator's workstation. It's

where many of our customers spend their entire working day for weeks and indeed months at a time. The climate-controlled Clever Cab sits on top of power units that are engineered for the most demanding of on-farm and transport tasks, which is why comfort and functionality are equally significant in McCormick's latest design innovation."

The cabin glass supplied by Saint-Gobain, while the cab itself is a hub of digital efficiency, says McCormick. Its standard 12" DSM Plus touchscreen monitor, paired with a second 12" digital dashboard with encoder control, offers a seamless user interface. This duo integrates McCormick's full suite of management software for in-field operations and remote diagnostics.

The roof includes a transparent hatch to monitor high front-loader movements without straining, while the rear window opens up to



THE CLEVER CAB PROVIDES 8CM OF ADDITIONAL HEADROOM ABOVE INDUSTRY STANDARDS

The DSM Plus configuration offers high performance: 12-inch high-resolution, full HD display; intuitive 12-inch digital dashboard; advanced configuration of remote valves; full AEF Isobus compatibility; and control of the Precision Steering Management system, McCormick's satellite-based precision guidance system.

75°, which provides greater visibility of towed implements. A high-efficiency carbon filter system ensures operator safety against solid, liquid, or gaseous contaminants, which has earned the McCormick Clever Cab a class two-filtration rating.

The McCormick Clever Cab's four-speaker Alpine audio system, which is also compatible with Apple Car Play and Android Auto, completes the picture.

Available accessories include: 8.6L refrigerated compartment, in-cab storage compartment and bottle holder, 12 V sockets for charging mobile devices, internal mirror. Powerful Alpine touchscreen radio with DAB+, 4 Alpine 200 Watt RMS speakers, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, Bluetooth, integrated microphone, and 2 USB ports.

Valerio Morra, president of Argo Tractors, said the McCormick Clever Cab incorporates 'the best features of comfort and practicality, due to passionately crafted details and decades of manufacturing experience, guaranteeing excellent performance.'



IT'S A CELEBRATION!

Well, my friends, it's September and that can only mean one thing. Yes, you've guessed it – it's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) month. This year marks the 94th outing of this great institution, and with it comes a change of setting. We're heading to Screggan, Tullamore, Co. Offaly from September 16-18, where gates will open from 9am to 6pm daily in the exhibition areas. Ploughing competitions run from 10.30am to 2.30pm each day, with over 350 skilled men and women set to battle it out across various classes all in the hope of progressing to European and even world ploughing championship level. One of the things that keeps the Ploughing fresh is how it moves around every few years, giving different counties a chance to shine while also offering a real economic boost to those rural communities.

As Europe's leading outdoor agricultural trade exhibition, the Ploughing is an absolute powerhouse – boasting over 1,400 trade stands (and growing), with millions in sales and an unrivalled platform to showcase what Irish and international agri-businesses and agri-services have to offer.

This year's setup includes an agricultural zone featuring everything from forestry and farm buildings to renewable energy, while the rural lifestyle zone will feature food, drink, wellbeing, crafts and all things equestrian. The residential zone gives a taste of home improvement, landscaping and horticulture, while the motor zone will have all the latest on cars, vans, trucks and ATVs.

Of course, no visit would be complete – in my books, anyway – without a stroll through the machinery exhibition. There are some fresh faces joining the lineup this year, and who, we wonder, will take the coveted Machine of the Year Award? If livestock is your thing, then this area promises even more breeds and expert insight into breeding, showing, nutrition and genetics. Foodies are well looked after too, with a mouth-watering array of local and national produce on offer. But perhaps the real jewel in the crown is Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Arena, where over 40 Irish companies will unveil cutting-edge research, AI developments and agricultural tech. I am excited to check all this out!

And here is an interesting tidbit for you – would you believe that around five per cent of the Irish population turns up at the Ploughing each year? That's some pull! But before all that kicks off, I want to share with you some details of a recent trip to the Netherlands with the team from Kverneland Ireland. We visited the European HQ of both Kverneland and Kubota, and were treated to an engaging presentation on their future plans, including a sneak peek at what they're preparing to launch at Agritechnica. I'll have the full lowdown on that in the October issue.

That evening, we also raised a glass to the legendary German machinery journalist Cord Lehmann, who was signing off after 45 years in the field. A true stalwart of the agricultural media, he bows out with the respect and admiration of an entire industry. We wish him every happiness in his well-earned retirement.

I had the chance to attend the official launch of this year's Ploughing on the Co. Offaly site a few weeks ago. What a buzz. I met all the movers and shakers in the business the mood was really upbeat and positive. You'd barely drive a stake in to the ground it was that hard after all the good weather – we hope that continues for the duration of the three-day event. And as I looked in the rear-view mirror as I left the site that evening, I have to say, I felt a little emotional. Isn't it great that we can celebrate our passion for rural life, agriculture and machinery on such a large scale every year, to such a vast and varied audience? Book your tickets, polish your welly boots and whatever you do, don't forget the sunscreen (if the weather is hot!)

Until next month – farm wisely, farm safely.





Tom Murphy
Professional Agricultural
Contractors of Ireland

When asked 'what does PAC Ireland do?' I have no hesitation in highlighting our achievements, often accomplished against the odds. These are successes that not only protected agricultural contractors' businesses but also saved them considerable amounts of money. Having recently read some political biographies, I noticed a common thread: if you don't blow your own trumpet, no one else will. So, let's have a look at how PAC Ireland came about.

It all started with the Irish Association of Agricultural Contractors (IAAC), a small group based in the northeast of Ireland. One of the issues that brought them together was the rampant black economy, which they thought could be solved by general agreement to charge the same prices. Because membership of IAAC was open to all, it didn't take long for those operating in the black economy to promptly undercut the agreed prices. The group also wanted a higher profile and better coverage by the Irish Farmers Journal, which was then seen as the farmers' bible.

Our first meetings were boisterous. Members felt excluded and unheard with many genuine grievances. High on the agenda was a meeting with the minister. From experience we knew that meeting any minister with a shopping basket of issues was not on and

could damage credibility. We had to get our house in order first. So, to start, we advised that price fixing was in fact illegal. Before we went anywhere, we must ensure that our members were above board so Professional Agricultural Contractors of Ireland (PAC) was born and members had to verify they were VAT registered, tax compliant, and have appropriate insurance in place. Meetings with various ministers and Government departments would be for serious issues only.

SUCCESS

Major successes should not be forgotten. The tax claw back on written down machinery, left contractors and farmers with tax bills often exceeding €50,000. All the farming organisations met with revenue where they agreed a revised retrospective implementation date. PAC did not accept this date and fought on in isolation. With the help of Jimmy Deenihan, we got a meeting with the late Hugh Coveney, Minister of State at the Department of Finance. To cut a long story short, a new date for implementation was agreed that was not back dated. This saved agricultural contractors and farmers hundreds of thousands in tax bills. An article in the Irish Farmers Journal at the time seemed to imply that credit for this was down to all the farming organisations, but following a meeting, it was accepted that it was PAC – and only PAC – that kept up the fight.

OTHER WINS

Our next big milestone related to the loss of the sugar beet industry. Farmers were to be compensated but agricultural contractors,

who had considerable investment in now redundant equipment, were not. PAC insisted that contractors should be compensated and after seven days in the high court, PAC won a judgement of €7,500,000 for agricultural contractors in compensation.

When waste permits were introduced by the Department of the Environment, PAC negotiated with officials for days persuading them to withdraw a Statutory Instrument (S.I.), which was detrimental to contractors. We then participated in re-writing the S.I. Without PAC's intervention and ability to work quietly with officials, contractors would have been at great financial loss.

There have been regular attempts by both the European Commission and the Road Safety Authority to require tractors that are used by contractors to have a tachograph fitted. The Department of Transport commissioned legal advice that judged agricultural contracting to be a service industry. If this were allowed to stand, it would have resulted in contractors having to fit tachographs and being prevented from using marked fuel. Again, the quiet, courteous, diplomatic negotiations between the department and PAC paid off and the idea was scrapped.

PAC Ireland's approach has always been not to negotiate by banging the table, never try to embarrass officials if they get it wrong, but to work together to resolve any problems. I believe this is why PAC is respected as an organisation and why its contribution is welcome on so many national committees. Our members know they are only a phone call away from confidential, honest, hands-on advice. I hope I've blown the trumpet loudly for PAC.



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James Twohig, director of operations Valero (Texaco Ireland) making a presentation to Donal Fitzpatrick, MD, JH Fitzpatrick's Ltd to mark 70 years of partnership between the two companies.



Simon Pratt, business manager Case IH and Frank Ward CNH Industrial Case IH Rol and territory manager (far right) make a presentation to Joe Fitzpatrick and Donal Fitzpatrick to celebrate 50 years of association with Case IH tractors.



Michael Kinsella, Rol area sales manager, Abbey Machinery; Clodagh Kavanagh, MD A bbeey Machinery present Joe Fitzpatrick, founder of JH Fitzpatricks, with a token of appreciation to mark doing business together for over 40 years. Also pictured are Theresa, Donal and Joe Fitzpatrick Jnr.



The Fitzpatrick family: Joe jnr, Mary, Joe snr and Donal cutting the 70th celebrations cake in the company of a large gathering of customers, suppliers and well-wishers.



James Twohig, Valero (Texaco Ireland); Kieran Creedon, area sales manager, Manitou; Clodagh Kavanagh, MD Abbey Machinery; Simon Pratt, Case IH; Donal and Theresa Fitzpatrick; and James Heanue, MchaleEngineering all celebrating their association with JH Fitzpatricks. McHale has been doing business with the Fitzpatrick family since they started manufacturing in the eighties.



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NEW TECH AND UPGRADES FOR CASE CUSTOMERS

Case IH Optum tractors, available in three models with rated power outputs from 271hp to 340hp, can now be ordered with new technology packages designed to help customers easily match specification to their key requirements. In addition, the joystick option for precision control of the front linkage has been upgraded to also control the rear linkage, allowing precise tailoring of tractor set-up to the task being performed. The configurable joystick incorporated into the Multicontroller armrest on Optum tractors has been updated to proportionately control both the front and rear linkages. Joystick functions are configured using the tractor's Case IH Pro

1200 touchscreen display, making it simple to set up the tractor to suit the operator and the task, whether using a front and rear combination such as a pair of mowers, or a rear implement only – a plough, for example. Following the approach used on Case IH Quadtrac, Steiger, Magnum and Puma 185-260 series tractors, Optum models are now available with tiered technology packages. These allow buyers to tailor their tractor's features to exactly meet their needs. The tech packages can be combined with the existing Advanced or Professional specification packages, simplifying the ordering process, while also enhancing resale value.

All three packages include the armrest-mounted Pro 1200 touchscreen display, with a readiness package (harness and mount ball) for a second display. Customers can choose to order the second and third level tech pack options if they wish to specify greater levels of automation and higher-accuracy AccuGuide auto-steering. Optum tractors now come standard with Connectivity Included, enabling owners to unlock their tractor's full potential. Connected services and FieldOps capabilities are provided throughout the life of the machine's connectivity modem, with no recurring subscription fees. Additionally, when added to a customer account, new Optum models enable qualifying existing machines to be upgraded to Connectivity Included at no extra cost. With FieldOps, the new all-in-one data management app and web platform, customers gain near real-time access to both their machine and agronomic data. This simplifies the monitoring, planning, and evaluation of all operations, streamlines workflows and maximises efficiency on and off the field.

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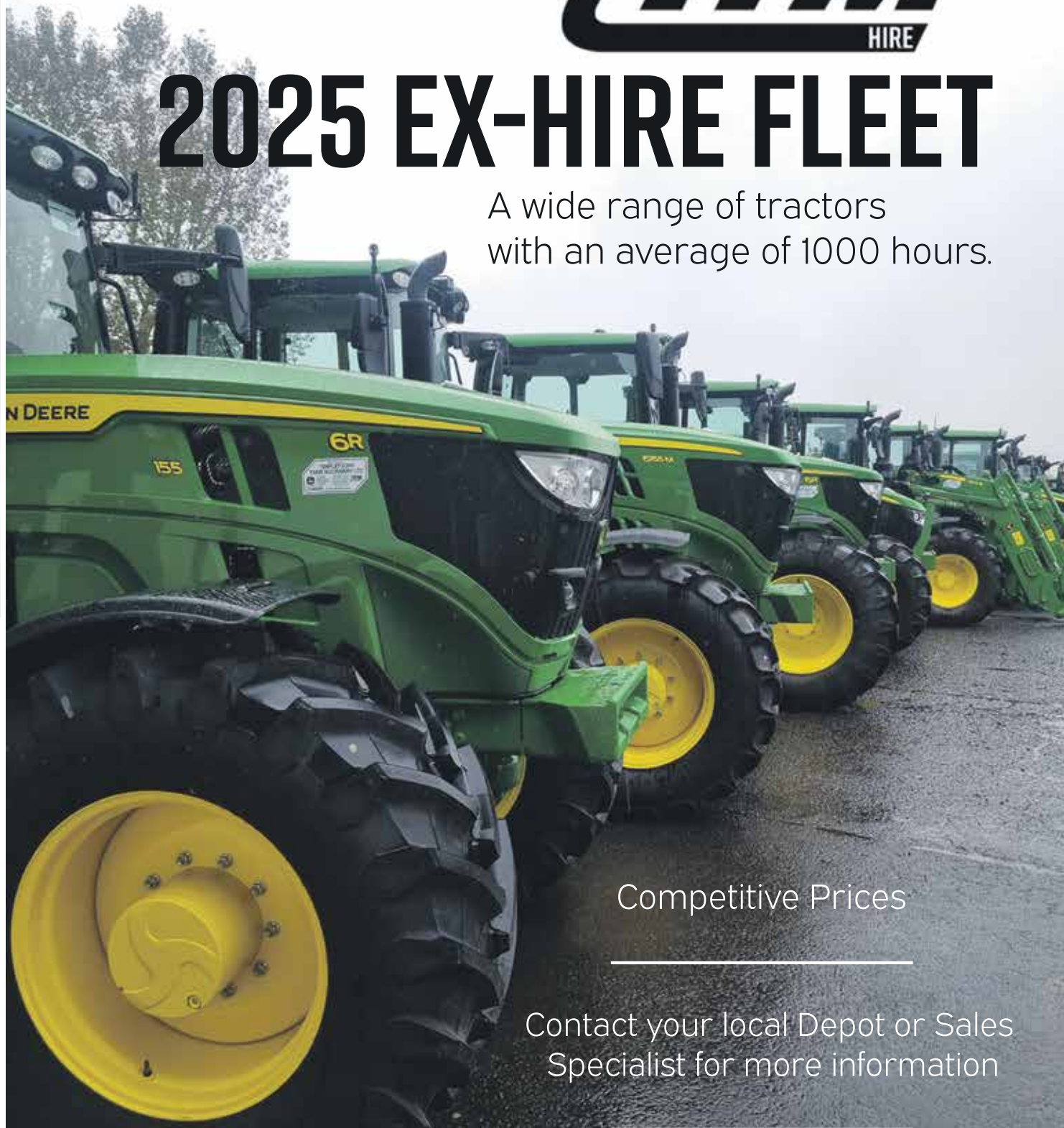


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TACKLING SILAGE IN CO. CARLOW

IN THIS MONTH'S FIELD REPORT, WE HEAR FROM FORMER IRELAND, LEINSTER, AND LIONS RUGBY STAR – AND FARMER – SEAN O'BRIEN. THE TULLOW TANK TELLS US WHY HE RATES KRONE SO HIGHLY WHEN IT COMES TO TACKLING SILAGE SEASON

Based in Tullow, Co. Carlow, Sean runs a calf-to-beef enterprise alongside his father who also keeps 35 sucklers. They have about 100 acres of owned and rented land of which 30-40 acres are cut once for silage every year, yielding about 300 bales.

"It's very important to have your own equipment," says Sean. "Especially when it comes to silage season, you know you can go and mow whenever you see fit. I know I have something reliable that's not going to let me down when I go out there that's what I've found with Krone over the last few seasons."

STAYING LOCAL

Sean uses the Krone EasyCut 2801 CV which he bought in O'Toole's in Tullow. "They're the local garage and they're great to deal with. We got it over the line very quickly and I've never looked back since," Sean says. "I dealt with John, and he came out after the first field I mowed last year just to make sure everything was running smoothly and it was set up right. So great service in there by the lads to be fair."

RIGHT CHOICE

"I chose Krone because I had done a good bit of research on different mowers, and I just wanted something with a conditioner on it," Sean explains. "I went for the Krone nine-foot for handiness on the road. It's very compact."

Krone mowers are designed to sit low and centred when in transport position. Whether it is the nine-foot or 12-foot, the Krone mower sits

between 100-124 degrees, depending on the model, which ensures it doesn't stick out on narrow roads and is also very stable at high transport speeds, the company states.

"I've found it brilliant, the quality in the machine and how strong it is. There are a few great things on it such as the suspension in the bed and how it just floats along the ground. It doesn't take much to drive it, to be fair. I have a 135 horsepower tractor and it's at ease [with the mower] probably doing 13km/h or 14km/h with it. At the minute, I'm getting eight acres an hour and that's not pushing too hard so I'm pretty happy with that."

According to Sean, the manoeuvrability of it in the field is 'class': "It is zero turn, there's no swinging out or swinging in; you just lock up the tractor and you're straight back down at it so you're mowing very efficiently with it." Sean comments on the hydraulics: "How quick it goes up and down is fierce handy when you're turning on headlands and trying to get back up and down the field."

CONDITIONER

"Having the conditioner on the mower definitely takes a day off, depending on weather conditions, rowing it up and getting it ready," Sean explains. "It wilts very quickly when it's turned over. You have an adjustable spread on the back of the mower and I usually leave it fairly wide so that way it gets a good turnover going through the mower and you can see the grass drying out and the quality of the silage over the last few years has been superb, so it's definitely aided the quality of

feed for us."

The Krone CV conditioner rotor with V-shaped steel tines spreads the crop at the full working width. At 64cm, the conditioner rotor is the largest on the market, which allows it to condition heavy, first cut silage easily. The gearbox gives you the option of 900rpm for intensive or 600rpm for less intensive conditioning. The required conditioner speed can be set quickly and easily using a simple lever.

Sean continues: "The one thing that I actually love is seeing how clean the surface is when I look back over the mowed field. I'd be very particular on grass – even when mowing the lawn – I'd hate any stripes in it or missed bits or high in one place and low in another. To be fair to the Krone mower, it is superb with that, it leaves a very clean finish."

CLEAN CUT

A clean cut is essential for producing clean forage. All EasyCut Krone mowers come as standard with the unique Krone DuoGrip suspension system. This system suspends the disc mower in its centre of gravity which allows it to float on even the hilliest terrain. Maintaining a consistent ground pressure across the full working width, producing the cleanest cuts with light pull and control.

Sean comments: "To be honest, I've only hit two big bumps and rocks lying in the grass and it's done no damage, obviously the mower will bounce up a little bit and you'll see it coming up but that's the great thing about it you know it's not stuck to the ground."

The Krone SafeCut system has been tried and tested in Ireland for many years. The patented system protects the disc and complete driveline. On impact, the roll-pin shears and the disc spins up and out of the way of neighbouring discs. 10 minutes and a 20c part gets you back



working and could save thousands in repairs.

The Krone EasyCut mower is also protected by a break-back system as standard. On impact with an obstacle the mower swings backwards and upwards in a 140cm arc before returning automatically to its working position.

"I like to keep things as simple as possible," Sean explains. "Obviously I want to have good equipment around the place, have a safe environment to work in and I think with Krone that's what you get. It's a very well-built machine, a very easy machine to maintain and something that's going to last a long time so you're getting value for money. You don't want to be getting parts or changing bits and pieces on machinery too often because it is expensive but so far so good with Krone."



James Porter, Henry Porter Machinery; Martin Owens, area sales manager at IAM Agricultural Machinery; and Henry Porter, Henry Porter Machinery.

HENRY PORTER MACHINERY APPOINTED BOMFORD TURNER AGENT

IAM Agricultural Machinery has recently appointed Henry Porter Machinery, based outside Lisburn Co. Down, as an official Bomford Turner agent for the region. Founded in 2006 by Henry Porter, the company began by selling quality used tractors, primarily from the Case IH brand, leveraging Henry's 20 years of experience in the industry. Over time, the business expanded into new machinery sales of

Strautmann tub feeders, Hustler bale feeders, Bobman cubicle cleaners, as well as products from Fleming, Reck, Malone, and MultiOne. In 2013, the company secured the prestigious Pottinger franchise for grassland and tillage equipment. Henry's son James joined the business in 2018. Bomford Turner, a global company specialising in hedge cutters and vegetation management equipment is now part of Henry Porter Machinery's

portfolio. Martin Owens, area sales manager at IAM Agricultural Machinery, said: "Henry Porter Machinery has built an outstanding reputation for delivering top-quality brands and excellent customer service. Their expertise and commitment to supporting farmers and contractors make them the perfect partner to represent Bomford Turner. We look forward to working closely with them to grow the Bomford presence in the region."



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The image is purely indicative.



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- Plan for a 270-day herd grazing season now.
- Apply last nitrogen (N) in early September based on clover content.
- Analyse silage and dung samples to make best decisions.
- This is a big month for animal health preventative action.
- Replacements are so valuable – manage their target weight.
- Beef weanlings – what’s the plan?
- Analyse the pros and cons of delaying cull cow sales.
- Surplus cash in 2025? Where should you invest?



By Matt Ryan

- 2026 FARM CALENDER YEAR STARTS NOW
- » September is the month to set yourself up for 2026.
 - » Your 270-day grazing season plan starts now.
 - » Review the 2025 breeding season.
 - » Replacement heifers must be managed properly to achieve target weight.
 - » Cow body condition plan starts in late September or early October.
 - » Plan your animal healthcare now, this will set you up for the year.
 - » Financial review is necessary to minimise tax bill and start the financial plan for next year.
 - » Test silage, soil and animal health status now.
- COW-HERD GRAZING SEASON OF 270 DAYS
- » Milk from grazed grass is one of Ireland’s key marketing logos. I have set a target of 270 days at grass for the whole herd.
 - » This is influenced by:
 - Let-out date, which is influenced by:
 - Ground conditions.
 - The amount of grass available.
 - Farmer attitude.
 - Housing date, which is influenced by:
 - Ground conditions.
 - The amount of grass available.
 - Farmer attitude.
 - Calving pattern
 - This has a major influence because cows that have not calved are not let out to grass; hence, the need for compact calving.
 - » As every day of extra grazing is worth €2.80 per cow, we must strive to graze grass for as many days in the year as our farms allow.
 - A 10-day – even if only three hours per day – increase in the grazing season increases profits by €28/cow and reduces the carbon footprint by 1.7 per cent.
 - » The first task, now, is to do your autumn rotation plan on

- PastureBase:
- You must decide on the start (range September 20 to October 10) and finish (range from October 15 to November 25) dates for last rotation.
 - But you, the manager, must challenge yourself to maximise these dates.
 - Discussion groups should ensure all members are doing it. If not, the facilitator should help.
- » Also, a grass-feed budget covering the period from now until May is a ‘must-do’ task – consult your adviser for help if necessary:
 - This is important to guarantee the correct closing (750kg DM/ha – 900kg DM/ha) and opening covers next spring (900kg DM/ha – 1,100kg DM/ha).
 - It will help to save on meal and silage costs.
 - It will show you when to expect high covers and when actions are necessary.
 - When to dry off and cull cows.
 - When to introduce meal. The plan must be such that low levels of meal are fed before October 1 (then start with 2kg) and when to increase to 3kg (not before November 1).
 - Quantity of baled silage to be introduced, and when – none before November 1 if possible.
 - And, finally, when to house all cows – they must be kept out as long as possible on grass but be guided by the target closing farm cover.
 - » To do the budget you must know a few bits of information before you start:
 - Intake per cow and autumn average farm cover (AFC) targets. See Table 1.
 - Friesian cows, milking 1.4 kg MS/day will require 16.5kg DM/day, while Jersey Xs require 3.6 per cent less or 16kg. This will decrease as the MS yield decreases from month to month.
 - You will also need to know the calving pattern, preferably by week (make a good ‘guestimate’) for next spring.
 - You will also need to know the potential growth rates on your

farm for autumn and spring. PastureBase will give you previous years’ performance and if you have not done before they will give you county/regional figures for planning. It is usually 3-5kg DM/day from December 1 to February 1.

You will also need to know the AFC targets for next spring: Depending on stocking rate (SR) the target opening AFC in February should be 900kg DM/ha – 1,100kg DM/ha. The target in early April should be 600kg DM/ha – 700kg DM/ha to facilitate SR of 3.5 to 4.3 cows per hectare of grazing from mid-April – this allows the farm to maximise the area for first-cut silage.

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

Days	3.5 cows/ha		3.0 cows/ha		2.5 cows/ha		Rotation length
	Cover/cow	AFC	Cover/ cow	AFC	Cover/ cow	AFC	
30	280	770	330	990	300	750	Sept 1
35	340	1,200	370	1,110	425	1,050	Sept 15
40	335	1,175	380	1,150	400	1,000	Sept 30

- » Rotation length for September 1, 15, 30 should be 30, 35 and 40 days, respectively.
 - » In September you are grazing the second last rotation, and it is very important to get yourself grazing the correct paddocks now so that you will be grazing the correctly situated paddocks in the spring:
 - Obviously, you should be able to graze the driest paddocks first in spring and they should also be near the milking parlour.
 - » As a general principle you should graze the silage ground twice before closing in April. This will have a major influence on which paddocks to graze first and last in the last two autumn rotations.
 - If you want to close fields for silage on April 1, for cutting on May 20-25, then you must graze approximately half your paddocks before starting to graze the silage area from around March 15 to April 1 and graze other eight to 10 paddocks from April 1-10 (magic day).
 - This grazing sequence must be mirrored in the September and October rotations.
 - If you plan to graze the silage area twice before closing, with an average closing date of April 15, and a six-week cutting date of June 10, then you must graze your silage area first in spring and again from April 10-20.
 - Again, this must be mirrored in September/October rotations.
 - This may sound complicated but talk to your adviser and Discussion Group for clarification as it is worth a lot of money in savings on meal, and higher milk solids.

- LAST NITROGEN
- » The amount of N – protected urea – you can use now depends on how you have managed your nitrogen allocation use to date this year – check with your adviser.
 - If you have no allowance but you have slurry or soiled water available, you should cover as many acres as possible to maximise the benefit of the N therein.
 - » All your bag N must be used before September 15.
 - If you spread after that, you are subject to penalty and response is poor.
 - To be able to apply 20 units/acre on all acres at milking platform, farmers must apply none or very little on outside land blocks.
 - Because of low grass covers on farms this year, bulk spread all your N over the whole farm in early September – this will maximise growth to build up grass.
 - » Your last day for spreading slurry is October 15.
 - It would be a good idea to delay spreading – until October 1-15 – any ‘left over’ slurry because the N therein will contribute to grass growth and grass ‘protection’ in November – a kind of anti-freeze effect.
 - » What are the recommended rates of N in September? Depends on the clover content (%) (see Table 2).
 - It is worth noting, because of the growth rates achieved in August and the mineralisation of N, there may be no N required at low stocking.

Table 2: Recommended rates of N for different % clover content.

20% clover	15% clover	10% clover	5% clover	Grass sward	Nitrogen
15	20	20	20	23	Pro-urea (kg N/ha)
13	17	17	17	19	Pro-urea (units/ac)

- » Low stocked farms – 2.24 cows per hectare or less – need no N because the N is already spread, and ‘background’ N is adequate to grow the amount of grass required.
- ANALYSE SILAGE, SOIL DUNG SAMPLES!
- » Silage should now be analysed for feeding value and for minerals.
 - » With a feed analysis you can estimate the quantity of feed you have available in dry matter and feeding value.
 - You will know whether to buy straw for over-fat cows; how much meal to feed to thin cows and, more importantly, you will know which silage to keep for feeding to milking cows in spring.
 - The mineral analysis will indicate to you what you need in a pre-calving mineral mix and what minerals may be deficient in



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cows' next breeding season.

- » **Soil testing should be done, particularly if not done for a few years. There is only one way out of low N allowances and that is to have soil fertility at optimum levels. Fertiliser, lime, P and K grow grass!**
 - It is essential to apply lime at every chance you get to increase pH on every acre to 6.5.
- » **Talk to your vet about dung analysis.**

ANIMAL HEALTH

- » **September is a big preventative care month!**
- » **Salmonella, could put a farmer out of business, resulting in cow abortions at seven to nine months.**
 - Vaccination must be done in early September.
 - The chances are in-calf heifers are being done for the first time and need two injections, three weeks apart, the second one before late September. This is very important because the animal has no protection for two weeks after the second injection. So, she could abort.
- » **It is essential to vaccinate weanling replacement now for leptospirosis at six months' old – be guided by drug type advice.**
- » **Watch out for hoose among weanlings:**
 - Yellow/white doses will kill hoose worms and give two to three weeks' protection and longer with good grassland management.
 - There is gross over-use of antiemetics in the control of worm parasites in calves – this is going to lead to resistance. Therefore, only dose if you really have to – take veterinary advice.
- » **Fluke (stomach fluke) may be a problem on some farms.**
 - It is worth getting dung samples analysed (cost €50) to confirm presence of fluke (particularly for dry farms).
- » **Vasectomise male calves now to prepare for next year:**
 - If you do not have any, go out and buy (one per 50 cows at least); he will be a great supplement to heat detection next year.
- » **Mastitis/high SCC: Some serious offenders (2+ cases/year) should be dried off now while young cows who are a problem should undergo the CMT test and acted on.**

WHEN TO SELL CULL COWS?

- » **When choosing cows to cull, you must consider more than reproductive performance. The potential they have if they remain in the herd and create additional profit must be weighed against the cost of keeping them.**
- » **Prepare a cull list, which could be refined into 'must cull' and 'would like to cull' categories.**
 - The 'must cull' list would include:
 - Cows that are empty (scan now to confirm).
 - Lamé cows (three to four times this year).
 - Mastitis cows with three to four high SCC readings and two to three clinical cases in the year.
 - When to sell these is the question?
 - With cull cows making €6/kg out of the parlour and a very good milk/meal cost ratio and plenty of good silage available, it would seem as if cull cow sales should be delayed until December.
 - From September to December, it looks as if they could generate a profit of €400-€500 each.
 - Remember keeping cows on the milking platform (MP) in the autumn adds:

- Higher grazing demands on the MP.
- Could push you outside the Derogation stocking limit.
- Complications to a farming system when silage has to be fed from October, resulting in a greater workload.
- The 'would like to cull' cows that are pregnant, should be decided on the following basis:
 - Projected to calve later than mid-April 2026.
 - Old cows with low levels of mastitis, some lameness.
 - Cows yielding less than 400kg MS/year.
- Is there an opportunity to make more farm profit next year by keeping them?
- With replacement heifers being scarce and likely to make over €2,500 each, one must seriously keep all cows and sell surpluses, be they R2s or late calving cows next spring.

REPLACEMENTS ARE SO VALUABLE!

- » **Because of their potential value and the financial opportunity they present, both small weanling (R1s) and in-calf heifers (R2s) must be brought up to target weights. The plan starts now!**
- » **In-calf heifers (R2s) have been neglected on many farms over the last few years at this time of year:**
 - Weanling heifers (R1s) must be 33% of mature weight on September 1 (170kg-190kg).
 - In-calf heifers (R2s) must be 73% of mature weight on September (400kg-430kg).
 - It is essential to weigh all replacements now (do it every three months) and take action.
- » **Divide up your replacement heifers now by weight:**
 - Under target heifers are obviously one group but grossly overweight/fat animals are equally an issue.
 - Animals that are fat/overweight will not milk well during first lactation and neither in their lifetime. They will be more difficult to get in calf. Use these to clean out pastures after being grazed by the main mob.
 - For every 10kg an R2 is under target now she will need an extra 60kg of meal. Therefore, feed under-weight R2s, 1kg-2kg meal as well as grazing in front of the strong heifers.
 - The same principle goes for the R1s but they will require approximately 40kg meal (17%-18% P) per 10kg underweight.
 - Overweight R1s, gaining more than 0.8kg/hd/day will under-perform as cows. Therefore, graze them after the weanling mob to clean out pastures.
 - A weighing scales is a very good investment for discussion groups (one between every three to four members) – it will pay for itself in one year.
- » **If you have heifers out on contract, get the weights now and, based on advice here, take remedial action.**

BEEF WEANLINGS – WHAT TO DO?

- » **For one reason or another, many dairy farmers have beef weanlings on the farm this autumn.**
- » **With beef prices so good, because of supply and demand, farmers are wondering what they should do with them?**
- » **They are making good money now and they will make good money whenever you decide to sell because they are scarce.**
- » **In my opinion April is the best time to sell this sort of animal because demand is greatest then when cattle farmers have grass and all the 'hardship is behind them'**
- » **If delaying sale until April, consider the following:**
- » **Have you adequate silage for them – they require 0.8t/month?**

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- Have you adequate housing space for them – a weanling requires 15-16 sq. ft per animal on slats. If less than that their daily weight gain will be greatly reduced?
 - Will they push you over your SR limits?
 - Will cashflow issues arise? It should not be a problem this year on farms,
 - When is your next TB test? Feeding them for a long period, if you have a reactor, will be a major headache.
- » Do a costings now to see what price you will need to get to cover the costs:
- » They will need 2kg/head/day from now until sale.
- » Their autumn management will be more or less the same as that for replacement heifers, but males will need to be castrated now if grazing with heifers.

SURPLUS CASH 2025 - WHERE BEST TO INVEST?

- » A great year in dairy farming will result in some free cash. This is an opportunity to 'do the right thing'. Invest in items/buildings which give greatest return to future farming and savings to labour. Consider some of the following:
- Because lime, phosphorous and potash gives 152% return on their investment the whole farm should be brought up to the required standards this autumn.
 - Reseeding gives an 96% return, therefore, do some more reseeded in early September because the weather and ground conditions are very suitable this year.
 - By improving the farm infrastructure you will achieve a 48% return.
 - Most farm roadways need to be improved.
 - Paddocks were erected on most farms 10-15 years ago; many farmers paddocks are too small for herd sizes to give 24- or 36-hour grazings.
 - Take advice on these before doing them.
 - Slurry storage requirements are now expected to increase by 20%-30% so it will be worth starting the process of achieving this target.
 - We should target eight to nine rows of milkings per milking; this is your opportunity to achieve this target. Farmers are spending more than 33% of their time milking and the only way you improve this is by reducing the number of milking rows.
 - Labour saving investments are the future, so make a list of what would help your farm.
- » Some farmers are heavily borrowed per cow, over €2,000/cow, and now is a good time to reduce that to manageable levels.
- » Electricity blackouts are a source of worry; then an electricity generator may be a good investment for you.
- » But one of the best investments you can make is to take a full two-weeks holiday away from the farm. There is an awful lot of talk about mental health and burn-out, but people must stop

the talking and do something about it. Start with a worthwhile holiday break this autumn. To facilitate this, consider:

- Get the relief services or family to cover for you and maybe a Discussion Group member might oversee the management of things for you.
 - Once per day milking (OAD) while away.
 - Or 'three-in-two' milking; that is three milkings in two days.
- » The best way to deal with these suggestions of mine is:
- Establish, approximately, what you can afford to spend.
 - With your family, prioritise what investments would give greatest benefit to the family unit.
 - Good leadership skills are required to achieve some or most suggestions given here.

BITS & PIECES

- » At the end of the month or in early October, BCS the herd to start the early management of thin cows.
- » Paddocks must be grazed out well (< 4cm) this rotation, otherwise, poor autumn tillering will result due too many dung-pads/tall grass areas.
- » It will be hard to graze out paddock after rain as they will be very rich in N.
- » Unless paddocks have very high pre-grazing covers cutting and bailing is not recommended in September.
- » Reseeds: Do it up to mid-September, including clover in all mixes.
- » Grass covers on over 60% of PastureBase farms are under target, therefore, the need for supplementation arises to prolong grazing to late October to November:
- Good quality silage has merit as it gives greater gut-fill.
 - Some farmers will have to feed 5-6kg meal, 5-6kg DM silage and the remainder grazed grass for a few weeks in early September to achieve reasonable grass covers.
 - Palm kernel, justifiably, is being fed on some farms at 5-7kg – it is easy to feed out in paddocks.
- » If you have been feeding silage during the drought, do another check on the amount of winter feed (dry matter) available and act early to remedy:
- Straw is good value for money, and it should be a major part of fat dry cow diets next winter.
 - Farm accidents are a constant news item on Irish farms. So many near misses have been brought to my attention that we all need to ask: are we doing all in our power to prevent accidents?

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way."

John C Maxwell



Denis Drennan
President ICMSA

THERE'S A COMMISSION FOR THAT!

There is a great tradition in Ireland of setting up commissions, committees, and reviews. The media seem to like them and so long as the subject of these gabfests is not urgent, then there's no harm in these endless roundtable discussions and chats, right? But, sometimes the subject is urgent. So, why then, has the Commission on Generational Renewal in Farming not shown urgency in publishing its findings? At time of print, we were still waiting for these – more than two months after it was expected!

The issue of generational renewal in farming is an urgent one. The average age of our dairy farmers – our most technical and value-added farmers – is approaching 60. It's becoming evident across a host of metrics that we desperately need to start seriously resolving the reasons why our next generation are proving so reluctant to come home and take over family farms that have often been in the family for generations.

DISPELLING THE MYTH

That's the very first myth to dispel – the idea that because the farm has been in 'our' family for six or seven generations, that John or Mary will feel duty-bound to take it over. John or Mary does not feel bound to 'go farming' because their grandparents or great grandparents bought the farm a century ago and it's just expected of them to keep it going. The 'Johns' and 'Marys' I meet these days

are going to make the decision about their careers on the same basis as all their non-farmer friends. They're going to look at the likely incomes, the predictability of those incomes, the holidays and time-off, and the hours of work expected and demanded. On all those metrics, the farming lives that John or Mary is being urged to take up, suffer badly by comparison with competitor sectors and these competitor sectors are now a real option. They are accessible to the children of farm families who can commute daily to the suburbs of Cork, Galway, Limerick, and Dublin where alternative jobs are located. That's the problem with the expectation that the next generation is going to take over the family farm.

TOO LATE FOR 2026

The ICMSA has already said that we think it is concerning as it is perplexing that the Commission on Generational Renewal in Farming has not yet released its findings. Those findings were expected to be published at the end of June, nearly two months ago, and it is now becoming obvious that whatever recommendations are brought forward from the commission's deliberations, are unlikely to be incorporated into Budget 2026. That's a year lost that we can't really afford to lose if we are serious about this question of generational renewal – and we very definitely should be serious about it. Some years ago, the ICMSA set up a young farmer

forum to hear firsthand the main obstacles the participants identified as blocking their entry into farming. A majority of the young farmers listed 'financial uncertainty' as the main obstacle.

PRIORITY

The ICMSA is very aware that not everything can – or even should – be done in one fell swoop. We are 75 years at this, and we know how it works. But we think it's imperative that a start be made to address the question of extreme farm income volatility and we topped our list of submissions to the commission with an appeal to see Budget 2026 introduce a scheme to deal specifically with the excessive income volatility that is putting off so many young people from considering a career in farming. There was a commitment made last year to look at this. The report published recently by the Tax Strategy Group was unfair and inaccurate and the ICMSA continues to lobby that the forthcoming budget will address the most obvious obstacle to generational renewal. If we are not ready or willing to look at the most obvious obstacle – as verified by the young farmers themselves – then what was the point of the Commission at all? These kinds of problems don't fix themselves and if you're not honest about the real nature of the problem, then we don't think you have a hope of coming up with a workable answer.

CHURNING OUT AGRI-MEDIA TREASURES



THE RECENT OPENING OF AN OLD MILK CHURN BY THE GUILD OF AGRICULTURAL JOURNALISTS, FILLED WITH SNAPSHOTS OF AGRI-MEDIA FROM 1998, HIGHLIGHTED THE MANY CHANGES BUT ALSO THE SIMILARITIES IN THE INTERVENING PERIOD, WRITES BERNIE COMMINS

In 1988, the Guild of Agricultural Journalists of Ireland (Agri Guild) gathered a representative sample of agri-media from that year. Newspapers, supplements, letters, radio cassettes annual reports and more were safely placed in a 10-gallon milk churn and 'buried' it away in the Mansion House. It was to be out of sight and out of mind for 50 years until 2038. But five decades proved too long to wait.

The revelation by *Irish Farmers Monthly* publisher, David Markey, earlier this year, to the current Agri Guild committee, that such a treasure existed piqued great interest. This treasure needed to be explored and shared, they agreed, and now was as good a time as any. Of course, in true David Markey style, he quipped that if the churn wasn't opened soon,

Hidden away for almost 40 years
– a time capsule of agri-media.
Photo: Bernie Commins.

IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY

those who knew about it would be dead, along with all knowledge of it!

David was one of the young Agri Guild members responsible for the churn idea almost 40 years ago along with Michael Patten, formerly of Glanbia and Michael Miley, former journalist and PR consultant. Coinciding with the celebration of the Dublin Millennium in 1988, the churnful of media was presented to then mayor of Dublin, Ben Briscoe.

TIME CAPSULE

Last month, the RDS hosted 'A Time Capsule of Irish Agriculture' in the presence of Agri Guild members old and new, and special guests. The milk churn had been dusted off, given a shine, and it was ready to make its special-guest appearance. One by one, the contents were plucked and presented by Markey, Miley and Patten. It was a lucky dip of an *Irish Farmers Monthly* (out first and generating a laugh from the audience as it has been picked by David); a Farm Exam from the Cork Examiner as it was in 1988; an Irish Farmers Journal – the trove kept on churning out the treasures.

One such treasure was an article written by Tom Arnold who was then senior economist with An Chomhairle Oiliúna Talmhaíochta/ Agricultural Training Council (ACOT) about Irish agriculture in the year 2038. By then, the article predicted, there will be 10,000 full-time commercial farmers in Ireland with 400 acres being the average farm size. In terms of crop and livestock production, Tom wrote, it would continue to be 'in 2038 broadly similar to that which prevailed 50 years ago': "Grass is to be the predominant crop and from this is produced the finest milk, beef, sheep and deer," according to the article. It also predicted that average fat content in milk would fall from 3.5 per cent to 2 per cent, and that IT, biotechnology and the environment would be big agri-influencers by the 2030s. In a cover letter accompanying the article, Tom wrote: "I hope it will be of interest and will not inspire too much laughter [in the future]." Well, 37 years later, the number of farms has about halved since 1988, and the prevalence of environmental factors and technology are well known today.

The National Farm Survey from 1987 from An Foras Talúntais – Teagasc's predecessor – was also included in the churn. In it was an interesting observation about costs at the time. It read: "A feature of agriculture in recent years had been rising costs. This was reversed in 1987 particularly in the case of two

of the major cost items – concentrate feed and fertilisers. These showed a substantial decline in 1987, the former by virtue of reduced volume and the latter because of lower prices. Farm overhead costs were also brought more under control and lower interest charges helped in this regard. The overall decline in costs was 6.5 per cent." How things have changed.

As items were unveiled and discussed, additional anecdotes were shared by audience members, adding context and colour to the black and white headlines. It really hit home how much experience and knowledge was in the Minerva Suite in the RDS that day, and how important the event was to all present. Another big story of the 1980s was the consolidation of dairy processors. Michael Patten explained: "The background to this was that quotas had come in, production was curtailed in Ireland, there was very little growth. Interest rates were through the charts back then, so the dairy co-ops decided to expand overseas. But to do that, they required money, and so they all became public companies. And the rest, as they say, is history."

The rise in sheep numbers in the 1980s also attracted great media attention, and Michael Miley added context: "Between 1980 and 1988 sheep numbers doubled in Ireland, as far as I can remember with the biggest increase seen in farmers in the south of Ireland," he said. Sheep farming, Michael explained, was not part of the CAP when Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973. "In fact, sheep did not become part of any policy until 1977 when a bilateral arrangement happened with France," Michael explained. "That meant that we could send a certain tonnage of sheepmeat/lamb – duty free –

into France." Then, a ewe premium scheme was introduced under the EEC's Sheepmeat Regime established in 1980, which led to an explosion in sheep numbers in the 1980s, said Michael. The Disadvantaged Areas Payment scheme also played a part in the rise in sheep numbers at that time.

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY REPEATING...

Common themes within the agri-media time capsule focused on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the weather, prices, costs, and politics – all of which still occupy today's column inches, airwaves, and digital screens. And production constraints in the dairy sector at that time are mirrored in the present day – albeit for very different reasons. While quotas were responsible back then, the abolition of quotas 10 years ago, has not been the panacea that many perceived it to be. The evolution of the agri-media featured in a panel discussion, and while it was noted that most print media included in the milk churn still exist today, there could be no denying the shift from print to digital, and the significant decline in the former. In terms of the latter, Ireland's sole digital-only agri-media platform, Agriland, is proving to be a strong player in today's field. A presentation by Agri Guild member, agri-journalist and researcher, Claire McCormack PhD in relation to coverage of agriculture in mainstream versus agri-media highlighted a dearth in coverage in the former, but the significance of the latter was clear (we will return to this in a later issue). A Time Capsule of Irish Agriculture was, as guest and former director of Teagasc Dr Liam Downey put it, 'a very long trip down memory lane'. But it was an enjoyable and important trip for us all to take.



David Markey, publisher IFP Media and *Irish Farmers Monthly*; Michael Patten, former head of HR and corporate affairs at Glanbia; and Michael Miley, former agri journalist and PR consultant, with Suzanne Campbell, RTÉ. Photo: Philip Doyle.

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MATT O'KEEFFE
EDITOR

PUT UP AND SHUT UP

Economic incoherence allied to financial incontinence is not a combination designed for optimal outcomes. Add in the incessant verbal and textual incontinence around various global political topics and the outcomes grow even more gloomy. We are a lowly populated island nation on the edge of the north Atlantic. We have marginal, if even that, influence on global events, political or military, which, nevertheless, give rise to much handwringing and no little amount of useless blather from our political leaders. We are ill-fitted to assume a role as moral guardians for the world and even more ill-equipped towards assuming any leadership role in improving the lives of those most impacted by the actions of despots and dictators. Even if we assume our political leaders are acting purely in an altruistic manner, reflecting the thinking of Irish people in general, there is still an onus on those leaders to safeguard the best interests of Ireland. At the risk of losing a few points in the erratic and undependable popularity stakes, sometimes politicians must, or at least should, be aware that pontificating on all manner of topics can be self-defeating in the long run. Assuming that much of the guff being uttered is unlikely to have any positive impact whatsoever, there is surely something to be said for shutting up more often than not. Many of those people most vociferous in their condemnation of international atrocities,



are immune to certain unpalatable economic facts. Neither are they usually the ones who will lose most from taking the high moral ground. Politics is often grubby. It is often not about the best option but the least worst. If utterances from high-minded people result in people losing their jobs, that's a risk one should presumably take, provided, of course, it's not your own job that's on the line. Should we allow ourselves to be bullied into silence by those who can negatively impact our wellbeing? Of course not, but that can be the ugly reality of our well-meaning utterances.

POPULISM

It is not as if we do not have enough priorities – economic, social and environmental – without ever leaving our shores. Our population should continue to grow in the coming decades. Have our political leaders

the same level of angst about ensuring our housing, energy, water, health and education infrastructure is adequate to meet those challenges as we have around issues over which we have no control whatsoever. Do they think that, come election time, they will be judged on their WhatsApp, X, TikTok and other social media pronouncements or on their record of delivery on commitments that were made before, during and after the last election? Is it easier to lecture about the Middle East than to engage in actions which will have positive and meaningful impacts on the lives of Irish people. Constant barrages of populist social media messaging provide a feeling of action. They constitute a mirage that dissipates without any tangible outcomes. We need a concentration on issues that affect our lives and livelihoods and over which we have some degree of control. We need efficient delivery of infrastructure. If a Metro is required, we should have a full cost-benefit analysis to prove it. That's not too much to ask. The same criteria apply to a Shannon-Dublin waterpipe, energy infrastructure and other critical assets. We don't need populist spending of €9m on phone bags in schools. Instead, enforce phone use school rules at no cost to the taxpayer. A simple example of financial incontinence. Multiply it many times over and the reality of throwing money at a problem instead of applying common sense solutions becomes clear.



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