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JUNE 2023 EDITORIAL

Matt O'Keeffe, Editor



MILK AND GRAIN PRICES OUT OF **KILTER WITH PRODUCTION COSTS**

Extreme peak-to-trough price seesaws are familiar to pig producers. Such is the volatility of the sector that only scale and efficiency have kept producers in business. It will take time for pig producers to rebuild their finances after the recent extended loss-making period. Falling product prices, allied to historically high input costs, have resulted in very high debt levels among those still in business after financing their production losses through borrowings. A dig out from Government provided welcome, if limited, respite that probably prevented more producers from going out of business. While the pig sector has returned to profitability and the medium-term outlook is positive, the contagion of falling prices has now shifted to the milk- and grain-production sectors. From historic highs, the ex-farmgate prices of both grain and milk have fallen by more than 30 per cent in recent months. This puts both commodities firmly into loss-making territory. As milk falls below 40c/L, a baseline figure below which producer confidence is totally eroded, there are few milk producers who can break even, never mind make a profit margin. For grain producers, the move into loss-making territory is the same or even worse. While production costs have fallen back in both sectors, they are still high compared to where they were two years ago, especially across energy, fuel, and other inputs. Much is made of fertiliser prices moving downwards, significantly. What is not highlighted is that a large proportion of the annual fertiliser tonnages used on dairy and tillage farms, annually, was spread in the early months of the years when fertiliser was up to €300 per tonne more expensive than current quoted prices and even higher if bought forward last autumn as was being encouraged by some merchants. This spring was one of the wettest

on record, especially during March and early April when milk producers would have hoped to have a large proportion of the cow's feed intake requirements supplied by grazed grass. Expensive concentrate inputs as well as large tonnages of silage were used to maintain yields and output. Those costs are, for the most part, not yet paid off. With base milk price well below 40c/L for May/June and onwards, those meal invoices must be paid for with lower milk price remittances over the coming months. Likewise, there will be a considerable cost associated with replenishing silage stocks, completely depleted by heavier than anticipated feeding through February, March and April. Agricultural contractors have been warning that their charges will be higher this year, adding to an increased production cost base on dairy farms. Meanwhile, tillage farmers are facing an income Armageddon, with forward barley and wheat prices quoted last week at €193/t and €203/t respectively. Even rapeseed prices have collapsed close to €400/t, pulled down by weakening global soya bean prices. Any suggestion that profits earned on foot of higher prices in 2022 will be available to cushion current commodity price falls is misplaced. Producers mostly use higher returns to reinvest in their businesses, replacing wornout tractors, combines, sprayers and tillage equipment, in the case of grain producers. The same mentality of reinvestment and upgrading is common among milk producers. The bottom line is that there is no financial reserve capable of counteracting a 30 per cent reduction in output prices.

Without being overly pessimistic, an extended summer drought, which looks possible right now, can only make a difficult situation even worse. That's without factoring in large tax bills for 2022 which will come due next November.

CONTENTS

- 4 Upfront
- **Business news**
- 14 Interview Tirlán CEO, Jim Bergin
- 16 Interview **Minister for Agriculture** and the Marine, **Charlie McConologue**
- 19 Feature Blowfly strike prevention
- 85 Management hints
- 89 ICMSA
- 90 Farm Safety
- 92 Rural Life
- 94 Very end
- 21 Focus: Pig Health
- 22 'Our island status is our biggest plus-factor'
- 24 Re-energising pig production
- 27 More milk for more pigs
- 28 Teagasc open days in 'pig' demand
- 30 Research review alternatives to zinc oxide and in-feed medication
- 32 Effective vaccination in high-performance pig units
- 34 Keeping pigs cool for the summer
- 36 Profile: The Irish Pig **Health Society**
- **39 FTMTA Farm Machinery Show Focus** Machinery news, reviews and interviews



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A FATAL REMINDER

Farm safety remains a priority for everyone involved in agriculture. The recent death of a young boy who was killed in a tractor accident is a stark reminder of how great the potential for danger is on and around farms.

The fact that the boy was only 13 years old only adds to the sadness of this loss. Family, friends, and community are the ones greatly affected by this tragic death; for most of the rest of us, his death will become another statistic in an ongoing reality that farm-related accidents and deaths are still far too common. Much is being done to raise awareness and put positive regulations in place to, at least, curb the risks associated with farming. The appointment of a Government minister, Martin Heydon, with a dedicated role in coordinating farm-safety actions was a welcome development. There is still much to be done, however. Knowledge of risk, constant vigilance and awareness need further reinforcement. A belief among some that an accident or worse will never happen to me or mine is not, and cannot, be an acceptable attitude. There is a case for the introduction of farm-safety modules in rural schools where these are not already in place. No effort must be spared to reduce the potential for members of our farming community being injured and killed on our farms.

After much speculation over who would replace Patrick Donohue as special advisor to Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue, the appointment of Amii McKeever to the role has been greeted positively.

Amii brings a wealth of experience to her new appointment

Amii brings a wealth of experience to her new appointment and is an astute and politically savvy performer. After various roles with IFA, IFJ and other organisations, she will provide advice and guidance to Minister McConalogue at a critical time in Irish agriculture. There are probably fewer than 18 months left in the life of the current Government so Amii will be keen to ensure that her new boss has no missteps in the coming period. We note from the interview conducted with Minister McConalogue for this edition of the Irish Farmers Monthly that he does not rule out further ambitions beyond agriculture. The Donegal electorate is volatile and McConalogue's first priority is re-election. Then Fianna Fáil party members will ultimately decide on a new leader when Micháel Martin eventually relinquishes the position. We wish Patrick Donohue well on his return to Lakelands, where his recent experiences in the department will surely be put to good use.



50 YEARS OF ICOS AND IFA IN BRUSSELS

Last month saw the Irish Co-operative Organisation Society (ICOS) and the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) hold a reception to mark the opening of their offices in Brussels five decades ago in 1973. ICOS represents 130 co-operative enterprises in Ireland with over 150,000 individual members and a combined turnover of €14bn employing in excess of 12,000 people. IFA and ICOS opened offices the same year that Ireland joined the EEC. Both organisations are now part of a broader EU umbrella of farm organisations, with IFA participating in an umbrella grouping of European-wide farm organisations, while ICOS is affiliated to COGECA, which represents EU co-operatives across the Member States of the EU. The Brussels event was organised by Damien O'Reilly, EU Affairs & Communication manager at ICOS; Liam McHale, director of the IFA Brussels office; and Niall Madigan, IFA national press officer. Over 200 guests attended the event including: IFA Iresident Tim Cullinan; and ICOS president, James O'Donnell; as well as MEPs, EU Commission officials and former staff and committee representatives. Strong representation of our farmers and co-ops at the centre of EU power in Brussels is just as essential now as it was back when far-sighted representatives of IFA and ICOS took the decision to establish a permanent base in Brussels 50 years ago.

ALLTECH ONE WORLD TOUR COMES TO DUBLIN

The Alltech ONE 2023 conference, traditionally held in Kentucky for the past 38 years, will be held in Croke Park in June. Over the two days an expert line-up of speakers from the agri-food industry will discuss industry trends, sustainability and consumer pressures. The event will cover a range of topics including: the business of food and farming; animal health; nutrition; soil health and crops. Among the speakers are:

Dr Mark Lyons, President and CEO, Alltech; Tara McCarthy, Global Vice

President of ESG at Alltech; and Zoe Kavanagh, CEO, National Dairy Council.

Dublin will be one of a number of global venues across four continents at which Alltech is hosting its ONE conferences. The decision to move from a single conference platform in Kentucky is shrewd and should increase the global profile of Alltech, as well as attracting an even wider audience. The event promises to be an intense and worthwhile two-day networking and informative experience.



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SEPTORIA PRESSURE IN IRELAND

According to Corteva, winter cereal growers will face a significant septoria challenge as they prepare for T2 spraying. A mild winter followed by heavy rain in April, and conditions warming in May, provide the perfect breeding ground for fungal disease to develop. Crop specialists at Teagasc say they have seen a lot of septoria in wheat crops – much higher than normal. However, the good news is that crops are growing well and flag leaves are fully emerged in many cases. So, the current period of good weather should give farmers the opportunity to get the situation under control with their T2 sprays.

MAJOR DAIRY CONFERENCE IN CORK

The Fine-tuning Irish Dairy Conference is now established as an important and worthwhile event in the Irish dairy calendar. The Axa-sponsored conference held this year on June 8 in the Radisson Blu Hotel, Little Island, Cork - brings together speakers from across the dairy industry. Speakers include: Dr Frank O' Mara, director, Teagasc; David Kennedy, head of dairy at Bord Bia; Eoin Lowry, head of agriculture, Bank of Ireland; Karina Pierce, professor of dairy production, UCD; TJ Flanagan, CEO, ICOS: as well as representatives of IFA. ICMSA, ICOS, IHFA and FMP. The conference - with Billy Kelleher, MEP for Ireland South, as a keynote introductory speaker – is now in its fifth year, with Axa supporting the event, in association with the National Dairy Council and Enjoy, It's From Europe. Among the topics explored will be: choosing the right cow for the future; coping with climate regulations; and Irish dairy's social licence to produce milk. If you haven't already registered you can do so at www.fullhouseevents.ie



VISIT TO ABP DEMO FARM

The Guild of Agricultural Journalists of Ireland recently hosted a member event at ABP's demonstration farm in Clonegal, Co. Carlow. The event included a farm walk and a discussion on ABP's latest research findings. The objective of ABP's demonstration farm is to examine how improved efficiencies can lead to a more sustainable outcome for farmer suppliers and for the wider environment. Apart from highlighting the importance of animal breeding, the research on the farm also incorporates grassland management, herd health and regenerative practices. Pictured on the day are Guild members with ABP representatives.

€12,000 PRIZE FUND FOR IRELAND'S FORESTERS

A prize fund of €12,000 should encourage foresters to apply for the 2023/24 RDS Irish Forestry Awards, which are now accepting entries. Prizes span the full range of possible forestry use, from small public amenities to large commercial operations. Anyone with woodland is eligible to enter; in fact, you can even nominate friends and neighbours! This year the RDS is delighted to announce a new award category in partnership with the Woodlands of Ireland. Joe Gowran, chief executive, Woodlands of Ireland, said: "The new Native Woodland Conservation Award is designed to encourage and reward projects involving the conservation and management

of forests and woodlands which are ancient and/or long-established and managed in a sustainable way, that is both beneficial to biodiversity and the local economy." Award winners will be announced at the 2024 RDS Spring Awards, which will take place in the RDS Concert Hall next year. Focusing on sustainable, climate-smart agriculture, the RDS-Forest Service Awards are Ireland's national forestry awards and are part of the RDS Spring Awards. They are divided into four main categories which highlight, celebrate and reward those who are at the forefront of the economic, environmental and community development of the forestry sector in Ireland.

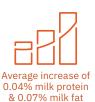


A group of farmers and contractors from all over Ireland on a recent factory trip to Maschio Gaspardo in Italy, including *Irish Farmers Monthly* machinery editor Noel Dunne. The trip was organised by WBD farm machinery, the main importers and distributors the Maschio Gaspardo range of farm machinery in Ireland.









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InTouch

MANAGING THE PEAKS AND TROUGHS

CATHAL BOHANE, INTOUCH NUTRITION

The arrival of June brings with it the report card of the previous few months. Farms have been tested a lot: from calving, early lactation, calves, breeding, silage, grass management and, of course, dealing with the weather. How is your farm performing? Cows are now post peak and over a month into breeding. Now is the time to assess the figures for submission rate and conception to first service. A lot of farms will report cows being very quiet but are afraid to tempt fate and say they are in calf. If cows are 30+ days, it is best to scan them and confirm rather than having an issue in six weeks' time. It is not too late to rectify any issues now. June is also a difficult month for managing grass and the weather. Silage is putting pressure on the stocking rate, and weather is a mixed bag but, ultimately, we have the perfect scenario for grass growth: heat, moisture and fertiliser. Grass growth is hitting 80kg+, and unless you have a high stocking rate, grass is growing faster than its consumption. This needs to be managed to avoid a snowball effect. One of the biggest causes of dropping milk volume and milk protein over the next month is mismanagement of excess grass. Forcing cows to manage the grass will decrease intake and quality, including long-term quality. If cows are losing production, it is a sign that their energy balance is not right, leading to other issues around condition and fertility as well. Taking out excess grass and increasing the stocking rate with other stock are two solutions to this. Excess grass for silage is a not a bad thing, since stocks were depleted earlier this year. It is important not to wait for this silage to 'bulk up'. Taking it out straightaway will ensure high quality and will bring the area back into the rotation as soon as possible.

As we move beyond peak production, this time also needs to be managed. I would encourage you all to look at the levels of milk produced by your herd for the months of June and July in 2021-2022 and especially calculate the decline. Change per week should be less than 2 per cent, whereas for many farms it is more than this due to the mismanagement of cows' intake or the times where 'feed pockets' arise and we don't fill them with supplement. Making some high-quality bales early will give us the feed to fill these gaps beyond concentrate supplement. Many farms try to get that extra 20-30kg of milk solids from their cows annually. Usually, that is not about getting the cows to higher peak milk yields; it's about filling the feed pockets with correct levels of grass management and utilising excess grass effectively at certain times.





PGI STATUS OF BEEF STILL UNDER SCRUTINY

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) has confirmed that the European Commission is still reviewing the revised product specification for Irish grass-fed beef. In December 2021, following scrutiny by the European Commission, the application for a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) for 'Irish Grass Fed Beef' was published in the Official Journal of the European Union for a three month 'opposition procedure' which was open both to EU Member States and third countries.

Following a submission by the UK through that consultation procedure, the European Commission invited the DAFM and Bord Bia and their UK counterparts to engage in discussions on the application. After extensive engagement, the consultations

were successfully concluded, with agreement that the geographical area covered by the application will cover the island of Ireland, according to a DAFM spokesperson. In early August 2022, the revised product specification was sent to the European Commission, which has recently advised that its scrutiny of the revised application is ongoing, the spokesperson told Irish Farmers Monthly. "It is not possible to state when that scrutiny will be completed. However, department officials are in regular and proactive contact with the Commission with regard to progressing the scrutiny. It is expected that the Commission will advise of the next stage shortly," the spokesperson said.

CAP-RELATED INFO GUIDES PUBLISHED FOR FARMERS AND ADVISORS

Two new guides have been published that will 'will provide valuable and important information to farmers and advisors on the changes to the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) programme from now to 2027, according to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The publication of a Guide to Land Eligibility and a new Explanatory Handbook for Conditionality Requirements was welcomed by Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Charlie McConalogue, who said: "The new CAP has brought with it a raft of changes regarding land eligibility which will be of benefit to farmers and it is important that we give as much guidance as possible to farmers regarding these changes." In relation to the Guide to Land Eligibility the minister described it as a practical guide to help farmers understand the rules on land eligibility for the various related EU schemes, such as the Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) scheme. The guide provides useful explanations, examples and images for relevant subjects like eligible agriculture areas and agricultural activities. Included are detailed examples of eligible and beneficial farm features and other features that are considered ineligible. The guide also includes a question and answers section and worked examples

for a number of different land parcels. In relation to the conditionality handbook, the minister said: "Conditionality replaces cross compliance under the new CAP and while many of the requirements remain the same, there are changes and we want farmers and their advisors to be fully aware of the changes." Conditionality comprises 11 Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and nine Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) and beneficiaries of the CAP must comply with these conditionality requirements from 2023 onwards in order to be in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the BISS and other areabased schemes.

"By complying with these conditionality requirements, farmers are contributing to Ireland's overall ambition to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, improve nutrient use and efficiency, reduce chemical nitrogen use, improve water and air quality, improve biodiversity levels and to safe food production and upholding strong animal welfare principles," said the minister.

The documents are published on the DAFM's website and found at the following links:

- ► Land Eligibility https://www.gov.ie/ en/service/99d45-land-eligibility/
- Conditionality https://www.gov.ie/ en/collection/e11a2-conditionality/

of the calculation of an eligible hectare



Damien O'Reilly EU Affairs and Communications Manager, ICOS

LETTER FROM BRUSSELS

"How are you settling in?" It's a question I am asked regularly. I am six months in my new role here in Brussels and the time has zipped by. People also ask me if I miss the radio business. Truth be told, I don't. That is a blessing because, as you can imagine, there is a great buzz to working on radio and there was that initial worry that I might miss it. With all due respect to my former colleagues and employers, it was time for me to move on and whatever motivated me to make the big leap, it feels like it was the right move. I left on the best of terms with everybody and left my programme in tip-top shape. I spent 24 years in RTÉ and loved it. I never expected to end up working on agricultural programmes but a bit like joining the Gardaí, you never know where you will be stationed! I worked across a range of areas including news, current affairs, and sport but it was reporting on farming where I spent 99 per cent of my time. It was the best job in RTÉ, taking me across the country and across the world and, many times, to Brussels to talk to farmers and report on agriculture. RTÉ has a long tradition in agricultural programming and a variety of such programmes have been broadcast over the past 60 years. As time went by, the shows evolved, and the latest iteration is, of course, Countrywide, which airs on Saturday morning. I remember approaching my bosses with the idea of a live one-hour rural/farming magazine programme on Saturday to replace the half-hour recorded programme I was presenting at the time, called Farmweek. Eventually, they gave it the green light and we went to air in September 2009, the morning after Ryan Tubridy presented his first Late Late Show. I am a month older than Ryan and the two most interesting phases of our broadcasting careers began and ended at roughly the same time, albeit he bowed out of the Late Late a few months after my last broadcast. I sent him a text to welcome him to the 50 club! We were both born in 1973, the year Ireland joined the European Economic Community and the year ICOS opened its office in Brussels. The opportunity to run this office was a case of perfect timing. I was ready to move on to a new career and having worked so deeply in agriculture over the best part of a quarter of a century, it was the perfect fit. I am reading the same material, attending the same meetings, chatting to the same people I did when working in radio. ICOS is part of the broader COPA COGECA family and the cosmopolitan feel to the office is energising.

Alongside my great colleague, Liam MacHale, of the Irish Farmers' Association, we are on the top floor of our building, sharing with our colleagues from France and Sweden. As I look out one window, I can see the corner of the iconic EU Commission Berlaymont building and out of the other window, the EU Parliament is visible. We really are at the heart of the action here, as we have been for 50 years now. A new job, a new home, a new country – it is quite the life change. And, yes, I am settling in well!



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

In 2010, a survey of grass samples from 44 farms across Ireland showed posture trace mineral levels at 73%, 50% and 38% of lactating dairy core requirements for copper, sinc and selenium respectively, meaning cuttle can be on the threshold of subclinical or clinical trace mineral deficiency during the graping season.

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

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

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

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

Hartman et al (2014) demonstrated that beef cattle fied a diet containing greater concentrations of antagonists like sulphur and molybdenum had greatly decreased liver trace mineral stores. As part of this study, the cattles' trace mineral stores were attempted to be restored by either trace mineral injection along with a maintenance diet or by high trace mineral diets alone. Regardless of the dietary antagonism present, trace mineral injection rapidly improved the copper and selenium status of the cattle. Onal trace mineral supplied at ISON of the daily trace mineral requirement from organic/inorganic blend took 28 days to recover optimal trace mineral levels and an inorganic diet, also at 150% of faily trace mineral requirement, took 42 days*.

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

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

ASK YOUR VET ABOUT STRATEGIC TRACE MINERAL INJECTION.

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AWARD WINNER HAS 'IMPRESSIVE AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF BIODIVERSITY'

Milk Quality Awards Pictured at the Dairygold Milk Quality Awards are overall winners and East Cork regional winners: Denis and Ruth O'Leary; with Professor Frank Buckley, UCC; Seán O'Brien, chair of Dairygold; Conor Galvin, chief executive, Dairygold; and judge, Don Crowley, Teagasc.

Dairygold milk supplier Denis O'Leary from Blarney, Co. Cork was declared the Overall Winner of the 2022 Dairygold Milk Quality Awards and winner of the East Cork region for consistently supplying the best quality milk to Dairygold throughout 2022. Denis is milking 130 pedigree Friesian cows on his farm near Blarney, Co. Cork with the help of his colleague of 35 years, David Cusack, and his wife Ruth. The herd produced 577kg of milk solids per cow in 2022 with an average somatic cell count (SCC) of 87,000 and a current herd EBI of €230, the highest of the finalists. Denis has focused on improving sustainability on his farm by incorporating clover to all reseeds and has been increasing the quality and length of hedgerows on the farm over the last number of years. He also uses Pasture Base Ireland to optimise grassland management, uses protected urea as his primary source of fertiliser and uses the ICBF's HerdPlus to manage breeding decisions.

RDS IRISH FOREST & WOODLAND AWARDS



CALLFOR ENTRIES

€12,000 Prize Fund

Whether your woodland is for commercial, recreational or a number of different purposes, there is an award category for you. Everyone is encouraged to enter with prizes for winners and runners up in every category.

New award category: The Native Woodland Conservation Award

For more information on the 2024 Awards, contact:

RDS Forestry



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An Roinn Talmhaíochta,



Denis pinpointed the importance of a good work life balance, adherence to routine and a simple grass-based system as being the cornerstones of his success in this competition. The judges remarked on Denis's impressive awareness and appreciation of biodiversity having some years ago embarked on a long-term plan to incorporate new trees and hedgerows on farm. They also spoke about Denis's involvement in local discussion groups and how he utilised these communities to enhance his technical performance and the sustainability of the systems he uses on the farm.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

This year's Sustainability Award went to John and James Magner of Carrigcunna, Killavullen, Co. Cork. While there was a strong showing in the sustainability category, John and James, in collaboration with their farm manager Pad Sheehan, were praised by the judges for their exceptional standard of dairy farming and demonstrating what can be achieved when you balance high productivity with environmental responsibility. The judges recognised the Magners' strong commitment to biodiversity, notably demonstrated in their careful management of hedgerows to encourage bird nesting and preserve optimum biodiversity levels. They commented that the farm exemplifies key characteristics of successful Irish agriculture: ensuring steady income, fostering an exceptional quality of life, and coexisting harmoniously with the natural environment.

AFRICAN SWINE FEVER DECREASES IN PIGS AND WILD BOAR IN THE EU DURING 2022

The number of outbreaks of African swine fever (ASF) in pigs and cases reported in wild boar in the European Union (EU) fell considerably in 2022 compared to the previous year, according to a new report published by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The disease was notified in eight EU countries in pigs and 11 EU countries in wild boar.

"Over the last decade, ASF has had a dramatic impact on the pig-farming sector in the EU and continues to disrupt local and regional economies. While this latest report shows encouraging signs that efforts to halt the spread of the virus may be taking effect, the picture across the EU is by no means universally positive and we must remain vigilant. Farmers, hunters and vets have a particularly important role to play in reporting suspicious cases," said Bernhard Url, EFSA's executive director.

In 2022, ASF outbreaks among domestic pigs in the EU decreased by 79 per cent compared to 2021. The decrease was particularly marked in Romania, Poland and Bulgaria. Lithuania, on the contrary, registered a slight increase caused by a cluster of outbreaks notified in summer in the south-western part of the country. Eight EU countries (Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) and four non-EU neighbouring countries (Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine) reported outbreaks in domestic pigs. Romania was the most affected EU country with 327 outbreaks, representing 87 per cent of the total EU outbreaks. Serbia was the most affected non-EU country of those included in the report, with 107 outbreaks. ASF was notified for the first time in North Macedonia. Regarding wild boar, 40 per cent fewer cases were reported in the EU during 2022 compared to 2021. This is the first decrease of ASF cases in wild boar in the area since its introduction in 2014. Eleven EU Member States (Czechia, Estonia and Hungary in addition to the Member States with outbreaks among domestic pigs) and four non-EU countries (Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine) notified ASF cases in wild boar.

EFSA's StopASF campaign extended

To support the continuing efforts to control the spread of the virus, EFSA is extending its StopASF campaign in 2023. The campaign raises awareness among farmers, hunters, and veterinarians in the EU and surrounding countries about how to detect, prevent, and report ASF. Now in its fourth year, EFSA's StopASF campaign encourages commercial and backyard farmers, veterinarians, and hunters to 'detect, prevent, report' ASF cases. The campaign relies on the assistance of local farmers' groups. It is run in partnership with local authorities in 18 countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia.



Prioritising the next generation

Maeve Regan, Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

It's vitally important to prioritise the next generation of milking cows by focusing on achieving replacement heifer target weights over the next number of months.

Hitting target weights at certain milestones is crucial to ensure replacement heifers are on course to achieve the main goal of being 60% of their mature weight when bred at 15 months.

Meal feeding at grass

Transitioning calves from a milk-based diet to a grass-based diet can be tricky. Spring born calves that are weaned and now at grass, should be offered supplementary concentrates in the diet for 4-6 weeks minimum, to ease with the transition onto a grass-based diet.

Where 1-2kgs concentrate is offered at grass for the first number of weeks, this reduces the total amount of fresh grazed grass in the diet and avoids hungry calves over-indulging on lush low fibre, high N grass; resulting in what is often referred to as 'summer scour'.

Alongside offering concentrates, fibre sources can also be offered in the diet (e.g., straw/hay/roughage) through this transition, as well as turning calves into slightly heavier covers. We must remember young calves are not fully developed ruminants yet and high-quality lush grass may not be the best forage for supporting rumen development.

Target weights

Weighing scales are by far one of the most underutilised management tools on farm. Timing of weighing can also be beneficial. By weighing in the weeks pre-housing, compared to weighing at the point of housing, allows farmers to identify heifers that are behind target. The best advice is to group accordingly and make alternative plans for those heifers under target weights.

The threshold figure for 2023 spring born weanling heifers is approximately 200kg in mid-September (33% of an assumed mature weight of 600kg). Heifers that are lighter than this should be separated and given priority access to the highest quality grass and re-introduce concentrates depending on their weight relative to the herds target.

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



MONITORING CELL COUNT – KEY TO MAYO FARMER'S PRESTIGIOUS MILK-SUPPLIER AWARD



The 16th annual Aurivo Milk Quality Awards saw the highest accolade of Aurivo Milk Supplier of the Year presented to Mayo dairy farmer Michael Gordon, who operates a family-run dairy farm in Crossmolina. Michael was recognised by judges for his dedication to animal welfare, excellent milk quality, and sustainable farming practices.

Michael has been farming in Crossmolina since 1998. He converted from beef to dairying in 2018 and now milks 75 crossbred cows on 50 hectares. Michael's wife Ita and their children, Emily, Kevin, Ciara and Aoife are all involved in the farm. Michael enjoys working with his family and seeing the herd progress. The family take great pride in their herd and practise the highest standards of animal welfare from calf to cow. Michael will now represent Aurivo at the NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards which sets out to celebrate the best milk suppliers in

Ireland. In addition to the overall award, Michael received the Excellence in Udder Health award. Michael credits his success in this category to his continuous and close monitoring of his herd's cell count. Michael utilises data available to eliminate the spread of infection, by using culture and sensitivity testing to ensure cows receive the correct treatment and reduce the use of antibiotics on farm.

CHAMPION OF SUSTAINABILITY

Also taking home a top prize was Dolan Farming Ltd, a fifth-generation family farm in Hollymount, located in Co. Mayo, run by Louis, his wife Bernie, and their son David. They were recognised for their continuous focus on sustainability and the farm's low-emission trajectory at this year's annual awards. Louis credits the Champion of Sustainability award to their focus on crossbreeding to produce high protein and fat output, which allows them to have less reliance on feed. The family have also reduced the use of nitrogen on the farm by using protected urea and 30 per cent of their grazing platform has clover included and they hope to increase this year on year. Other sustainable farming practices utilised by the Dolan's include rainwater harvesting and biological pest control by the way of owl boxes.





Summer is a busy time and a dangerous time on farms, particularly for children. Farm vehicles and machinery are one of the most significant hazards on farms, not only to the operators but also to people who are close by.

Between 2013 and 2022, of the 190 people killed in farm incidents, just over half (100) involved farm vehicles and machinery. In addition, there was a significant number of non-fatal injuries involving tractors and machinery, some of which were life changing. Data from Teagasc's National Farm Survey (NFS) indicates that around 10 per cent of the 4,500 non-fatal incidents on farms in 2020 involved farm vehicles and machinery. Serious and fatal injuries result from being crushed, trapped or struck by a farm vehicle or machinery.

LONG SUMMER DAYS

Tiredness increases the risk of a safety incident and is a contributing factor in many safety incidents. It is critical that tractor and machinery operators are alert at all times and not tired. If feeling tired, take a rest or get someone else to take over. If the workload is heavy, consider getting help or hiring a contractor for some tasks such as fencing or slurry spreading.

OLDER FARMERS

Older farmers are at particular risk when working with tractors and machinery. Over the past decade, 40 per cent of all fatal incidents of people over 65 years of age involved farm vehicles and machinery. Reversing machinery is one of the main factors in fatalities among older farmers.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY ON THE FARM

Children are particularly vulnerable when it comes to farm vehicles and machinery. More than 10 per cent of fatalities on Irish farms involves a person under 18 years of age. In the past decade, 21 people under 18 years of age lost their lives on Irish farms, with tractors involved in 16 of the fatalities and other machinery in a further two. Every precaution must be taken to ensure children are kept safe. Children are unpredictable and often are not visible when near vehicles and machinery. When children are in the farmyard, they must be always be supervised by an adult. Children under 14 must not operate tractors or self-propelled machines. Children under seven years of age should not be carried in a tractor or other farm machinery. When children over seven years old are carried in the cab, it must have a properly designed and fitted passenger seat with seat belt.

WHERE DOES FARM SAFETY FIT IN ON YOUR FARM?

Good farm management must always put health and safety at the core of all decisions and work on the farm. Many fatal and non-fatal incidents can be prevented by simple changes to behaviour and practices, and often at little or no financial cost.

PREVENTING INCIDENTS INVOLVING FARM VEHICLES AND MACHINERY

Safety need not slow down work or make it more difficult. In fact, safe machinery and facilities along with good planning should enable work to be carried out

more efficiently while minimising the risk of injury. The key considerations for preventing incidents involving tractors and machinery include:

- Plan, prepare, and discuss with everyone involved;
- Always allow enough time for a job to be carried out;
- Keep machinery in good working order with all guards in place. Never operate machinery if guards are missing or defective;
- Ensure the operator is trained and competent to use the machinery;
- Adopt practical and safe working methods:
- Drive at a safe speed;
- Always practice the SAFE STOP procedure – reverse park safely, handbrake on, controls in neutral, lower attachments, engine off, and remove keys; and
- Keep everyone who isn't involved in the work away from the farmyard and away from machinery.

For more information on farm safety, visit www.gov.ie/farmsafety





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



IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY EDITOR, MATT O'KEEFFE SPOKE TO CEO OF TIRLÁN, JIM BERGIN, AS THE FOOD AND NUTRITION BUSINESS ANNOUNCED ITS HEALTHY FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR 2022

Tirlán's 2022 financial results, published last month, mirrored the historically high milk and grain prices that were achieved last year. Despite the challenges of the war in Ukraine, high input prices and global inflation, it was a strong year, Jim says. "It was fortunate that international dairy markets were strong and provided a return that covered high on-farm costs. Our revenues went over €3bn for the first time. We made a profit after tax of €44.6m, which is a margin of one and a half per cent."

FALLING MILK PRICES

But it is hard to escape the new milk-price reality and the consequences of that: "Last year we paid 63c/L actual price, which was considerably higher than anything we had seen previously. In grain, we paid €310/t for barley, again the highest price ever paid.

There is now a huge level of angst among our farmers because of milk and grain price drops in recent months. That's very understandable. "The price of green grain fell below €200/t, while the margin on milk production is waferthin. We're seeing some markets stabilise. We think cheese prices, for example, have bottomed out. Butter is still weak, but we're hoping that it has hit a base level. The gross return on dairy products is between 40c/L and 45c/L before processing costs. We can't hold back the tide in terms of the markets, but we'll do everything we possibly can to pay the strongest price and to support our farmers."

FIXING FIXED-MILK PRICE

Fixed milk pricing has been a big bone of contention for some exposed Tirlán suppliers. Jim outlines the actions taken to provide

relief: "Last year, this was the biggest issue for a group of our farmers and a huge amount of time was given over to it. We spent €22m in supporting those suppliers with offers and schemes that would help them to shore up the gap between the price that was available to suppliers, generally, and those caught with a lot of milk in fixed-price contracts. Fixed-price volumes in the current year are in low single digits as a percentage of the overall pool. We must be fair to everybody. We can't find ourselves in a position where we are paying a higher price to fixed-price suppliers than to our open-market producers." Despite the recent fixed-price tribulations, Jim does not rule out further programmes: "Hedging high-risk inputs or outputs whether that's feed, energy, or, in this case, milk, is part of the world that we are in. There's a huge amount of speculation on gas, oil, energy, and on commodities. We will have to be very careful about managing those variables into the future. Where risk-mitigation tools can be used, we should use them,"



THERE IS NOW A HUGE LEVEL OF ANGST AMONG OUR FARMERS BECAUSE OF MILK AND GRAIN PRICE DROPS IN RECENT MONTHS

FIITURE PROSPECTS

"We're going into a different era. We've had 83 per cent growth since 2014. We're now into a situation where the environmental context is far more stringent, but there is significant opportunity for productivity improvement, whether that's in breeding or management. I believe we will have moderate growth and there's a lot to play out in the whole environmental policy side of it, both opportunity and challenge. We want new entrants because youth and renewal are critical for everybody, every family, every club, every school, and we will encourage that. But we will have a greater balance between milk growth and environmental restriction."

FRESH MILK REALITY

"We have three business categories. Our ingredients category is a €2bn business with exports to 100 countries. Revenue went up by 40 per cent last year. Revenue in our agri-business, providing farm inputs, went up by 40 per cent. Input costs to our farmers also went up by 40 per cent. On the other hand, revenue in our domestic consumer business, fresh milk and other dairy products, went up by 10 per cent. There was no big price inflation on the processing side. Because international prices have come back, there's a belief that domestic consumer prices should have come back as well. It simply hasn't happened that way."

DOG-EAT-DOG BUTTER MARKET

The somewhat contentious Tirlán entry into the US butter market elicits this response: "Our Truly Grass Fed product in the US is a single brand and what we're doing is brand building within it. There are two elements. One is the business-to-business side, which is us selling to ingredient customers, and the second element is selling on the retail shelves. The business-to-business aspect has really taken off. The retail business is much tougher. It's dog-eat-dog, fighting for distribution and shelf space and it has been a much slower burn." And in that fight, is Ornua the other dog?

"It's not, no," he says. "To be fair, there's lots of space for Irish product in the US. Ornua's Kerrygold is the number-two brand there, and we are very much targeting the organiccredentials-based segments. The more brands you have, the more you grow the category. We've learned that from Irish whiskey." But does it not have to be price driven? "No. The credentials are critical. We have a team that's tracking Truly Grass Fed all the way from production through collection and processing, how it's packed and how it gets to the shelf. We must be able to stand over our product. It's non-GMO-product verified, and animalwelfare approved. Those credentials are very important. We're targeting the foodie who is interested in those credentials and will pay more for high margin products."

ESG OFFICER

"The appointment of Dr Lisa Koep as Tirlán's environmental and social governance (ESG) officer is at the heart of the company's future strategy, explains Jim. "We're very much focused on two things. One is the balance within sustainability for our farmers. Not alone are there restrictions and demands for compliance but in tandem with that, there are opportunities for income because our farmers own the land.

"They can generate other incomes, for instance, from renewable energy sources. As we go along, we will find that there is a balance for our farmers that's going to present opportunity and challenge. Our approach in terms of policy and regulation will be to accelerate the opportunities for our farmers so that we can see a balance between more compliance on one side and not having the same growth opportunities, while having opportunity on the other side. "Farmers are practical. They adapted through

"Farmers are practical. They adapted through the 1970s to the end of quotas and they have grasped the growth opportunities since 2015. Now, we will adapt to the sustainability era. The whole ESG strategy is to provide opportunities as well as manage the challenges ahead."

Quick quotes

On the so-called national herd
"I absolutely disagree with the idea
of a herd cull."

On the retirement schemes
"If there's to be a retirement scheme,
it should be available for all
enterprises."

On the anaerobic digestion industry

"The regulatory authorities need to speed up anaerobic-digestion policy so that farmers can get a vision of what their farms might look like and what their income streams might be in future. We need to see opportunity as well as constraint."

On solar energy

"Interest is huge in solar energy production among Tirlán farmers. Farmers react positively to opportunities because they are business-minded people."

On the Belview plant

"We are on track to open our new cheese plant at Belview for next spring's milk production. It is the largest single investment in the history of the Irish dairy industry." IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY EDITOR, MATT O'KEEFFE
RECENTLY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SIT DOWN
WITH MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND THE
MARINE, CHARLIE MCCONOLOGUE, AND QUESTION
HIM ON JUST SOME OF MANY ISSUES IMPACTING
IRISH AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS INCLUDING THE
CONTENTIOUS PROPOSED NATURE RESTORATION
LAW, DEROGATION, FARM SAFETY, AND WHETHER HE
HAS PARTY-LEADERSHIP AMBITIONS

One of the questions that has been crying out for an answer recently is the location of a second veterinary college. According to current stats, of all the vets that are registered to practice here, 65 per cent of them graduated in Ireland while the remainder completed their veterinary studies abroad. The call for a second veterinary college appears to be well justified, and there have been several expressions of interest from third-level facilities, outside of University College Dublin, where the only veterinary degree is currently offered. But the minister is tight-lipped on the location of a second offering.

"The process is ongoing in terms of assessing each of the applicants," Minister McConalogue said.

"The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has a role in the process, which is being led by the Department of Higher Education, with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) also closely involved. It is a very thorough ongoing process as all three applicants hoping to host a new veterinary college are putting forward very strong cases.

"I am clear that we have a demand and requirement for more veterinary graduates, with a fair proportion of our annual needs being met currently by graduates qualifying in other countries. There has been no decision as to whether there will be one or more vet schools established. All this is under continuing consideration. As of now, there is no definite timeline on when a decision will be made. I expect it to be in the near future."

NATURE RESTORATION LAW CONCERNS

Addressing the issue of the contentious proposed Nature Restoration Law currently being debated at European level, and potential implications for Irish farmers, Minister McConalogue said: "I understand its importance in an Irish context to farmers. Through interactions both within government and among my European Agriculture Council colleagues, I have been working to ensure that the legislation accommodates our national circumstances, especially given the disproportionately large areas of peat-based agricultural soils in Ireland.

"We have made great progress in the last few weeks and there has been an accommodation at the Council of Ministers that reflects our national position. Regarding the 2030, 2040, and 2050 targets for rewetting, we would have the capacity to meet those targets fully from State-owned land as required. The Parliament has yet to agree on its position and then negotiations begin with the Council. My hope is



DEROGATION DECISION PENDING

Another major issue on the minister's agenda is the ongoing Nitrates Derogation review: "We are now one of three countries with a derogation. That runs up to the end of 2025 with a mid-term review in the second part of this year. Under that review, part of the conditionality is that if water quality has not been improved then the derogation limits would drop from 250kg to 220kg (organic nitrogen) per hectare. We are planning to engage with the Commission on having a degree of flexibility on this.

"It all comes back to everyone involved in the agriculture sector taking measures that will ensure that water quality is improving. Ultimately, the continuation of the derogation is dependent on that. We have made it clear that initiatives are being taken to improve water quality and that time is needed to measure the success of those actions."

A POWERFUL REGULATOR

The recent appointment of a CEO-designate at the office of the Agri-Food Regulator, Niamh Lenehan, marks progress in the move to establishing unfair trading regulations, according to the minister.

"Niamh Lenehan has been appointed as CEO and the regulator will have significant powers in relation to unfair trading. That will extend to being able to bring offenders to court and impose large fines up to €10m in individual cases where wrongdoing is proven.

"There is also going to be a very important role for the regulator in acting as an independent influence in the supply chain, working to ensure that the relationships that



are in place between primary producers and retailers, as well as businesses deliver fair play for everyone. I have taken consultations and feedback from across the agri-food sector on board and I believe this will be a very robust body."

LIVELY INTEREST IN LIMING

The financial allocation for the National Liming Programme, introduced by Minister McConalogue, has proven inadequate to meet demand but, he said, he is 'committed to seeking additional funds for the scheme': "It showed the appetite among farmers to improve their farms and soils and the aim is to get back to the kinds of lime tonnages that were spread several decades ago. We allocated €8m towards the liming programme. It was massively oversubscribed with €72m worth of applications.

"We are working to see what capacity we have to bring additional funding to the programme and back farmers' enthusiasm for increased liming. I will do as much as I can to meet demand. There will be some tempering and adjustment required given the level of oversubscription. In doing that, I want to ensure that we back the farmers who have applied as far as possible."

FARM SAFETY

In recent weeks, the farming community has been rocked by a number of farm-related deaths. An elderly man from Co. Kerry died following an attack by a cow, and a 13-year-old boy from Co. Mayo died in a tractor accident. Reflecting on this, the minister said: "Unbelievably sad. It's every family's nightmare and our thoughts and prayers are with them at this trying time.

"Deaths on farms are still commonplace and it is our objective to do all we can to reduce

farm accidents.

Even with increased regulation around farm safety, you are only one wrong step away on a farm from injury and worse.

"Farmers and their families cannot afford to be complacent or lose concentration. That is an ongoing message and an ongoing job on all farms to ensure that the surrounding environment and farm practices are as safe as possible. Minister of State, Martin Heydon, whose remit includes farm safety, has been very active in improving safety standards and raising awareness around farm safety."

LEADERSHIP DECISION LOOMING

With some speculation that Micheál Martin may step down as Fianna Fáil leader before the general or even local elections, various names are popping up as potential leadership candidates. Does the minister have leadership ambitions? "Fianna Fáil is working really well in Government. It is delivering and working hard on the various challenges facing the country. That includes agriculture and food production where there has been significant success in recent years. "Micheál Martin has provided great leadership, not just for Fianna Fáil, but for the country and it's my objective to see him lead the party into the next election and subsequently to be re-elected as Taoiseach. We will then see what the future holds, but any talk of leadership change is very premature at this stage." When pressed further on this, he added: "It is a question for away down the road. It is much too early to be making any judgements around that question. "My entire focus is on delivering for rural Ireland, and particularly for the food sector and for family farmers and increasing the contribution the agricultural sector can make to the country. Ultimately, whenever there is a vacancy, it will be for others to decide."





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AS WE ENTER PEAK BLOWFLY STRIKE SEASON, NIALL CLAFFEY EXAMINES THE KEY FACTORS THAT LEAD TO STRIKE ON IRISH SHEEP FARMS, AND OUTLINES PREVENTATIVE MEASURES FARMERS CAN TAKE AGAINST THE DISEASE

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE WHEN IT COMES TO BLOWFLY STRIKE

Blowfly (green bottle) is the main external parasite traditionally affecting sheep in late spring and during the summer months here in Ireland. However, changing weather patterns have resulted in an increasingly unpredictable season which, of late, is lasting longer. Blowfly strike causes:

- ▶ Pain and suffering for individual sheep;
- ► Secondary bacterial infections;
- ▶ Death:
- ► Production losses for the farmer;
- ▶ Increased labour in treating animals; and
- Increased veterinary costs.

All sheep farmers will be aware that strike can occur very quickly, often within 24 hours, but how is this possible? A single adult female blowfly can lay up to 300 eggs at a time (approximately 3,000 eggs throughout the average 30-day lifespan). Therefore, one single fly has the potential to produce 3,000

new flies.

If you then imagine that many strike cases involve multiple female flies laying eggs on one single sheep, it is easy to see how quickly thousands of maggots could be present in a 24-hour period – in just a single case of strike. But why do blowflies lay eggs on sheep? One of the principle aims of any living organism is to ensure the continuation of its own species. Blowflies are no different. After emerging, a female blowfly will mate almost immediately and look for a source of organic matter to lay eggs. Therefore, a sheep's fleece acts as a nice incubator for the eggs and larva (maggots) to develop and an attractive location for the female fly to lay its eggs especially if it is contaminated with faeces. Over the years, several mechanical methods have been adopted in the sheep industry to mitigate flystrike, including shearing; dagging; and tail docking. Additionally, the

Factors affecting the risk of strike				
Increased risk	Decreased risk			
Warm weather	Good parasitic worm control			
High humidity	Tail docking (lowland flocks)			
Undocked tails (in lowland flocks)	Dagging and crutching			
Faecal soiling (daggy sheep)	Foot rot control			
High fly numbers	Shearing			
Foot rot	Frequent flock inspection			
Head wounds on rams	Appropriate insecticide use			
Thick-fleeced breeds				
Lack of preventative insecticide use				

healthier your sheep are the cleaner the sheep/fleece will be. Operating a good worm control programme, while preventing scour/coccidiosis will avoid contamination of the fleece.

Wounds on ram's heads for example – that have discharge which the flies will be attracted to–can increase the risk of strike. Moreover, the presence of foot rot can also lead to flystrike, while proper disposal of dead animals on farm is also important when

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Figure 1. One single fly has the potential to produce 3,000 new flies.

Active + Concentration	Blowfly prevention	Blowfly treatment	Other parasites	Withdrawal
Dicyclanil 1.25%	8 weeks (can be applied 3 weeks post shearing)	No	No	Meat 7 days Milk 0 days
Dicyclanil 5%	16 weeks (can be applied on the same day as shearing)	No	No	Meat 40 days Milk 0 days
Dicyclanil 6.25%	19 weeks (can be applied on the same day as shearing)	No	No	Meat 40 days Milk 0 days
High-cis cypermethrin 1.25%	6 to 8 weeks	Yes	Headflies Ticks Biting lice	Meat 8 days Milk 5 days
Deltramethrin 10mg/ml	No	Yes	Ticks Lice	Meat 35 days Milk 0 days
Diazinon	8-10 weeks	Yes	Ticks Lice Scab	Meat 49 days Milk 0 days

Table 1. Using a preventative treatment early in the season prevents established blowfly strike in the flock.

it comes to minimising the fly population. By following these good management practices, we can prevent the number of flies developing in the environment in the first place – on both our own and neighbouring farms.

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

While the management practices above will decrease the risk of flystrike, at the end of the day, using an appropriate preventative insecticide is the most practical way of managing the disease. Using a preventative treatment early in the season prevents established blowfly strike in the flock – to

protect the sheep and to prevent those first waves of flies from breeding. Doing this will reduce blowfly numbers, and strike risk, later in the season. Nowadays, prevention has never been easier using insect growth regulators (IGRs). Insect growth regulators (IGRs) life cycle, preventing stage 1 maggots (which develop from the eggs usually within 12 hours) developing into stage 2 maggots.

Stage 1 maggots have no mouthparts, are unable to feed and die. As a result of being unable to feed they cannot create any skin damage on the sheep. Narrow-spectrum Dicyclanil is the active ingredient that works

by preventing the first-stage maggots developing into the second stage maggots. Its mode of action is targeted at the lifecycle of flies, therefore has no activity against other ectoparasites. Cypermethrin, Deltamethrin pour-ons and Diazinon dip, are broadspectrum insecticides, meaning they will kill multiple stages of the lifecycle of many insects. However, from a sustainability point of view, narrow-spectrum products should be chosen over broad-spectrum products. It is recommended to use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when applying products. It is suggested not to shear sheep for two months post administration of a pour-on (three months post-dipping) and in general to handle sheep as little as possible post administration.

Correct application is important for all animal medicines, especially blowfly control. When it comes to administering an IGR, it is recommended to use a four-stroke technique, with a correctly calibrated gun with a fan spray nozzle, to maximise fleece coverage, ideally on a dry day.

Sheep should be grouped according to weight where possible – preferably in a pen. In a race, the fleece can easily be moved about as the sheep jump about and on top of each other. The product moves by gravity and if it isn't on the midline, one side of the sheep may not be protected. While this may take a bit more time, it will ensure the animals get the correct dose. Remember, too little will not give the full protection and too much is wasting your money!

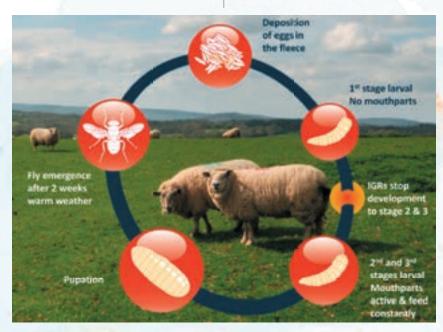
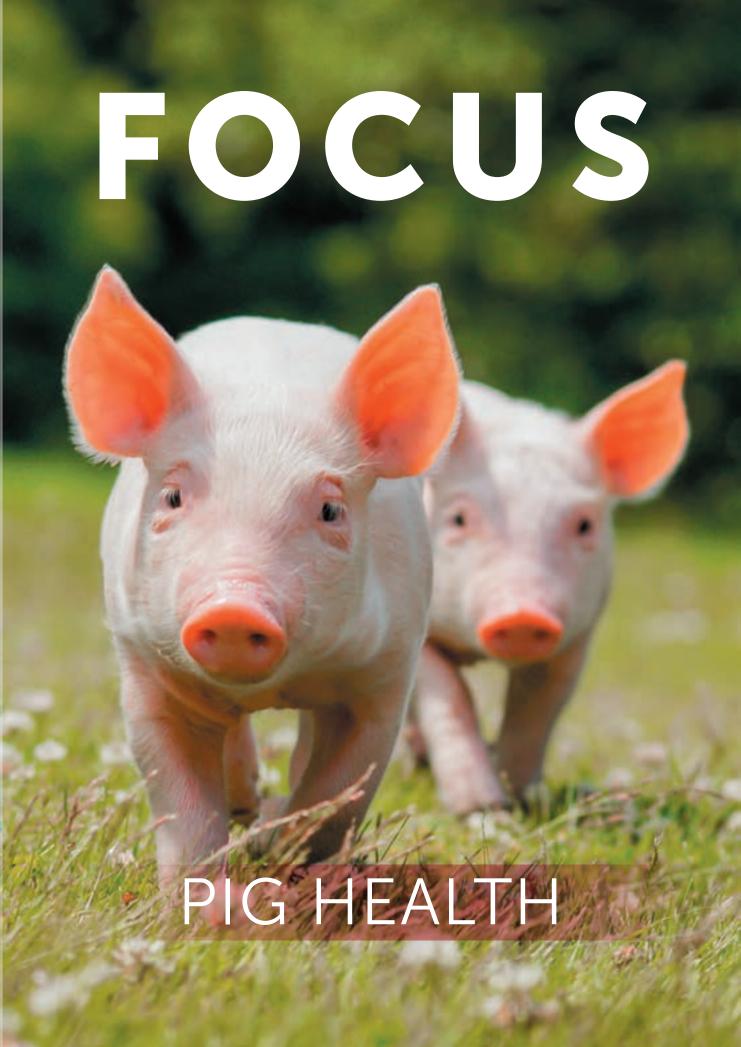


Figure 2. Blowfly life cycle. Source: Elanco Animal Health.



JUNE 2023 | PIG FOCUS

President of the Irish Pig Health Society (IPHS), Thomas Gallagher.

OUR ISLAND STATUS IS OUR BIGGEST PLUS FFACTOR'

The president of the IPHS has brought much knowledge and insight into the role from his job as business unit director with MSD Animal Health. From a farm in Donegal, Thomas holds an honours degree in agricultural science from University College Dublin as well as an MBA from the Smurfit Business School. His work with MSD prioritises preventative animal-health solutions, an emphasis that he clearly carries into his voluntary role in IPHS. The fact that Ireland is an island has significant animal-health benefits, he says: "Our island status is our biggest plusfactor in terms of biosecurity. We live in a globally integrated world where people and

PRESIDENT OF THE IRISH PIG
HEALTH SOCIETY (IPHS), THOMAS
GALLAGHER, ADDRESSES
IRELAND'S PIG HEALTH,
CHALLENGES TO THE SECTOR,
COMPETITIVENESS, AND MUCH
MORE IN A WIDE-RANGING
CONVERSATION WITH IRISH
FARMERS MONTHLY EDITOR,
MATT O'KEEFFE

goods travel freely. Equally, the potential for disease to cross borders and even continents is significant. We need only look

at Covid-19 for evidence of that fact. We have seen the impact that African swine fever has had on pig production across the world, especially in China, where there are reports of a resurgence of the disease. We have evidence of some outbreaks in eastern Europe so high vigilance is needed to protect our pig herds at all times. But we cannot be complacent just because we live on an island. We have strong biosecurity protocols in place, and these are being regularly reviewed and improved to ensure that we keep potential pig health threats out of our herds."

Unprecedented financial challenges
Thomas reflects on a torrid time for pig



PRODUCING 18 PIGLETS WHEN A SOW HAS ONLY 14 TEATS IS AN ISSUE THAT WE DECIDED NEEDED IN-DEPTH DISCUSSION

producers up to early 2023: "The previous 18 months was a very challenging period. We saw reductions in the national pig herd, of between five and 10 per cent. Since February, we have seen pig farms returning to profitability, which is massively positive. A combination of a more balanced international supply and demand for pigmeat allied to significant reductions in input costs, specifically grain prices, have combined to bring about this turnaround in profitability. "Seventy per cent of the total production cost is feed, so every €10 reduction in a tonne of wheat or barley is worth the equivalent of 4c/ kg of pigmeat price. The influence of grain prices and the impact of the disruption in grain supply and pricing because of the war in Ukraine cannot be overstated. The outlook right now is very positive for pig farmers trying to rebuild their finances and repay debt built up over an extended period of lossmaking.

"The timeline to restore production to previous levels is nine months so there is some way to go just to get back to where pig producers were two years ago. Across Europe last year, 500,000 sows were slaughtered because of the losses pig farmers were suffering."

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Quality over quantity by maximising health and efficiency was the theme of this year's IPHS conference, Thomas explains: "We are prioritising health and efficiency, and our conference theme reflected that fact. Sow retention and longevity were discussed at one of the conference sessions. There have been several novel trends introduced over the past 10 years. Higher 'born alives' and more prolific genetics being two notable trends. High 'born alives' has implications for the longevity of the sow and that needs

to be considered in assessing the benefits of pushing for more live piglets per litter. The challenge is to get high output from a sow while still maintaining sustainable retention rates and longevity in the breeding herd. We invited a UK speaker to lead the discussion on that topic and he provided data to explore the topic from several perspectives. That session was very well received by our conference attendees."

COMPETITIVENESS

Thomas is unambiguous in emphasising the competitiveness of the Irish pig-production sector: "We are as good as is out there. In performance terms, Irish pig herds are in the top-third internationally in our figures for sow longevity, for instance. Overall, comparing ourselves to the Dutch or Danish pig sectors, our competitive performance stands up well across most of the relevant figures. Our feed conversion ratios are excellent on a comparative basis as are our output figures. If we have one problem compared to some of our international peers, it is that we have higher feed costs, generally, compared to others. Access to cheaper grain due to proximity to large ports that handle feed from across the world is a major determining factor in pig feed costs.

"It's not always easy to make direct comparisons. Look at Denmark as an example. They mostly manage different production sites for different pig life stages. Here, it is almost all integrated, single site production models. The Danish producer tends to sell significant numbers of weaners and young pigs generally to German farms for finishing. In Ireland, the farmer typically owns the pig from birth to bacon. That's our traditional production model and it works well, while allowing for the fact that there is less opportunity to play the market. Ultimately, there is only a single line of sale to the end processor. Other production models in other countries can offer more selling choices." Improving sow milk production

Improving milk volume in lactating sows was another topic covered at the IPHS conference: "Producing 18 piglets when a sow has only fourteen teats is an issue that we decided needed in-depth discussion so we included it as a full session topic at our conference. The biggest single element of the nutrition equation for a sow feeding new-born piglets is the availability of sufficient colostrum at the early stage of life. Inadequate colostrum severely compromises a pig from reaching its lifetime potential. That was the approach we took to the discussion."

THE SOLAR OPTION

Solar-energy production was another topic addressed at the IPHS conference and Thomas Gallagher's MBA thesis on solar PV adoption in Irish homes gives him a deep understanding of what is involved in adopting a solar-energy production option for pig production units: "The huge increase in energy costs over the past year or so has concentrated minds on exploring viable energy alternatives. Many pig farmers are recognising that investment in solar, given the supports that are in place, offers a very good return on investment over a three-year payback period and there is a big carbon reduction element also, making it an environmentally positive undertaking. Pig farms are very energy intensive, so opportunities to reduce energy costs through solar or woodchip or other alternatives are being widely adopted."

PROTEIN DEMAND

Concluding, Thomas highlighted the increasing demand for protein: "The demand outlook for pigmeat is positive, driven by higher global population and increasing demand for food protein. Take the African continent as an example. A growing population is slowly moving from a carbohydrate-rich diet to one that is more meat-protein based. That offers opportunity for pigmeat producers."



Barry began by highlighting an energy audit that showed large variations between best practice energy consumption and typical energy use across a range of pig-production activities. In farrowing units, for instance, where energy is required for heating, lighting and ventilation, the figure for best practice, measured in kWh/pig produced (kilowatt per hour per pig produced) is believed to be 4kWh. But typical industry energy-use figures for the same activities are double the best-practice target. Likewise, the discrepancy between best practice and industry norm energy use for the weaning stage is significant. The best-practice target is set at 3kWh/pig which is a third of the average figures being achieved in pig units. Those contrasting figures on energy usage point to an opportunity to improve energy-use efficiency through improved management as well as upgrading the energy performance of pig production buildings. Barry outlined a

series of upgrading options to reduce energy use, including:

- ► Enclosing creep areas;
- ► Switching to more energy-efficient lighting;
- ► The introduction of high-efficiency pumps, aerators and separators; and
- Improving insulation and ventilation, as well as fitting more efficient fans in units.

SOLAR

On the other side of the energy equation, the Teagasc expert explored options to reduce the energy unit costs through the adoption of renewable-energy sources on pig-production farms. Solar is becoming the 'go-to' option for many businesses and private homes as government policy has finally got the message that moving consumers from fossil-based energy to renewable sources needs significant support and incentive. Even allowing for the fact that energy costs have retreated somewhat from the extraordinary highs of the past twelve

months, Barry emphasised that over the longer term, electricity prices are trending upwards. He pointed to the now well-proven solar technology as an obvious cost-effective alternative energy source for high-use pig-production facilities. Solar adoption also accords with the Government's policy to electrify heating and transport. For all businesses there is the benefit of being able to legitimately claim kudos for environmental awareness and reduced carbon use.

COST-EFFECTIVE INVESTMENT

Barry provided valuable advice to pig producers considering investing in solar energy production. He detailed the differences in performance and longevity between the two types of monocrystalline solar panels. Panel robustness is another consideration, given that they will be placed on farms where dirt, dust and gasses are part of the surrounding environment. Even the location, near the sea, for example, should influence



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BUT TYPICAL INDUSTRY ENERGY-USE FIGURES FOR THE SAME ACTIVITIES ARE DOUBLE THE BESTPRACTICE TARGET

panel choice. Long-term warranties need to be closely scrutinised, as Barry advised. Ultimately, the condition of roofs on which these panels will be placed, perhaps for several decades, needs to be assessed in detail for stability during installation, maintenance and operation over many years. Ground-based solar panels can be a viable alternative installation option.

KEY SOLAR CONSIDERATIONS

In considering the adoption of solar panels to maximise the value of solar-produced electricity on a pig farm, the farmer needs to consider all aspects including, though not exclusively the cost/benefit. Barry

provided guidance in making these decisions. The best return on investment, as he confirmed, is to use the generated electricity in the business as it is being generated. Storage imposes limitations including increased cost. Practicalities that must be understood include the fact that a solar PV system only generates energy during daylight hours, with a peak production around noon. Solar systems do produce energy during all daylight hours but produce five times more electricity, on average, on a mid-summer's day than during the December/January period. While the Government has relaxed some planning requirements for solar installations, a checklist is advised, according to Barry, as to whether an individual business requires planning or not depending on circumstances particular to the business in question. There are also limitations on how large the installations can be in order to qualify for a planning exemption. Orientation of roofs is sometimes overlooked in considering a solar installation. The difference, however, in energy production between a southern and a northern orientation, is essentially the difference between a cost-effective and a cost-ineffective installation. Grid connection for the export of electricity is now generally available, after much foot dragging by ESB Networks for several years. Electricity export potential should be considered by anyone placing solar panels on the roofs of their farm buildings, Barry said.

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COST EFFECTIVENESS

Assuming all the structural, orientation and consumption factors are optimal, Barry produced several examples of the electricity cost savings to be gleaned from a solar installation. He provided payback timescales and, importantly, a calculation of the carbon offsets from a solar installation. Turning this carbon offset into hard cash is something businesses in general and pig producers in this instance, will have to advance in the future. As food processors, buyers, consumers and governments increasingly insist on data around carbon use, there has to be a push for this lower carbon footprint food production model to claim a premium in the marketplace. It cannot be acceptable that demands for higher environmental standards and lower carbon inputs, which often carry increased production costs, do not have these additional costs reflected in the product

Heating is a large component of energy use on pig farms and Barry broadened his energy-options presentation by outlining the potential of on-farm biomass-based energy as a heat source. His ultimate assessment of farm-based energy production was that the opportunities for renewable energy production on pig units are considerable, provided such key factors as roof space and demand for space heating are adequate. Rising electricity prices reduce the payback timescale for solar PV, he added. Barry also advised consideration by pig farmers because they are high energy users and, therefore, particularly exposed to price fluctuations, and potentially some future instability in the energy market, to provide cost competitive and dependable energy to their farms.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF MANAGING BIGGER LITTER SIZES THROUGH INCREASING MILK PRODUCTION BY THE SOW WERE EXPLORED AT THE RECENT IRISH PIG HEALTH SOCIETY (IPHS) SYMPOSIUM. THE TOPIC WAS DEALT WITH BY DR CHANTAL FARMER, A RESEARCH SCIENTIST IN SOW LACTATION BIOLOGY AT THE SHERBROOKE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD CANADA, AND MATT O'KEEFFE WAS THERE TO LEARN MORE

The specific theme of Dr Farmer's paper dealth with 'Maximising mammary development to increase sow milk yield. The background to this target is the fact that, while advances in genetics and management have facilitated larger litters, the sow's ability to feed those larger litters adequately in the critical early weeks has not improved to the extent necessary. Put simply, the sow is not producing enough milk to sustain maximal piglet growth. Hyper prolificity, as Dr Farmer explained, is a relatively new problem. As the litter size has increased, the amount of milk ingested per piglet has decreased. As confirmed by the Canadian researcher, the number of secretory cells present in the sow's mammary tissue at the onset of lactation is the main factor limiting milk yield.

MAMMARY DEVELOPMENT

This is clearly an entire research field. There is the existing knowledge on mammary development to be assessed with critical questions to be answered around when mammary development takes place and the impact of hormones on that development. With that knowledge, influential factors can

be identified including pre-puberty and lategestation management. Body condition and mammary development in the late-gestation period must be managed optimally to increase milk-production potential. The IPHS conference attendees were informed that there are three main timelines when rapid mammary accretion can be achieved. These include the prepubertal period from 90 days onwards, the last third of gestation and during actual lactation. It is in one or the other or all of these three specifically identified periods that it is possible to stimulate increased milk production. Dietary and supplementation management are not new. Dr Farmer reached back to research carried out in 1945 to confirm outcomes on the ingestion of barley ergot for the last 25 to 87 days of pregnancy in sows. This research essentially provided evidence of what does not encourage udder development of milk secretion. It was not until the 1970s that research confirmed that the inclusion of barley ergot depresses prolactin, the critical hormone for mammary growth and milk production during pregnancy and after giving birth. This breakthrough then facilitated the

development of management and feed formulation technologies to increase prolactin, with favourable outcomes in terms of early lactation milk yield and significantly improved piglet weight – up to 21 per cent during lactation. Commercialising this research was then targeted and successfully introduced.

FEEDING FOR MILK PRODUCTION

Manipulation of nutrition at critical periods in the sow-feed management was further highlighted by the Canadian researcher, with specific guidelines delivered. Returning to the aim of improving mammary development, Dr Farmer spoke about the use of natural stimulants, including a milk thistle extract, silymarin, as a prolactinemic agent. It had been shown to be efficacious in raising prolactin in rats as well as milk yield in humans and cows. However, fed to sows, there was evidence of some increase in prolactin but not on a large enough scale to improve mammary development or milk yield. In what is clearly a complex field of research. Dr Farmer outlined various approaches in terms of nutrition management and supplementation with the ultimate aim of increasing milk yield at that critical early life of the suckling piglets. Her concluding message was enlightening - that there is still much to be learned. The data from this ongoing research is provided in the Canadian researcher's paper available on the IPHS website.



Dr Keelin O'Driscoll at Teagasc's recent Pig Development Department open day. Photo: Teagasc.

THE TEAGASC PIG DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT RECENTLY HELD A NUMBER OF PIG OPEN DAYS IN MAY ACROSS TWO LOCATIONS, MOOREPARK RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CENTRE IN FERMOY, AND BALLYHAISE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE IN CAVAN. MATT O'KEEFFE WAS PRESENT AND REPORTS ON THE MAIN LEARNINGS

This was the first large in-person pigresearch event since 2019 and delegates were welcomed in Cavan by the director of Teagasc, Professor Frank O'Mara, and in Cork by the head of the Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation programme, Professor Laurence Shalloo. The opening session at both locations included an overview of the research programme by the head of the Teagasc Pig Development Department, Dr Edgar Garcia Manzanilla.

AN ADDICTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Pig producers are notoriously addicted to building knowledge on productivity and profitability in a sector that is subject to extremes of supply and demand, together with equally extreme profitability and lossmaking peaks and troughs. It was no surprise, then, that over 170 pig producers and industry stakeholders attended over the two-day annual event.

The format for the events had a new structure where attendees were guided through interactive stations. This provided an excellent opportunity for participants to see first-hand the results of the comprehensive research programme being undertaken by Teagasc, and to meet and discuss with the researchers, advisors and postgraduate students who

carry out the work. The interactive stations covered a wide range of topics, including many issues targeted towards improving the sustainability of the Irish pig industry, managing the pig environment, improving pre- and post-weaning management and nutrition, managing disease, grower and finisher feeding, as well as the potential for developing added value pig products for the retail and export markets. Also included in the day was an opportunity to visit and view the newest addition to the Teagasc Pig Research Facility at Moorepark, a state-ofthe-art finisher building designed specifically to conduct low-emissions and high-welfare research trials.

INNOVATIVE THINKING

The Teagasc researchers encouraged producers to look outside their own facilities and inform themselves to an even greater degree of society's expectations in relation to standards of animal welfare in pig production systems. There was discussion on how producers could capitalise on these expectations by pursuing premiums for high welfare pigmeat production.

With a degree of thinking outside the box, there was also some exploration of the potential for outdoor pig production and how such systems could go some way towards

meeting the public's expectations around higher welfare standards as well as providing diverse ecosystems and diversifying income streams beyond the traditional indoor-based model.

ONE WELPIG ROADMAP

In collaboration with all the sector's stakeholders there is ongoing work into developing a comprehensive roadmap -WellPig - designed to assist the Irish pig sector transition to higher welfare production systems. If an objective comment can be made on this important strategy, it is that developing a roadmap towards higher welfare is relatively straightforward. The real challenge is to be able to pass on to consumers the higher costs associated, in many instances, with achieving and maintaining these higher welfare standards. Time and again we have seen that there are inevitably higher production costs to be carried in most aspects of their implementation.

PRODUCTION MODELS

Speaking after the Teagasc pig events,
Teagasc researcher Dr Keelin O'Driscoll, said:
"The Teagasc Pig Department has a strong
reputation both nationally and internationally
in cutting edge pig research. However, as
well as showcasing our work, a primary aim
of the open days was to engage with our
stakeholders so that going forward we can
effectively target our programme to address
their needs."





JOHN O'DOHERTY, FULL PROFESSOR OF MONOGASTRIC NUTRITION AND THE HEAD OF ANIMAL AND CROP SCIENCES IN THE SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCE, UCD, PROVIDES AN UPDATE ON RESEARCH INTO ALTERNATIVES TO ZINC OXIDE AND IN-FEED MEDICATION

In 2022, Irish Farmers Monthly spoke to Professor O'Doherty about PigNutriStrat, a research project he is leading with Teagasc Moorepark and South East Technological University (SETU) to develop solutions to prevent and manage diseases in pigs in order to reduce antibiotic use. The research is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and is looking at everything from biosecurity right up to nutrition of sows and pigs post-weaning and the economics of these changes, he explains.

The key focus in the last few years, he says, has been investigating alternatives to in-

feed antibiotics, and zinc oxide in pig diets.

"Zinc oxide is a heavy metal and was also

increasing antimicrobial resistance and has

been banned since 2022. We are now looking

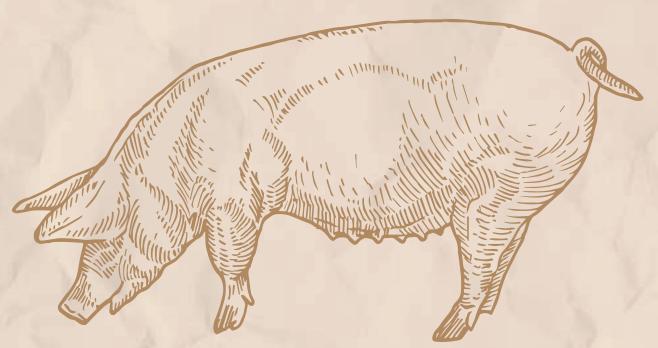
at ways of improving performance without the use of additives, and while a number of feed additives are available, none has delivered the same performance as zinc oxide or in-feed medication. One of the reasons for this is that the pigs don't eat enough directly after weaning." This, he says, is due to the immaturity of the gastrointestinal tract, and the solution may lie in offering feed that addresses this issue.

ACIDIFIED CEREALS

"Over the last few years, Ruth Connolly and Shane Maher (PhD students) have been looking at acidified cereals in pig diets. Rather than drying the cereal, we add an organic acid blend to cereals at harvest time. In comparison to dried cereals, we have seen very good results in terms of improved average daily gain in the region of about 13-14 per cent, less diarrhoea in weaned pigs, and improved food conversion ratios. Throughout the life cycle of the pig, we are getting in the region of 6-7kg increase in body weight at slaughter from organic acid-treated cereals."

The organic acid blend added to the cereals is a combination of propionic acid with a blend of salts (MycoCURB). "It doesn't reduce the pH of the feed or have any detrimental effects on feed bins."

The question the research is now answering is, why? "Firstly, we have seen that the organic acid-treated cereals improves the ileal nitrogen and gross energy digestibility



of the diet as well as improving the total tract nutrient digestibility of the diet: in the region of 7-8% improvement in digestibility. Secondly, we see a very different microbiome in pigs: a different microbial population in the gastrointestinal tract and an increase in beneficial bacteria, particularly Faecalbacterium, in the pigs that have been fed the acidified cereal diets. We also see a lot less inflammation in the gastro-intestinal tract."

They are, he says, healthier pigs. "The main stressful point around pig production is weaning, and zinc oxide and infeed medication are used around this time. You see a very strong relationship between the presence of pathogenic bacteria, like E. coli in the gut of the pig and the levels of diarrhoea. What we are seeing with acidified cereals is an increase in the beneficial bacteria, like Faecalbacterium, and a reduction in pathogenic bacteria in these weaned pigs."

NATIVE BEANS

In a parallel study, in conjunction with SFI Biorbic Centre and Adesco, Professor O'Doherty along with Shane Maher (PhD student) has been researching native beans as an alternative protein source for pigs. The vicia faba, also known as the broad bean, fava bean, faba bean, field bean, bell bean, or tic bean, performs well in the Irish climate as the crop is tolerant of wetter conditions and cool summer temperatures. In dry seasons and on light soils, beans can suffer from drought.

"We have been using native beans as a protein source in place of soya bean meal and it's been going quite well. Beans haven't been used to a major extent in Ireland, mainly because soya beans always worked." According to Teagasc, annual production has increased from 3,000ha to 11,000ha in recent years aided by a protein crop support scheme. "Beans are 27-29 per cent protein, soya bean meal is about 48 per cent protein, so they are a good alternative source of proteins. "In the Biorbic project, we are looking at levels of beans that can be used along with the acidified cereals, and studying if can we use the organic acids treatment at harvest to improve the nutritional value of those beans."

WHAT ARE ANTI-NUTRITIONAL FACTORS?

Anti-nutritional factors (ANFs) are compounds present in foods that can reduce nutrient utilisation or food uptake, which leads to impaired gastrointestinal functions and metabolic performance.

Source: Nutritional Composition and Antioxidant Properties of Fruits and Vegetables, 2020 Amit K. Jaiswal

Can we expect to see organic acid-treated cereals used across Ireland? "For an industry to take it up, they like to see a lot of evidence. When I began looking at this work, I hoped to

get the same performance from treated grain as dried grain. However, to my surprise, we are getting in the region of 6-7kg increase in body weight at slaughter from organic acid-treated cereals and we are also reducing the carbon footprint of pork."

CARBON FOOTPRINT

Acidified cereals and native beans meet another objective of the research: finding alternatives that have a lower carbon footprint. "You aren't using kerosene to dry the cereal, instead you are preserving the cereal using an organic acid blend, so you are lowering the carbon footprint for pig production. We are seeing a 10-15 per cent reduction in carbon footprint. That's a huge advantage in working towards our carbon neutral goals." According to Teagasc, more than 1.2 million tonnes of imported protein feed could be displaced by native beans which would contribute hugely to our efforts to reach our climate targets. "Soya beans are grown in the US, Brazil and Argentina so they have to be imported and that's a huge carbon footprint. We would expect the beans to be grown here which will have a major impact on our carbon footprint. They can also be a source of protein for ruminants - anything that will reduce our carbon output. The effect on the carbon footprint of pork on an acidified cereal and bean diet is massive, you could be talking about a 50 per cent reduction."



INFECTIOUS DISEASES ARE OF GREAT ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE IN COMMERCIAL PIG PRODUCTION, CAUSING CLINICAL AND SUBCLINICAL DISEASE THAT RESULT IN PRODUCTIVITY LOSSES, REDUCED WELFARE, AND DRIVES THE USE OF ANTIBIOTICS ON FARM. VACCINATION, WHEN CORRECTLY APPLIED, HAS BEEN SHOWN TO REDUCE THE LEVEL OF THESE ADVERSE FINDINGS, WRITES MAUREEN PRENDERGAST, VETERINARY TECHNICAL MANAGER, MSD ANIMAL HEALTH

Porcine circovirus type 2 (PCV2), and *Mycoplasma hyopneumoniae* are two pig pathogens with a worldwide distribution. Studies in Europe show that PCV2 is endemic in 100 per cent of farms while the figure for *M. hyopneumoniae* for Irish farms, north and south, is around 70 per cent.

DISEASE CHALLENGE

PCV2 disease, also called 'wasting' in growing pigs, causes variable signs but pigs may have a cough, raised temperature, diarrhoea and increased mortality. Affected pigs may look thinner and 'hairier' than their mates but not all pigs will have outward signs of disease. PCV2 infects white blood cells resulting in immunosuppression and increased susceptibility to other viral and bacterial diseases. This impaired immune response can also impact the effectiveness of vaccination programmes in young pigs. Recently, the reduction in antibiotic use has highlighted issues with reproductive performance in sows, seen mainly as poor farrowing rates. Testing shows that some of these sows are infected with PCV2. An increase in the return to oestrous, reduced farrowing rate and an unexpected increase in weak born piglets should flag the consideration of PCV2, along with porcine

reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS), leptospirosis and porcine parvo virus infections as a cause, especially in gilts. *M. hyopneumoniae* disease (enzootic pneumonia) usually results in chronic coughing, a low grumbling pneumonia and reduced performance in growing pigs. Transmitted by nose-to-nose contact, affected pigs remain infectious for up to 200 days and can take, on average, five days longer to reach slaughter weight compared to unaffected animals.

Both PCV2 and *M. hyopneumoniae* are very significant players in porcine respiratory disease complex (PRDC), along with PRRS and swine influenza virus. The respiratory disease complex refers to the interaction of infectious agents, immunity, environment and management conditions that can result in pneumonia in pigs. Damage caused by respiratory disease also allows infection of the lungs by bacteria such as Pasteurella, *Haemophilus parasuis*, Streptococcus and *Actinobacillus pleuropneumoniae*.

PROTECTION THROUGH VACCINATION

Thankfully, PCV2 and *M. hyopneumoniae* are also the diseases that are most commonly vaccinated against. In Ireland, the vaccination rate in piglets against PCV2 is approximately 95 per cent and for *M. hyopneumoniae* is

approximately 73 per cent. Although most farms will already be vaccinating against these prevalent diseases, it is worth reviewing the importance of effective protection.

Because of the way that these diseases interact with other issues on farm, PCV2 and *M. hyopneumoniae* vaccination should be considered the foundation of herd health. For farms wishing to reduce the use of antibiotics, this is especially important.

Piglets are commonly vaccinated against

PCV2 and M. hyopneumoniae at around three weeks of age. Vaccines are available individually and in combination. Combination vaccines (such as Porcilis PCV M Hyo) are convenient, labour-saving and can minimise pig handling and stress. This combination vaccine is mostly used as a single 2ml dose from three weeks of age but can also be given as a split dose from three days of age to provide protection in the event of poor maternal immunity and an early disease challenge. Onset and duration of immunity post-vaccination varies between the different commercial vaccines, so always speak to your vet about the vaccination schedule that is best for your farm.

Many farmers express concern that vaccination can temporarily affect performance and piglets can be 'knocked back'. It is always best to use vaccines that are licensed for use together and they have been proven not to interact adversely. Farmers in Ireland have been successfully using this combined PCV M Hyo injection on Irish pig farms for the past eight years because of the very significant improvement in pig performance that it has been proven to produce.



NEW APPOINTMENT TO MSD ANIMAL HEALTH PIG TEAM

Aidan Byrne has recently joined the pig team at MSD Animal Health covering the region south of Galway in the west and Dublin in the east. Based near Birr, Co. Offaly, Aidan was previously a farm manager with Rosderra for 10 years and brings a wealth of practical experience to his new role. Commenting on his appointment, he said: "I can't wait to get out and about with customers and on farm, supporting the product range."

Pictured left: Aidan Byrne and Laura Boyd from MSD Animal Health, with Trevor Shields, winner in the Large White Class and owner of the Interbreed Pig Champion at the Balmoral Show.

OTHER DISEASES

Although PVC2 and M Hyo are Ireland's most widely used vaccines in growing pigs, many farmers also routinely vaccinate against other diseases such as porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS). Like PCV2, PRRS is a viral disease that contributes to PRDC, but it can also have a profound effect on the piglet's immune system, acting as a gateway to other viral and bacterial diseases. Vaccination with Porcilis PRRS can be given concurrently with Porcilis PCV M Hyo where this is needed.

Porcilis PCV M Hyo now has the added advantage that it can be mixed with Porcilis Lawsonia, which is used to reduce diarrhoea, weight loss, bacterial shedding and mortality associated with Lawsonia intracellularis, the cause of lleitis in pigs. It has been proven to give effective protection against all three diseases in a single shot, giving farmers peace of mind that there will be no interactions or reduction in efficacy.

Vaccination is an economic decision as well as a welfare decision.

Effective protection against common diseases has been proven to benefit production metrics and allow growing pigs to reach their genetic potential. Your vet will advise which vaccines can deliver the level and duration of protection that is right for your farm.

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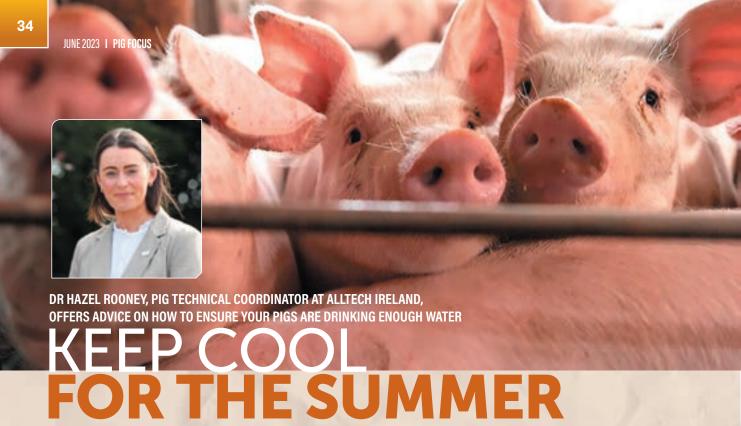
Always read the complete package leaflet or SPC before use. Porcilis PCV M Hyo suspension injection for pigs contains: Porcine circovirus type 2 (PCV2) ORF2 subunit antigen and Mycoplasma hyopneumoniae J strain inactivated. Porcilis Lawsonia contains inactivated Lawsonia intracellularis strain SPAH-08. Withdrawal periods: zero days. Legal categories: ROI POM NI POM-V Further information is available from your Veterinary Practitioner or MSD Animal Health

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LBU-S-121-23 MAY 2023



Pigs require water for several processes, such as growth, reproduction, the proper function of cells, maintaining body temperature, and transporting nutrients into the body tissue. Water is the single most important nutrient to a pig's welfare, yet it can often be taken for granted and its quality can sometimes be neglected. Water is also the most consumed nutrient in terms of amounts throughout a pig's lifetime, so it's important to provide enough. Pigs will not reach their maximum growth potential without continuous access to clean drinking water, so the quantity and quality of water are important in all stages of production. The water requirements of pigs are primarily associated with body weight and feed intake. Pigs tend to drink about 10 per cent of their bodyweight per day, or roughly twice the amount of feed they eat. The daily water requirements for pigs are shown in Table 1 below.

Production stage	Water requirement (litre/pig/day)
Nursery pigs (up to 27kg BW)	2-5
Grower pigs (27-45kg BW)	5-12
Finisher pigs (45-120kg BW)	7-12
Non-pregnant gilts	12
Gestating sows	12-25
Lactating sows	10-45
Boars	12-20

Table 1. Daily water requirements for pigs in all stages of production.

To ensure that a pig's water requirements are met, we must consider the following:

- ▶ Water quality;
- ► Water flow rate and pressure; and
- ► Feed form and feeder type.

WATER QUALITY

- ➤ The water systems in your piggery must supply good-quality, fresh water. In general, the quality of the pig's water can be determined by measuring the presence of the following organic and inorganic elements:
- ▶ Total bacterial count: Water contamination by bacteria is estimated by measuring the level of coliforms per millilitre of water. A total bacterial count of 50 colony-forming units (CFU) per millilitre is considered good. If coliform levels are higher than 100 CFU/ ml, a chlorine treatment is recommended.
- PH: Water pH ranging from 5.5 to 8.5 is considered acceptable. If water is too acidic (lower than 5.0), it can create corrosion and damage pipes and waterlines; on the other hand, a basic pH (higher than 8.5) can leave scaly deposits.
- ► Hardness: Calcium and magnesium are the two predominant minerals that make water hard. In pig production, hard water can contribute to the formation of scale deposits. The optimal water hardness in pig production is below 60 parts per million (ppm) of calcium carbonate (CaCO_a).
- ➤ Total dissolved solids: Total dissolved solids (TDS), also known as water salinity, are

- the amounts of soluble salts and minerals dissolved in the water. Contaminants are usually measured in parts per million. Most of the time, the amount of minerals or salts dissolved is well within acceptable ranges, but sometimes very high levels can damage performance or equipment.
- Nitrates and nitrites: Nitrates and nitrites are usually present in the water on a pig farm because the water supply is exposed to materials with high nitrogen levels, such as animal waste, nitrogen fertilisers, or



decomposing organic material. Especially in monogastric animals, nitrites are 10 times more toxic than nitrates. Levels as low as 0.10 mg/L of nitrites can impact performance in pigs.

Good water quality starts by implementing a programme for testing water. Test both ends of each water line in the unit at least twice a year. Water lines should be cleaned regularly to prevent biofilm buildup, which can be a considerable source of microorganisms in the water. Keep in mind that special measures need to be taken in cleaning the lines, as chlorine-based disinfectants have little to no effect on biofilm. Cleaning the water lines will also increase the efficiency of chemicals used via water.

WATER FLOW RATE AND PRESSURE

To ensure that your pigs' daily water requirements are met, the water systems on your unit need to provide an adequate flow rate for each stage of production. The recommended water flow rates for nipple drinkers are shown in Table 2, and it's important that these guidelines be followed, because having a low flow rate increases a pig's time spent at the drinker, while an overly high flow rate increases water wastage. Water flow rates can easily be measured with a stopwatch and plastic bottle as follows: place a one-litre plastic bottle or container underneath a drinker on your unit and, using the stopwatch, record how long it takes for the bottle to be filled. This will determine the

flow rate of the drinker, and you can adjust as necessary.

Water pressure also influences the activation of water delivery devices by the pigs and the amount of water wastage. The recommended water pressure to facilitate drinker activation while controlling water spilling is 20 psi.

Production stage	Flow rate (litre/minute)
Nursery pigs (up to 27kg BW)	0.5
Grower pigs (27-45kg BW)	1
Finisher pigs (45-120kg BW)	1
Gestating sows	1
Lactating sows	2
Boars	1

Table 2. Recommended flow rates for nipple drinkers for pigs according to their life stage.

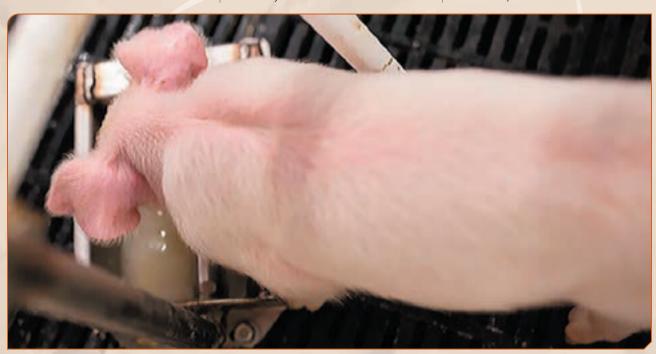
FEED FORM AND FEEDER TYPE

Feed form and feeder type can influence a pig's water intake. For example, water consumption is greater for pigs that are fed meal diets compared to pellet diets, resulting in a similar water-to-feed ratio when accounting for differences in feed efficiency between the feed forms. Wet-dry feeders reduce water wastage compared to dry feeders and waterers.

ON-FARM CHECKLIST

Here is a quick checklist of things to consider if you are experiencing issues with low water intakes in your herd:

- ➤ Temperature: Have you checked the temperature of the water? Like humans, pigs prefer water to be cold and fresh, and the temperature of the water can affect intake.
- ► Flow rate: Have you measured the flow rate of the drinkers to ensure that it's not too low or too high?
- ➤ Water pressure: Have you checked the water pressure to see if it's approximately 20 psi?
- Quality: Have you sent any water samples to an accredited lab to be tested? This can help identify issues such as high salt levels and microbial and bacterial counts and poor water pH. Have you any issues with water hardness on the unit? Hard water can result in the accumulation of scale in the water system, causing nipple drinkers to become blocked.
- ► Hygiene: Is the water coming from the drinkers clean? Would you drink the water that the pigs are getting?
- Access: Have the pigs got continuous and unobstructed access to clean, fresh, cold water? Access to plenty of clean drinking water is fundamental for pigs, and the quality of the water can directly affect performance and productivity. By implementing a programme that monitors and maintains proper levels of water quality and by carrying out proper equipment maintenance, pig producers can avoid costly problems that can negatively affect the performance of their herd.





PROFILE: THE IRISH PIGHEALTH SOCIETY

THE IRISH PIG HEALTH SOCIETY (IPHS) IS STILL EMPHASISING ITS FOUNDING PRINCIPLES AFTER 53 YEARS. HERE, THOMAS GALLAGHER, IPHS PRESIDENT, OFFERS AN OVERVIEW IF THE SOCIETY'S COMMITTEE AS IT CURRENTLY STANDS, WHICH REFLECTS A WIDE RANGE OF EXPERTISE WITHING THE INDUSTRY

Established in 1969 with the aims of supporting the Irish pig industry, disseminating relevant information to the sector and promoting new ideas of value to pig production, the IPHS holds an annual symposium and trade fair to accommodate face-to-face interaction among its members. The diverse makeup of the society is reflected in the IPHS Committee, led by current President Thomas Gallagher. Thomas works with MSD Animal Health Ireland and holds an honours degree in Agricultural Science from UCD. Subsequently, he completed an Executive MBA with the Smurfit Business School. Thomas is a Business Unit Director at MSD Animal Health.

James Luttrell is the vice president of IPHS. The Laois man holds a BSC in Agricultural Science from WIT, now the South East Technological University. James has been working as a pig nutritionist for the past five years with Devenish, having previously worked with Alltech.

Alltech's Hazel Rooney also holds an officership as treasurer of IPHS. An Animal Science degree recipient with first class honours from UCD, Hazel undertook a PhD in swine nutrition from UCD and the Teagasc Pig Development Department, during which she researched maternal feeding strategies during sow gestation and lactation. Again, her background and role as Pig Technical Coordinator with Alltech fits perfectly for her involvement in the Pig Health Society. The Secretary of IPHS is Shane McAuliffe. From a large-scale pig farm in Kerry, Shane holds a Masters in Pig Health from the Royal Veterinary College of London. He has had a varied career to date, working with Animal Health Ireland, Interchem, and Easyfix, before taking up a role with AHV Ireland, As Head

of Swine with AHV, Shane regularly lectures internationally and provides consultancy services to companies across the world. He is also secretary of the Irish branch of the European Pig Producers (EPP) organisation; is a member of the Irish Farmers' Association's National Pigs and Pigmeat Committee; a member of World Animal Protection's 3Ts Alliance; and a member of the Pig HealthCheck Implementation Group.

TIES WITH TEAGASC

Teagasc is closely involved with IPHS and has a dedicated liaison appointee to the IPHS Committee. Amy Quinn, who has a range of academic qualifications including a BSc in Zoology, an MSc in Ecological Assessment and a PhD from the University of Warwick and Teagasc, brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her IPHS involvement. Since 2013, she has been employed by Teagasc as a Pig Development Officer with the Pig Development Department (PDD) providing an advisory, knowledge transfer and education service for Irish pig producers in order to enhance the sustainability of Irish pig meat

production. Amy also coordinates the PDD education service, PDD events and the Teagasc PDD corporate website and is the editor of the stakeholder newsletter.

COLLABORATION

The IPHS is very much a collaborative cross-industry grouping. Industry advisors on the committee include Martin Tighe of Univiv, where he works as an independent consultant scientist and founder of Univiv Ltd. Martin's qualifications in Chemistry, Nutrition and Integrated Health make him a valuable addition to the IPHS coordinating committee. He previously worked in agriculture and fisheries research in Iceland for six years and then changed career to focus on pharmaceutical product development. Martin has also contributed to novel technologies for oral drug and nutrient delivery in fields including rare diseases and oral insulin. Since 2011, he has worked with a range of natural chemistries that show promise as anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-oxidant and antiinflammatory agents. Univiv develops and manufactures a range of health products for ruminants, swine, poultry and aquaculture.

HEALTH FOCUS

Carla Gomes brings another international dimension to IPHS. She graduated as a veterinary practitioner from the University of Porto, Portugal, and worked in a small animal practice while studying for an MSc in Veterinary Public Health in Lisbon Technical University. Carla then lectured in Epidemiology and Public Health at the University of Porto and completed a PhD in Salmonella in pigs, specialising in risk characterisation and modelling of disease transmission within a herd. She moved to Scotland in 2012 to work for the Epidemiology Research Unit at Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). Currently, Carla works with Animal Health Ireland (AHI) as the Programme Manager for the Pig HealthCheck Programme, an AHI-led programme co-funded by pig producers and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) with the aim of improving the profitability and sustainability of the Irish pig industry through improved animal health.

Another IPHS committee member is Jessica Connolly who has been working with JMW Farms since 2018, where she began working part-time on a 2,500-sow breeding site. She worked there until she completed her undergraduate degree in agriculture and then she took up a role as research and development coordinator, running various trials across all aspects of the business, from sows to finishers. Since completing her undergraduate degree, she has undertaken a MSc degree through University of Glasgow on a part-time basis, studying animal nutrition, specialisng in monogastrics.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Head of Pigmeat and Poultry for Bord Bia, Peter Duggan leads and manages the implementation of the organisation plans for these categories in response to sectoral developments. Peter has spent over a decade working with client companies and key stakeholders in his current position. From a farm in Co. Laois, he is an advocate for supporting farm families and food producers that help to contribute towards a vibrant rural economy.

PRODUCTION

Completing the IPHS committee membership are two pig producers. Tom Sherman farms near Mallow, Co. Cork, where he keeps his dam-bred sows in a fully integrated unit. Tom is also on the IFA's Southern Region Pig Committee and recently joined the Irish Pig Health Society (IPHS) committee as a farm representative.

Hannah Ryan is from a pig and dairy farm in South Tipperary, where she works alongside her father Charlie Ryan in an integrated unit. Hannah originally studied at Waterford Institute of Technology and, having completed her Green Cert, she is now studying pig production. Hannah spends most of her time between the farrowing rooms and completing office work for the farm. Hannah also works part-time in healthcare in her local hospital.



The Irish Pig Health Society Committee



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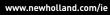
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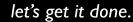














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I want to extend a very warm welcome to our pre-show focus of this year's Farm **Tractor and Machinery Trade Association** (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show, which will take place in Punchestown, Naas, Co. Kildare, on July 5-6.

Here, we offer a taste of what to expect at the show, plus the latest machinery news, reviews and upcoming trends.

In addition, on page 58, Michael Farrelly, executive director of the FTMTA, chats about the upcoming show and the importance of the industry to Ireland's farming communities and overall economy. We also look back on the very first FTMTA Farm Machinery Show, which took place in February 1989 against a backdrop of skepticism from certain quarters at the time. The success of event continues to this day with plans for a February show to return in 2024.

Looking at wider industry issues, on page 56 Bernie Commins reports on the importance of encouraging recruitment and promoting career opportunities in the farmmachinery sector, while on page 64 David

Leydon at Ifac outlines the employment challenges for agri-contractors and advises on ways to minimise risk.

Elsewhere, Bobby Miller, chair of the Irish Grain Growers, offers some insight into the main driving forces behind choosing tillage equipment; the hot topic of autonomous machines is discussed on page 62; and readers will find all the latest news from leading manufacturers and distributors.

The aim of this month's FTMTA Farm Machinery Show focus is to whet your appetite for the event in July and keep readers up to speed on developments in the trade. We hope you enjoy the content and if you haven't already booked your tickets, or your stand space, for what promises to be an excellent and exciting show, visit www.ftmta.ie for full details. We look forward to seeing you all there.

Until next month, farm wisely and farm safely.

Noel Dunne

Machinery editor, Irish Farmers Monthly



Kverneland's most recent addition to its tedder range is the high-capacity 85156 C tedder. With close to 16m working width and 14 rotors, it is designed with high output and excellent crop quality a priority, according to Kverneland. All elements of the 85156 C are dimensioned with intensive usage in mind, focusing on providing more productivity and reduced downtime for all silage conditions, the company says. The tedders continue Kverneland's focus on silage quality, with the small diameter rotor ensuring maximum drying potential is realised.

"By increasing drying speed, we aim to secure a high-value nutrition content," says John Doyle, product manager, Kverneland Group Ireland. "Ideally we hope to get the best possible result within the shortest timeframe."

The 14 small-diameter rotors of the 85156 C are designed for maximum spreading quality across the full working width of the tedder. The rotor design provides a generous overlap between the rotors, giving an efficient pick-up and turning of the crop. All Kverneland tedders feature the Super-C tines, made from 10mm spring steel of equal length. This gives the

added advantage that the load is spread evenly on both tines, providing longer lifespan of the tines. For heavy conditions, the angle of the rotor can be set aggressively while for fragile crops, a gentler angle can be chosen. This versatility also allows farmers to adapt to changing weather conditions, ensuring their crops dry evenly and efficiently.

One particular feature on the full tedder range offered is the positioning of the rotor gearbox on the frame, which means reduced stress on the tedder frame.

Another important feature, according to Kverneland, is its reputation for durability. All Kverneland machines are built with highquality materials, premium steel frames, reinforced tines, and heavy-duty gears and bearings, which make them resistant to wear and tear. Additionally, the tedders are equipped with maintenance-free driveline and rotor heads, greasing points are kept to a minimum, while border tedding comes as standard. Large wheels and tires provide excellent manoeuvrability, even on rough terrain. Importantly, for such a large working width, the tedder folds into a transport width below 3m and is driven like a trailer on the road following behind the tractor.







NEW HOLLAND'S METHANE POWER PROTOTYPE TRACTOR WINS PRESTIGIOUS DESIGN AWARD

The New Holland T7 Methane Power, liquefied natural gas (LNG) prototype tractor recently won the 2023 Green Good Design Award, which is bestowed by the Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design and The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and **Urban Studies.** Together, they identify and emphasise the world's most important examples of sustainable design, with the aim of heightening awareness among the general public about the best efforts of global companies to adopt sustainable design. From architecture and landscape to urbanplanning projects, products, packaging and graphic designs, the institution receives hundreds of submissions from around the world. For 2023, projects from over 32 nations were granted Green Good Design 2023 awards, representing the world's most important manufacturers and design firms and leading Fortune 500 corporations focused on more sustainable design and environment worldwide.

The T7 Methane Power is the world's first LNG tractor, which builds on the heritage of the commercialised T6 Methane Power, fuelled by compressed natural gas, but this new model will more than double the autonomy of New Holland's current methane-powered

Founded in Chicago in 1950 by Eero Saarinen and Charles and Ray Eames, the Good Design programme remains the oldest and most important design awards programme worldwide. This is the 15th year of this very specialised edition of the original Good Design programme and it is judged by a jury of distinguished design professionals and leading industry specialists, recognising outstanding examples of green design.

products, according to the company. CNH Industrial's in-house design team created a tractor with a new 'clean blue' colour and an

aesthetic designed to accent the tractor's use of sustainable alternative fuels. Inspired by nature itself, the all-new exterior features fit with the brand's new signature design style, which can be seen in the reimagined bonnet with the illuminated New Holland iconic leaf, according to New Holland. A brand-inspired approach to lighting has been adopted, with the New Holland's leaf lending its form to the lighting design. From illuminated bonnet and C-pillar leaves to the LED running strip which wraps around the cab's rear roof, lighting has been transformed from a function to a core design element. The tractor's cab incorporates a full-length skydome roof for enhanced visibility and a greater sense of space. Operating features include the innovative SideWinder Ultra armrest, the new larger IntelliView 12 touchscreen, and the CentreView fixed hub steering wheel-mounted display, combining to make operation intuitive. Ergonomically-shaped seats in leather and Alcantara, with contrasting stripe and embroidered logo, look sporty but provide the comfort and support operators need. New Holland says that the T7 Methane Power LNG prototype is a step forward on the path towards its carbon-neutral strategy. It can be powered by liquefied biomethane sourced from livestock manure and slurry, delivering better than carbon-zero operation.

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McHale will have a selection of wrappers on display at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show in Punchestown, along with a wide range of other machinery for both the farmer and contractor. This range has recently expanded, according to the company, to include mowers, rakes and balers, but wrapping is still the main priority for the company that has been a key player in wrapper development for the last 30 years. One of the McHale highlights is the fully automatic V6760 baler, which is the highest-spec machine in the V6 range, which is Isobus compatible with the option of using McHale's ISO-PLAY 7 or ISO-PLAY 12 terminals, to allow the operator to experience the highest level of customisation and machine performance. Building on the current V6 range, McHale has added the following features to the V6760:

► PROFI-FLO PICK-UP

McHale has created its highest output pick-up for the V6760. The new Profi-Flo pick-up has been designed to increase crop intake through more efficient crop flow and has been engineered to ensure end users are operating with a high-performance pick-up that is designed to suit various working conditions.

The new tapered feed channel encourages the crop to flow from the pick-up, towards the rotor and into the bale chamber, maximising throughput. To reduce maintenance, all Profi-Flo pick-ups are fitted with a heavier driveline which reduces chain load and increases chain life.

Customers can choose between a five-tine bar cam track pick-up or, the optional, 6-tine bar camless pick-up which has increased in width. Behind the tines, customers will notice a number of changes to improve the flow of crop into the chamber. The newly designed lateral feed augers direct the crop into the large diameter rotor which allows for maximum throughput. McHale has also introduced the Adaptive Intake which has been specifically designed to allow the intake area to automatically adjust up and down to changes in material flow. The design of this intake area has a number of advantages: it automatically adjusts to the volume of crop, which allows the machine capacity to be maximised in light and heavy rows/swaths; the intake area automatically adjusts to allow the machine to better handle uneven and lumpy rows/swaths; better crop intake; and less chance of blockages occurring.

▶ 1,000RPM GEARBOX

A 540rpm gearbox is equipped on the V6760 as standard. To optimise machine performance, a 1,000rpm gearbox is available as an optional extra, which provides the following advantages: the 1,000rpm gearbox results in an increase in PTO speed with a substantially reduced torque; this reduces the sharp loads on the drive line, providing the clutch setting with 10 per cent more capacity which reduces the risk of blockages and provides more throughput; the option to select a lower PTO speed (if available) on

the tractor for easier restarts in the unlikelihood of blocking; and for lower tractor engine speeds and best fuel efficiency, the 1,000rpm gearbox can be run at an optimal speed range of 900-1000rpm.

► INTELLIGENT CHAMBER CONTROL

This increases the opening and closing speed of the chamber, which helps to contribute to higher productivity of the machine. The variable chamber opening height has also been adjusted to suit the bale diameter and increase the ejection speed of the bale for maximum output and operator comfort.

► ELECTRONIC VARIABLE DENSITY PRESSURE REGULATION This results in increased bale density, due to the higher loads exerted on the bale at optimum stages of the bale formation.

► LOAD CELL BALE SHAPE INDICATORS

These are fitted on each door lock and measure the bale load on each side, and displays accurate bale shape feedback to the operator.

► HYDRAULIC BALE KICKER

This lowers or raises as the chamber door opens or closes, allowing the bale to be ejected with more momentum, clearing the door swing zone.

► NEW NET SYSTEM

This has a larger brake, allowing for 25 per cent more stretch, which improves performance when baling in high densities.

AUTO UNBLOCK

When connected to an Isobus tractor, the V6760 will auto unblock by lowering the drop floor automatically once the software detects a blockage. Once the operator restarts the PTO and the blockage clears, the drop floor will automatically rise to its original position.

► AUTOMATIC DROP FLOOR RESET

This comes as standard on the V6760 when using Isobus or an ISO-PLAY terminal. If a blockage occurs, the operator can press one button on the control console which lowers the floor. After the PTO is re-engaged and the blockage is fed through, the drop floor will automatically rise, and the knives will reset to their original position.

► AUTOMATIC KNIFE DROP FEATURE

This is available on the McHale V6760 and can be enabled by the operator using the control terminal in the cab. This allows the operator to chop the crop until the bale is almost complete, at which point the machine will automatically drop out the knives. Depending on the feeding method, this improves fodder distribution, keeping the bale neater when the net is removed.

► KNIFE CLEANING CYCLE

On the McHale V6760, to ensure effective operation and a consistent chop length is achieved, the operator can set a knife-cleaning cycle to run at desired intervals. This prevents the knives getting jammed when not used for prolonged periods.

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STARTING POINT

The very first Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show took place in February 1989 against a backdrop of skepticism from certain quarters within the industry who deemed the timing to be wrong, and who believed that attendances would be low. As we count down to the 34th biennial event, we look back on those earliest days when the concept became a reality

An Irish Farmers Monthly article written

after the first-ever show back in 1989.

The staging of the first biennial FTMTA Farm Machinery Show, which was opened by the Minister of Agriculture and Food at the time, Michael O'Kennedy, in February 1989, was the culmination of five years of dissatisfaction due to existing exhibition facilities and the changing nature of the farm machinery trade resulting in more complex technological advances, which called for a different, more specialised presentation.

The then FTMTA president, Geoff Daly, accompanied by Michael

Moroney, who was machinery editor of the Irish Farmers Journal at the time, travelled to the Netherlands in 1988 and met with the organisers of the Landbouw RAI agricultural machinery show in Amsterdam. The meeting provided advice on the requirements that would ensure a successful show. On returning home, a plan was put together, which resulted in a series of meetings with Irish trade representatives, and an agreement with the RDS to organise and manage the show at their indoor Simmonscourt Exhibition facility in Ballsbridge, Dublin, on behalf of the FTMTA.

Minister for Agriculture and Food; and the late John

Perry, JR Perry Ltd, Athy, Co. Kildare.

RIGHT TIME, RIGHT PLACE

For many years, the farm-machinery trade had been conscious of the need for an exclusive farm-machinery show at the right time of the year. The timing of this show in February provided an ideal opportunity for farmers and contractors to assess their machinery needs when the pressure on farm work was not at its greatest. It also provided farmers and contractors the local opportunity to view new equipment that would have been introduced previously at the large European machinery exhibitions. Timing was also influenced by the end of the financial year when customers made up their minds to avail of capital allowances



New Farm Machinery Show

THE NEW Farm Machinery
Show to be held in the
Simmonscourt Pavilion of
the RDS on February 6-8
next, is a positive move by
the Farm Tractor and
Machinery Trade Association to improve the marketing environment for the
machines their members
sell. Their point is that most

of the machinery on the market today is technically sophisticated requiring careful study and consideration before purchase, and accepting this, customers are no longer content to slog around a muddy site to meet a salesman in a draughty caravan.

An Irish Farmers
Monthly article
informing readers
of the new farm
machinery show
back in 1989.

in their tax bills. The February date also gave the farm-machinery trade an earlier indication of the machinery requirements of their customers so that supplies could be made available in good time for the new season. In order to stage the show, a separate company, FTMTA Exhibitions Ltd., was formed by the show committee, composed of Geoff Daly, Jim Larkin, Shay Lynch, Pat Lyons and chaired by the late John Perry.

FTMTA members initially expressed some skepticism about the show, considering the risk of failure too high and the market outlook uncertain. However, at the first show, 90 per cent of the available show space was filled, with an overall attendance of 9,000 which fully vindicated the organisers. The second FTMTA Machinery Show, held in 1991, was 100 per cent sold out with an attendance of 11,000 and the third biennial show, held in 1993, was even more successful, with the attendance rising to 13,500 and firmly establishing the FTMTA Farm Machinery Show in the show calendar.

Subsequent FTMTA Farm Machinery Shows, now held at the Punchestown Event Centre near Naas, Co. Kildare, have been equally well supported by the farm-machinery trade and have enjoyed continued rising customer attendances. And here we are, 34 years later!





KRONE PACKS A PUNCH WITH NEW FEATURES

The Krone Big Pack 1290 HDP II now boasts several new features that used to only be available on the Generation 5 Big Pack. These are, the company says, the well-proven PowerClean knotter fans and eight reliable Krone V-knotters that produce no scrap tail ends.

The Krone PowerClean is a hydraulic cleaning system that dusts not only the knotter bank but also other areas of the machine that are usually contaminated with debris. This is done by hydraulic turbines in the knotter bay that generate an overpressure which, in turn, prevents debris from depositing in the first place. The huge advantage of the unique system is that it produces a clean knotter bank that is considerably less prone to wear, Krone says. The Big Pack 1290 HDP II powers the PowerClean system hydraulically. The oil flow is supplied by the tractor's hydraulic circuit and load sensing system.

Knotting on the Big Pack 1290 HDP II now means there are no twine offcuts – thanks to the Krone V-knotter, an in-house development, which produces no scrap tail ends. The V-knotter offers the best of two worlds: the enormous reliability of the established Deering double knotter and the absence of offcuts of the Cormick single knotter.

Double knotters are indispensable on today's high-density balers. The additional challenge on the Big Pack 1290 HDP II is its extremely high throughput of up to 85 tonnes per hour (t/h), which increases the pressure inside the bale. Due to its high throughput and high bale densities, the Big Pack 1290 HDP II uses a patented system of eight double knotters that produce effective binding knots, which, even in extreme conditions, tie up bales reliably without producing scrap tail ends. Another advantage of the V-knotter is its modified functions, which produce a finishing Deering knot with longer tail ends that translate into stronger knots. The starter knot on the following bale is a Cormick loop knot where the ends are formed into a bow which increases the knot strength. The double knotter eliminates those unwanted offcuts and keeps fields and the knotter bank clean. The knife is now in a fixed position in front of the twine holding disc, the scraper lever is equipped with an extractor and thus pulls the remaining twine in a loop into the

starting knot. The knotter beak is open in a

V-shape, allowing the loop knot to be pulled

out downwards.





MAKING A BIG IMPACT

Krone launched two forage

harvesters in the high-end 980-

1,080 horsepower (hp) range last

September and you will get the opportunity to see just how 'Big' the X 980 and the X 1080 are at this summer's FTMTA Farm Machinery Show. Drawing on many years of experience in building high-output forage harvesters, the German company's most-recent models are in response to an increasing global demand in the 900hp to 1,100hp segment, the company says. The most powerful agricultural machine in the world, currently, is the whopping 1,156hp Big X 1180 which has performed exceptionally well in the market since its introduction back in 2018. This and the two new Big X 980 and 1080 models are powered by the hugely impressive Liebherr V12 engine. All models in the range are naturally compliant with Stage V and Tier 4f

Another strong selling point of these two new Krone foragers is the modified PowerSplit feature, which facilitates

emission treatment.

emission standards, the latter requiring only selective catalytic reduction (SCR)



customising the available engine power to current requirements at the touch of a button. When full engine power is not needed, PowerSplit allows operators to operate the Big X in the Eco-Power mode and in one of various output ranges that are selected to suit various conditions. The advantages of this technology are boosted efficiencies and a greater fuel economy. By comparison, in situations that require the full engine output, the operator selects X-Power. This can also be activated automatically and continuously variably from the various output levels – a technology that clearly increases operator comfort in daily operations. During the past few decades, Krone has developed innovations and unique features for forage harvesters, which are very useful and practical. One of the most outstanding features is the innovative crop flow assembly that consists of six pre-compression feed rollers, the massive chopping drum and the OptiMaxx 305 CornConditioner, which is the biggest of its kind. Thanks to its huge conditioning surface area it ensures intensive grain and stalk processing. Another unique feature is the VariStream system which consists of a spring-loaded floor beneath

the chopping cylinder and a spring-loaded plate behind the crop accelerator which combine to ensure blockage-free, smooth crop flows through the machine. The system allows operators to use the machine to its maximum capacity and reduce consumption rates per hour.

Krone VariLOC is a gearbox inside the pulley that drives the chopping drum that makes the Big X a versatile all-rounder. By easily reducing the drum speed from 1,250-800rpm, operators can increase the chop length by up to 50 per cent – an intelligent solution for quick changes from short to long chop length.

The new dual-purpose NIR Control sensor helps to measure and record nutrient levels in grass, maize and whole crop silage as these crops are being harvested. This sensor, which received several DLG awards, is suitable for use on a Big X and on a Zunhammer slurry applicator. And, last but not least, the new Big X 980 and Big X 1080 are equipped with SmartConnect, a standard telemetric unit that offers real-time collection and transmission of all machine data. The data can then be communicated to Krone SmartTelematics and/or transferred to a farm management system via the agri-router.



Vendro and KWT Tedders from 5.6m - 19.60m working widths, with 4 – 18 rotors to choose from.



Round tine arms with integrated tine savers provide superior strength in all directions.



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Krone OptiTurn Tines lift and spread the grass even in a heavy crop of grass.



For more information speak to your local Krone Dealer or contact Ben Buckley on +353 87 758 6746



JCB PROVES THAT SIZE REALLY DOESN'T MATTER

JCB's recent addition to its telescopic handler range proves that size really doesn't matter! Its compact 514-40 has been 'designed to go to places and get into spaces where no other telehandler can' according to the company, and with a height of just 1.8m and a width of 1.56m, it certainly has the capability to be a versatile machine! As well as being suitable for agricultural-related tasks, it is also a good fit in construction and landscaping sectors, and is at home at events too.

The telehandler is powered by a low maintenance 24.7hp (18.4 kW) diesel engine that meets the EU Stage V emissions standard without the need for a complex diesel particulate filter (DPF) or any diesel exhaust fluid, minimising operating costs for customers and simplifying operation.

This three-cylinder, 1.1L engine, which boasts 66.9Nm of torque, drives through a proven Bosch hydrostatic transmission to a two-speed Linde motor, delivering a maximum travel speed of 10mph (15km/h).

Permanent four-wheel drive and four-wheel

steering give the 514-40 the all-terrain capabilities synonymous with JCB's market-leading Loadall range, according to the company.

The maximum lift capacity is 1,400kg, while maximum lift height is 4m, making this an ideal machine for numerous industry sectors. Lift capacity at full reach is 525kg. With an unladen weight of 2,695kg, the machine boasts a 17 per cent higher power-to-weight ratio than the Loadall 516-40. However, the 514-40 newcomer can be transported on a lightweight 3.5-tonne trailer behind a 4x4 or a light commercial vehicle, making it easier, quicker and less expensive to move it between distant work locations.

The full width operator's cab is 20 per cent larger than the previous 516-40 and a full 200mm wider than competitor models to provide the operator with a comfortable working environment, while the extensive glazing delivers excellent visibility to all four corners.

The cab will be instantly familiar to operators of other Loadall models, with JCB's intuitive







Strautmann's new silage forage wagon, the Magnon 8 CFS series, boasts compact dimensions and intuitive features. according to the company.

So, if you are about to jump on that wagon, what can you expect? As well as advanced features such as Flex-Load pick-up and the Exact Cut Cutting Unit, it boasts a hydraulically swivelling front panel. This

powerful yet compact silage forage wagon offers a loading capacity between 36m³ to 44m³ (DIN [German Industrial Standard]), taking up less space than while offering more capacity than similar size wagons. "The three models 370, 410 and 450 come equipped with advanced features such as Continuous Flow System (CFS), Flex-Load Pick Up and Exact Cut allowing owners

greater autonomy over its operation," said a spokesperson.

"With an eye towards agricultural businesses that require reliable performance from their machinery in high demands surroundings, the Magnon 8 series is sure to be a welcome addition on many farms this coming year," the spokesperson added.

This powerful yet compact silage forage wagon offers a loading capacity between 36m³ to 44m³ (DIN), taking up less space than while offering more capacity than similar size wagons.

The Magnon 8 silage forage wagon is designed to maximise efficiency and capacity. Its hydraulic-powered front wall adjusts in three stages, as chopped grass builds up against the tailgate sensor pushing cargo space further back for a total of 4.5m3 extra loading potential regardless of original size or shape this ensures maximum density throughout transportation operations no matter how full the wagon becomes. Additionally, during unloading this same feature facilitates efficient release with its on command function from inside the cabin.



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TIME FOR A LIGHTER **TOUCH IN TILLAGE**

The need for more sustainable and environmentally friendly farming practices stretches all the way to the types of tyres we use on our machines they can make or break the soil beneath. It is with this in mind that BKT Tires has designed an extensive range of highquality tyre products that, it says, meets the specific needs of today's farmers, especially those involved in tillage.

"Fully in line with the trend of light tillage and soil preservation, BKT can offer numerous tire patterns for latest-generation tractors that enable farmers to transport heavier loads avoiding soil compaction," a company spokesperson explained.

First up is the Agrimax Force, which BKT describes as its high-end product, suitable for both harvesting and transport operations, enabling effective and productive soil tillage even on hard soil. Thanks to increased flexion (IF) technology, Agrimax Force can carry heavy loads at a lower inflation pressure compared to a standard tire, reducing soil compaction, according to BKT. It is a great tire for high-power tractors and combines that provides a comfortable driving experience, excellent traction, outstanding self-cleaning properties, as well as low-fuel consumption, the company says.

Its Agrimax Fortis tyre features a reinforced nvlon carcass, which, in addition to excellent traction and handling, it enables the transport of heavy loads even at high speeds of up to 65km/h.

The Agrimax RT 855, according to BKT, stands out for both excellent driving comfort and traction, as well as top self-cleaning properties that allow a rapid transition from field operations to road usage. It also provides exceptional flotation properties on the ground and is ideal for preserving crop productivity.



Designed to prevent soil compaction, there is the IF tyre, RIB 713. Compared to a standard tyre, the IF technology enables a larger contact area on the soil along with lower inflation pressure, while evenly distributing the weight. The steel-belted casing ensures excellent puncture resistance as well as protection against damages caused by stubble on the ground. With its D-classified speed rating, the tyre can withstand speed peaks of 65km/h on the road. BKT's range also includes Agrimax RT 765, RT 857, and AGRIMAX RT 657, described as 'extraordinarily resistant' tyres that provide excellent protection against punctures, cuts and stubble.

A LONG WAY TOGETHER



AGRIMAX V-FLECTO

No matter how challenging your needs, AGRIMAX V-FLECTO is your best ally when it comes to soil tillage and haulage applications. The tyre features excellent traction along with enhanced driving comfort both in the fields and on the road. With the exclusive VF technology, AGRIMAX V-FLECTO can carry very heavy loads with a lower inflating pressure even at high speeds providing reduced soil compaction, best self-cleaning properties as well as fuel economy.

AGRIMAX V-FLECTO is BKT's response in terms of both technology and performance for high-power tractors





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Bernie Commins spoke to Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade
Association (FTMTA) president, Karol Duigenan, and general manager
of Pöttinger Ireland, and former FTMTA president, Diarmuid Claridge
about employment challenges in the farm-machinery sector

There is no doubting the success of our indigenous agri-machinery sector across manufacturing, exports and imports, distribution and sales. According to the FTMTA, the farm-machinery industry in Ireland is worth in excess of €677m, annually, covering both new and secondhand machinery, along with parts and services; and our export market is worth in excess of €200m.

Many established family-run companies continue to develop, innovate and expand as younger generations take the reins.

Larger companies and, indeed, the bigger, global names that have set up in Ireland also perform well when it comes to recruiting staff with modern facilities, training opportunities, and a better work-life balance.

Despite employing more than 6,000 people, certain pockets of the industry are proving challenging to fill where jobs are concerned. FTMTA president, Karol Duigenan, says the association is working on ways to address and reverse this scenario, "We [FTMTA] used to be very focused on working to ensure better wages for staff, but post-Covid-19, the emphasis among staff doesn't seem to be just on money, it seems to be more about lifestyle [work-life balance]. Unfortunately, in our industry, we cannot always offer the kind of lifestyle as some jobs in other industries because there can be a lot of overtime, especially in the summer months. We are slowly adapting but in order to adapt [fully], we need to get the volume of staff up."

But this is a chicken-and-egg situation at the moment because, Karol says, the industry is not considered appealing right now, so attracting new staff to make seasonal conditions better for all staff is proving very difficult. The reasons for this are not new, and although wages may not be the main issue for people, they are still of concern. "There would be a lot of money turned over in the industry but it is not a very high-profit-margin industry compared to others. The demands during harvest time, on Saturdays and Sundays, are huge. Progression is another thing, and a lot of people can't see progression in their jobs, and in some instances, perhaps the rural locations of some places might put people off," Karol says.





SECONDARY SCHOOL INITIATIVE

Based on the above FTMTA stats, the foundation of the industry is strong but futureproofing it requires a degree of targeted action. "There is a vast array of jobs in the machinery trade, people might think it is workshop-based only but there are sales jobs, IT jobs, communications and media roles, jobs in marketing and accounts. We are changing tack to attract staff, but it takes time," Karol says. "We [FTMTA] are hoping to start an initiative soon where we will visit schools and promote the industry, we are hoping to have that ready for September 2023, if we can." This is a longer-term goal, he says, and as such, it will take some time to see the impact this will make but the FTMTA believes it is required. "We feel that apprenticeships are not promoted as much as other third-level courses [in universities and colleges]. That is not to say that we don't want third level graduates, we need them too, but we would like the machinery industry promoted more [generally]," he said.

FTMTA IINF 2023

THERE ARE HUGE CAREER LADDERS, IF YOU ARE A CAREER-DRIVEN **PERSON AND YOU WANT TO PROGRESS YOURSELF, IT IS ENDLESS**

EARN AS YOU LEARN

Pöttinger Ireland general manager, Diarmuid Claridge agrees with Karol, and is proof that successful career progression is possible via the dealer apprenticeship programmes that are available all around the country. "University wasn't for me. I tried it and didn't like it, but I knew that I always wanted to do what I am doing now, working with manufacturers at this level. So, I decided that I would do an apprenticeship, get in the door that way, and see if I could build myself up," Diarmuid says. And that is exactly what he did. "It shows that you can reach the top heights of a career by doing an apprenticeship, and the apprenticeship programme is really something that the FTMTA wants to highlight because our member firms who are dealers are really struggling to get mechanics and partspeople and salespeople right now." The apprenticeship programme combines college and work placement, and apprentices can earn as they learn, Diarmuid says. It is an ideal opportunity for many, but, he says, the programme requires additional government support. "The facilities for training agri-mechanics, for example, need to be updated," Diarmuid says. He fully supports the FTMTA's move to reach out to secondary schools. He feels that there is a culture in Ireland, generally, that views apprenticeships as being less attractive or less valued than the standard third-level undergraduate courses that are on offer in universities and colleges. "I think it is a perception that apprenticeships are not as good. But I know a lot of people who went to university, and they didn't like it, it is not for everyone. From an agri-mechanics point of view, we are probably looked upon as the 'dirtier ones'

dealing with the mud, the farmers, the oil. But as a career, you won't get better." And, he adds, the job today, in reality, is a lot cleaner than the perception. Although, he admits, some companies do need to look at their facilities and address some issues: "Some of the facilities are not great in certain places, no woman or man would want to work in some of them. Some business owners struggle to see that. There is this view that, 'ah it's agri-spec, so it's fine' but that is the problem. That [attitude] maintains the bad reputation sometimes."

But, Diarmuid says, if you are a careerdriven person, the world is your oyster. "There are huge career ladders, if you are a career-driven person and you want to progress yourself, it is endless," he says. "Agri-machinery is worldwide, you have manufacturers worldwide, you can go where you want. People study technology because they believe that is the future, but so is food supply, it will forever be the future, we can't live without it. Agriculture is the basis of food supply and while there is always going to have to be someone there to tend to the animals, there is always going to have to be someone there to tend to the machines that are producing the food." During the Covid-19 pandemic, the farm-machinery sector was an essential service and remained open for business, as it was deemed to be the backbone of the Irish agriculture and food-producing sectors. Its value, then, was recognised by the government and Diarmuid says he would like to see that value continued to be recognised by way of promoting it as a rewarding and successful lifelong career.



The farm-machinery industry in Ireland is a key cog in the overall workings of the agri-food industry and is central to the future of our farming communities. Its economic importance, the innovative solutions it offers and the career opportunities it holds are issues that FTMTA executive director Michael Farrelly is keen to highlight, alongside the existing challenges that need to be addressed: "Throughout Covid restrictions, there was supply chain disruption, which led to much longer delivery times. While we are seeing some light at end of tunnel regarding this, there are still some challenges out there. Because of the long supply timeline, machinery dealers had to get into pre-ordering machinery much earlier; that can lead to problems such as high stock levels. Anecdotally, I am seeing that while business in general is good for Irish dealers, there is a higher level of stock in the yard. However, the value of second-hand equipment is strong and that is very important for dealerships."

RECRUITMENT

"No matter who you talk to and what sector they are in, the biggest issue for everyone currently is recruitment, and it is no different for the machinery sector. There are serious staff shortages – right across the board, in every area, whether it is admin, welders or salespeople. But what we are very much focused on is a critical shortage of agricultural mechanics. We recently surveyed members on this topic and the results showed that there is a shortfall of approximately 600 qualified mechanics in the industry here in Ireland and that is having a huge impact. We are trying to liaise with all the relevant bodies to see if we can work in a joined-up way to

alleviate the pressure and attract more people into the industry. A lot of manufacturers are also running recruitment campaigns." Michael believes that it is also about telling the right stories, showcasing the possibilities and educating people on the career progression that is evident within the trade. "There are so many examples of key figures within the machinery world who started out as mechanics and are now in very senior roles. The industry is fast-moving and innovative – we need to showcase this better. And we need colleges offering tailored courses that the industry requires; if this happens, there will be huge support from the industry in terms of work placement and sharing knowledge from the sector. That kind of collaboration between industry, colleges and even schools is very important."

SHOWTIME

Traditionally, the FTMTA always ran a large indoor show in Punchestown during the winter months but during Covid restrictions this was not possible. "Last year we ran with a summer show and it was very successful for us, but our aim is to get back to where we were, with an indoor show in the winter that is out of sync with Agritechnica. In 2024 we hope to return to this and then have a Grass & Muck event the following year.

"We got great feedback from the public and exhibitors on our summer show last year and we are really looking forward to this year's event. The main comment from those attending last year was on the quality of the attendees and exhibitors; the right people were there. I think the strength of our show is that it is a machinery show and doesn't

try to be anything else. It is where the experts are. And I think that large manufacturers are being more choosey about attending shows in general. The FTMTA Farm Machinery Show is 100 per cent about farm machinery so it attracts the right people – attendees don't want to know how much a machine is, they already know that! They want to get into the technicalities. We need to remember that and make sure we don't ever lose sight that this is a machinery show and not a country fair. Some organisations run shows as a commercial enterprise; we certainly don't run them to lose money but our core reason for hosting the show is to benefit our members."

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

There is a huge amount of change happening within agriculture as a whole, being driven primarily by policies addressing climate action. Michael believes that the machinery sector should have a place at the table here and notes that interaction with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is fundamental to this. "I would estimate that the machinery industry in Ireland is worth over €1bn euro annually to the economy in terms of sales, and that is not even when you factor in all the other businesses that benefit from the industry as well; the tentacles of our dealerships reach far and wide and drive a lot of economic activity to rural areas.

"There needs to be much more interaction between the Department of Agriculture and us; the changes coming down the track for Ireland's agri-food sector are intrinsically linked to our machinery sector. For example, the push until recently was to go bigger and bigger with

horsepower but now, with a focus on the organic farming sector, there is a need for smaller equipment, which we would have been selling 15 years ago. Unless there is better engagement, there won't be the stock in the market to meet these requirements. Also, with TAMS, a lot is focused on the bigger tillage farmers in terms of precision farming but I think that everyone could benefit from precision ag so we should be making it more widely available to farmers.

"In addition, contractors are excluded from the TAMS grants and, while I can understand some of the reasons here, the reality of the situation is that most of the slurry and chemical spraying is done by contractors and there has to be very heavy investment in equipment. Should the Department be looking at other ways to incentivise contractors to help them invest in new technology?"

FUTURE OF FARMING

Concluding, Michael points to the innovation evident on farms today and comments on what is coming down the track: "Already, widely across Ireland we have robots milking cows; we have tractors that almost drive themselves with millimetre accuracy; and sprayers that can accurately apply inputs according to what is needed to minimise impact on biodiversity. This is game-changer stuff and there is so much more coming down the line. It is really exciting. What will be interesting to watch over the next five to 10 years is what can be gleaned from the big data that is being collected right now out in the fields. This information will drive the next steps."





Grassland specialist Pöttinger has once again tied up a colourful bouquet of innovations for the new season. The company's most recent mower combination combines high output with the best possible ground tracking and the greatest reliability thanks to intelligent technology, the company says.

The Novocat V 10000 is available with a headstock for 3m or 3.5m wide front mowers. This makes working widths of up to 9.62m and 10.02m possible. As an option, the Novocat V 10000 can be equipped with the proven Collector cross conveyor belt and Cross Flow auger for merging swaths. The Novocat V 10000, like its predecessor Novocat A10, is a front/rear combination that is exceptionally adaptable and convenient to operate thanks to an extensive electronics and hydraulics update: The hydraulic cylinders integrated into the booms shift the cutter bar by up to 370mm on each side. As a result, they ensure optimum overlap and perfect mowing quality on slopes, when cornering and on flat surfaces. The ground pressure automatically adapts to the working width. Optimum hydraulic weight alleviation guarantees soil conservation and the best forage quality. In addition, wear is significantly reduced, and fuel costs are lowered. This automatic adjustment system is available as an option on the Novocat V 10000. The patented Y Drive input gearbox features an output shaft on the opposite side. This has the advantage that longer standard PTO shafts can be used with less of an angle in operation. The result is exceptionally smooth operation and high performance, even in really tough conditions and at the headland. This new design extends service life significantly.

very latest Isobus-capable Select pre-select control system as standard. The job computer is located directly on the machine. An Isobus cable or the new Select Control terminal can be connected to the job computer. All functions can be preselected and then performed using the tractor's remote valves. Only one double-acting hydraulic connection is required. The control system allows the mower units to be lifted individually. Hydraulics are also used to fold the side guard (optional), adjust the working width and operate the transport interlock. The control terminal has an integrated maintenance indicator. This displays the next maintenance tasks (greasing points and oil change) that need to be carried out on the machine, depending on the hours worked. The second control option is the optional Isobus-compatible system. The Novocat V 10000 can be controlled either using an Isobus tractor terminal or the new third-generation Power Control, Expert 75, or the CCI 1200 control terminal. The hydraulic oil supply is via load sensing. With this control option, all functions such as individual lifting of the mower units, working width adjustment, side guard folding and transport interlock are controlled directly, with some integrated into automatic function sequences. A new feature here is Section Control activation, using the standard job computer. Another innovation is the optional automatic inclination system. In addition to these features, the new mower combination boasts the proven hydraulic NONSTOP LIFT collision safety device to protect the cutter bar, and the Novocat cutter bar, proven a thousand times in the field, with its quick-change blade system as standard equipment.

The Novocat V 10000 is equipped with the



A TOP ADDITION TO PÖTTINGER'S RANGE

The TOP 882 C has been a popular recent-enough addition to Pöttinger's range of centre-swath rakes. The TOP 882 C demonstrates its full capabilities at a working width of 7.7-8.8m. The longer boom allows very flexible swath width adjustment between 1.32.6m, and flexibility that offers the advantage of wider swaths for forage harvesters and narrower swath widths for small loader wagons. Despite the impressive rotor diameter of 3.7m, the transport height without removing the tine arms is still below 4m. The weight alleviation springs contribute to particularly smooth running and the best soil conservation. The large tyres on the chassis ensure optimum stability. With its unique, proven Pöttinger Multitast jockey wheel system, the five-wheel chassis delivers the best ground tracking and, as a result, less dirt ingress in the forage. The Multitast wheel tracks the ground immediately in front of the tines and responds to each undulation. It also greatly increases the size of the rotor's support triangle. This makes the rotors run even more smoothly and suppresses vibrations. On the TOP 882 C, the Flowtast glide bar is available as an option.





Replacing the rotor chassis wheels, this glide bar offers the best reliability in challenging ground conditions. Flowtast glides effortlessly over even deep ruts, holes, and wheel marks. The glide bar is especially suitable for soft and damp soil conditions.

The rake is extremely easy to operate. The required working width is set hydraulically. The lifting sequence can be individually adapted. The higher the setting, the larger the swaths that can be driven over without disruption. That is the best viable way to protect the forage. The lower the clearance height, the faster the height is reached at the headland and the more time is saved. For uniform lifting of the rotors, the machine is equipped with a flow splitter as standard. An individual rotor lifting system with electrical preselect for raking headlands and field borders is also available as an option. With the Toptech Plus rotor unit, Pöttinger continues to rely on proven technology. The TOP 882 C has a continuously adjustable cam track with the largest diameter of 420mm for raking a neat yet loose swath. The distinctive feature of the Pöttinger tines is that they pass just above the ground directly below tine carrier at only a slight angle. Even with large volumes of forage, they remain close to the ground and sweep up all the matter. The tines are angled forward in a dynamic position. Due to this shape, they actively lift the forage away from the ground - like a pitchfork. As more forage is collected, it rides up the tine unhindered. Dirt ingress and disintegration losses are minimised as a result.









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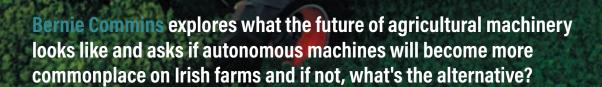
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THE RISE OF THE MACHINES



Flying fruit-picking robots; battery-powered telehandlers; hydrogen-combustion engines - the pace of change in relation to agricultural machines is astonishing. Machinery companies are constantly innovating to problem-solve for the farmer and the contractor. Developments in electrification, alternative fuels, data-fuelled precision agriculture, and autonomous machines are all playing a part in dealing with labour shortages, time shortages, environmental consequences, rising costs, and more.

A recently published report in the UK, entitled *The Future of Agricultural Machinery* featured some interesting commentary and observations from top industry professionals there. Looking specifically at tractors – obviously of great interest there and, of course, in Ireland – a common view expressed in the report is that bigger is no longer better.

"The sheer weight of the machines is

compacting the soil and diminishing soil health and their fuel-guzzling engines are also becoming an issue due to their environmental impact and increases in red diesel prices and regulations. Crucially, these big machines are not suited to precision work. They are designed to cover as much of the field as possible and as quickly as possible," the report stated. Some companies like New Holland and JCB are addressing the fuel-consumption concerns with the former launching the first-ever T6 methane-powered tractor, and the latter developing a hydrogen-gaspowered combustion engine. But what about the size issue?

SMALL AND AUTONOMOUS

The Hands-Free Farm at Harper Adams is a reasearch project that is farming 35 hectares of land using nothing but autonomous machinery with zero human input, the report states. Obviously, this farm is on a much smaller scale than most in the UK especially, and in Ireland,

but Kit Franklin, principal investigator of the Hands-Free Farm explains: "Our tractor is 40hp and the implements are two metres wide. I'm not sure what the optimum scale for the machinery is yet, but we do know you don't need to be using machinery of 600hp plus in the UK." Such machines, he says, are needed in North America where they are pulling equipment that is 30m long but not in the UK with 6m pieces of machinery at the back. Kit believes that the future involves lots of small, autonomous machines working across the farm.

Chris Wiltshire, who is the UK and Ireland marketing manager at John Deere says in the report: "Concepts such as autonomous tractors and machine electrification have been the talk of the farming community for years. But these ideas are evolving at such a rapid pace, the cutting-edge innovations being developed by the world's leading brands are coming sooner than you think." Belinda Clarke, from Agri-TechE, adds: "The mood music in agricultural machinery is that





we are all heading towards autonomy." But are we playing that tune here in Ireland?

LIMITED

Machinery editor of *Irish Farmers Monthly*, Noel Dunne, who is the only Irish member of the European Tractor of the Year judging panel believes that autonomy has a somewhat limited place on most Irish farms, specifically in terms of tractors, or other larger bits of kit. "On some tillage farms, maybe, and in horticulture, autonomy is growing, but with the standard size of farms and standard practice of farms in Ireland, I cannot see it fitting in on a mass scale." he says.

President of the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA), Karol Duigenan, agrees: "As far as I know, there is nobody in the bigger sectors using anything that is autonomous. Those who are getting into these machines would be the vegetable growers and fruit growers. You are probably seeing it in the amenities area too, with grass-cutting machines but not in tillage.

"The problem here in Ireland, unlike in the UK where you could have 5,000 acres or more in just one block, is that a farmer here who has 2,000 acres, is probably driving 40km to get to it all, as it could be in 30- or 40-acre blocks. The farmer here would have to drive the autonomous machine there, wait for it, and transport it home again." Unless you have a large land parcel, autonomous tractors or larger machines may not work so well here, he says.

'LET YOUR IMAGINATION GO WILD'

But Diarmuid Claridge, general manager of Pöttinger Ireland is open-minded about the potential of agri-machinery autonomy in Ireland. "If you let your imagination go wild for a minute and think of the craziest thing possible, it will happen. It might not be in your lifetime or in mine, but it will happen because that is the way things are progressing. If you go back 30 years, who would have ever thought that there would be a robot hoovering your house or mowing your lawn. Driving a car – whether it is lane assist or cruise control, you are so close to being fully autonomous.

"A lot can happen in 10 years, especially in this area of food production and with such food demand. We literally cannot feed the world as it is, so we will have to find ways of being more productive with fewer people and robotics is, without a doubt, going to come into play more in farming. They are already milking cows."

Diarmuid continues: "I think there will be autonomous tractors. People say that Ireland is too small, but I think it is only a matter of time. I think the landscape in 100 years' time will be very different to what it is today. As autonomy develops further, the requirement for high-horsepower tractors, in my opinion, won't be there.

"I think you might have smaller robots, like the size of a remote-control car, for example, and you might set down 12 of these in your field, and they will cover the field all night, and they will go back to a base station, collect their seeds and go off and plant their seeds. Or they will be doing the weeding in the field. I don't think that tractors will be the size that we have today, because we have to look at the soil health and prevent soil compaction, so there will have to be smaller machines."

WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

What is more of a priority for Irish farmers right now, Karol says, are alternative-fuel options and how soon they might be available, but it is very early days in this regard. "We are not developing the biogas, for example, on a large enough scale. There is a lot of talk about synthetic fuels [those with fossil-fuel properties but produced artificially] but whether these are viable is another thing." Currently, Karol says, diesel is still the only fuel in town and he doesn't see that changing in the next five to 10 years. "There is interest there [among farmers] but only if it can offer the same kind of performance as a dieselcombustion engine, but the availability of these alternative fuels, as well as the infrastructure to produce and store them is limited.

Noel references the recently opened Solar Capital Investment Scheme under the new Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS) 3. "What dairy farmers are telling me now is that if electric tractors start coming into play, if electric telehandlers start coming into play – and we have some there at the moment - if they can link into the grid for that electricity, it could be a way to go. "Currently, in the Irish market, there is only one electric tractor available - a 24hp Farmtrac tractor, which is no good to a dairy farmer now. But that's something that maybe could change in the future." TAMS 3, Noel feels is encouraging Irish farmers to buy more high-end pieces of equipment and kit, aiding the practise of precision farming, which for some farmers is more important right now than an electric, alternatively fuelled or autonomous tractor. Maybe less is more? Maybe smaller is bigger? Time will tell.



EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES FOR AGRI-CONTRACTORS

Hiring employees and building a team always involves a certain amount of risk. But there are steps that agricultural contractors can take to protect themselves, explains David Leydon, head of food and agri-business with Ifac

The starting point of all employee-employer relationships is the employment contract. Employers are legally required to provide employees with written terms of employment within two months of their start date. This document should include a job description, details of the pay rates, and hours to be worked. A well-drawn-up employment contract will ensure that your employees understand their rights and obligations and know precisely what is expected of them. The contract should also reference your grievance and disciplinary policy, setting out clear processes for resolving any disputes that may arise at a later date.





FAILING TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE POLICIES IS A SIGNIFICANT RISK TO YOUR CONTRACTING BUSINESS

EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

It is also a good idea to have policies that can act as a roadmap for day-to-day operations, providing guidance for decision making and streamlining internal processes. These policies should explain the expected standard of behaviour around issues such as health and safety and the use of social media in the workplace.

The recent trend of videos going viral on social media platforms like TikTok are a cause of concern for many employers. A policy that forbids the use of a mobile phone while operating machinery can help protect agricultural contractors against inappropriate or dangerous behaviour by their employees.

GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

Suppose an employee breaches their employment contract or engages in behaviour that is deemed inappropriate, substandard, or unacceptable. In that case,

it is crucial to follow the procedures set out in your grievance and disciplinary policy and ensure that any disciplinary action taken is proportionate and fair.

DOCUMENTATION AND TRAINING

Employment policies should encourage good behaviour, but they can only be effective if clearly communicated to your employees. It is difficult to hold employees accountable if they can argue that they were unaware of your policy. Increasingly, there is an onus on employers to have formal, documented policies in place and to provide training for their employees on these policies. Failing to implement effective policies is a significant risk to your contracting business if things go wrong and you end up in legal proceedings. Poorly drafted employment contracts and policies can result in adjudicating officers ruling against you and awarding hefty compensatory sums to your employees.



JOHN DEERE HARVESTLAB 3000 AVAILABLE ON S AND T SERIES COMBINES

John Deere is now offering its HarvestLab 3000 technology on its S and T Series combines. This, the company says, is 'expanding the use of near-infrared (NIR) sensor to four applications by enabling constituent analysis for grain and rapeseed. For several years the HarvestLab 3000 has been used for real-time analysis on forage harvesters, and to examine the value of manures and slurries. But the innovation has now expanded its use to include analysis of grain on John Deere combine harvesters.

HarvestLab3000 helps to measure important quality parameters in wheat, barley, and rapeseed in real time and continuously. In addition to moisture, the protein content of grains and rapeseed can now be determined. Furthermore, the starch content of barley and the oil content of rapeseed can be recorded. The sensor uses NIR spectroscopy to analyse various constituents within harvested crops. Since 2009, the various calibrations for the HarvestLab 3000 have been further refined, adding more samples from more crop types, varieties, and regions year after year, according to the company.

The sensor can process a 12 per cent wider wavelength spectrum for additional accuracy and provides more than 4,000 measurements points per second. Typically, this equals up to

one million measurements per load. All data is displayed and site-specifically documented in real time, allowing operators to adjust settings and enables automated machine optimisation while still in the field instead of waiting several days for laboratory results.

The addition of HarvestLab 3000 enables farmers to instantly know for certain whether wheat has hit milling specifications, or is destined for feed markets, allowing batches to be stored separately according to quality and marketed in a more targeted way. It also allows for better documentation of the harvest as the grain quality is recorded at each individual point in the field.

It will also compare varieties or validate machine settings and give an overview of which areas of the field have successfully converted nutrients into yield and protein/oil, so that operators can better plan fertiliser application for the next season.

The sensor is located on the combine at the bottom of the clean grain elevator, and before the grains enter the grain tank they are pushed directly in front of the HarvestLab 3000 with the help of a motor-driven auger.

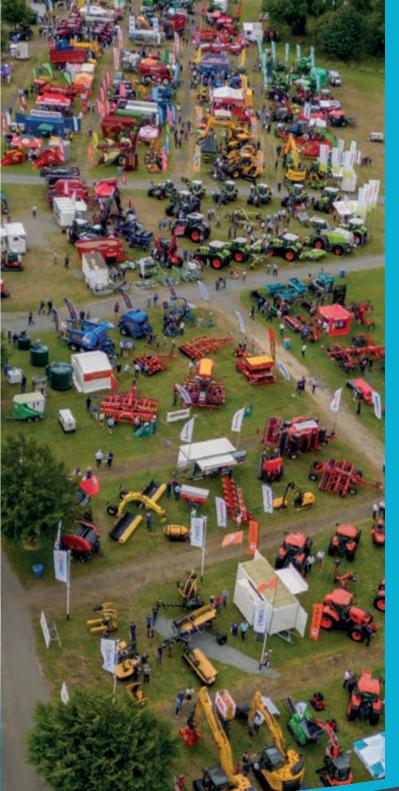
Together with the StarFire receiver, site-specific data can be generated on the on-board display, which can be automatically synchronised with the John Deere Operations Center via JDLink. This allows operators to

receive real time data in the cab while they are working for precise and accurate farming. Harvest results can be reviewed with features such as Field Analyser. It is also possible to connect the Operations Center with partner software to gain further insight or create application maps for future fertilisation. Simon Beddows is a farmer based on the north bank of the River Thames in Oxfordshire, who uses HarvestLab 3000 to manage 900 hectares. Simon started using HarvestLab 3000 after noticing his fields had large variability in soil types, with one field containing 16 different types of soil, which led him to become interested in precision agriculture.

Simon uses the HarvestLab 3000 on an S780 combine harvester and primarily uses the device for protein monitoring, and has now harvested two seasons using the sensor, producing protein maps of his fields for more precise farming. He is also involved in a project in collaboration with Reading University which uses the HarvestLab 3000 to analyse protein content in milling wheat.

"Using the HarvestLab makes sense in that it allows us to put the right amount of fertiliser in the right places to produce a more even crop," Simon said. "It's all about evening up the yield of your crop, which maximises your total yield from the field."





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Slovenian company, SIP, is one of the leading suppliers of heavyduty, grass-harvesting machinery with over 60 years' experience manufacturing a full range of mowers, tedders and rakes.

The company's machinery is distributed in Ireland by Meath-based Farmec, which will be exhibiting at this summer's Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show. Farmec tells us that the SIP Silvercut Disc 1500 and SIP AIR 900 T are currently out on demo and won't make the show, so here is a flavour of what these two machines have to offer, and if you want to find out more, then be sure to visit the Farmec crew at the show in Punchestown next month. The Silvercut Disc 1500, with a working width of 15m, is the largest production mower in its class, according to SIP, and with front mower combination, it has capacity to cut up to 200ha per day, satisfying the needs of the most demanding users, especially contractors. Specification features, according to Farmec, include flawless terrain adaption with hydropneumatic suspension; electronic steering axle, which enables more precise and faster steering; automatic central lubrication system; hitch suspension and much more, all combining to create a powerful, reliable and user friendly, big-capacity mowing combination. Because folding is a complex sequence of movements, due to its narrow

2.99m transport dimension, SIP developed a patented, innovative hydraulic system for easy and fast folding operation of the mower. SIP's AIR 900 T, with a working width of up to 9m, represents the cutting edge of swathing technology that prevents the swath from ash contamination, and so, provides high-quality forage. The SIP AIR concept combines the patented flexible pick-up with the cross-belt transporter to provide high-speed swathing performance. The camless flexible pick-up spring tines barely touch the ground to provide cleaner raking with significantly reduced crop contamination. The smaller diameter pick-up and its slow rotation enables better forage flow with zero turbulence and reduced leaf loss. Pick-up tine savers are standard equipment. The robust linkage with hydropneumatic float system follows the ground contours perfectly and provides excellent responsiveness to changes in ground conditions. Height control is provided by freely rotating disc supports, positioned close to the pick-up reel. The hydraulic drive enables perfect crop flow to either side of the pick-up. The swath width can be adjusted between 0.8-2m. With tractor power up to 120hp output capacity is rated at up to 15ha/h. SIP AIR swathers are available both in tractor mounted and trailed options with working widths up to 9m.



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The 2023 model year sees the Jaguar 900 and Jaguar 900 Terra Trac forage harvesters from Claas benefit from an optimised Pick Up drive while the Jaguar 800 series is expanded with new and more powerful models. In addition, the Cemis 1200 terminal with the new GPS Pilot becomes available for all models.

It was in 2021 that Claas introduced a third, customer-specifiable drive variant for the front attachment on the Jaguar 900 and Jaguar 900 Terra Trac models in the form of an additional hydraulic drive for the reel of the Pick Up. This drives the reel independently of the intake auger with automatic, variable speed adjustment relative to the ground speed. The result is an efficient raking action at any speed with minimal intake losses and very low wear. With effect from the 2023 model year, this drive system is enhanced with additional functionality that automatically adjusts the Pick Up speed to the around speed above 5km/h. If the ground speed or the set chop length is changed, the speeds of the pick-up reel and intake auger are automatically matched to the prevailing conditions. This results in an even more consistent crop flow, especially where there are frequent and significant changes in swath thickness. If necessary, both speeds can also be adjusted manually from the cab by the operator in accordance with the requirements

of the harvest. This has the benefit that crop feed is even more precise, resulting in a more consistent crop flow through the forager, especially when operating under varying conditions. Also new is the automatic chain lubrication for the left-side drive of the intake auger and pick-up reel.

With effect from the 2023 model year, the Jaguar 840 receives the larger Mercedes-Benz OM 471 LA Stage V six-cylinder engine already used in the Jaguar 850. Its ample displacement of 12.8L means that engine output for the smallest forage harvester in the current Claas product range is increased by 27hp, taking the maximum output to 435hp at 1,600rpm and making significantly greater torque reserves available. The excellent Jaguar efficiency is maintained as the increased displacement has no effect on the diesel consumption per tonne of throughput. The Jaquar 840 has a 730mm wide feeder unit with four precompression rollers as well as a 750mm-wide chopping cylinder with a diameter of 630mm. As an option, it can be equipped with the MCC roller corncracker with a sawtooth profile, the MCC MAX with the particularly durable BusaCLAD coating or the MCC Shredlage cracker. It is therefore possible to select the right technology for intensive crop processing across the entire length-ofcut spectrum.

CEMIS 1200 WITH NEW GPS PILOT

Following the Trion and Lexion, the Jaguar 900 and 800 can now also be equipped with the new Cemis 1200 terminal with the newly developed GPS Pilot. As well as representing an alternative to the row sensor when harvesting maize with the Orbis and the Cam Pilot when harvesting grass, this automated steering system can of course also be used when harvesting whole crop silage or other types of forage crops. The Cemis 1200 has a 12-inch screen that provides a 2D and 3D display with a splittable screen, as well as online task management and documentation with data export by means of Telematics or USB stick. Another new development is the twostage activation of Auto Pilot/GPS Pilot and Cemos Auto Performance or Cruise Pilot. After turning and entering the next track. the operator first activates the steering system at the touch of a button and accelerates up to the speed at which the machine is able to make optimal use of the available power; with a second push of the button on the Cmotion lever, Cemos Auto Performance or Cruise Pilot – depending on the system fitted – takes automatic control of the ground speed. This enables faster adjustment to the set engine speed, the most efficient power level and a suitable around speed. If the pushbutton is pressed down somewhat longer; both functions are activated simultaneously as usual.



FTMTA SHOW TO FEATURE **AMAZONE'S NEW SEED-DRILL COMBINATION**

The new Generation Amazone Avant 02 seed drill combinations will be on display at the upcoming FTMTA Farm Machinery Show. So, expect to see the FTender front-mounted tank and the latest generation power harrows equipped with the new TwinTeC double disc coulters, according to Irish distributor, Farmhand. The rigid Avant 02 seed rails can be mounted on the KG 01 power harrows, and the working width range extends from the rigid 3m and 4m, up to the folding 4m, 5m and 6m.

The new KG 02-2 power harrow provides the basis for a perfect seed bed. The 3.3 tine carriers, per metre of working width, till the soil intensively as well as thoroughly incorporating any organic matter during the mulch sowing process, according to Farmhand. The levelling board is now guided by the roller, so that the tines of the levelling board do not need to be adjusted as the working depth varies. A wide range of packer rollers are available, but the wedge ring roller has proven to be the most popular roller to suit changeable Irish conditions.

The TwinTeC double disc coulters are mounted by the seed rail onto the active soil tillage tool with roller. The TwinTeC coulter is offered with a row spacing of 15cm. The maintenance-free, TwinTeC coulters run very smoothly through the soil at a coulter pressure of up to 60kg/ coulter and place the seed precisely. The working depth of the parallel-guided coulter can be adjusted independently of the coulter pressure. The placement depth is determined by the depth guidance rollers. The hydraulic coulter pressure adjustment allows very rapid and convenient reaction to varying soil conditions. If a pre-cultivation with the rotary cultivator is necessary on a headland, the coulters can also be completely lifted up using the hydraulic coulter pressure adjustment. The power harrow with roller can also be uncoupled from the seed rail when needed for solo seedbed preparation. The after harrow on the coulter ensures excellent seed coverage, and with the clever design ensures an extremely long wearing life and it can be set to one of five height positions and if it is not needed, it can be deactivated in the park position.

On the 3m and 4m Avant, the seed travels from the FTender front mounted tank via a single conveying system whereas, on

the 5m and 6m Avant, it is via a double conveying system, to the segmented distributor head, or heads. The distribution head is mounted directly above the coulters, resulting in a short and steep line of transfer between the distribution heads and the coulters. Electrical one-sided switching is also possible in the Avant.

Isobus machine control

The machine control of the Avant is by Isobus. The software has been developed internally by Amazone and facilitates intuitive operation of the Avant. The easily comprehensible symbols and freely programmable buttons can be used to adapt the interface of the operating terminal to the requirements of the user. Control of the seed drill combination can be performed either by the AmaTron 4 or AmaPad 2 Isobus terminals from Amazone, or by any other Isobus terminal from another manufacturer.



The Fendt Cargo T740 with its innovative elevating cab design will be at the FTMTA Machinery Show in July.



Fendt has chosen to debut its innovative Cargo T740 telehandler with its elevating cab design at this year's Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show. The telehandler will be part of a packed Fendt stand that will also include the new 728 Vario Gen7, and Tigo forage wagon.

"The FTMTA Farm Machinery Show is an important event in the agricultural calendar and we wanted to bring a cross section of Fendt machinery that reflects the needs of farmers in Ireland," said Fendt's Richard Miller. "We, therefore, have a focus on tractors in the 100-200hp range that can be specified with loaders, while also showing the future with the new 728 Vario Gen7 tractor." The Fendt 211, 312 and 516 Vario tractors chosen for the stand have all been fitted with Fendt's Cargo loader to illustrate the benefits of the tractors for grassland system work. The Tigo forage wagon further demonstrates the progress Fendt has made in this sector. "The Tigo is a popular product in Ireland because the range offers capacities of 22-45m3 in a compact design that is up to 20 per cent shorter than rivals," he said. The Fendt Cargo loader, fitted to the tractors at the event, is also an increasingly attractive option for operators buying lower

horsepower Fendt tractors. It makes even the smallest 200 Vario a capable loading machine which can reduce fuel costs and help access to small spaces.

"There will be three tractor and loader combinations on display to demonstrate the versatility of the Fendt range for loading work. The panoramic view from the cab, intuitive joystick controls and weighing functionality all help to make a 200, 300 or 500 tractor a capable and comfortable loading machine," said Richard.

The current Fendt 724 Vario Gen 6

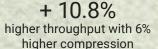
tractor will feature on the stand with the incoming 728 Gen 7 as a way to illustrate the progress the brand has made in both engine technology and efficiency. "The Gen 6 has been a tremendously successful tractor throughout Europe, and the new 728 with its AGCO power unit, higher output and greater efficiencies will uphold Fendt's reputation in the mid horsepower sector. The FTMTA show will provide a unique opportunity to see both and ask our team questions about all the products on show," he said.





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The above question was put to me recently, and what I would say, firstly, is that for the vast majority it's not a decision taken lightly, or hastily. Indeed, it could take a couple of years to finally take the plunge to invest in a piece of kit whether new or second hand. The Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS) has played a role in machinery purchases. It's a welcome scheme, generally, and the new Tillage Capital Investment Scheme, under TAMS 3, is now open for applications until June 16. However, it has some faults in my opinion.

THOUGHTS ON TAMS

I believe that more types of tillage equipment should be made available under the scheme, and there needs to be more focus on equipment for smaller-horsepower tractors. A far greater percentage of tillage farmers are smaller scale or mixed farmers. It's logical to put more focus there where horsepower requirements are lower, and higher-grade technology makes little financial sense. A case could also be made for how financing is dealt with. Surely, when a loan provider gives written approval, that should suffice rather than the farmer having to have all the money in the bank account when paying for the piece of equipment on a particular day. It disrupts cashflow in many instances especially in relation to larger investments. Another point in relation to TAMS is the ceiling of €90,000 that is in place for individuals, joint ventures and companies (a higher ceiling will be in place for Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine-registered farm partnerships). This needs to be raised substantially, especially in the light of the sharp rise in equipment prices. In my view, €200,000 should be the figure. The precedence is there in the pig and poultry sectors to raise the ceiling.

HORSEPOWER AND SIZE

The average horsepower is now in the 160-170hp range, I'm told, and rising consistently as the years pass, which also means that the equipment attached is heavier. Is this leading to problems? Last autumn and spring have proven difficult, weather wise. We are told that weather patterns are changing, with more intense wet spells and more intense heat spells becoming the norm. Ireland's geographical location suggests that we will be hit least hard in terms of crop production, but these challenges need a closer look when choosing equipment. This leads me on to one of the key drivers when making a decision to upgrade equipment. More recently, skilled labour has become a scarce commodity and the cost of employing someone, even just as casual labour at peak times, is being examined now for various reasons. The need for more horsepower equates to having less labour to get through the workload when the weather windows open. It is often now a case of needs must when making the move to purchase.

WORKING OFF-FARM

What's also evolving is that more and more tillage farmers are working off farm either full- or part-time. So, their choice of equipment is definitely influenced by time limits and reliability of the equipment they buy. Spending hours repairing equipment is low on the priority list. When I started farming, the necessity for off-farm work was mostly confined to small livestock farm holdings based mainly in the west of Ireland. How times have changed. The youth currently are not attracted to the tillage industry and this is reflected in the numbers in agricultural colleges and universities.





Next year and the year after look even worse as the limit of 250kg organic nitrogen application per hectare may drop to 220kg per hectare under the new cow-banding rules. This is inevitable, I believe, if water quality does not improve.

Another impact on water quality is, perhaps, restrictions on the rate of chemical fertiliser allowed to be used on crops even though our [tillage] usage-efficiency rate is extremely high compared to other agricultural sectors. What impact will that have on viability on owned land? Do tillage farmers have to consider a farm gate fee for slurry? It cannot be ruled out yet, especially with the impact of nitrates measures now taking a real hold. We simply cannot solve another sector's problem and help keep it viable while we encounter serious land issues just because we are deemed by some not to be as financially competitive for land. The thinking caps need to be worn longer to deal with the nitrates challenges. Meanwhile tillage farmers, especially those in the rental market will wonder whether to update equipment or contract their operation which may be forced on them anyway while this is hanging over us.

We also must remember that contractors are suffering the same labour issues and we must support them as best we can to help them provide the quality service we expect. Can we afford to lose such a valuable service especially when the age profile of tillage farmers is increasing yearly?

TECHNOLOGY

Technology is moving at a fast pace, which is exciting and challenging at the same time. Spending hard-earned funds on what could be outdated and unwanted technology in the future is always in the back of the mind. However, in fairness to the trade, they recognise this and are working on technology that facilitates better communication between different systems. Connecting information from soil sample results to combine harvester yield monitors, etc. and regurgitating that information to sprayers and variablerate spreaders will become the norm, I think. This, too, is going to influence purchases where different equipment will be able to communicate with each other via software packages. I plan to invest in auto-steer technology myself in the near future.

IMPACT OF NITRATES RULES

The impact of revised nitrates rules has been felt by our dairy neighbours and those intensively farming livestock, but tillage farmers have been put directly in the middle of this problem. The land rental market has historically been important to the tillage sector, aiding farmers in scaling up, in order to survive. Now, the ability to hold on to rented land looks bleak due to demand for extra land by intensive livestock farms. This year saw the rental market heat up substantially.



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VALTRA CELEBRATED ANOTHER RECENT ACHIEVEMENT AS ITS NEWEST TRACTOR, THE Q SERIES, SCOOPED THE PRESTIGIOUS RED DOT AWARD FOR PRODUCT DESIGN. HERE, WE LOOK AT THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MACHINE, KNOWN AS 'THE BEAST'

The Red Dot win comes fewer than six months after the company released the Q Series, which boasts horsepower (hp) that ranges from 230hp-305hp and it adds to the Farm Machine 2023 Jury Award at SIMA in November, which praised the tractor for its 'agricultural contractor focused approach'.

For a new tractor in a previously unchartered horsepower range, receiving such an award confirms what many farmers and contractors who have test driven the tractor have been saying: "The Q Series is a well-designed tractor that perfectly suits this higher horsepower segment," according to the company. At 230hp-305hp, the Q Series perfectly fits the gap between Valtra's 155hp-271hp T Series and its 290hp-405hp S Series.

HYDRAULIC HEAVEN

The 200+ litre hydraulic pump and 75-litre exportable hydraulic oil capacity ensure the Q Series can work with any implement. The hydraulic Eco option enables maximum flow to be reached at 1,650rpm.

In test drives, customers have praised the Q Series' smooth CVT transmission, manoeuvrability, and high level of visibility for such a high horsepower tractor. To achieve this, careful consideration has been given to the design of the Q Series. Valtra's

Industrial Design and User Experience Department lead, Kimmo Wihinen, explains that the best tractor experience comes from listening to the customer: "Customers have been asking for a bigger T Series. We have delivered a completely new tractor. Large farms and agricultural contractors need an efficient higher horsepower tractor but with good manoeuvrability and visibility. Everything from the easy access via the aluminium steps, the all-new powerful integrated front work lights, market-leading cab comfort, new roof design, and easy to use, fully integrated technology via the SmartTouch user interface, responds to customer feedback. "Everything is designed to make the O Series the most comfortable. and well-equipped tractor of its kind. It is the best tractor we have ever designed and built here in Suolahti [Finland]. We are very happy that the Q Series continues Valtra's history of winning Red Dot Design Awards."



Model	Max power		Max boost power		Max torque NM	
	НР	KW	НР	KW	STD	Boost
Q225	230	169	250	184	1000	1100
Q245	245	180	265	195	1100	1200
Q265	265	195	290	213	1200	1280
Q285	285	210	305	224	1280	1280
Q305	305	224	305	224	1280	1280

Valtra's previous successes with Red Dot Awards has included an award for the T Series in 2016; an honourable mention for the N Series in 2017; a win for the A Series in 2018; a win for the G Series in 2021; and, more recently, a Red Dot Award for the N Series in 2022.

The Q Series will be on the road heading to various locations across Europe as part of Valtra's SmartTour 2023. Further details can be found from the Valtra SmartTour web page.

DRIVE TIME



Pictured at the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Golfing Society's annual competition, held at Portarlington Golf Club recently: FTMTA president, Karol Duigenan; Claas regional sales manager, Trevor Campbell, who was overall winner; Fastparts area sales manager, Jackie Mills, who won the Paddy Callan trophy in the ladies' competition; and *Irish Farmers Monthly* machinery editor, Noel Dunne.

MASTEK'S FLEXISHOE INNOVATION MEETS NEW TAMS REQUIREMENTS

Mastek's latest innovation, the FlexiShoe, has been designed to address the concerns of farmers who have been struggling with the limitations of traditional trailing-shoe applicators, according to the Cavan-based company. The FlexiShoe offers a lightweight, low-emission solution that is perfect for hilly or uneven fields and for farmers with low-horsepower tractors.

Mastek's managing director, Paul Quinn, said the FlexiShoe was developed in response to the feedback received from farmers. "Farmers are concerned because the new TAMS 3 scheme has not included dribble bars, which means that they have to purchase trailing shoes. However, traditional trailing shoes are not suitable for all farms, particularly those with hilly or uneven fields and stoney fields and for farmers with small-horsepower tractors". So, he explained, Mastek's engineers set out to create a new type of trailing shoe that will satisfy all the requirements of farmers while also reducing emissions and meeting the TAMS 3 specifications which states that the equipment must 'split the grass and place the slurry directly onto the soil.' The FlexiShoe can be door- or chassis-mounted and weighs less than 500kg. It is equipped with a heavy lay flat hose, a rubber booth and coulter that will split the grass and place the slurry directly onto the soil. It also has a boom



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breakaway for safety. The FlexiShoe also features Mastek's SuperCut Macerator which has been successful in Ireland and around Europe. The FlexiShoe will be eligible for a 60 per cent grant as a retrofit or with a new tanker, to a maximum cost of €40,000. The FlexiShoe will be available in 7.5m/10.2m and later in the year Mastek will introduce the FlexiShoe concept to wider applicators and umbilical range. "This innovative product is another game-changer for the industry just like our door mounted PUDB when launched in 2012," said Paul. "It will provide farmers with a cost sensitive, reliable, efficient, and lowemission solution that is suitable for a wide range of farming applications. We believe that the FlexiShoe will help farmers to achieve their sustainability goals while also enhancing their productivity and profitability."

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JCB'S £100M HYDROGEN PROJECT MAKES INTERNATIONAL DEBUT

JCB'S £100 million project to produce super-efficient hydrogen engines was given its international debut recently at one of the world's biggest construction equipment fairs. A team of 150 engineers is working on the pioneering initiative to develop hydrogen combustion engines – and more than 50 prototypes have already been manufactured at JCB's UK engine plant.

JCB chairman, Anthony Bamford is leading the project to develop JCB's hydrogen technology. "The JCB engineering team has made enormous strides in a short space of time to develop a hydrogen internal combustion engine. As the first construction equipment company to develop a fully working combustion engine fuelled by hydrogen, I'm delighted we are now able to present this technology on the international stage," he said.

Prototype JCB hydrogen engines are already powering backhoe loader and Loadall telescopic handler machines. JCB has also made a major breakthrough in proving the wider appeal of hydrogen combustion technology by installing one of the super-efficient hydrogen engines into a 7.5-tonne Mercedes truck - a retrofit which was completed in just days. JCB has also unveiled its very own designed and built mobile refuelling bowser to take the fuel to the machines. The bowser has enough hydrogen gas to fill 16 hydrogen backhoe loaders and is able to be transported either on the back of a modified JCB Fastrac tractor or on a trailer. JCB's move to reduce emissions goes back almost 25 years and the latest diesel engines designed to comply with European Stage V regulations have already delivered a 97 per cent reduction in nitrogen oxides emissions since 1999 and a 98 per cent reduction in particulates, the company said. In addition, JCB's drive to reduce fuel consumption means today's JCB machines use 50 per cent less fuel, on average, than those manufactured more than a decade ago. This has saved 16 billion litres of fuel – equivalent to 53 million tonnes of CO₂.

JCB has also been involved in electric technology development to meet customers' demands for zero-carbon products. While battery electric is suitable for smaller machines which do less hours and typically use less fuel, larger machines have a higher energy requirement. This would result in larger batteries, which would take longer to charge, making them less suitable for machines which work multiple daily shifts and do not have the available downtime to recharge. As a result, JCB has concentrated its development of electric machines on its compact range, including the 525-60E Loadall telehandler and the 19C-1E mini excavator, the world's first electric mini excavator. As the company examines future fuels which deliver zero emissions, it continues to search for a mobile fuel which can be taken to the machine, ensuring maximum uptime and fast refuelling: hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), biogas, e-fuels, ammonia, and hydrogen have all come under the microscope. Interestingly, JCB engines have been approved for use with HVO since Stage IIIB/Tier 4i engine legislation came into force. As part of its hydrogen development, JCB also investigated its use in fuel cells and in July 2020 unveiled the construction industry's first ever hydrogen powered excavator, which was a 20-tonne 220X. For the time being, JCB has come to the conclusion that fuel cells are too expensive, too complicated, and not robust enough for construction and agricultural equipment.



FTMTA JUNE 2023 I

NEW STANDARDS IN PRECISION-AG **TECHNOLOGY**

With its model year 2024 tractors, John Deere says it is taking farming to the next level, integrating the new G5 CommandCenter displays into all 6, 7, 8 and 9 Series machines. The new G5Plus CommandCenter includes documentation. data sync, JDLink connectivity, variable rate application, section control and AutoTrac guidance as standard on all 6-cylinder 6R, 7, 8 and 9 series tractors. The 12.8-inch G5Plus CommandCenter is 33 per cent larger than the previous display, comes with 1,080P high definition and a much faster processor. With

this update, customers will achieve the highest levels of precision agriculture efficiency and ease of use while ensuring their tractors are ready for the future. The model vear 2024 John Deere 6R brings with



it new developments to improve driver comfort. The redesigned steering column and new steering wheel provides the next level in comfort, especially in its on-theroad performance. In addition, the new dampening system available on both Premium and Ultimate seats, the 6R model year 2024 sets new standards, according to John Deere. The model year 2024 7R features a new steering system with a 50 per cent increase in steering capacity. This is made possible by larger steering cylinders, which are fitted as standard to all 7R models. To enhance operator comfort during transport, the 7R features a new Automotive Type Steering System. It naturally re-centres itself and improves line holding significantly. Known as reactive steering, the feature can be easily activated via a softkey on the CommandCenter, Two additional front brake discs enhance the operator's experience and transport performance. All 7, 8 and 9 Series tractors have a new high-resolution corner post display and a built-in StarFire 7000.

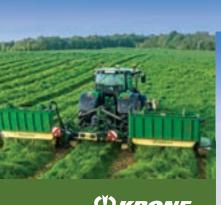








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For Business Users Only: Finance is provided by Amazone Finance and Krone Finance, which are trading names of First Citizen Finance DAC. First Citizen Finance DAC is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. Lending criteria, terms and conditions apply. Minimal draught resistance, an integrated compact disc harrow, comfortable operation and a large, divided seed hopper - these are features of Lemken's new Solitair DT seed drill. With this machine, Lemken has completely restructured its range of trailed seed drill combinations, focusing all of its developments even more strongly on profitability, according to the company.

To ensure good reconsolidation in the first working step, the new Solitair DT features a leading tyre packer. For the second step of seedbed preparation, the Solitair DT is equipped with a compact disc harrow with relatively large 465mm diameter concave discs, that are individually protected against overloads by leaf springs. If a reduced intensity of tillage is required, vertical corrugated discs can be used instead of the concave discs, which penetrate the soil less, reducing both moisture loss and the emergence of weeds. If targeted reconsolidation of seed rows is required, a trapeze packer roller can be attached behind the disc harrow. At the heart of the Solitair's seeding technology are individual electrically driven, fertiliser-proof metering units, each of which supplies one distributor with seeds. The seed metering wheels are combined into seed wheel sets, eliminating the need to switch seed wheels on and off. The seed wheel sets can be changed without tools. The coulter bar fitted to the Solitair DT features the proven, parallelogram-guided OptiDisc double disc coulters with depth control wheel. The DT seed hopper holds a volume of up to 5,100 litres and is available in a dual hopper version. The dual hopper allows the Solitair DT to be used for combined seeding with fertiliser or for sowing different seeds. Two variants are available: with the single-shot version, the fertiliser and seeds are placed in a shared seed furrow, whereas the double-shot version places fertiliser in a line below the seed level via separate fertiliser double disc coulters. Lemken's new Solitair DT is available in 4m and 6m widths.



Tom MurphyProfessional Agricultural
Contractors of Ireland



WHAT IF ...?

Most people will have had a dream or fantasy at some time in their lives. I certainly have. My dream is that agricultural contractors and farmers realise that their value to society is far greater than, perhaps, certain other professions, trades and groups – those that think they are indispensable and use their muscle to force demands for higher wages by withdrawing labour. And part of that dream involves others realising their worth, too.

What if agricultural contractors and farmers went on strike? What if there was no milk, no meat, no vegetables, no bread, no butter or other dairy products – fresh frozen or tinned? What if there were just empty shelves, week after week. Oh dear! There would be no profits for the middleman or supermarket chains. Would they then have to consider if they can stay in business because of the small return they would make without products and ingredients produced by the farming sector? Could my dream make them realise that without agricultural contractors and farmers they might be made redundant? In my dream, farmers' and contractors' value would be realised and acknowledged, but what a nightmare the quest for such recognition would create!

HOW WE SPEND

It is interesting to note how the public spend their income and what has become a priority in household spending. Apart from housing, the spending on leisure, eating out, alcohol, and car ownership each account for more than is spent on food. Since the 1980s, the proportion of household expenditure on food across Europe has steadily declined from 28 per cent and by 2021, Eurostat figures show the average expenditure on food and non-alcoholic beverages across Europe was 14 per cent. In Ireland it was 8.3 per cent. There is no doubt this has been at the expense of farmers and agricultural contractors who are our main food producers.

This takes me to why I support Macra. If we want young people to go into farming, they need a better deal than previous generations got. They must not be treated as cheap labour to subsidise the rest of the population's lifestyle choices – happy to spend on life's luxuries, not so much on good food.

I know of farmers in my locality whose children have stated clearly, that they will not carry on farming for the poor income and the hours endured. One of them works in a factory with set hours, assured income, and a pension; another is a bus driver bringing home more than his father.

RECKLESS POLICY

Importing cheap produce from countries around the world has to stop, especially countries that do not have to adhere to our high standards of production and are not required to comply with environmental

or employment-protection legislation. This clearly undermines our farmers and the price they can achieve for their produce and, of course, on the prices that agricultural contractors can charge. The Common Agricultural Policy system is broken. It is not the farmer who is benefiting, in my opinion, but the chain of middlemen and supermarket giants. Government and their advisers need to wake up and smell the coffee before it's too late.

MACHINERY SHOW

I often marvel at the resilience of the machinery trade as it always puts on such a fantastic display of the latest farm machinery at the biennial Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show. In July, the demands of farmers and agricultural contractors who need the latest technology to enhance the service that they can offer to their farmer clients will be satisfied as Punchestown, once again provides that backdrop for this event.

In relevant terms, compared with machinery shows and sales in the UK and Europe, Ireland is a small market for machinery manufacturers. So, I take my hat off to them for treating us on a par with the bigger markets. We should all make the effort to attend the Machinery Show even if you're not buying this year. We need to show our appreciation to the manufacturers and the FTMTA for all the time and energy taken by them in putting on this show. The date for your diary is July 5-6 at Punchestown in Co, Kildare.



CLAYDON APPOINTS NEW UK AND IRELAND SALES MANAGER

David Furber has been appointed sales manager for the UK and Ireland by Claydon Yield-o-Meter Limited, for the company's innovative Opti-Till range of agricultural crop establishment machinery. Commenting on his appointment, David said: "This is an extremely exciting time to join a company that has been at the forefront of changing the way in which agricultural crops are established for more than two decades.

"As farming businesses become larger and more reliant on key equipment, it is essential that they have a professional dealer locally to sell and support Claydon crop establishment machinery," he said. "A key part of my role will be to work with our existing dealers to ensure that customers are fully supported and further strengthen our distribution network in areas where currently we are underrepresented, particularly Scotland and

Northern Ireland, This will benefit existing owners by providing more local points of contact and ensure that potential customers are made aware of the cost, timeliness, agronomic and environmental benefits of Claydon Opti-Till." With both parents from farming families and his father an agricultural contractor in the Nantwich area it was no surprise that David decided to make a career in the industry. In 1992, he joined Shropshire-based agricultural implement manufacturer, Salopian Kenneth Hudson (SKH) and was involved in designing drills. SKH was part of the Greenland Group and when the businesses merged with Ipswich-based Vicon, David became a service engineer for the company, supporting Vicon dealers and customers in East Anglia.

Appointed Vicon key account manager eastern region - in 1996, David held the



role for over five years. Norwegian-based Kverneland Group acquired Vicon in 1998 and three years later David was promoted to UK sales manager for Vicon, a position he held for 19 years until becoming UK sales manager for Kverneland Group in December 2020. Responsible for the Kverneland, Vicon and Kubota brands in the UK and Ireland, David remained there until December 2022.

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MESSAGES

- · Set your June targets and take steps to achieve them.
- Take great care not to miss cows on heat in late season.
- · Adhere to 'normal' grassland-management needs.
- Make adequate quantities of quality silage.
- Prepare now to sell your male calves next spring with a commercial beef value (CBV) tag
- Kale should be sown now!



By Matt Ryan

TARGETS FOR JUNE?

- » You are under performing if you are not achieving the following standards in June:
 - A milk decrease of less than 2.5% from week to week.
 - The aim should be to maintain the peak, starting in April, for 40-50 days at over 2kg milk solids (MS) per cow per day.
 - A post-grazing height of 4-4.25cm (use plate metre to confirm).
 - Grazing quality grass (80+% DMD) by grazing covers of 1,400-1,600kg DM/ha.
 - Have 76% of your annual nitrogen allowance used by second week of June.
 - Less than 20% tall grass (dung-pads) in each paddock.
 - 80% of your silage made by mid-June.
 - All slurry tanks empty.
 - Somatic cell count (SCC) less than 120,000.
 - Total bacterial count (TBC) less than 15,000.
 - 75% of your cows in-calf after 42 days' breeding.
 - All heifers must be in-calf.
 - Are you on target to have less than 5% of cows calving in April next year?
 - Now using high dairy beef index (DBI) beef bulls a must!
 - Cows and calves on no meals.
 - In-calf heifers (R2s) weighing 350-380kg and heifer calves (R1s) weighing 125-140kg.

AIM TO FINISH BREEDING IN JUNE!

- » The minimum cost of a missed heat is €250.
 - It could be much greater (€800-€1,000) if it results in the cow not being in-calf at the end of the season.
- » National figures are extremely worrying (2023). Calving interval = 388 days; six-week calving rate = 66% (target of 90%); cows culled per year = 21% (target = 15-18%); and the average age at culling = 4.7 lactations (target = 5.5).
 - Serious financial losses!
- » This period of reproductive management is all about using the records to guide heat expectations and subsequent actions.
 - I hope you are not too busy to compile and use the records that you need.
 - Collars are great but you must make use of the information.
- » Minimise this problem by answering a few questions.
- » What percentage of my cows/heifers are repeating?
 - The target conception rate to first service is 60%+ or a nonreturn-rate (NRR) of 65%+.
 - Use the ICBF website to answer this question for you or examine your breeding chart.
 - If more than 35% of cows are repeating then you have a problem.
 - A NRR of over 65% for cows served more than 28 days is the target – may seem very high but some of them will 'break' later in the time.
 - Cows experiencing foetal death beyond day 34 of pregnancy will take up to eight weeks to return to a natural heat.

Rank yourself against targets in Table 1 and act.

Table1: Herd fertility targets for June

Assessment index	Very poor	Poor	Acceptable	Good	Very good
% non-detected oestrous	>40	40-20	20-15	15-10	<10
% 18-24-day return intervals	<50	50-60	60-62	62-65	>65
% cows needing 3 services	>30	30-25	25-16	16-12	< 12
% cows needing 4 services	>17	17-12	12-6	6-4	<4
% cows culled empty/year	>13	13-10	10-7	7-5	<5

- » The possible causes of the problem may be some or all the following:
 - Cows are underfed due to tight grazing, shortage of grass, stemmy grass, letting cows out directly after milking onto 12hour grazing block – allows the first cows out to eat all the best and easily accessed grass – or very wet conditions.
 - Cows are too thin or losing weight.
 - Bad semen (infertile bull check with your discussion group if any particular bull is causing more repeats).
 - Cows under stress due to lameness, mastitis, lack of water, stray electricity (don't underestimate), health issues (IBR, BVD, neospora, leptospirosis, fluke, etc.), mineral deficiency (phosphorous has become an issue). Get your vet to address these issues.
 - Cows are under stress on service day or when the heat was due.
 - Service procedure was poor (never presume you or your technician are perfect AI technicians). Over 65% of repeat service must be between day 18-24.
 - Associated with this is the AI person having to use an unsuitable service crate – very common?
- » Genetically, herd is infertile this is probably the main reason! The following Table 2 highlights the issues associated with infertile cows compared with having a fertile cow.

Table 2: Physiological mechanisms responsible for greater fertility in fertile cows compared with infertile cows (Source: S Butler, Moorepark)

Early post-calving

Higher dry matter intake Greater BCS Earlier resumption of cycling Superior uterine health More favourable metabolic status

At breeding

Stronger oestrus expression Less ovulation failure after oestrus Fewer silent heats Greater luteal phase circulation More favourable metabolic status

- Minerals may be a problem (could be iodine, copper, selenium, cobalt or phosphorous) – this is probably fourth or fifth on the list of the issues to investigate. Consult your vet.
- » Cows being served in June will calve from March 11 to April 10 next year.
- » Do everything within your power to have all cows in-calf by the end of June:
 - You must use short gestation Friesian AI bulls because their gestation length is minus 11-13 days (worth over €70/cow profit next year).
 - The following breeding protocols should be your target:

- Four to six weeks, dairy AI, then three to four weeks high DBI beef AI bulls, finishing up with short gestation dairy AI.
- Continue serious heat detection. Harder now as one cow/ day/100-cow herd will be only on heat and she will only be mounted 11 times (compared with 50+ during first three weeks).
 - Top up paint daily if needed.
 - The optimum time to AI is 12-24 hours after the onset of standing heat.
 - When a cow has been served, mark the cow's shoulder, so as not to re-serve her again the day after, as this can cause the loss of pregnancy as well as costing an extra €15-20.
 - Repaint or put on the scratch card the day after service.
- Scan all cows 30 days after mating.
 - Why? You will identify non-pregnant cows and weak pregnancies; therefore, with good records you can resynchronise/PG them and they will be mated in the next few days, picking up at least 10 days in calving next year.
 - This scanning takes place once per week for three weeks, as follows, for a mating start date (MSD) of May 1:
 - June 6 (37 days post MSD) all cows served week one of Al.
 - June 13 (44 days post MSD) all cows served week two of Al.
 - June 20 (51 days post MSD) all cows served week three of Al.
 - Records will help you with this beneficial task but you need a highly competent scanner.
 - Shoulder 'raddle' (marking powder) all cows served week one with green marker, week two with blue, etc. so that they can easily be drafted out each week for scanning. Computerised identification overcomes that problem.
 - Note, if you plan to scan do not have a stock bull 'running with' either the cows or heifers between first service and the scan date.
 - It is worth noting that embryo loss beyond day 34 of pregnancy is primarily associated with either cows carrying twins or infectious diseases such as neospora or BVD. Issues that cause stress such as lack of water, lack of grass, etc. compromise the cows' immune system and allows these diseases attack the foetus.

SELLING MALE CALVES NEXT SPRING WITH CBV TAG!

- » Yes, it will be advantageous when selling male calves next spring to know their commercial beef value (CBV).
 - Dairy farmers MUST use high-beef-merit AI bulls on their cows from now to the end of the breeding season.
 - The top 20 Dairy Beef Index (DBI) bulls are listed on the ICBF site.
 - By using one of these bulls your male calf will have a 4- or 5-star rating when selling.

- DBI, just like EBI, is a financial ranking of the beef bulls as a result of their various financial traits.
- » As much care should now go into choosing your beef bull as it did for your dairy bulls so that you have a male calf to sell next year with good beef genetics – the target is to have a 4- or 5-star CBV calf.
 - This will almost certainly mean that beef calves from stock bulls will be less valuable.
 - See Table 3.

Table 3: Minimum required DBI beef sub-index of beef bull to achieve a 4- or 5-star CBV dairy-beef calf.

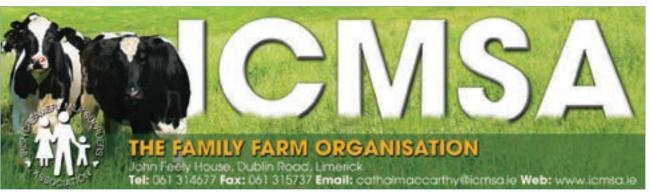
Dairy herd beef sub-index Beef bull sub-index (DBI) to achieve:

	€80 [4-star CBV]	€123 [5-star CBV]
-€13	€86	€129
-€5	€78	€121
-€2	€75	€118
€0	€73	€116
€4	€72	€112

- » The larger the minus on your dairy-beef sub-index for your dairy cows, the higher the DBI must be used to achieve a 4- or 5-star CBV calf.
- » When choosing a bull from the DBI list, consideration must be given to gestation length and calving difficulty.
 - Every day a cow is not milking is €2.50 lost profit.
 - A difficult calving will have many consequences both for the cow, the calf and farm profit.
- » The final link in convincing the dairycalf buyer is getting the calf genotyped next spring.
 - You have to prove parenthood.
 - That information can be displayed at the mart when selling.
- » All dairy cows should now be genotype because we are in an era where only the best will do.

'NORMAL' GRASS MANAGEMENT IN JUNE!

- » For those of you in a 'normal' situation, I hope a drought doesn't develop from the time I write these notes to the time you read them. The following management is suggested:
 - Depends on how well you have grazed out paddocks in May but graze covers now that are appropriate to your stocking rate.
 - If badly grazed out, paddocks must be topped low to 3.5cm so as to set-up quality grass for next rotation.
 - This, unfortunately, will slow down regrowths, and delay the next grazing for 23-25 days.
 - The pre-grazing grass cover must not be greater than 1,600kg DM per hectare.
 - The following table gives the target covers to aim at on the grazing area.



Stocking rate	Pre-grazing cover	Average farm cover
(Cows/ha)	(SR x 18 x 21 + 50)*	(SR x 180)**
2.5	995	450
3.0	1,185	540
3.5	1,375	630
4.0	1,560	720
4.5	1,750	810

^{*} Stocking rate x daily allowance x rotation length + residual DM

- » If pre-grazing covers (PGC) and average farm covers (AFC) are greater than specified above, then you must take out the strong paddock for baled silage within the next two to three days.
 - This material should be cut, very low at 3.5cm, tedded or left in small rows for wilting, then bagged.
 - This silage will be very good quality.
 - It will be 80%+ DMD and should be labelled and later fed to milking cows.
 - Aim to have two to three bales of this material for every four cows in herd so as to reduce your autumn-spring meal bill.
 - This material will be nearly as good as meal and will only cost half as much.
- » If PGCs are greater than specified but AFC is below target, be careful before you take out the strong paddock.
- » The big message is to measure grass weekly and graze covers appropriate to your stocking rate but never, ever above 1,700kg.
- » Measuring grass is the most important driver to ensure adequate quality grass is always available while minimising topping.
- » As topping is effectively wasting grass or utilising less of the grass grown, we must avoid topping as an option by grazing out all paddocks to 4cm. Topping or remedial management is only required when more than 25% of the paddock has tall grass, that is areas around dung-pads and urine patches.
- » Many farmers are now using a disc-mower (instead of toppers) to manage their grazing to very high-quality levels by cutting out 'strong paddocks' for baled silage. Being under-stocked on the grazing area during summer will result in more baled silage Table 3.

Table 3: Surplus bales per hectare for different annual grass yields and grazing stocking rates on the grazing areas (cows/ha). Source: Teagasc.

	Summer	Stocking	Rate on the grazing		Area
Annual growth - tonnes (t) DM/ha	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	4.5 for first cut then 3.5 for second (*)
10.0	3.3	-1.3	-5.8	-10.3	-3.8
12.0	7.2	2.6	-1.9	-6.4	0.1
13.5	12.1	7.6	3.0	-1.5	5.0
15.5	17.3	12.7	8.2	3.6	9.0

(*) In this scenario, the farm is closed to 4.5 SR from April until early June for first cut, with a grazing SR of 3.5 on grazing platform for second cut. Stocking rate period runs from confirmed silage closing (April 15, approx.) until mid-Aug start of building AFC.

» Table 3 shows:

- If you are growing 15.5t DM/ha on MP you will have to make a lot of bales, even 3.6 bales when cows are stocked at 4.5 cows/ha.
- If only growing 10t DM/ha you will never generate bales, except at 3.0 cows/ha – you will be seriously short of grazing grass for all other grazing stocking rates.
- A case can be made to make two to three quality bales/cow for feeding in a dry summer, late autumn or early spring to milkers, as highlighted in green.
- Cutting a whole lot of bales on the grazing platform due to

under-stocking only complicates the whole system. Remember, for ever four bales cut/ha, 1,000gallons (=1 bag 0:7:30) of slurry needs to be applied as they reduce nitrogen, phosphorous and potash availability.

» The message is clear, know how much grass you are growing and match the grazing stocking rate accordingly to minimise complicating the system with bales.

The following are the nitrogen recommendations for June:

Cows/ha (June)	Units/acre
2.0 or less	14
2.0-2.5	21
2.5-3.0	28
3.0-3.5	28

- If you are following the Moorepark Grass Clover 150 system you will be applying 9kg N/ha (7-8 units/acre) after each grazing from May to August.
- If you have substantial levels of clover in paddocks you will not be using any nitrogen for the remainder of the year. But apply one bag 0:7:30 after every second grazing.

GRAZING TARGET FOR A SECOND CUT

- » A second cut of silage is almost certainly required on all reasonably stocked farms.
 - According to Teagasc, silage reserves on farms are at their lowest in years and we need to make silage for a 4.5 to sevenmonth winter
- » By stocking cows at 3.6cows/ha, calves at 14/ha and replacements at 2,200kg/ha the remainder of the farm should be closed up for silage.
- » For second cut, use 70-80 units of N, 14 units P and 60 units K and 10 units S per acre but make allowances for nutrients in slurry.
 - Each 1,000 gallons has 5 units of N, 5 units P, and 30 units K.
- » Get the silage contractor to cut from the centre of the field out so as to allow wildlife and young pheasants to escape.
- » Silage preservation and quality has disimproved during the last few years.
 - If silage needs an additive that preserves it, use it.
 - You need a preservative when sugars are low due to excess moisture (rain) or very lush high-quality grass.
 - If you can cut in dry conditions, tedding and wilting also helps, and you definitely need no additive.
 - As the quality of our silage has slipped over the last few years, we must improve the quality by cutting earlier (a few days makes all the difference) and don't wait for bulk.
- you must get your silage contractor to cut low, definitely no higher than 3.5cm off the ground.
 - Otherwise, you will have poor quality aftergrass from these fields later.
- » You must collect all silage effluent in your tank.
 - Don't take for granted that this is happening but ensure that it is.
 - Fish kills are high risk and the consequences are very serious for the offending farmer.
- » Apply 40-50 units/acre of nitrogen for after-grass grazing.

REPLACEMENT HEIFER CARE

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

	% mature cow	Holstein Fr	Jersey X
Yearlings:	63	367	342
Calves:	23	135	127

^{**} Stocking rate x recommended cover per cow

- The cows' mature weight is got by weighing third calvers and older cows in June – worth doing NOW. Or if the herd's maintenance is €20, then the herd will average 541kg/cow. Every €10 difference from this changes the cow's weight by 50kg.
- You must weigh replacements regularly to make sure you know what's happening and, therefore, deal with underweight animals.
 This advice is imperative for contract heifer rearers/farmers with heifers on contract so that no disputes occur later in the year.

» Calf (R1s) stage:

- Calves must always on the best grass, with residuals eaten off by the R2s or cows. As well as best grass, there are fewer parasites high up on the grass plant.
- Small calves would benefit from milk and/or meals in June.
- Big calves on good grass require no meals as the economics is poor.
- Stay on top of parasites such as hoose and stomach worms.
 Dose for hoose when oldest calf starts to cough and dose for stomach worms, if not on the ivermectin programmes, with a white/yellow dose in late June and move onto aftergrass.

» Heifer(R2s) stage:

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

KALE: CHEAPEST WINTER FEED OPTION!

- » An 8t/ha crop of kale will be the cheapest source of feed next winter.
 - It is 80% DMD, as good as barley.
 - It and fodder beet will cost less than €1/day to feed a cow next winter.

- The expected yield is 8-12t DM/ha with early June sowing.
- With a 10t average crop and allocating 4kg and 7.5kg respectively to weanlings and cows per day (with another roughage), the crop will feed 40 weanlings or 20 cows for 60 days.
- The weanlings and cows will gain 0.6kg and 0.25kg respectively per day.
- Sow where fields need to be reseeded or after first cut silage.

» Requirements:

- Sow in early June thereafter, 1t/ha/week DM is lost.
- A fine, firm seed bed is essential.
- Seed can be drilled or broadcast (need higher seeding rate) at 4.5-5kg/ha.
- Sow kale once per five years in same field to avoid clubroot.
- You need a soil pH of 6.5-7.0
- Nitrogen: It needs 100kg/ha (80 units/acre) split in two applications, the second one at the two to three leaf stage.
- For a soil index 3, per hectare (kg) apply 30 P (24 units/acre) and 170 K(140 units/acre) at sowing. Poorer soils require more.
- Watch out for pests as the crop develops.
- There should be a run-back area available to the animals during feeding.
- Strategically place round bales of silage in the field, near headlands, when the crop is being sown.

BITS AND PIECES

The IBR annual vaccine may be due in June/July. Test the milking machine now and change liners at 2,000 milkings.

REMEMBER

"When your values are clear to you, making decisions comes easier."



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Pat McCormack, President, ICMSA

JUNE 2023 I ICMSA

MINISTER RYAN IS BOGGING DOWN MIDLANDS REWETTING PROJECT

The Irish Independent's rewetting-related editorial of Monday, June 29, titled 'Both climate and farming needs must be considered when it comes to EU demands' should be required reading for anyone who doubts the wisdom of the old maxim that it is the first step of any journey - or any process - that is most important. If the first step you take is in the wrong direction, then every step afterwards takes you further from where you wanted to go. One wonders whether Ministers Ryan and McConalogue read it? If they haven't then they should.

REWETTING COMMENCES

The background to this rapidly worsening 'jam' is easily disposed of. In 2021, various State and semi-State agencies began the process of rewetting state land. The ICMSA noted the commencement of this process and acknowledged the State's right to do as it wanted with its own land. We acknowledged the vital role that carbon sequestration will play as we strive to meet our national targets and we never once objected to, or even guibbled with, the decision itself. All we asked for at that time - and all we are asking for still - is a commitment from those State agencies to make good any damage or loss of productivity that their rewetting might cause to our adjoining farms and community infrastructure: roads, septic tanks, etc. We didn't then – and we don't now – think that this was an unreasonable ask. It's the kind of assurance and arrangement that two neighbours would come to in five minutes over a cup of tea.

But Bord na Móna wouldn't give us the commitment. They wouldn't give us any guarantee to make good any damage that their project might cause. Instead, they expressed confidence in their hydrologists and engineers

and, effectively, told the neighbouring farming communities not to worry their little heads about data and engineering stats that they wouldn't understand anyway. The ICMSA countered by pointing out the obvious contradiction to that position: if Bord na Móna is so supremely confident that its rewetting won't damage adjoining localities, then what was the problem about giving a legal guarantee to those neighbouring localities?

THE PROBLEM, STILL

That was the problem two years ago – and it's still the problem today. The farming communities around the 88,000 acres that are being rewet are told that (A) the engineers say that rewetting will stop at the boundary hedges and (B) if it doesn't, then Bord na Móna or whoever will not be responsible, even where the problems emanate from their project on their land.

Very understandably, the neighbouring farmers and the ICMSA did not feel like being fobbed off in this fashion. In the simple fairness and modesty of our request, we wrote to Minister Ryan on January 5 inviting him - as the minister with direct political responsibility - to attend a public meeting to be held in Tullamore on a date of his choosing and for which he could be accompanied by whatever selection of semi-State executives, engineers and hydrologists he felt might be required to explain to the local community the why, where, when and what of this absolutely massive project. Minister Ryan declined our invitation. We urged him to reconsider and stressed the danger of panic and speculation replacing reasoned exchange. He declined again. It is ironic that as the State busily fills in excavated bogs, backs up dykes, and blocks drains to rewet their 88,000 acres, there's at least one Cabinet minister who is busy digging an electoral hole for every Fianna

Fáil, Fine Gael and Green Party representative in the midlands. Whatever about the water seeping into neighbouring sites, Minister Ryan's inexplicable reluctance to recognise and accept and articulate what everyone else can see clearly, is spilling over from his own department into others. On the proposed EU Nature Restoration Law, Minister McConalogue first announced that it would be voluntary. When we reasonably pointed out that adherence to a law is, by definition, not voluntary, that line was quickly dropped, and we started hearing that the State's land holdings would be sufficient to meet all the requirements of the proposed law until 2030. What happens on January 1, 2031 must remain a mystery for now. But there's nothing to worry about. In the same way that the water will stop at Bord na Móna's boundary ditch, it'll all be fine and there's no need to ask any hard questions now.

WE DON'T ACCEPT THAT

This is our families' lands, and it was our forefathers and foremothers who broke their backs for generations making that land productive. We are not inclined to have that legacy and heritage - and our livelihoods - just waved away and dismissed in this, frankly, almost contemptuous fashion. The midlands rewetting project and the EU Nature Restoration Law are the first of these enormous environmental infrastructure projects that Ireland will be rolling-out all over the land in the coming decades. If what we have seen so far is any guide to what we can expect, then we might as well give up now. Alternatively, Minister Ryan could actually try to squeeze in a visit to faraway Offaly at some stage and we can start to move forward on the basis of real information and the kind of accountability to which the people of Offaly, the wider midlands, and the whole of Ireland, are entitled.



MAKE CHILD SAFETY A PRIORITY



CIARAN ROCHE, FBD RISK MANAGER URGES ALL FARMERS TO HEED THE BELOW ADVICE TO HELP PREVENT THE UNTHINKABLE

Take farm safety action now to prevent an unthinkable accident. Tragically over the last 10 years, 21 children have been killed in farming accidents; this represents 10 per cent of all fatalities on Irish farms. The grief and trauma caused by a child fatality is immeasurable. My deepest sympathy goes to anyone who has had to live through such a life-changing event. I'd encourage anyone who's been affected by a serious or fatal accident to reach out to Embrace FARM for support.

Accidents involving tractors, quads or other farm vehicles resulted in 76 per cent of all child fatalities. Other causes of child fatalities on Irish farms include falls from heights, heavy loads falling on children and electrocution. It is imperative that children are kept away from working vehicles and are adequately supervised when they are on the farm. It's important that we teach children how to farm safely. Now is the time to stop dangerous working habits which may have been passed down for generations. During school holidays it is especially important that the farm family members focus on five key child safety guidelines; highlighted below.

PROVIDE A SAFE PLAY AREA

A farm is a great place to grow up. There are lots of ways children can get involved, but it is not a playground. There are many hazards on the farm and children are particularly vulnerable to risks due to their inquisitive nature, poor perception of risk and lack of farm safety knowledge. A safe and supervised

play area away from the hazards of a working farm should be provided for children.

SUPERVISION

It is important that children are only allowed on the farm when they are supervised by an adult. These occasions should be taken as an opportunity to teach children about the risks and how to stay safe on the farm. With child safety in mind, Agri Aware – supported by FBD, IFA and ESB Networks – produced a short farm safety film called 'Once upon a Farm' aimed directly at primary level students. We would encourage all persons to view the video by scanning the QR code below



VEHICLE SAFETY

Over three-quarters of child fatal accidents on farms involve vehicles It is imperative that children are kept clear of moving vehicles. The tractor is not a babysitting aid and must not be used as one. The Code of Practice on Preventing Accidents to Children and Young Persons in Agriculture says that a child must be at least seven years of age before they are allowed to sit in a tractor and, only then, provided there is a properly designed and fitted passenger seat, with a seat belt, inside a safety cab or frame. Children under the age of 14 must not be allowed to drive tractors or self-propelled machines. Children over the age of 14 must only be allowed to operate

tractors after having received training. Young person's must be at least 16 and hold an appropriate driver's licence before they can drive in a public place.

A quad bike is a not toy. If it is operated unsafely, it can quickly create significant risk of death or injury to the operator. The most important safety issues with quads are training, experience, wearing personal protective equipment, maintenance and knowledge of the terrain. The minimum age for farm type working quad bikes is at least 16 years of age. This is usually clearly stated on the quad.

DANGEROUS ACTIVITIES / AREAS

Children are naturally inquisitive and will often get into seemingly inaccessible places. Make sure that children are kept away from dangerous areas such machine operating areas, slurry pits/ slurry storage areas, stacks of bales, chemical stores, sheep dipping tanks and grain silos. The most effective way to do this is to provide adequate supervision and childproof fencing around these areas.

LIVESTOCK

Children should not be allowed to come into close contact with dangerous animals such as bulls, stallions, rams and female livestock with newborn young. Don't leave the safety of children to chance; prevent the unthinkable by making child safety a priority on your farm.

Data Source: Health and Safety Authority Fatalities in Agriculture Data 2013-2022



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'FIXING FOOD TOGETHER' IS NOT SO BLACK AND WHITE

THE CLIMATE AND HEALTH ALLIANCE RECENTLY PUBLISHED A POSITION PAPER THAT IS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF HOW OUR FOOD IS PRODUCED AND CONSUMED. IN HIGHLIGHTING THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH OUR FOOD PRODUCTION ON ONE HAND - OUR AGRICULTURE SYSTEM - IT SIGNALLED ON THE OTHER HAND THAT THE FARMING SECTOR IS KEY TO PROVIDING THE SOLUTION. IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY SPOKE TO DAIRY FARMER, JOHN KELLY, WHO PARTOOK IN A PANEL DISCUSSION AT A CONFERENCE THAT COINCIDED WITH THE LAUNCH OF THE PAPER, TO FIND OUT HIS THOUGHTS ON ITS RECOMMENDATIONS

The position paper, Fixing Food Together: transitioning Ireland to a healthy and sustainable food system, stated that our dietary habits need to change radically as part of an ambitious plan to protect public health and the environment. According to the paper, a lack of policies to shape a healthy food environment has caused ultra-processed foods and excessive red and processed meat to dominate the Irish diet at the expense of fruit, vegetables, plant proteins, wholegrains and sustainable seafood. This has led the alliance to seek a special Cabinet sub-committee to 'oversee a food revolution'.

The policy paper offers six key recommendations, among them to end the junk food cycle; promote transition away from over-consumption of processed foods to a more plant-based diet including beans, peas and lentils; and to improve agricultural practices and land use. The lobby group indicated that the farming sector could be a key part of the solution, and dairy farmer John Kelly, farming 220 Jersey-cross cows in Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow, was invited to take part in a panel at a recent conference to coincide with the launch of the paper. He was invited to provide the farmer's perspective, he tells us. And, here it is.

The Climate and Health Alliance is made up of a range of medical, health and social care professional organisations, non-governmental organisations, public health organisations and advocacy groups from the island of Ireland.

NO DEMAND, NO PRODUCT

"The report is based on health professionals' view of food and what farmers should and shouldn't be growing," he said. "It's hard to argue with a health professional's take on nutrition, that's their wheelhouse. But some of their recommendations – farmers should grow more vegetables, people should eat more vegetables – farmers know it's not as simple as that.

"The vegetable sector is the most competitive sector, and people are getting out of it. I made the point that, you can come up with policy, but farmers can't implement policy, it has to come from the consumer back to us. We are filling market demand. We can't supply a product with no demand. "The reasons I milk cows is because there is more money in it than sheep. It brings us a lot of benefits, but there is a downside where water quality has decreased, where biodiversity has decreased. We can see these things happening, but I have a responsibility to feed my family and pay my bills. It is about grounding policy in reality. Farmers have a responsibility to the environment and to themselves. We are all self-employed, if we don't get up in the morning, we go bust," he said.

PART OF THE CYCLE

Fast-food has a negative correlation with health, and it's hard to disagree with



that, John said: "As a farmer, personally I don't have input in that, even though I am probably involved in it some way. It depends on what way you see yourself: am I just a farmer, or am I part of the dairy industry, or am I part of the wider ag-food industry? There is a separation there that a lot of us find hard to come to terms with. There are large food companies that are bringing a lot of money into the country and producing a lot of food products, but a lot of those are going into the fast-food industry, and some of those are coming from dairy products, so am I part of that? It's very nuanced.

"There were examples of how the sugar industry lobbied not to impose a sugar tax, how the tobacco industry lobbied not to impose a smoking ban, and they would look at fast-food the same. In principle, you don't see anything wrong with that, and they would point out that, for example, yoghurts have been 'dessert-ified' and turned into unhealthy foods and a lot of that is coming from the food industry pushing consumption of unhealthy food. Whether we are part of that, is where it gets murky. Am I, as a farmer, responsible for the food industry pushing fast-food? Yes and no. I'm part of the cycle," he said.

SHADES OF GREY

"I live in a world of grey. Even if I implement positive change for the environment on

the farm, it nearly always comes at the cost of profitability, and that's the issue that farmers have. High stocking rates are profitable, but it does have a larger impact on the environment. When talking about the environment, the more simplistic the message, the easier it gets across, but that's not the reality for us. There are so many pros and cons to every decision, it's really complicated.

"They say grow more vegetables, but my land doesn't suit it, the market isn't there. In Ireland, we find it hard to grow wheat. Not all grains are the same. The way I look at agriculture is we can do better, we can farm a little bit less intensively. There is no silver bullet, there is no one thing that is going to solve all of this. There are lots of little, tiny things I can change and reduce my impact a little bit. But in my opinion, we have to come to terms that producing food is going to leave some sort of impact, but we need to minimise that as much as we can."

VALUING THE ENVIRONMENT

John said he wants people to value the environment, it is the right thing to do, but it must be rewarded.

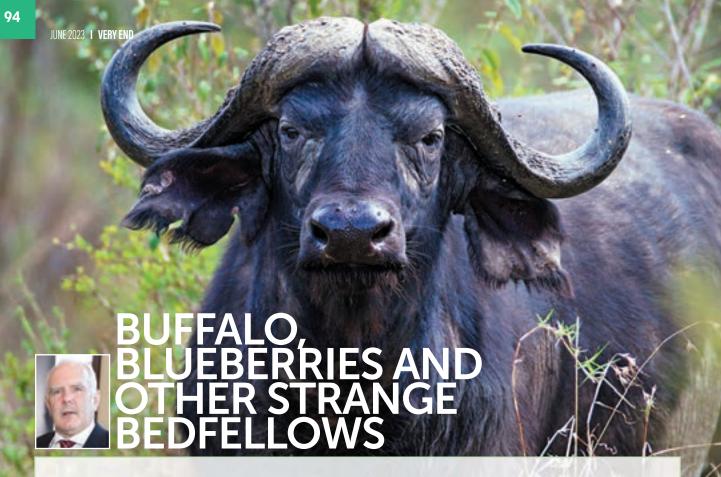
"At the minute we're selling into businesses, we have to make money, that's our capitalist world. Everyone appreciates that the environment is important but there is no cost on it. People say they value it, but it's only in a metaphorical way. People will

respond if you put a financial value on it, and pay people appropriately for protecting the environment, not scaled down schemes where you are taking money from one thing and putting it into another.

"There are farmers out there that will do that. I would look on it like maternity leave: there is a societal benefit to paying people for maternity leave. They have their child, the State gives them money so they don't have to work, and they can rear the child for the benefit of the society. Farming is a bit like that too. We still need to produce food, but we also recognise that the environment needs to be looked after and improved. If you look at the trends, the way we are doing things is having a negative impact on the environment. If we want to stop that, we need to limit the bad things and incentivise people to do better. People will respond to money. It's not fair to force farmers not to farm but give them no financial support. There is nothing sustainable about eroding farming.

"It's important to have other sectors engage with agriculture and have their say, only together will you be more informed, and we inform other people about the realities of farming and that's why I went to the conference: to give a farmer's perspective on what policy means to us. If they can hear from a farmer and ask him questions directly and learn from us and we can learn from them, and that's only beneficial."





Across all sectors, farmers are facing disruption to a greater or lesser degree in the coming years. While we do not have detailed economic or physical analysis on the potential impacts of a major rewetting programme, there can be little doubt that it will affect many thousands of farms. Not just to farms, or parts of farms, that could be rewetted voluntarily, but also to farms both upstream and downstream from those rewetted lands. Equally, there are implications for farms on the periphery of public peatlands, mostly under Bord na Mona jurisdiction. Individual farms are a relatively recent construct and are interdependent; they share a common land base and what happens on one farm often has consequences for neighbouring lands. It is hardly fair that significant actions taken on one farm or land base should have a detrimental impact on surrounding lands, especially if those affected landowners who are not involved in a rewetting programme would not have the comfort of being financially compensated for the potential damage to the productivity of their farms. Ultimately, these issues may only affect a minority; nevertheless, they should be addressed in advance. Otherwise, the law of unintended consequences will cause much disruption and uncertainty.

At least we have some indication of what farmers impacted by a widespread rewetting programme on peat-based agricultural lands can look forward to in terms of how they can manage their farms and the kinds of enterprises they may be able to operate. (A health warning should be issued before anyone reads further into this paragraph). At last, the self-styled environmental experts as well as some dangerously maverick public representatives, have partially answered questions as to what farmers should use their land for, in a new era where traditional food production practices are no longer acceptable or, if rewetting becomes commonplace, are not practical. Dexter cattle are suggested as one alternative. Currently a minority interest, Dexters have the merit of being lighter and would do less damage on rewetted soils though, even then, a few months of light grazing is probably the totality of their usefulness. They do bring a new interpretation to the increasing demand for lighter carcasses. Blueberry production has also been proposed. There is certainly some market potential for berry production and blueberries have the merit of liking acidic soils. Probably the most exotic proposal is the introduction of Water Buffalo on

rewetted soils. Buffalo mozzarella cheese production is a high margin enterprise, I am told. Water Buffalo do like to bask in ponds and marshlands. However, they also need dry land to graze on so that they can produce that high value milk. Heavy beasts ploughing their way through grassland with the water table a few centimetres below the surface, are hardly conducive to a viable milk production enterprise, be it Water Buffalo or Friesian cows. Meanwhile, the launch of the review of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Agricultural Regulations has farmers scratching their heads in bewilderment. A six-week consultation process may deliver some clarity, but farmers need to be aware that changes to farm structure - including realigning of hedgerows or walls or levelling hilly parts of fields - may not be possible in future, certainly without ever closer scrutiny from relevant authorities. Bringing unproductive or abandoned land into food production could be increasingly frowned upon, to say the least. Drainage or renewal of existing drains on agricultural lands may be challenging in future, not because of cost or infrastructural impediments but because this EIA review could result in some prohibition of such activities.



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



