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EDITORIAL

Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

THERE IS A TIDE IN OUR AFFAIRS

Let's clear away the fog currently encircling Irish agriculture and attempt, at least, to create a long-term view of where the industry is going or should be going in the decades ahead. Much of the change we have experienced in recent decades was achieved by stealth and/or inevitability. The decimation of farm numbers since the middle of the last century has been quite extraordinary. Moving from 300,000 farmers to little more than 100,000, mirrors the same experiences in agricultural communities across the world. When we joined the European Economic Community in 1973 there were 65,000 Irish milk producers. Now we are touching 17,000 and that is after a period of rapid expansion and opportunity since the demise of EU milk quotas. There has been an influx of new entrants, but barely enough to reinvigorate and replenish the Irish dairy sector with youth and energy. Still, despite the current travails with falling farmgate prices, nitrates reductions and often invalid criticism over the environmental impact of milk production, there are ongoing opportunities for young enthusiasts to enter dairying with the prospect, at least, of a long-term viable income.

This is not the case in several other sectors, even though, with reasonable scale and high levels of production efficiency, there are options in dry-stock production to make a full- or part-time living, at least for now. Leave aside tillage, which is dependent on large scale to justify the investment involved, apart from random niche opportunities.

The long-term viability for many dry-stock farms is heavily dependent on ongoing and increasing subventions from government and EU as well as an indefinite postponement or even cancellation of several trade deal negotiations which the EU seems fully committed to. The continuing growth of middle-class consumer societies across the globe, especially in high-population countries in South America and South-East Asia, means that the pressure is firmly on the EU to increase trade with these countries, even if it means sacrificing the relative protectionism for European agriculture, particularly in meat production. Increasing global consumption of animal proteins may soften the impact for European producers but barring climate catastrophe stifling livestock production in low-cost countries, European producer ability to compete will reduce in the decades ahead. That is the negative side of the equation.

On the positive side, and in seeming contradiction to the foregoing analysis, there has rarely been such opportunity for landowners as exists right now. Traditional production is and will continue to be under economic and environmental pressure, and I include dairy in that. However, as with every cloud, the solutions to climate change mitigation can deliver opportunity. For land ill-suited to pasture-based livestock production, the re-emergence of forestry as a viable option cannot be ignored. Our interview with Paddy Bruton of Forestry Services Limited illustrates the long-term positive prospects for a viable income from tree planting. We are, at last, likely to see the development of a biomethane industry at scale. That, too, will offer financial opportunity for farmers who wish to remain as pasture-based farmers without necessarily being at the mercy of volatile livestock prices. While planting solar panels on land is anathema for many of us, the economic return to the landowner above most livestock production options is unarguable. Organic farming is more heavily subsidised than ever before. While these subsidies exist, the figures also add up for many interested farmers. We may even see the land itself, as a carbon store, deliver income opportunities for farmers. Agriculture is changing irrevocably. We can either curse the incoming tide or attempt to rise with it.

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THEM BONES, THEM BONES

New research from the Australian University of Melbourne reaffirms the value of dairy in the diet. While previous research has shown the value of a dairy-rich diet throughout life and most especially for young adult women, the latest findings show that it is never too late to benefit from additional dairy in the diet. The study has found that increasing dairy consumption in older people can dramatically improve their health, resulting in a 46 per cent reduction in hip fractures and a 33 per cent reduction for all fractures for older people. The National Dairy Council provides an estimation on its website that the Irish health system treats 30,000 osteoporosis-related fractures every year, costing €400m to our health services.

In the Australian study, 7,000 residents across 30 residential care homes were given an increase in the amount of dairy they consume each day. It found that 3.5 servings of dairy per day consumed by residents, was associated with a 46 per cent reduced risk for hip fractures, 33 per cent for all fractures and 11 per cent for falls, following the two-year study. The authors of the study attributed the findings to the additional calcium and high-quality protein found in dairy foods.

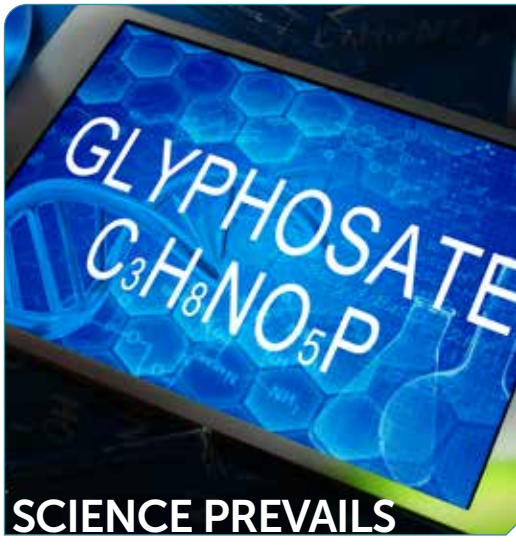
The Irish Department of Health has new dietary guidelines that advise older people to consume three to four servings from the 'milk, yoghurt and cheese' food group each day, coincidentally close to the advice issuing from Melbourne University's medicine faculty on foot of its research findings. The downside, from an Irish perspective, is that less than 4 per cent of over-60s in Ireland consume the critical three to four dairy servings per day shown to be necessary to mitigate the risk of fractures in old age.

PAST PEAK PLOUGHING?

Was this year's reduction in the number of attendees at the Ploughing symptomatic of a long-term trend? Or was it just the result of inclement weather, especially on the first day, and the parking issues that arose as a result? It seems that, despite the weather, many exhibitors felt, from a business perspective, that it was the best event in years. The involvement of Enterprise Ireland has opened up new opportunities for agri-business and technology to showcase their wares and the Innovation Arena is now a centre point at the Ploughing. But, while the commercial and social aspects of the annual National Ploughing Championships continue to appeal to hundreds of thousands of people, the reduced livestock presence as well as the dearth of tractor manufacturers in attendance have somewhat reduced the impact of the spectacle. The Ploughing is becoming increasingly costly to host and that is reflected in entrance and exhibitor fees. While most would still consider it to be great value for a day out, it does represent a considerable outlay when the cost of fuel, food and discretionary purchases are considered. The Ploughing remains a go-to event for politicians. They love the opportunity to meet and greet the electorate in casual circumstances, allied to plenty of positive photo opportunities.

The word is that neighbouring landowners who facilitated the National Ploughing Association's requirements for parking and site infrastructure are unwilling to commit to another year. The damage to fields was deemed too excessive to be repeated. Anna May and her team have been exploring other options in recent months. One promising site at Gowran in Kilkenny was deemed too challenging from a traffic-management perspective. Next up is a potential Kildare venue. Decisions will be needed quickly as the staging of this moveable feast of agricultural endeavour requires many months of planning. A permanent site must be a future consideration as its current nomadic nature is hugely costly and challenging to manage.

Lots and lots of wood chip laid down in the parking field to help drivers. Photo: NPA, Twitter.



SCIENCE PREVAILS

It looks like some degree of science is being brought to bear on the issue of glyphosate use. After being erroneously maligned as a potential carcinogen, the herbicide has received the backing of the European Commission in recent weeks for an extension of its use on EU farms for the next 10 years. A report from the European Food Safety Authority concluded that there are no critical concerns around glyphosate use and that, presumably, drove the Commission decision. At last, science seems to be winning out over fearmongering, though there is still the potential for the Commission's draft regulation to be blocked this month at a meeting of the EU's Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed. Should that be the case, the crop protectant would again face a cliff-edge ban at the end of this year. Glyphosate is, if anything, becoming a more important herbicide that ever, with widespread use in supporting min-till systems and the establishment of new clover-rich and multi-species, all critical developments in climate change mitigation strategies.

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MSD Animal Health

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ASA CONFERENCE

Photo: Tony Gavin Photography.

The Agricultural Science Association (ASA) banquet has grown substantially over the years. We counted 40 tables at the dinner, which was sponsored by Bord Bia. This year's ASA distinguished member award was given to Professor Frank Crosby of UCD. Frank is highly regarded by his peers and the award was recognition of a lifetime of dedication to educating young graduates. The conference which was held earlier in the day was, we believe, down in numbers on previous years. There were four sessions with some excellent presentations and discussions. FBD, once again, supported the event as principal partner, along with session sponsors Bord Bia, Tirlán and Alltech. The ministerial address and Q&A were sponsored by the *Irish Farmers Journal*. Tommy Boland, the outgoing president of the ASA did a great job during his year, with a high media profile. He handed over the chain of office to Niamh Bambrick from Mullinahone Co-op at the AGM. The organisation is in safe hands with Niamh, who displayed competence and confidence in her roles during the conference and dinner presentations. The ASA is one of the strongest voluntary organisations in the Irish agri-food arena, with international tours, and relevant events across carbon, equine, horticulture, as well as student travel bursaries and career days. Its 'Experts in the Field' podcasts are an excellent innovation with the series available on the ASA website.

VIKTOR LEMKEN'S 85TH BIRTHDAY

Long-time head of Lemken, the international farm machinery manufacturer, Victor Lemken celebrated his 85th birthday last month. In 1966, Viktor became the sixth generation of his family to join the company, which was founded in 1780. Viktor has stepped back from day-to-day management, though he is still active on the company board. His daughter Nicola Lemken is the seventh generation of the family to be part of the company as a shareholder and member of the executive management.

For decades, the plough was the tillage implement most associated with Lemken. With two expansions of the product range – seed drill technology in 1996 and the company's entry into crop care technology in 2005, Viktor expanded the former plough forge into one of the world's leading agricultural-technology companies after taking on the top management role in the company following the death of his father in 1969.

THE COST OF IDEOLOGY

Piling on unnecessary cost to commuters, transporters and other energy users including householders, through ever-rising carbon taxes, is a result of ideology winning out over rationality. The high cost of energy has resulted in every consumer minimising their expenditure on that vital commodity. In many cases, householders on restricted incomes will reduce their heating allocation below the minimum required to keep their houses warm during this winter. Elsewhere, there is increasing evidence that high fuel and energy costs are impacting profitability and viability of businesses. Who, in their right minds, believes that fuel and energy is being wasted? That is the only logical reason why a Government would continue to pile additional carbon taxes on hard-pressed commuters, householders and businesses.

It is a clear case of blind ideology trumping rational decision-making. Adding unnecessary cost to energy is self-defeating in the longer term. Reduced profitability and lower consumer spending power, ultimately reduces Government income from personal and business taxes. That, in turn, reduces government ability to intervene in supporting climate change mitigation measures. Behavioural change should be encouraged through ongoing and even increased supports for retrofitting houses and adopting electrification across transport and other activities, not through coercive taxation. It's more carrots we need for societal change, not carbon tax sticks, if we want compliance and cooperation in changing the way we live and work.

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CATTLE HERD ALREADY REDUCING

The latest Central Statistics Office (CSO) stats on livestock numbers show a year-on-year reduction. Suckler cow numbers are down by 41,000 from June 2022 to June 2023, continuing an ongoing trend. Dairy cow numbers increased over the period by barely half that number, pointing to a plateauing of the dairy herd with a likely decrease coming down the bóthar on foot of banding, nitrates reductions and a collapse in milk prices. Total cattle numbers are down by 55,000 head, suggesting a tighter beef market in the years ahead. The sheep flock was up by 16,000 head while, somewhat contradictorily, breeding ewes were down by a whopping 87,000. The rebuilding of the Irish pig herd continues after an extended price trough, with a jump of 1.6 per cent in numbers to a total herd size last June of 1.66 million. Elsewhere, cereal acreage, unsurprisingly, dropped by 17,000 hectares, leaving ambitious growth targets for the sector in serious doubt. The ongoing fall in potato growing continues with another 100 hectares knocked off last year's crop area. While all these figures are only a point in time – June 2022 to June 2023, they suggest long-term inexorable trends. Peak dairy is approaching if not already passed. Our beef sector is showing signs of contraction and novel alternative farm-based enterprises will probably accelerate this decline in the years ahead. An ageing demographic profile of Irish farmers, while not included in this set of CSO statistics, will inevitably drive larger scale and fewer farmers and farms over the coming decades.

DOUBLE DUTCH HIT ON IRISH CALF EXPORTS

Partij voor de Dieren (PvdD), or Party for the Animals, is a Dutch political party that went below our radar until now. The animal-rights grouping in the Dutch parliament recently secured a parliamentary majority vote for a ban on calf imports. We send over 100,000 calves to the Netherlands, annually. Should the PvdD-promoted vote become law, we are going to have an awful lot of calves without any viable home. So much for free trade within the EU. Our best hope is that this will be a slow burner before any restrictions are placed on Irish calf exports to Dutch veal-producing farms. The Dutch authorities are also intent on banning livestock imports from regions or countries without an active infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR)-eradication programme. It is time to cease criticising Animal Health Ireland's motivation in promoting an IBR-control strategy.

InTouch

CATHAL BOHANE,
INTOUCH NUTRITION

TIME TO CHECK THE CONDITION

For many years now, body condition score (BCS) has been recognised as a main management feature in dairy operations. No matter what production system we operate in, BCS change is a cost to the system. The reason for this is that it takes more energy (4.5 UFL/kg bodyweight) and, invariably, money to gain BCS than the energy we gain from its loss (3.5 UFL/kg bodyweight); hence it can be cost that goes unnoticed in the business, even outside the negative effects of having cows in lower BCS.

Along with nutrition, minerals and management, body condition scores are the key features of any event in the cow's yearly cycle. This time of year, when cows are approaching the twilight of their lactation, is a very important time for BCS scoring. Having the cows in the right condition now will go a long way towards determining success or failure of the calving season. On a scale of 1 to 5, we are ideally going to dry them at 3 to 3.25 and maintain condition during the dry period. Body condition scores greater than this can lead to problems; fat cows are 4 to 9 times more prone to metabolic issues, and they can have up to a 30 per cent lower dry matter intake post calving. So, we need BCS scoring to answer important questions, such as: 'where are the cows now?'; 'are they on target, gaining or maintaining?'; and 'what do we need to change?'.

The first step is assessment. It's important to treat this as an essential task, rather than a passing glance. Many farmers look at cows in the field or view them from the front or from below them in the milking parlour, but these assessments can be flawed. Later, when the cows are in the crush getting vaccinated, we may become worried that, in fact, the cows are too thin or fat. Then we must go against the grain when designing a plan for the animals. Assessing cows in a crush at certain times of the year needs to become as important as vaccinations.

As per the above, the recommend BCS of cows at drying off and calving is 3 to 3.25. What should this look like? Refer to the photos below:

1. The thurl (marked in red) should be U-shaped.
2. The hooks (marked in yellow) should be rounded.
3. The sacral and tailhead ligaments (marked in blue) should be visible; if these are covered in fat, the cow is at a BCS greater than 3.25.

ACUTE SLOWDOWN IN AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT PRICE RISES

Agricultural price indices data released by Eurostat recently, show that the recent price growth of agricultural commodities in the EU slowed sharply in the second quarter of 2023 (when compared with the same quarter of 2022). Furthermore, the average price of goods and services currently consumed in agriculture declined between quarter two of 2022 and quarter two of 2023, the first decrease since quarter four of 2020. These latest data suggest a further settling down of global agricultural markets after a period of disruption, which was characterised by strong agricultural output and input price growth. Output prices are the prices that farmers get at the farm gate.

Between the second quarter of 2022 and the second quarter of 2023, the average EU price of agricultural products as a whole (output) increased by 2 per cent. This represented a significantly lower rate of increase compared with the previous quarter when the average price increased by 17 per cent (first quarter of 2023 compared with the first quarter of 2022). Potatoes (+38 per cent) are included in the sharpest price rises in the second quarter of 2023. Among other products impacted by strong price rises include eggs (+31 per cent) and pigs (+28 per cent). By contrast, the price of cereals decreased (-31 per cent), while those of poultry (+4 per cent) and milk (-2 per cent) remained more stable.

Over the same period, the average price of goods and services currently consumed in agriculture (input not related to investment) decreased by 5 per cent. This decline followed on from a slowdown in price growth in the previous quarter, albeit when prices increased by 11 per cent (first quarter of 2023 compared with the first quarter 2022). Among the inputs not related to investment, the sharpest rates of price decline were fertilisers and soil improvers (-23 per cent), energy and lubricants (-13 per cent), and animal feedstuffs (-5 per cent).

THE MERRY MILL WINS EUROPEAN ORGANIC AWARD

Family-run organic farm and oat-milling enterprise, The Merry Mill, based in Co. Laois scooped a top award at the 2023 European Organic Awards. A pool of close to 100 applications from all over Europe were submitted to the awards organisers, with 24 shortlisted candidates selected from 11 EU countries.

The Merry Mill was successful in the 'best organic food processing SME' category and picked up the award at a special ceremony in Brussels on September 25, EU Organic Day. The Merry Mill produces a range of organic gluten-free foods in a closed-loop system on their farm. In order to manage the whole process from start to finish to ensure no cross contamination of other grains occurs, they have built Ireland's first organic gluten-free oat mill.

The EU Organic Awards comprise seven categories and eight individual awards. They acknowledge 'excellent, innovative, sustainable and inspiring projects producing real added value for organic production and consumption'. The awards are jointly organised by the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions, COPA-COGECA and IFOAM Organics Europe, with the support of the European Parliament and the Council.


Jenny and Kevin Scully with daughters Sadbh, Aoife, Roisin and Niamh.

Commenting, EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski said: "In cultivating our land with the principles of organic farming, they not only nourish our soil but also provide healthy and quality products. Today's EU Organic Awards winners are the prime examples on how the production and availability of more organic food can bring benefits to farmers, consumers, and society at large."

Leonardo Pofferi, COGECA vice-president added: "Being an active partner of the second edition of the EU Organic Awards it is an absolute honor for Copa-Cogeca. The rewarding of these extraordinary realities underlines the active role that European agriculture has been playing towards a more sustainable Europe. It is inspiring and motivating to see all these great businesses and I wish you to congratulate and thank all of them for their role and contribution to the development and promotion of the European organic farming."

SIMULATORS WILL HELP 'DEVELOP LIVESTOCK HANDLING SKILLS'


Minister of State, Martin Heydon with Dr Anne-Marie Butler, head of education, Teagasc; Jonathan Keneally, technician, Teagasc Clonakilty Agriculture College; and Professor Frank O'Mara, Teagasc director.

Minister of State with responsibility for farm safety at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon, recently launched 11 calving simulators and 11 injecting simulators for use in Teagasc agricultural colleges and research and innovation centres. The simulators, according to the minister, will provide students with a safe environment in which to develop their livestock-handling skills before progressing to working with live animals. Almost one in five farm fatalities on Irish farms over the past decade involved livestock while livestock also account for over half of all non-fatal incidents.

"It is important that the next generation of farmers have the necessary skills in calving cows and injecting cattle to perform these tasks safely. This investment in simulators will greatly expand the capacity of Teagasc to provide enhanced training in these vital livestock husbandry skills. It will build on the investment I made in farm machinery simulators for agricultural colleges last year."

The livestock simulators will be available to students completing courses at the agricultural colleges and livestock research and innovation centres, and also to students at universities and technological universities who use these facilities for practical learning.

Dr Anne Marie Butler, Teagasc's head of education said that about 4,200 full- and part-time students, and a further 1,380 students in higher education undertake practical training at agricultural colleges and centres. An estimated 85 per cent of these students come from livestock farms, indicating the relevance of access to the bovine simulators. The bovine simulators will also be available to farmer groups who wish to expand their skill base related to cow-calving and injection skills.

Damien O'Reilly
EU Affairs and
Communications Manager, ICOS

LETTER FROM BRUSSELS

Brussels has the second-highest number of lobbyists in the world behind Washington DC. It's estimated that there are over 25,000 lobbyists working here. In a healthy democracy, lobbying is important and vital work. Legislators cannot propose legislation without consultation first and that is where businesses, trade unions, charities and other so-called non-governmental bodies come into play. Collectively, in places like Brussels and Washington, they are known as lobby groups. Their job is to try to influence legislation. That may sound worse than its actual purpose but there is nothing wrong with wanting to have an influence in decision-making. It is important for all facets of society. We do it when we vote, be it in a general election or on motions at the local sports club AGM. But it can also be used as a weapon in debate or as a pejorative insult. Where one interest group disagrees with the aims of another, the term "powerful lobby" is triggered to paint a picture of the ordinary person getting walked on by the more powerful. A good example of this is evident in the growing and unnecessary culture war between environmentalists and farmers. It is not just in Ireland but right across Europe that agriculture and the environment are hopping off each other. The ongoing Nature Restoration Law debate is an example of such divisiveness. Environmentalists like to be called campaigners or advocates while farmer representatives are labelled by environmentalists as powerful lobby groups. It's an ironic use of words, considering the fastest-growing lobby group in the EU is arguably from the broad environmental family. It is becoming clear here in Brussels that, collectively, environmental lobbyists are quietly gaining huge power and influence. That is fine too. The EU needs a strong environmental lobby like never before.

Frans Timmermans has stepped down as EU Commission vice-president to make a run for Dutch Prime Minister, but he is seen as the classic personification of a side of that incremental growth which has not been very farmer friendly. Where farmers might, in good faith, dare to question some of these policies, they are accused of being in climate denial, or worse, 'lurching to the far right'. Put simply, in my view, this is gaslighting farmers.

The EU has seldom faced so many diverse challenges at once: war in Ukraine, climate change and severe weather events, migration, and the threat to food security. Farmers and food producers are very much part of the front line in finding solutions to the threats posed. So, never has it been more important that they have a voice, a strong lobby around the EU table, especially when they are being asked to change the way land is farmed, reduce emissions, protect biodiversity, and continue to supply citizens with safe, traceable, and affordable food. Why would anybody wish to weaken that influence in the decision-making process at this critical juncture?

icos
Irish Cooperative Organisation Society

The beginning of the end: Lactation 2023

Maeve Regan,
Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

For spring calving herds, the end of the lactation is now in sight and there are important decisions to be made over the next few weeks that will dictate how stress-free calving 2024 may be. This month, we'll highlight a few important boxes to be added to the 'to-do' checklist prior to drying off.

Milk recording

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

BCS

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

Silage analysis

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

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

Selecting a dry cow mineral

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

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

NEW ROLE FOR JACK O'CONNOR AT MSD ANIMAL HEALTH

MSD Animal Health has appointed Jack O'Connor as ruminant business unit director for the company's range of products for the dairy, beef and sheep sectors in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Jack succeeds Dr William Minchin who vacated the role recently.

Jack has held a number of roles within the organisation since 2016, most recently as ruminant sales manager for the technology solutions portfolio. Prior to this, Jack worked in ruminant marketing for six years. In this time, he spear-headed digital educational initiatives including the development of step-by-step video series focussed on udder health and calf health promoting best practise from the day a calf is born to the day it is weaned.

Announcing the appointment, Fergal Morris, general manager, MSD Animal Health Ireland said: "Since joining, Jack has been involved in multiple projects and tasks from key account management, product launches, customer events, company hosted conferences and a range of successful marketing campaigns which have helped to drive growth and support our business over the last eight years. Jack has a deep understanding of our product portfolio and specifically how we can leverage growth in sales across our technology and biopharmaceutical ranges."

Commenting on his appointment, Jack said: "I am delighted to take up this role at what is an important time for livestock producers and the veterinary practitioners who are faced with numerous challenges in terms of environmental pressures, labour shortages, antimicrobial resistance and market volatility."

Hailing from Drinagh, Co. Wexford, Jack graduated in 2017 from UCD with a bachelor's degree in agricultural science, specialising in food and agri-business management. Jack is a member of the Wexford Senior Hurling team and local St. Martins club.

DAIRYMASTER LAUNCHES NEW ROTARY MILKING PARLOUR

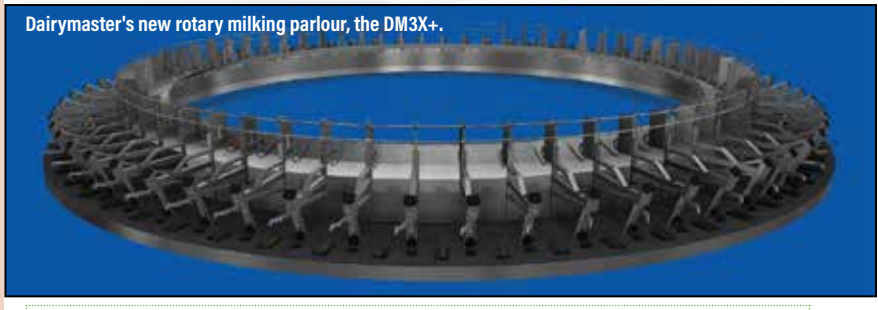
Dairymaster has launched the DM3X+ rotary milking parlour which has been developed primarily to suit the performance needs of the very large commercial dairies, according to the company. A Dairymaster spokesperson said: "These customers monitor parlour performance with standard industrial metrics such as throughput and uptime, and they seek to minimise both scheduled and unscheduled downtime. Dairymaster believes this product will strengthen their offering especially in export markets."

Dairy farming continues to grow outside of Europe, with typical farms milking thousands of cows three or even four times per day, all year round. Herd size for these farms is often determined by the number of cows that can be milked in an eight-hour shift. Milking parlour performance is everything to these commercial dairies with the parlour typically milking in excess of 21 hours per day, with the aim of milking one cow approximately every six seconds.

The spokesperson added: "The DM3X+ is specially developed to meet the needs of these types of farms, and includes advances for equipment reliability, speed of operation and cow flow. The bail divider on the DM3X+ follows minimalistic design principles to expose only the essential functions at the point of operation.

"The bail incorporates SmartSwitch technology, allowing the operator to quickly select the action they need. SmartSwitch is a traffic-light-like system whereby colours indicate various commands, for example, green for milking, blue for washing, red for stop, etc.

"The system is designed for speed of maintenance and has redundancy built into all major components to ensure continuous milking. The continuous milk flow ensures that cows are constantly milked, maximising milking throughput and speed of milking, meaning service can be done efficiently in between milkings." Some of the technology will be applicable to owner-operator dairy farms, and they will look to incorporate the suitable aspects into the existing rotary parlour designs where appropriate.

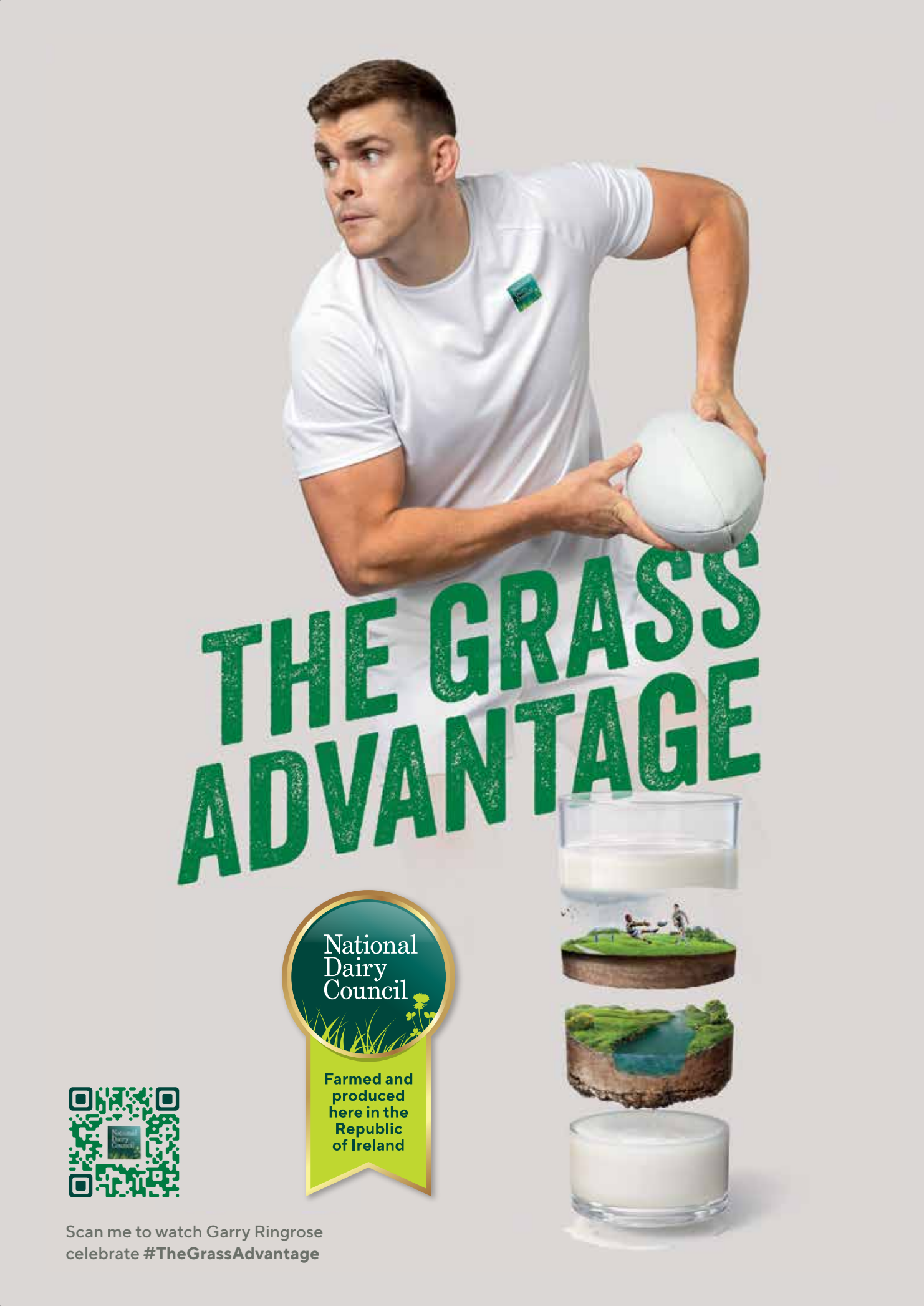


Dairymaster's new rotary milking parlour, the DM3X+.

SAVE THE DATE: TEAGASC PIG CONFERENCE

Teagasc's annual pig-farmer conference takes place on October 17 in the Hotel Kilmore, Co. Cavan and on October 18 in the Horse and Jockey Hotel, Co. Tipperary. Three invited speakers will join the Teagasc Pig Development Department line up for the event:

- Francesc Illas, works for Grup Batallé, a fully integrated company that manages 30,000 sows from genetics to final product, where he is currently the technical director and head of production.
- Johannes Vugts is a senior pig production adviser with HKScan, a 130-year-old Scandinavian food company that is currently the fifth-largest food manufacturer in Europe. He is based in Finland but also works Sweden and Estonia.
- Des Rice, who began his career as vet, is a business coach and psychotherapist and provides coaching and mentoring services on strategic, human-behaviour and stress management issues to many businesses and to various community groups. The event will begin at 1pm on both days.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McCORMACK ON THE HOME STRAIGHT

AFTER ALMOST 17 YEARS AS A FARMER REPRESENTATIVE, CULMINATING IN THE PRESIDENCY OF THE IRISH CREAMERY MILK SUPPLIERS ASSOCIATION (ICMSA), PAT McCORMACK IS INTO HIS FINAL MONTHS IN OFFICE. HE SPOKE TO MATT O'KEEFFE ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES AS HEAD OF THE ICMSA, AND ABOUT THE CHALLENGES FACING FARMERS TODAY

Pat became chair of the ICMSA Dairy Committee in December 2009: "I was six years in that role. During the last four of those years, I was deputy president and, after a further two years as deputy, I was elected president six years ago, come December. Farm politics and the challenges facing farmers have been coming hot and heavy in recent weeks and months and, without doubt, in the next few months there will be no slowdown. So, it will be full speed ahead until the election of my successor at the AGM in December."

REFLECTIONS

Pat's representative role had two distinct periods, reflecting the change in farm policy over that time, he said. "From 2009 to 2015 and beyond there was huge enthusiasm and optimism about the dairy sector with the opportunity to develop and expand after quotas were abolished. That was followed by active investment on dairy farms and in processing facilities. Unfortunately, over the past months, that enthusiasm has been drained and the challenges are clear around the difficulties of keeping the family farm vibrant and viable.

"We have seen the changes in the Nitrates Derogation, shifting from 250kg to 220kg and the likelihood that it will be very difficult to change that. Clearly, there must be some tweaks and compromises made to prevent serious damage to the viability of many dairy farms."

INCESSANT CRITICISM

Pat agreed that the constant criticism of Irish milk production is eroding confidence: "Farmers are doing a lot of work to manage their farms in an environmentally responsible manner. They are under pressure between the physical work involved as well as the management and the endless paperwork and compliance issues involved. We may be responsible for a third of the emissions, or water quality issues, but we are taking 100 per cent of the blame." He said farmers are seen as a 'soft target for criticism' but pointed out that when there is a national challenge such as a snowstorm or a pandemic closedown, it is Irish farmers' products that are most in demand.

"The first products to disappear from supermarket shelves are food essentials, whether that's meat, milk, flour or vegetables," he said. "It's at these times that consumers prioritise the essentials. Food security is a huge issue and shouldn't be undermined. We heard President Higgins talking about people changing their diets. The proven diet, over thousands of years prioritised animal-sourced protein as being essential."

QUOTA ABOLITION

The ICMSA president reflects on the game-changer of quota abolition: "In the run-up to abolition there was a huge apprehension for the family-farm model. ICMSA expressed that worry for a significant period. However, once the support mechanisms were reduced for European and Irish dairy farmers, there was only one approach to be taken." And, quota abolition served rural Ireland extremely well since 2015, he said.

"Going back to 2009, when the country was driven into a deep recession, thousands of people were looking for work. If you look around rural Ireland today, anyone that wants work can get it. Thousands of young people at school or college can earn money milking cows during holidays or weekends. That has helped so many people finance their education and lifestyles. Farm contractors are another source of casual and permanent employment. There is more opportunity now than in the past 40 years. Dairy expansion at production and processing levels has driven economic growth in rural Ireland."

THE PRIORITIES AHEAD

Looking to the short-term and the upcoming budget, Pat said he would be disappointed if robust measures to alleviate volatility for the sole trader are not introduced. "Our proposal for a management deposit scheme would be a positive delivery. Recent milk-price reductions only highlight the fact that volatility has to be managed. Farmers are challenged by this, especially in terms of cashflow and pending tax liabilities. If a scheme had been in place 12 months ago, the finance would have been in place to cover the likes of tax bills.

"Managing environmental challenges is another big ongoing issue. Calf welfare is a priority. Something needs to be done around recognition of different crude protein contents in livestock feed. We need differentiation between the use of a 12 per cent and an 18 per cent protein feed that is then reflected in the kilogrammes of organic nitrogen per cow excreted."

LACK OF REPRESENTATIVE COHESION

Pat had this to say about farmer representation, and the recent meeting with the Minister McConalogue: "I have had a very good working relationship with the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) during my years as a farmer representative. I served on the Farmers Charter with various IFA representatives. We made progress together. Unfortunately, they decided not to go into that meeting with the minister. We went in about our business. We felt that our members were affected by the nitrates changes and needed to be represented. Regrettably, we were left with no choice only to pass a protest.

"Minister McConalogue needed to be told about the impact on farmers. When we came out, we treated the IFA with respect and engaged in media briefings later as to what happened at the meeting. I don't believe there is anything to be gained from shouting at each other. It's unfortunate there wasn't more dialogue prior to that confrontation. The issues are too big. For the average herd owner, there is the prospect of upwards of 20 per cent herd reduction between changes in cow banding and the prospect of a 30kg reduction in nitrates by next January. Ultimately, we all stand shoulder to shoulder in defending Irish farmers."

THE STAND-OUT MOMENTS

The Tipperary-based milk producer reflects on some of the stand-out moments of his ICMSA presidency: "I was heavily involved in the beef talks. The inclusion of the 03 and the 4+ were significant developments. I was alone in proposing those immediate changes, even though they were introduced six weeks later. It was disappointing that there was a lack of support on the day. For those farmers who finished those categories of cattle during that interim period, they suffered as a result of the delay in implementation.

"Coming back to quota abolition, that was, without doubt, a stand-out moment of my period as a farmer representative. There was €70m of a super-levy fine in the year before abolition. Despite that, there was a huge buzz as well as an understandable apprehension at the scale of change coming. The delivery, in terms of increased production and the development of additional processing capacity, ultimately built with farmers money, was a source of great satisfaction. The 2020 targets were met almost three years early. That's success, by any measure. The national as well as the rural economies have benefitted and must benefit future generations. That's why it's so important to protect not only our generation of farmers but those coming after us. At a basic level, that includes the proposed 220kg derogation limit, if there is no concession on the reduction. I see any rolling back on the reduction as a huge challenge, but we must do our utmost to protect the viability of our farms and of rural Ireland."

Tara McCarthy pictured at the 2023 ASA Conference.

THE SYSTEM OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION

JUST OVER ONE YEAR ON FROM HER APPOINTMENT TO THE ROLE OF VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE (ESG) WITH ALLTECH, TARA MCCARTHY SPOKE TO *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY* EDITOR, MATT O'KEEFFE, ABOUT ESG, FOOD SUSTAINABILITY AND A HOST OF FOOD-RELATED TOPICS

It's a little over 12 months since the former CEO of Bord Bia joined Alltech in a role to which she brought a strong understanding of sustainable food production systems. Tara explains that role in a bit more detail: "Back in 2019, Alltech shared a vision with its customers and stakeholders of what the company is trying to achieve with the launch of our 'Planet of Plenty' strategy. It is defined as providing adequate nutrition for everyone on the planet, revitalising local economies and replenishing the planet's resources. That's the backdrop for what everyone in Alltech is charged with delivering," she says.

"Over the past 12 months we have defined the Alltech perspective towards achieving that vision. There are four specific jobs to be done. The first is building the proof that Alltech is very committed to achieving its aims. We must, in turn, build our own leadership to achieve our aims and really understand the networks and insights that are behind the huge task that is ESG. The third job is building confidence among our staff around the topic because it is a complex and constantly evolving scenario. We are looking at the investment all of that involves. Finally, the belief is that if we have our proofs and our insights around the value chain and have confident teams then there is an opportunity to display our strategies and policies to our customers."

DEVELOPING THE ESG TEMPLATE

There is no single ESG strategy or

benchmarking process for companies to adopt. But, Tara explains, this is an evolving area and standards are becoming more clearly defined: "There are initiatives, especially in Europe, to define the reporting expectations around each of the ESG frameworks. There are very definitive expectations around the transparency that should be in place. It is an evolving situation with efforts to develop global alignment and you have the US and voluntary organisations aligning their expectations to make it easier for companies to be consistent in their ESG standards. The situation is still evolving but is increasingly defined."

DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY

Whether you are a farmer, a small-business owner, a distributor, involved in nutrition or in any facet of the food industry, then sustainable food production is a concern. Tara defines sustainable food production as that which is produced in a way that is nutritionally optimum for people, and in a way that is aligned to our planetary boundaries, and that is affordable to consumers. It has a wider remit than sometimes thought, says Tara. "It is looking at the environmental, social and economic aspects of food production and the key is being able to have the metrics to prove to different stakeholders that what you are doing meets those criteria. Too often, when people talk about sustainability, they only concentrate on the emissions. That's one of the conversations we as an industry have to equip ourselves to navigate, because our job is not only to measure emissions, it is about producing nutrient-rich food to feed the planet in a sustainable way, which means we are living and producing within the planetary boundaries that we have available to us."

REFLECTING ON ORIGIN GREEN

The former CEO of Bord Bia would have been very involved in the establishment and roll out of Origin Green – the world's only national food and drink sustainability programme – during her time there. What is her view of the initiative now? "It is cutting-edge thinking and I'm very proud that Ireland has created an infrastructure that is almost uniquely globally. Origin Green certification protects our food chain. It encompasses all the relevant data around traceability and production standards. The next phase will require even further scaling up, because of all the other aspects as well as emissions. These include water quality, biodiversity, and all the necessary data around the nutrient value of Irish food."

> **"ORIGIN GREEN CERTIFICATION PROTECTS OUR FOOD CHAIN. IT ENCOMPASSES ALL THE RELEVANT DATA AROUND TRACEABILITY AND PRODUCTION STANDARDS**

THE CARBON BALANCE

The concept of zero carbon is another topic the Alltech vice-president explored: "We have to look at optimum carbon input and the closest we can get to carbon neutrality. You can't have animal production without carbon expenditure. The challenge is to ensure that consumers who are looking at reducing their carbon impact choose food on the basis of its low carbon footprint credentials. This is about the evolution of the value chain and the business model of agriculture throughout the world, because we will have carbon capture opportunities.

"Our soil is an enormous resource to capture carbon. Science is still evolving around that. We must look at the full cycle around food production, the roles of our crops, our soils and our animals and not regard each as isolated silos but rather as an integrated system. The responsible evolution of the carbon market is an opportunity for agriculture rather than a threat for producers to be beaten up over because of one particular number."

PROTECTING COMPETITIVENESS

When asked to reconcile the demands of the Green Deal and Farm to Fork with the challenge of remaining globally competitive, Tara says: "All of these are moving parts so there are no absolutes out there. It is clear that Europe has positioned itself to be the leader in environmental protection, not only in agriculture but across all aspects of society and the EU economy. That is a huge transition.

"Mairead McGuinness's contribution to the Alltech One conference challenged policymakers to stay close to farmers. It is not a 'them and us' situation. It has to be an entire value chain, being rewarded, being educated, as we make this transition.

"I am just back from the US and they are struggling, and are behind us in terms of progress because they don't have access to the data we have in Europe and most especially in Ireland. Traceability is limited in the US and there is division as to what the right route forward is towards sustainable food production. Cohesion in European policy offers an opportunity. No one wants the destruction of European agriculture. It is too large and important a part of all our economies to risk damaging it. Notwithstanding that, European agriculture must be more resilient, that is, not in a continuous boom/bust global commodity cycle. Collaboration between policy makers at all levels as well as our entire value chains must ensure that consumers have access to affordable, nutritious food with producers making a decent living."

THE ALLTECH MODEL

Tara outlined Alltech's role in the ongoing development of a sustainable food production model: "We have a €2.5bn turnover with 5,000 employees across 90 countries. We understand the importance of soil and its carbon-capture capabilities. We have invested in the science around soil and its value for sustainable food production. The soil microbiome and its improvement are important to us and developing products that can improve productivity while reducing fertiliser inputs are an integral aspect of our work.

"Our crop science division is an important growth area for us. We are also developing increasing knowledge around the multiple levers that influence efficient livestock production. That ranges from exploiting production data, on ensuring optimum growth and output from dedicated feed inputs though our InTouch Keenan system. Alltech's E-CO2 division mirrors the farm data collection on carbon footprint we are familiar with in Ireland.

"All this feeds into the efficiency of our products. The emphasis is on how natural products can contribute to efficiency and productivity while minimising waste and ensuring low carbon footprint in food production."

WHAT FUTURE ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

"THE FUTURE THAT'S BEST FOR YOU MAY NOT BE THE ONE THAT YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR," JACK BOBO, DIRECTOR OF FOOD SYSTEMS INSTITUTE AT UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM, TOLD THE AUDIENCE AT THE AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION'S (ASA) RECENT CONFERENCE. IT WAS, POSSIBLY, ONE OF THE MOST THOUGHT-PROVOKING PARTS OF HIS KEYNOTE SPEECH, WRITES BERNIE COMMINS

By and large, Jack was preaching to the converted when espousing the role of agriculture today and the huge advancements that the sector has made: "Often people are beating up on agriculture for what it's not doing but they're not talking about what it is doing, things are wildly better now," he said. He addressed the risk of offloading our agricultural production to other countries that have not adopted or are not adopting sustainable practices: "The challenge we have is to figure out where can we be more intensive in our production and where should we be more careful in how we produce food."

And he pointed out that, the Farm to Fork strategy and Biodiversity Strategy may lead to a decrease in food production of up to 15 per cent across Europe: "Fifteen per cent less food means you will import a lot more food," he said.

NOT ABOUT GOOD AND BAD

Jack continued: "The country that sends the most food to Europe is Brazil but I'm not sure that it makes sense to export your environmental footprint to, arguably, the most biodiverse country on the planet."

"But it's not about good and bad and right and wrong it's about choices and consequences, and we need to think about who should be producing that food, where that food should be produced, and how we do it better every day."

And this brings us back to the article's opening quote above. In arriving at this observation about the future we are fighting for, in terms of agriculture and food production, Jack posed potential scenarios that provided much food for thought.

"Let's put ourselves in the year 2050, we've arrived at a future where you're doing well, economically, and we have solved our environmental problems, and we ask ourselves, how did we get here? Thinking of the future we want helps us to think about what to do next, and so I want to give you an example in terms of scenario planning," Jack said. Three scenarios followed.

Jack Bobo pictured at the 2023 ASA Conference. Photo: Tony Gavin Photography.

THREE POTENTIAL FUTURES

"The first scenario is where we double livestock production to meet that [global] protein demand, so animal agriculture wins," he said. "In scenario two, alternative protein wins, so 100 per cent of that future growth in protein demand goes to alternative protein companies," he added. "And in scenario three, we are producing less animal protein in 2050 than we are today."

Asking for a show of hands from the audience as to which scenario would be preferable yielded little interaction – perhaps a true reflection of our uncertainty about the future.

Regardless, Jack continued: "I think scenario two and, possibly, scenario three are the best outcomes for you. Because, if we double the number of livestock on the planet, then the winners [in that scenario] are Brazil and Argentina, because you [Ireland] are not going to double the amount of dairy cows on your farms. It's not going to happen. So, in scenario one, demand doubles, and supply doubles, and your income is, at best, flat!

"In scenario two, demand for 'real' meat doubles, but the supply is flat, so your income is probably two or three times higher.

"And in scenario three, there's sort of two versions of that: one where highly productive countries produce less, and the other is where unproductive countries produce less, such as India and Brazil.

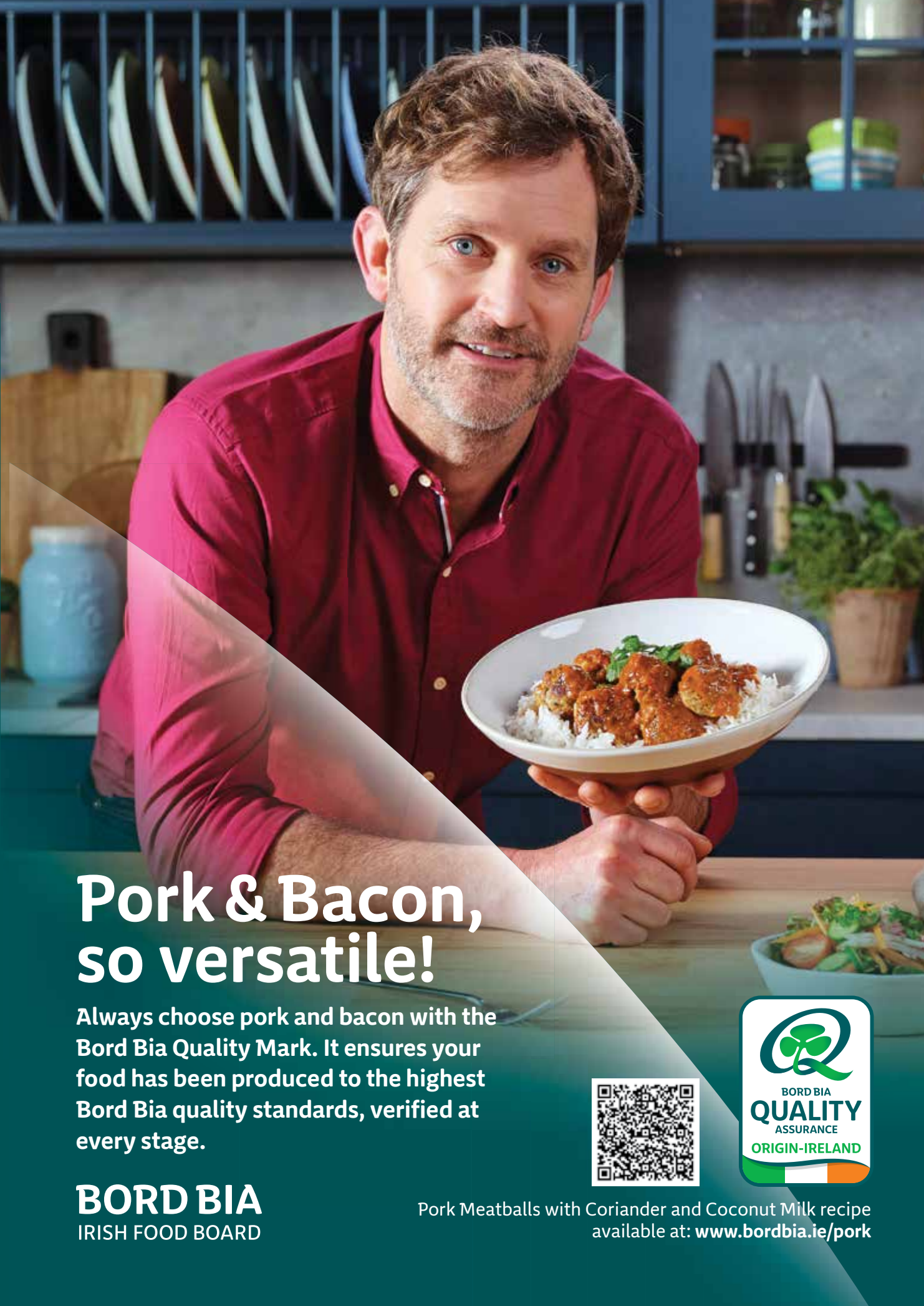
"So, if we reduced animal production in those extremely unproductive countries, that would be a reduction in [overall] livestock production, so your incomes would go up even more [due to demand]."

Maybe, he posed, there is a real opportunity for conventional protein production as we know it, and plant-based protein production to come together to meet future protein and food demands. "The point that I want to make is that the future that's best for you may not be the one that you're fighting for, and the competitors that you have today may not be competitors in the same way [in the future].

"And so, it's important that we have this clarity of vision. We need to know where we want to go but we also want to be flexible in how we get there. The future rewards clarity but it punishes certainty if you create rigid rules to how you're going to get to that future, something's going to go wrong and you're not going to be prepared."

NOT JUST FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jack confirmed that he is aiming to carry out research on these potential protein-production futures to determine the economic impact of these three scenarios on farmers' livelihoods, as well as the impact on health and the environment. "I think that will give ammunition to you to be able to talk about what you do, but might be motivation for other types of investments as well, " he said.



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SOUNDBITES: ASA CONFERENCE

THE AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION HELD ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN SEPTEMBER WITH A THEME THAT FOCUSSED ON THE 'SCIENCE OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS'. IT HIGHLIGHTED A RANGE OF ISSUES CURRENTLY CHALLENGING THE INDUSTRY AND ADDRESSED THE SOLUTIONS THAT EXIST, AND THAT ARE COMING DOWN THE TRACK. HERE, WE PRESENT A SAMPLE OF SOUNDBITES FROM SOME OF THE DAY'S EXPERT SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS

All photos: Tony Gavin Photography.

JACK BOBO

Director of the Food Systems Institute at the University of Nottingham

ON THE IMPACT OF AGRICULTURE:

"In many ways, there is nothing we do that has a bigger and more negative impact, but there is nothing more critical for our daily survival. For every dollar you invest in wind and solar, you get less than a dollar back because they are less efficient than fossil fuels. For every dollar, euro or pound that you invest in agriculture, you get 1.43 back every time. There is a positive rate of return. So you have to wonder, would consumers rather pay more for their energy, or less for their food?"

MARGARET BERRY

Head of Sustainability at the Kepak Group

ON THE 'ELUSIVE GREEN CONSUMER'

"On the surface, there has, apparently, never been a better time to launch a sustainable offering. Consumers increasingly say they want sustainable products. But the consumer is presenting us with a conundrum because there is a gap between consumer sentiment about sustainability and the consumer action for sustainability. They say they want progress but most aren't changing their shopping behaviour, nor are they willing to spend more money on sustainable products. While 80 per cent of consumers say they care about sustainability, only 20 per cent are acting on and paying for sustainable product choices. Less than seven per cent are willing to pay a premium for sustainable products, of which grocery retail is two per cent."

TARA McCARTHY
Global vice president for ESG, Alltech

ON MEETING OUR EMISSIONS TARGETS WHILE BEING PROUD OF OUR FOOD-PRODUCTION SYSTEM:

"We export 90 per cent of what we produce, particularly in our beef and dairy, and I have never met an exporter who has gone out apologising for anything. We go out with our best foot forward with the data sets that we have, with the fact that we are premium quality. We are on Michelin star restaurants, we are producing really well, and we are telling the world. Go to the US, Kerrygold is not apologising for anything! It is a premium butter – number-two market share there, and number-one imported butter. I would not get confused with an internal debate that we are having here, and the global impact that that our food industry has."

CHARLIE McCONALOGUE
Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

ON INCREASING ADOPTION OF VACCINES:

"The importance of animal health in relation to profitability and productivity, as well as making sure that we are making the most of the resources we put in, and minimising emissions, is crucial. In relation to the schemes and assistance we are providing, for example the new suckler scheme, we are looking to get a benchmark in relation to IBR in the beef herd, and to see how we can work with Animal Health Ireland to address that. In addition, we are encouraging information exchange and knowledge transfer in relation to the benefits of preventing rather than treating, and continuing to back all our research organisations."

JIM BERGIN
CEO of Tirlán Co-operative Society

ON THE CURRENT TRANSITION IN FARMING:

"I don't think we can dispute that we haven't made enough progress [water quality] and that the water quality is what it is. This is the most complex transition that farmers have ever been through and I have been through three transitions prior to this one: the growth in milk and automation back in the 70s; the quota era and 34 years of efficiency and consolidation; and the massive expansion from 2015 to 2021. But I am absolutely convinced that what is presented to farmers at the moment is the most complex subject and transition they have ever faced."

ASA's main conference partner was

FBD INSURANCE

ANUGA'S GROWTH OPP FOR IRISH FOOD AND DRINK COMPANIES

ANUGA, ONE OF THE LARGEST FOOD AND BEVERAGE EVENTS IN THE WORLD RETURNS TO COLOGNE, GERMANY IN OCTOBER. ITS BASE IS EUROPEAN, BUT ITS REACH IS GLOBAL, AND 'ITS POWER SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED' SAYS NOREEN LANIGAN, REGIONAL MANAGER, EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA, BORD BIA. HERE, NOREEN DISCUSSES THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS BIENNIAL EVENT, THE BUSINESS-GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR IRISH COMPANIES, AND THE SUPPORT OFFERED TO THEM BY BORD BIA

"Structured engagements such as Anuga offer a real opportunity to communicate the premium quality of Ireland's food and drink offering," says Noreen. "These trade shows are critical for the growth of the sector, not least because of the business potential involved for Irish companies trading within the EU, which represents 34 per cent of total Irish food and drink exports," she adds.

The attendance numbers associated with Anuga 2021 indicate that over 70,000 visitors from 169 countries and over 4,600 exhibitors from 98 nations took part. And this year, these numbers are all set to rise. So, the opportunity that Noreen is referring to is huge for the 15 companies exhibiting there in October 2023 across three Bord Bia Origin Green pavilions – meat, dairy and frozen. "It is like 10 trade shows under one roof, and is a significant opportunity for Irish processors and food producers to connect with their existing global customer base and discuss future business growth opportunities," says Noreen. A number of other independent Irish companies are also present at Anuga 2023, so Ireland is well-represented.

BORD BIA SUPPORT

In the run up to Anuga, work has been ongoing in the background to ensure that Irish companies can capitalise on the trade fair's offerings. To expedite connecting buyers and Irish suppliers, Bord Bia's German office undertook a major pre-event trade marketing and awareness campaign to promote the Irish industry's presence at Anuga. This included targeting more than 1,000 key influential buyers to visit the Origin Green stand.

"As 76 per cent of visitors and 92 per cent of exhibitors were from outside of Germany in 2021, Anuga remains fundamental to the industry's drive in building exports as it offers a unique opportunity to meet and build relationships with new and existing buyers," says Noreen.

In addition, Bord Bia also organised beef and dairy business-to-business (B2B) marketing campaigns across trade print publications, trade digital websites, and LinkedIn, targeting trade customers of beef and dairy.

"The objective of these campaigns is to communicate the unique selling points of Irish grass-fed beef and dairy. The combined reach across the different platforms for these campaigns is 1.6 million for dairy and 737,000 people for beef," explains Noreen.

During Anuga, a Bord Bia corporate campaign aims to target buyers across all food and drink sectors, while a separate campaign targeting trade customers for frozen PCF in Germany, UK and the Netherlands will also run on LinkedIn. These campaigns have a combined reach of 300,000 people.

"There is advertising across the Anuga marketing platforms, on their mobile app, on the website and in their buyer newsletter," adds Noreen. "And along with advertising banners at the north and east entrances to the show, and in the main boulevard, Bord Bia is also advertising Irish beef on a giant digital screen, located at a high-traffic crossing, which is expected to reach 1.8 million people," she adds.

TASTY PERFORMANCE

The primary focus for Ireland at Anuga 2023 is to target meat and dairy customers from the top-three visitor countries attending the show, namely Germany, the Netherlands and Italy, explains Noreen. "Currently 50 per cent of Irish beef, 74 per cent of Irish lamb and 36 per cent of Irish dairy exports are sold in Europe. The show is hugely important for connecting with customers there and further afield to continue to grow business primarily with a strong existing customer base."

But globally, Irish food and drink are performing 'exceptionally well' according to Noreen, and securing a variety of markets around the world is key. "Exports increased by 22 per cent in 2022, valued at €16.5bn, during a period of unprecedented change and challenges. Last year, Ireland exported the equivalent of over €45m worth of food and drink every day to customers in 187 countries around the world," says Noreen.

"Maintaining a diverse range of markets and channels around the world has been key to the success and continued growth of Ireland's food and drink exports. In 2022, Continental Europe remained Ireland's largest food and drink export destination accounting for 35 per cent of exports and delivering the strongest growth in both value (+30 per cent) and volume terms (+5 per cent), while the UK

> THE PRIMARY FOCUS FOR IRELAND AT ANUGA 2023 IS TO TARGET MEAT AND DAIRY CUSTOMERS FROM THE TOP-THREE VISITOR COUNTRIES

Noreen Lanigan, Bord Bia.

and international markets both now account for 32 per cent and 33 per cent of exports, respectively."

Exports to North America increased by almost 40 per cent to €2bn, and while China's Covid-19 restrictions contributed to a decline in exports there, growth in the value of exports to the Philippines, Japan and South Korea partially offset this decline. "Overall, Ireland's food and drink exports to Asia increased by 4 per cent to €1.4 billion," says Noreen.

CONVERTING TO GROWTH

If Covid-19 taught us anything, it was the importance of human interaction, of in-person communication, of making eye contact, and sharing a handshake. These help to form the foundations of strong relationships and can help overcome challenges that, inevitably, arise.

"Flagship events such as Anuga are fundamental to the Irish food and drink industry's drive to reconnect in person with key customers, and to partner with them to build sustainable value chains to meet the ambitions of Food Vision 2030, Ireland's strategy for the agri-food sector," says Noreen.

"Sometimes these meetings can lead to direct business and at other times, business conversion happens a few months down the line," she adds.

"The biggest challenge faced by companies is negotiating price increases with existing customers in the current inflationary context. Security of supply and long-term partnerships have never been more important.

"With Origin Green, Ireland is uniquely positioned to supply sustainably produced food and drink to these international customers who all have ambitious sustainability targets and demands on their Irish suppliers."

AT HOME WITH SUSTAINABILITY

Anuga 2023's general theme is 'sustainable growth' and with Origin Green – Ireland's national food and drink sustainability plan – underpinning much of their production practices, Irish companies are very much at ease with such a theme. Noreen explains: "Irish food and drink companies have long-term, independently verified sustainability plans in place through the [Origin Green] programme, and work towards achieving measurable goals year on year."

Since Origin Green was founded in 2012, Bord Bia has worked with Irish companies to help them achieve their business and sustainability goals in line with the most up-to-date market research, Noreen points out. "Most importantly, and this is particularly important for our international customers, where sustainability is concerned, championing a message of evidence-based decision making is crucial to moving our industry towards a sustainable future.

"And the fact that the Irish Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue decided to officially launch Ireland's presence there, is a huge support in our efforts to promote the Irish food industry's credentials as a leader in the production of sustainable food."

Indeed, Anuga provides a perfect platform from which Bord Bia can share the Origin Green story with the world, says Noreen. "We can now demonstrate the alignment of the Origin Green Charter with 15 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. We are going further by creating a cohort of future leaders in sustainability. This year saw the inauguration of the 52nd Origin Green Ambassador [in Ireland]. Collectively, these future leaders have undertaken over 100 projects with companies in 14 countries including the US, China, UAE and Europe.

"Bord Bia's recently established Global Council brings together the collective wisdom of leading policy and decision makers in government and the private sector, as well as sustainability advocates from NGOs and non-profit organisations. These are all core elements of the Irish food and drink industry that we are excited about sharing with new and existing customers this year at Anuga," says Noreen.

FUTURE FAIRS AND HERO PRODUCTS

Quarter four of 2023 is a busy period for Irish food and drink companies, according to Noreen, with Bord Bia organising and coordinating the Irish presence at a host of other European trade fairs for retail and food service channels in the coming months. These include:

- Natexpo in France where the focus is on organic products;
- Conxemar, a seafood show in Spain; and
- Food Ingredients Europe in Germany.

Bord Bia is investing in beef marketing across key UK and EU markets this autumn to specifically spotlight Irish quality-assured steak in the UK, Germany, Italy and Belgium, with stewing cuts being the hero product in the Netherlands. In addition to in-store promotions across Europe, there will be over 650 quality-assured Irish steak advertisements running on billboards in Milan, Rome and Florence in Italy. In the UK, Bord Bia is partnering with Michelin star chef, Paul Foster, to promote Irish beef at his new restaurant, Grass Fed, in Camden.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

AT THE RECENT AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION (ASA) CONFERENCE, MARGARET BERRY – HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY AT KEPAK, ONE OF EUROPE'S LEADING MEAT PROCESSORS – PRESENTED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTING THE CONSUMER WITH THE PRODUCER, WHICH, SHE STRESSES IS A VITAL PART OF IRELAND'S SUSTAINABILITY JOURNEY

The meat sector in Ireland, from farm through to processing and export, is one of the most important indigenous industries to the national economy. The sector is a critical and valuable contributor to the national economy in terms of economic and social activity. Margaret explains: "The Irish meat sector has come a long way from a frozen commodity business into a top-10 net beef exporter, globally. Thanks to our industry stakeholders we have been able to build a strong reputation for safe, high-quality and sustainable food on an enviable grass-based production system."

The potential for further growth exists, she adds, however sustainability requires a full supply-chain effort. "As processors, our position in the supply chain gives us some visibility of what is happening both up and downstream. We can see that our role, like so many others along the supply chain, is evolving and we must evolve with it. At Kepak, many of our customers are focussed on building a roadmap for their business on how they will meet their ambitious sustainability targets. The sustainability conversation is broadening with the rise of sustainability-reporting regulation calling on companies to disclose more about their sustainability and environmental, social and governance (ESG) strategy across their entire business."

Margaret notes that being at the end of a long and complex supply chain creates a huge challenge for B2B customers, for example. "They cannot act on sustainability in a meaningful way without suppliers and manufacturers acting, too. For example, up to 95 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in retail are Scope 3 indirect emissions that retailers can't tackle without the help of upstream and downstream supply chain partners. They want to see a shared ambition and verifiable data from the supply chain to support sustainability claims. They also need to be educated about agriculture."

TWENTY20 BEEF PROGRAMME

Kepak's founder, Noel Keating, recognised the critical importance of remaining directly connected with farmers and livestock suppliers, Margaret said. "That philosophy remains true to this day. It is from this foundation that we have developed several innovative producer programmes with a multilateral stakeholder approach to address the needs of stakeholders in the supply chain and the changing market requirements. The most recent iteration is the Twenty20 Beef Club, which is a strategic collaboration between Kepak and Tirlán, launched in 2019. This initiative was designed to work closely with producers, providing them with a blueprint that covers the husbandry of the animal from birth to finish and supporting them through a technical

support team. It offers a closed loop, fully integrated, high-quality beef supply chain with unrivalled traceability. The club's vision has sustainability at its core, creating both financial and environmental value for the producer, while delivering a more sustainable beef product for the evolving B2B customer and market needs."

To date, there are over 1,500 signed up farmers supplying calves or finished cattle through the club; 30,000 club cattle have been processed to date, with a further 60,000 cattle in the system for processing over the next 18 months. And, according to Margaret, farmer membership continues to grow year-on-year. "It is through this type of close collaboration with our producers that we are better able to support and progress the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability in our supply chain while at the same time helping our customers to reach their climate goals."

There are several other ways this collaboration brings real value to its members, Margaret said, including: bringing certainty to producers; knowledge transfer and technical support; increased resilience of the supply chain; and reducing risk.

"We can see that our business model in the future will include more integrated supply chains and this will be a key component to linking the producer and the consumer. With the conversation on sustainability expanding quickly beyond emission reductions to include topics like nature and biodiversity, closed loop integrated supply chains will be integral to customer engagement and, in time, consumer purchase decisions."

ACCESS TO DATA AND TECHNOLOGY

Margaret explained that access to quality technology and data is fundamental to linking the producer with the consumer. "As processors we know that in the period to 2030, quality data measure, capture and monitor techniques will be critical to the success of the sector. This will be the virtual thread that will connect the producer with the consumer. Providing transparency along the food chain and most critically allow us to capture, with evidence, our producers positive environmental impact.

"At Kepak, along with our peers, we know that the primary producers are fundamental to Ireland's vision to becoming a world leader in sustainable food systems. Their economic viability is crucial not only for their livelihoods but also in helping to deliver on environmental and social sustainability of the sector. A lot has been asked of them already and, there will be more asked of them, of all of us.

"We are in the enviable position in Ireland to have a unique ecosystem of interconnected stakeholders who continuously work together supporting the industry to produce safe, high-quality food in a sustainable way contributing to vibrant rural communities and the national economy. While the term ecosystem is not a new idea, the realisation of the true interconnectedness of Ireland's agri-food ecosystem is where we can achieve our true potential."

Kepak has 13 manufacturing plants in Ireland and the UK. The company has over 4,500 employees and a presence in 43 countries. The company works with over 21,000 farms and farming families through fair trade, knowledge transfer and sustainability initiatives.


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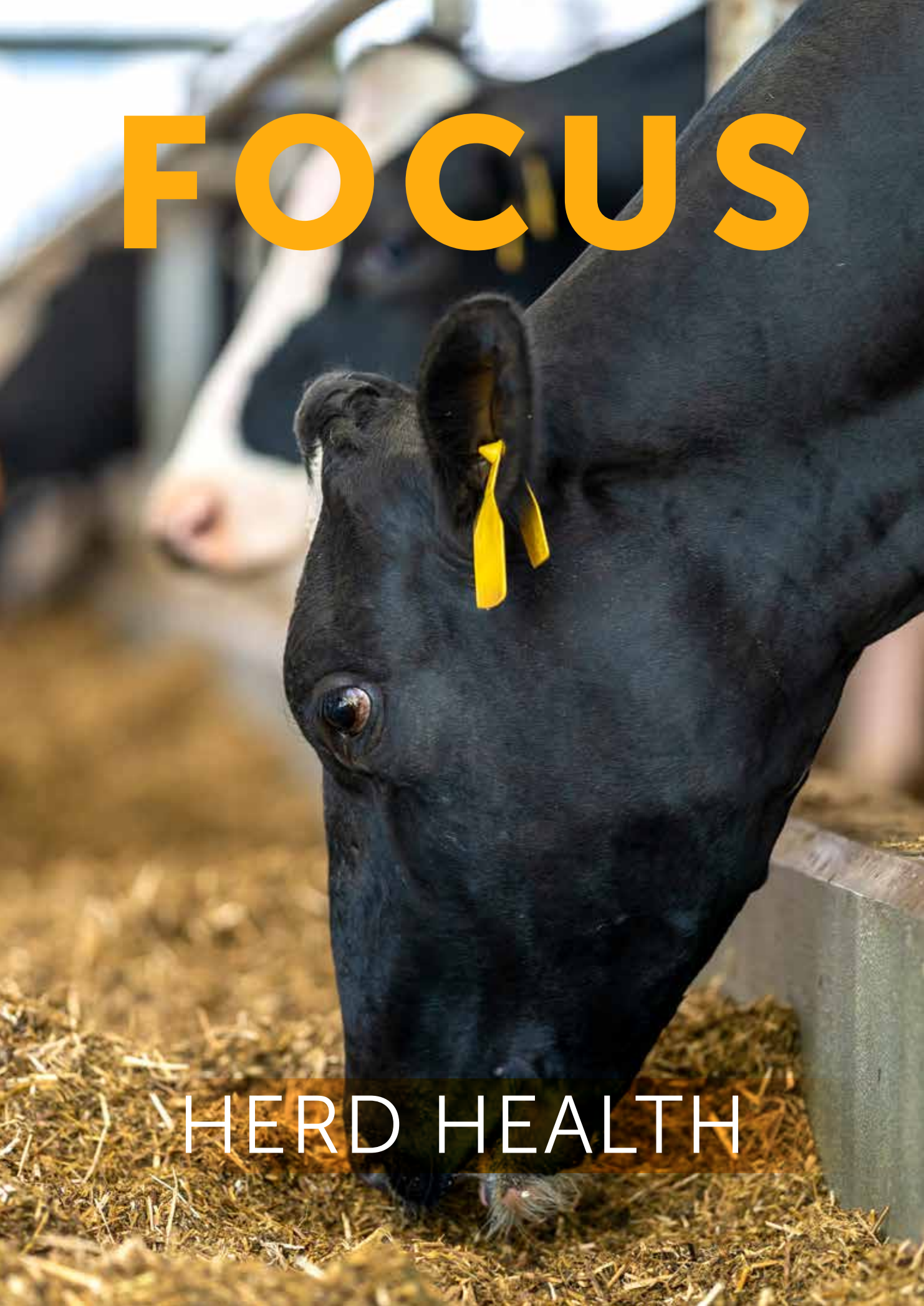

FOCUS

HERD HEALTH

PARTNER PROMOTION

REDUCING THE RISK OF A PNEUMONIA OUTBREAK

SARAH HIGGINS MVB, RUMINANT AND EQUINE VETERINARY MANAGER, MSD ANIMAL HEALTH OUTLINES THE WAYS IN WHICH FARMERS CAN REDUCE THE RISK OF A PNEUMONIA OUTBREAK THIS AUTUMN

Bovine respiratory disease, commonly referred to as BRD, is a complex disease entity involving interactions between the animal, infectious agents (viruses, bacteria and parasites) and the environment. Pneumonia is the main feature of the BRD complex. There is a seasonal peak of BRD cases in Ireland from September to February. Bacteria and viruses often result in concurrent infections. A primary viral infection compromises lung defence mechanism. Subsequently, cattle are predisposed to bacterial infection of the lower respiratory tract.

CLINICAL CASES MAY PRESENT WITH ALL OR SOME OF THE FOLLOWING SIGNS:

- Nasal discharge;
- Ocular discharge;
- Increased rate and effort of respiration (pant);
- Fever (greater than 39.5°C); and
- Off-form, poor appetite and coughing.

Interestingly, the cases you see on your farm are only the tip of the iceberg as there are often subclinical cases.

IMPORTANCE OF REDUCING RISK

Why is it important to reduce the risk of pneumonia in stock? Firstly, each year it is the most significant cause of death among cattle greater than one month of age and secondly there are substantial economic implications of respiratory disease both in the short and long-term. Furthermore, reducing the risk of pneumonia will positively impact the health and welfare of the animals.

Autumn is a particular risk period as cattle are routinely housed and spring-born beef calves are weaned, both housing and weaning elicit a stress response in cattle. Stressors negatively impact immunity of cattle resulting in increased susceptibility to disease, notably BRD. Therefore, it is imperative to mitigate stress and implement control measures. Controlling BRD involves a multifaceted approach which incorporates hygiene, housing, management, biosecurity measures and vaccination.

HOUSING

Good natural ventilation, avoiding draughts, providing dry bedding (for youngstock), comfortable temperature and practising good hygiene are vital components in housing facilities. Air movement within the shed is vital to remove noxious gases, heat, moisture and pathogens, for example bacteria and viruses. Prevent disease transmission from adult dairy cattle to naïve young animals by maintaining housing with separate airspace, though this is not possible with suckler herds. Adequate lighting is required to detect sick animals early in the disease process. Ideally, the long axis of the housing facility should be at right angles to the south-west to maximise natural ventilation efficiency.

MANAGEMENT

Avoid additional stressors during the housing period, for example, do not castrate, dose

PARTNER PROMOTION

and vaccinate animals at housing. These should be separated to prevent exacerbation of stress. Animals observed with any of the clinical signs outlined above should be monitored. It is crucial to identify cattle in the early stage of the disease process to enable a timely diagnosis and subsequently treat the animal with the correct veterinary medicinal products for the correct length of time.

BIOSECURITY

Ideally, a closed herd is advised. However, if purchasing animals, it is important to monitor for clinical signs of BRD while quarantining, for at least four weeks, preferably in a separate shed or, weather permitting, a well sheltered pasture.

VACCINATION

Vaccination is a vital component of the control measures to reduce the risk of pneumonia as it enhances immunity by stimulating production of antibodies. Vaccination will reduce infection and clinical signs of BRD. There is a broad range of infectious agents implicated in BRD highlighting the importance of providing broad spectrum cover against the infectious agents relevant to your farm.

"INTERESTINGLY, THE CASES YOU SEE ON YOUR FARM ARE ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG AS THERE ARE OFTEN SUBCLINICAL CASES

VACCINE PROGRAMMES

Vaccines incorporated into a vaccination regime will vary from farm to farm and should take into account the farm system, history of disease, risk factors associated with the farm in question, previous diagnostic lab results and/or post-mortem results. Engaging with your own veterinary practitioner to advise which vaccines are suited to your herd is highly recommended.

Vaccination programmes will vary depending on the product used. It is recommended to vaccinate in advance of the autumnal risk period. This is to enable the animal to respond as each vaccine takes a certain period of time to become effective.

The onset of immunity of Bovilis Bovipast RSP is two weeks after the second dose, while for Bovilis Nasalgen-C it is five days. Bovilis Bovipast RSP protects against both viral and bacterial agents namely PI3, RSV and provides the broadest protection on the market against *Mannheimia haemolytica*. Bovilis Bovipast RSP is the only cattle vaccine licensed to protect against serotypes A1 and A6. The primary course for Bovilis Bovipast RSP involves two subcutaneous injections administered four weeks apart. For calves the second injection should be given two weeks before the known risk period of weaning, housing or sale. For bought-in animals Bovilis Bovipast RSP can be administered any time after arrival, ideally allowing a short rest period before handling, and followed up with a second dose four weeks later. Bovilis Bovipast RSP can be administered at the same time as Bovilis IBR marker live but in different sites.

Bovilis IBR marker live, provides protection against bovine herpesvirus-1 (BHV-1), can be administered intranasally or intramuscularly two weeks before the risk period and provides six months protection.

A vaccine option to consider, when there is a short timeframe before the known risk period, is Bovilis INtranasal RSP Live. This live vaccine provides fast protection against RSV and PI3 with an onset of immunity of five days and seven days, respectively. Bovilis INtranasal RSP Live is a single 2ml dose vaccine, lasting 12 weeks and can be administered at least one week before the risk period and can be given on the same day as Bovilis Nasalgen-C, which was recently introduced by MSD Animal Health.

Bovilis Nasalgen-C is a live intranasal vaccine for the active immunisation of cattle from the day of birth onwards to reduce clinical signs of upper respiratory tract disease and nasal viral shedding from infection with bovine coronavirus. This vaccine is a 2ml dose administered intranasally. The vaccine has an onset of immunity of five days and a duration of immunity of 12 weeks.

Tailoring a correctly timed well suited vaccine protocol in conjunction with good farm management will positively impact animal's health and welfare. Disease preventative strategies are key to ensure animals are healthy, productive and profitable. Always consult with your veterinary practitioner to establish a vaccination protocol.

SINCE JANUARY 2022, NEW LEGISLATION HAS BEEN IN PLACE THAT DEALS WITH HOW ANTIBIOTIC TREATMENTS FOR ANIMALS CAN BE PRESCRIBED BY VETERINARIANS AND OBTAINED BY FARMERS, WRITES JORIS SOMERS, VETERINARY ADVISOR WITH TIRLÁN

BEING SUCCESSFUL WITH SELECTIVE DRY COW THERAPY

The aim of the legislation is to slow down and reduce the development of antimicrobial or antibiotic resistance in healthcare and veterinary medicine, and to safeguard the efficacy of antibiotics for future use in people and animals. This requires reduced and more prudent use of antimicrobials across all sectors without compromising animal health and welfare. The new legislation requires that antimicrobials are not used routinely or to compensate for poor hygiene, inadequate animal husbandry or poor farm management. The prescribing veterinarian will need to diagnose the disease and assess the level of risk of infection to the healthy animals in the herd before proceeding with prescribing for those animals.

DRY COW MASTITIS MANAGEMENT

For dairy cows, the dry period is a key part of the lactation. It allows the cow to divert essential nutrients to the rapidly developing calf foetus during last stages of the pregnancy. At the same time, it prepares the cow metabolically for the next lactation and provides a unique opportunity for the udder to recover and reset. The dry period is often also the most successful time to treat mastitis. In the past, blanket dry cow therapy was often used to achieve this, but since 2022 this is no longer the accepted protocol. Antibiotic dry cow therapy needs to be prescribed on an individual cow basis, based on herd and individual cow records that allow the prescribing veterinarian to assess the mastitis control in the herd and the need for

DECISIONS

The free dry cow consult is available through Animal Health Ireland to make these selective dry cow therapy (SDCT) decisions. Decisions around the eligibility for antibiotic dry cow treatments will depend on:

- Herd level information and individual cow data;
- Assessment of an individual cow's mastitis infection status based on a minimum of

30-DAY TIMEFRAME

Decisions on the use of SDCT and accurately identifying cows that may be safely dried off using only a teat sealer without antibiotics should not be made on SCC records older than 30 days at the time of drying-off. Using the California Mastitis Test on the day of drying off can help avoid inadvertently leaving an infected quarter untreated during the dry period and improves the overall SDCT success rates.

four, and ideally six individual somatic cell count (SCC) measurements through routine milk recording or another suitable method;
- Herd level mastitis infection rates and treatment records; and
- Milk culture and sensitivity testing.

Once antibiotic treatments for animals have been prescribed by the vet, the prescription is valid for five days from the date of issue. Treatments can be longer, as indicated by the prescribing vet, but the prescribed antibiotics will need to be drawn down within the five-day timeframe. Your herd's vet will need to justify the medicines prescribed for your animals. The use of individual cow cell count records, preferably through routine milk recording, information from milk culture and sensitivity testing and mastitis records, will help the prescribing vet to diagnose (sub-)clinical mastitis in individual cows and provide justification for the prescribing and use of milking cow and dry cow tubes.

Success of SDCT is strongly linked with selecting the right cows, using a very clean technique for the dry-off procedure, and housing cows in hygienic conditions, especially at the very start and end of the dry period. Because of these factors, there is no one size fits all in terms of SDCT protocol on farms and within herds. Each vet will have to determine: the level of SCC and mastitis infection rate to be used as a threshold, as well as the number of cows to be dried off on a single day; the appropriate procedure to use and the indicated antibiotic treatment where needed; and what to do when subsequent treatments for unexpected mastitis cases are needed during the dry period. Ultimately the success of SDCT is measured in the next lactation and a cell count reading within two months after calving is the best way to assess mastitis cure rates or if previously uninfected cows developed mastitis during the dry period.

PROBLEM PARASITES AT HOUSING – PLAN, PLAN, PLAN

NATASCHA MEUNIER, ANIMAL HEALTH IRELAND, HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A HERD-HEALTH PLAN IN PLACE WHEN CONTROLLING PARASITES ON YOUR FARM, AND LOOKS AT THE VARIOUS TREATMENT OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO COMBAT THE MOST COMMON PARASITES

Parasite control is an essential part of any herd-health plan, ideally drawn up with your vet while considering all the health issues on the farm such as vaccinations, fertility and nutrition. It shouldn't be set in stone though, and factors such as weather conditions should make you rethink the details as you go through the year. For example, this year saw a dry early summer, so very little dosing was probably needed until the heavy rains and warm weather set in. This late summer and autumn weather has provided an ideal environment for worms and flukes to thrive, and so it is expected that many farmers would have had problems with scour from gut worms, and coughing from lungworms (hoose).

LIVER FLUKE

The autumn is when animals are most likely to become infected with liver fluke. The parasite completes its life stage in the snail host over the summer and the infective stage attaches to the grass near waterlogged areas. These areas should be avoided for grazing where possible in autumn. After infection, it can take up to 12 weeks for the parasite to move from the gut to the liver and fully develop into adults where they will start laying eggs, which can be detected in a faecal sample. If animals are treated for liver fluke before housing, they may need a second treatment a number of weeks after housing. Also, some flukicides are only effective at killing adult liver fluke and so a re-treatment may be needed if animals are treated with a drug that is not effective against juvenile fluke.

Each farm has a different risk for liver fluke so discuss any treatment plan with your veterinary practitioner, taking the farm history into account. Previous liver fluke reports from the Beef HealthCheck programme for animals, both beef and dairy, sent to slaughter at participating factories are available online on the desktop version of the ICBF website (bit.ly/3Rzo1iR).

RUMEN (STOMACH) FLUKE

Infection with rumen fluke does not usually cause clinical disease, and adult rumen fluke seem to be tolerated fairly well. If rumen fluke eggs are detected on a faecal egg sample and the animals are healthy, they do not usually require treatment. It is the immature stage of the rumen fluke that usually causes disease, particularly if many of the parasites were picked up in late autumn. Similar to liver

FLUKICIDES CAN BE GROUPED INTO THREE MAIN TYPES

1. Flukicides that kill adult liver fluke only (e.g. albendazole, clorsulon or oxyclozanide). If only one treatment is given, this should be 10-12 weeks after housing. It might be preferable to treat earlier at housing and then follow up with a second treatment if the liver fluke burden is expected to be high to prevent production losses.
2. Flukicides that kill juvenile fluke from six to eight weeks of age and adults (e.g. closantel, nitroxinil or rafoxanide). If only a single treatment is given, this should be delayed until at least six to eight weeks after housing.
3. Flukicides that kill all stages including early-immature fluke (triclabendazole). These can be given from two weeks after housing. There are some reports of resistance developing to this flukicide.

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fluke, avoid grazing younger animals on wet or poached land. As there is only one product available in Ireland for treatment for rumen fluke and its use is considered 'off-label', always discuss whether treatment is necessary with your veterinary practitioner.

LICE AND MITES

In winter housing, the longer hair coats, warmth, humidity, and lack of UV light create a good environment for lice and mites to thrive. Closer contact between animals at housing allow lice and mites to spread easily between animals. Therefore, all animals in a group should be treated at the same time to prevent reinfection from untreated animals. Lice and mites are normally treated with an avermectin (clear drench) injection, pour-on product, or a topical pyrethroid. These medicines have no effect against lice eggs and once these hatch three to four weeks later, an animal may become re-infected. A re-treatment later in the season may also be needed if the burden of infection is very high. If a treatment does not seem to be effective, consult with a veterinary practitioner to identify the parasite involved and develop a tailored treatment plan. For example, injectable products seem to be less effective against chewing/biting lice, so a pour-on product might be a better choice if these are present. In contrast, mites usually respond better to injectable products.

ROUNDWORMS

Stomach and gut worms, as well as lungworms (collectively known as roundworms) can usually be controlled by any of the three main wormer classes. The exception to this is the larvae of the stomach worm ostertagia, which become dormant in the stomach wall over the winter period and can cause scours in the late winter/early spring (Feb-May) when they re-start their development. This particularly affects young animals that may have picked up large numbers of these worm larvae over the autumn. Products containing levamisole (yellow drench) are not effective against these inhibited larvae; instead, use a product from the clear drenches (macrocyclic lactones) or certain white drenches (benzimidazoles). Ensure that you check the withdrawal periods for any medicines used in dairy animals, to avoid residues in the milk for the next lactation.

RESISTANCE AND THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF WORMERS

Anthelmintic (wormer) resistance is making us rethink our approach to dosing animals. Resistance is considered present on a farm when a product does not kill the target parasites as effectively as expected. This resistance is carried genetically in the worm populations and is not related to the cattle themselves. There are only three classes of broad-spectrum medicines used to treat gut worms for cattle. Once resistance develops for one medicine in the class, resistance is present against all the medicines in that class. This is why it is important to test if the wormers used on farm are effective. Treating too often, especially when a small number of worm eggs or larvae are expected on the pastures, can drive the development of resistance but that has to be balanced against treating when it is necessary for the health of the animal.

HELPING YOUR HERD BREATHE EASY THIS AUTUMN

CELLCHECK ASSISTANT PROGRAMME MANAGER, ANIMAL HEALTH IRELAND, MICHELLE MCGRATH, BAGRSC, MANSCI, DIP. SFP, MVB DISCUSSES THE MULTIFACTORIAL NATURE OF PNEUMONIA, CLINICAL SIGNS, THE ROLE OF VACCINATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BIOSECURITY

Respiratory disease, or pneumonia as it is more commonly known, is a significant cost to dairy farmers. What farmers may not realise is that pneumonia becomes a problem from a young age. Calves that suffer repeated and/or severe bouts of pneumonia may end up stunted for life. Such calves may appear healthy after the signs resolve but do not achieve the same growth rates as their healthy comrades. Research shows that calves that get pneumonia during the first two months of life, are 15 days older at their first calving and also have lower milk yields (during their first lactation) of 525kg in a 305-day lactation. The cause of this poor performance is permanent lung damage and pleurisy from pneumonia.

MULTIFACTORIAL

Pneumonia is a complex problem and is often referred to as being a 'multifactorial disease.' This means that besides infectious agents, a number of environmental and management factors, and their interactions, will determine the occurrence and severity of disease (Figure 1). Cattle succumb when the disease pressure overcomes their immune system. There is no single factor that will control pneumonia and an appreciation of the animal-pathogen-environmental interactions is key to understanding the success or failure of control strategies. Managing just one of these issues will not prevent or control pneumonia – they must be tackled together.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES – THE INFLUENCES

1. Infectious agents are the small organisms (mainly bacteria, viruses and parasites) that are capable of causing an animal to become sick. However, infectious agents don't necessarily cause an animal to become obviously ill, and they can often be found in and around healthy animals.
2. Not all animals will get sick when exposed to an infectious agent. The outcome will depend on the balance between the severity of the challenge by the infectious agent and the status of the animal's immune system.
3. The environment influences both the animal and the infectious agents. For example, damp conditions can favour survival of some infectious agents as well as affecting animal behaviour and forage quality, which all contribute to the risk of pneumonia. In some situations,

Figure 1: The most important influences on infectious diseases.

infectious agents can build up in the farm environment to such high levels that the immune system can be overwhelmed (even when it is not compromised).

Environmental factors that affect incidence of pneumonia include poor air quality, draughts, humidity and high population density, with the risk of respiratory disease increasing with crowding and mixing of age groups. Any building that contains animals of significantly different ages or that is continuously stocked creates a significant increase in the risk of an outbreak of pneumonia within that building.

INFECTIOUS AGENTS AND CLINICAL SIGNS

Initial signs of pneumonia can be non-specific and include being off form, dullness, reduced feed intake and lack of gut fill. Other signs may include fever (over 39.5°C), increased respiratory rate, coughing, watery nasal discharge, and severe breathing difficulties. Early diagnosis is crucial because, by the time these later signs are noted, the disease is advanced and treatment is less likely to be successful as damage to the lungs may be irreversible. If you suspect pneumonia, consult your veterinary practitioner for advice on diagnosis and treatment.

The viruses that most commonly cause pneumonia are bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV), parainfluenza virus 3 (PI3V), and bovine herpesvirus 1 (BoHV-1), which causes infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR). BRSV and PI3V are more commonly a problem in calves and young stock. Not all infected animals show obvious signs of disease (sub-clinical infection) but may still experience reduced growth and production.

IBR is a particular challenge because once an animal becomes infected, it becomes a carrier for life despite developing immunity. The virus establishes a lifelong latent infection in the nerve cells within the animal's brain. At times of stress such as transport, calving, nutritional stress, mixing stock, etc., the virus may be reactivated and can be re-excreted leading to new infection in other susceptible cattle, which in turn will also become latent carriers. Herds with positive bulk tank milk results are considered to typically have at least 15 per cent of milking cows that are carriers.

BACTERIA

The bacteria involved in pneumonia include *Mycoplasma bovis, Pasteurella multocida*, *Mannheimia haemolytica* and *Histophilus somni*. Bacterial infection often follows a viral infection, and can cause severe damage to the lung tissue if left untreated or if treatment is started too late. *Mycoplasma bovis* can cause pneumonia in both adult cows and in calves from a young age to older weaned calves. Diagnosis is difficult without lung samples, taken from either a lung wash or post-mortem.

Mycoplasma bovis is most likely to be introduced by an infected, carrier animal, so good biosecurity is essential to protect your herd. Where Mycoplasma bovis is already present in a herd, many of the general principles of infectious disease control apply. The following measures will help control spread of infection:

- Ensuring adequate ventilation of sheds where animals are housed;
- Cleaning and disinfection of the sheds and feeding equipment;
- Not feeding colostrum from affected cows;
- Not feeding infected waste milk; and
- Regularly observing animals with emphasis on early detection of infection

Reducing concurrent stressors e.g. overcrowding and mixing animals of different age groups, as well as addressing other potential causes of immunosuppression e.g. presence of concurrent disease, is also important. Isolation of infected animals (housing them away from the rest of the herd, in a separate airspace and, where relevant, milking them last), will help break the infection cycle.

THE ROLE OF VACCINATION

Currently, vaccines are available to protect against many infectious causes including, BoHV-1, BRSV, PI3V, *Mannheimia haemolytica* and *Histophilus somni*. Unfortunately, there are no vaccines available for other bacteria such as *Pasteurella multocida* or *Mycoplasma bovis*. Vaccines are an extremely useful tool to ensure that the majority of animals become immune to the infectious agent before the risk of a disease outbreak, thereby avoiding the losses associated with animals becoming sick and unproductive. Vaccines take time to provide sufficient protection so ideally farmers should plan to use them well in advance of when their animals need protection. In some instances, vaccination does not prevent infection but decreases the severity of clinical disease if an animal becomes infected and/or decreases shedding of infectious organisms. Vaccination protocols are an essential part of herd health planning and should be developed by the farmer and veterinary practitioner together. The exact programme will differ for each farm, depending on which infectious agents you want to protect against. It is important to remember that vaccination is only one part of disease prevention and cannot compensate for poor management or insufficient attention to biosecurity.

> **"CALVES THAT GET PNEUMONIA DURING THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF LIFE, ARE 15 DAYS OLDER AT THEIR FIRST CALVING AND HAVE LOWER MILK YIELDS DURING THEIR FIRST LACTATION**

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD BIOSECURITY

Biosecurity is simply a technical term for preventing and controlling diseases. Since many respiratory diseases are spread through the movement and mixing of infected animals, you can reduce their spread and impacts by curtailing the inward movement of animals. Biosecurity has become an essential aspect of farming. With the diversity of management practices and disease profiles found on farms, it is crucial to develop a biosecurity plan that suits your system. This should involve veterinary advice and active participation from farm staff to address the particular risks your herd may face. One of the greatest threats to the health status of an established herd is the introduction of new animals. Additionally, newly introduced susceptible animals can also face potential disease risks when integrated into an existing herd. If you do need to purchase, buy in as few animals, and from as few herds, as possible. The risk of disease being introduced increases with more animals, and more sources.

PRE-CALVING MINERAL REQUIREMENTS

EDDIE PHELAN, RUMINANT COMMERCIAL MANAGER AT ALLTECH IRELAND, OFFERS SOME INSIGHTS INTO TRANSITIONING SUCCESSFULLY FROM THE DRY-COW PERIOD INTO LACTATION

Having a successful transition from the dry period into lactation is crucial for the animal. It will directly impact milk production, cow health and reproductive performance during the subsequent lactation. Getting the management and nutrition of dry cows right can lead to a successful transition period.

This transition revolves around four key areas: body condition, nutrition, minerals and management.

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

As already mentioned, one of the four key areas is getting mineral nutrition correct in the dry period. Dry cows should be fed a dry-cow mineral for the duration of the dry period. Ideally, this should happen between weeks six and eight. This is to ensure that there is a good reserve of minerals built up to allow the cow to calve down without any issues and continue into the lactation to follow.

SILAGE TESTING

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

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

MACROMINERALS

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

in 1.65g from silage. As a result, the mineral supplement will need to supply at least 35-40g of magnesium. If the feed rate of the mineral is 120g/head/day, it needs to be a minimum of 25 per cent magnesium to make up the deficit.

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

MILK FEVER

Research has shown that, where milk fever is relatively well-controlled, approximately 33 per cent of cows may experience sub-clinical milk fever. While dealing with farmers, I often get asked the following question: 'I had a higher number of cows go down with milk fever before calving, despite using boluses for some. What can I do to reduce the risk of this happening again?' We recommend the following:

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

Check the calcium level in the dry-cow diet: If greater than 0.45 per cent of total DMI (~ 5g), the cow will become too dependent on the supplemented calcium. This may result in her not being able to mobilise calcium from her bones, which can lead to milk fever.

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

IMPORTANCE OF TRACE MINERALS

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

IMPORTANT TRACE MINERALS

Zinc (Zn) supplementation is important at all times of the year as it helps to keep somatic cell counts under control, reduce incidences of mastitis and maintain the hardness of the hoof.

Selenium (Se) is a natural antioxidant and boosts the immunity of calves and dairy cows by playing a role in the resistance to viral and bacterial infection. Selenium supplements will only be effective if fed with the correct levels of vitamin E, as the two work in synergy. This is very important on maize and silage diets, where vitamin E is very low.

Copper (Cu) plays an important role in fertility and immunity. Copper deficiency can cause many issues, such as poor growth, reproduction problems, impaired immunity and diarrhoea.

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

First, as always, test your forage for minerals. Choose a mineral based on your forage mineral analysis. High potassium and low magnesium may also be the issue here, so you may need a mineral with higher levels of magnesium.

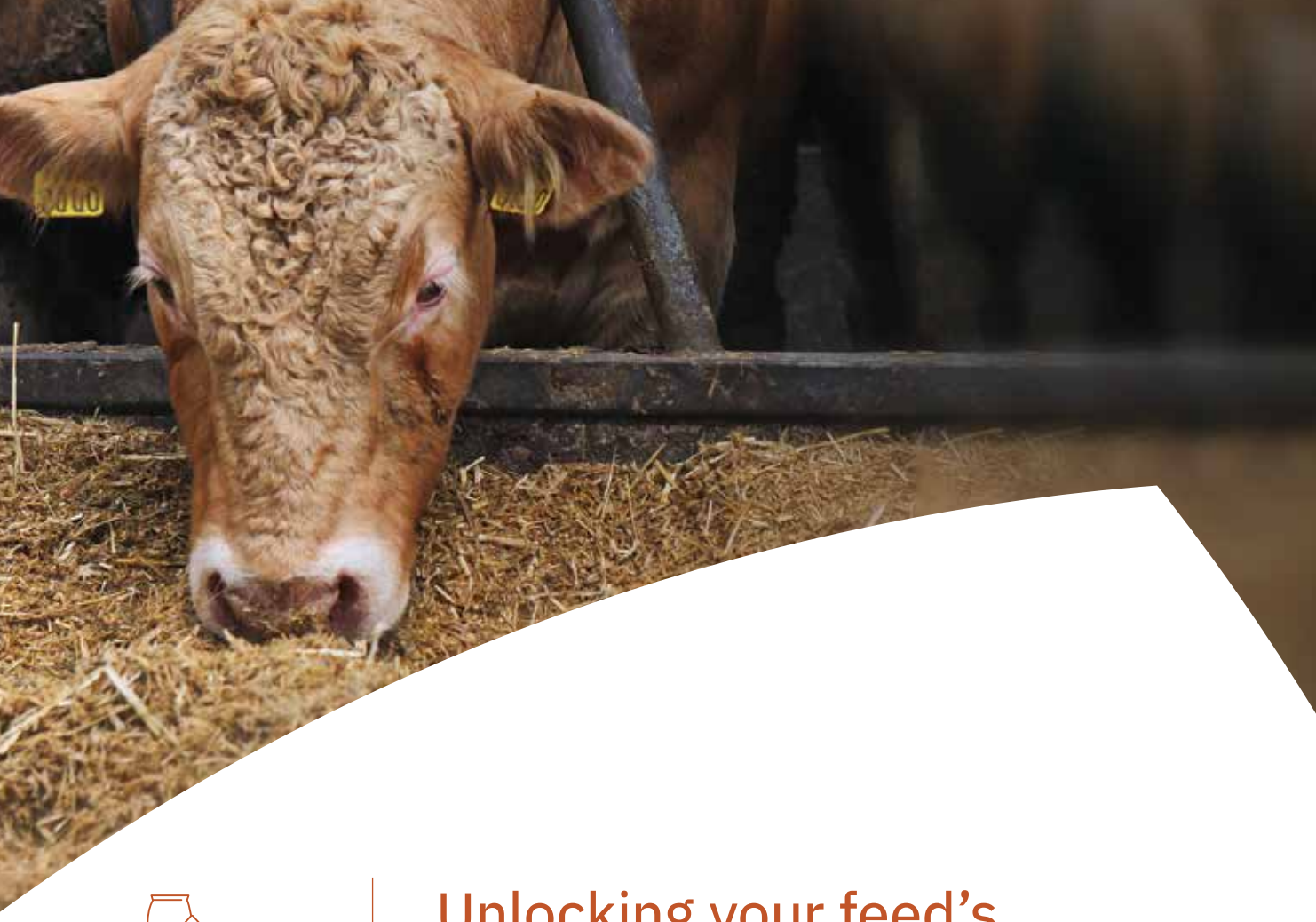
Then, check the label to see what type of mineral you were feeding; ask your supplier if you are not sure. If most of the elements are inorganic (i.e. zinc oxide), feeding high levels of inorganic minerals can cause mineral interactions, such as the zinc oxide interacting with copper, making it less available for absorption, which may lead to more cows with retained placentas.

Choose a mineral that contains organic minerals (Bioplex and Sel-Plex). These are proven to mimic the minerals found in grass and, therefore, are more bioavailable with better absorption and less chance of mineral interactions.

MINERALS THAT GO TO WORK, NOT TO WASTE

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

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



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Explore your options at
www.gov.ie/forestry

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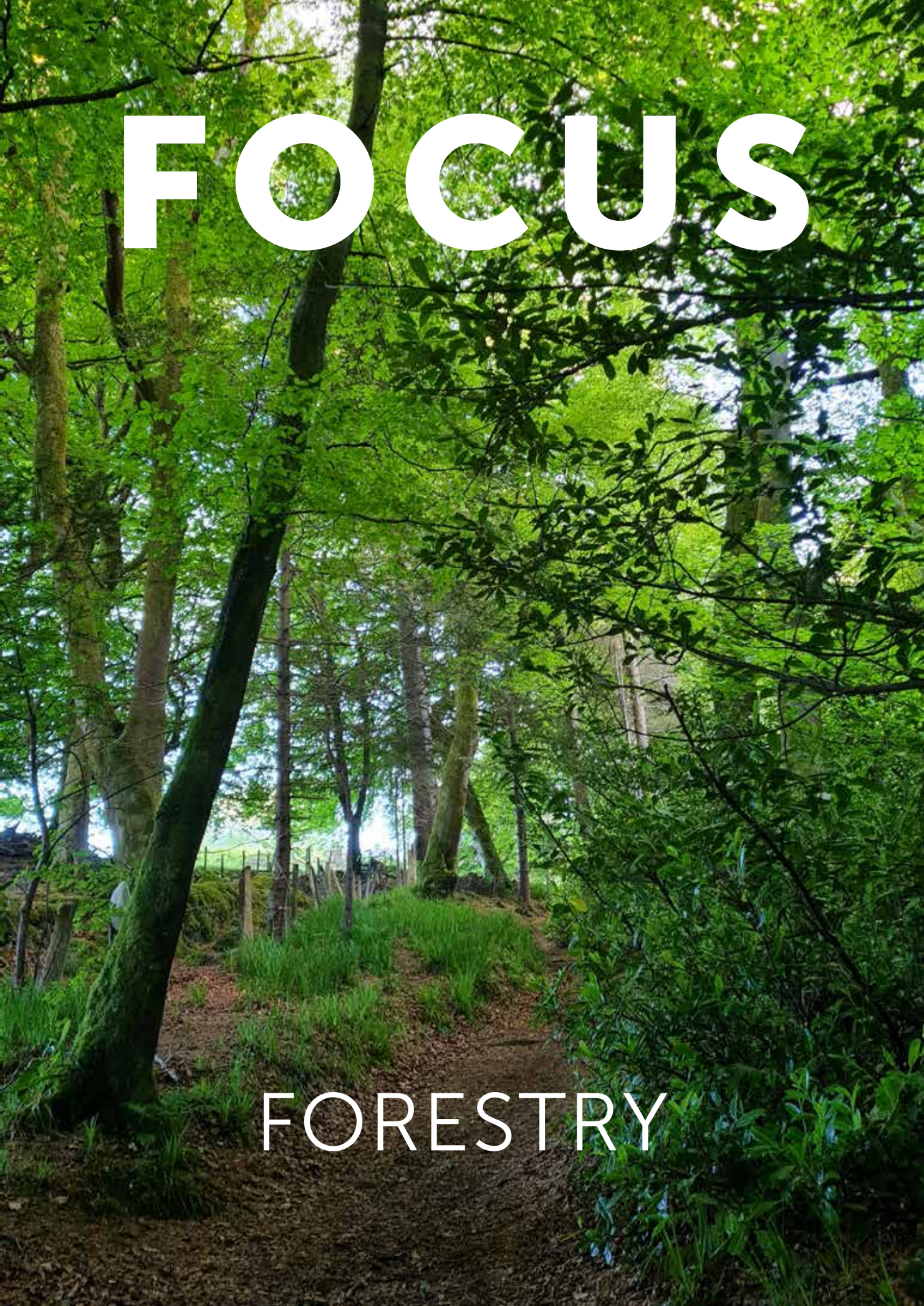

FOCUS
FORESTRY

WHILE THERE IS A GENERALLY POSITIVE RESPONSE HERE TO THE NEW AFFORESTATION SCHEME AND NEW FORESTRY PROGRAMME FOR IRELAND, MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT, IF AFFORESTATION IS TO REGAIN MOMENTUM, GOVERNMENT MUST ELIMINATE REMAINING IMPEDIMENTS AND IMPROVE CONFIDENCE IN THE SECTOR. MANAGING DIRECTOR OF FOREST SERVICES LTD, PADDY BRUTON, SHARES HIS VIEWS WITH *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY*

GROWING THE FORESTRY SECTOR

In August, the European Commission finally approved, under EU State aid rules, €308 million for an Irish programme to support much-needed investments in afforestation. It was a long time coming and while welcome, Paddy says that necessary actions must be taken without further delay.

"The forestry programme sanctioned by the European Commission was supposed to be in place on January 1 this year, so opportunities to plant this year have been forfeited.

"It is being touted, correctly, as the best-funded forestry programme in Europe. However, there is a big question mark over what can be delivered in the years ahead."

And while there are benefits and incentives for farmers, Paddy emphasises that an essential missing ingredient is confidence.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUD

"This forestry programme can deliver, but for it to deliver we need several actions. We need the Government to commit to issuing licences and scheme approvals quickly and efficiently to enable afforestation, road construction, thinning and clear-felling, and, ultimately, to enable replanting.

"The Social, Economic Environmental Association of Ireland (SEEFA) has estimated that the minimum required is 11,500 licensing approvals per year. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is currently issuing fewer than 4,000, and that needs to be sorted out," Paddy says.

The second requirement, Paddy outlines, is for Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue, to immediately set out a licensing plan detailing exact timelines for autumn 2023 and the entirety of 2024.

"This is important so that people can see that if they apply for a licence, they are going to get it in a dependable timeline. That's crucial to the success of the forestry programme and to the delivery of ambitious planting targets.

The next thing needed is a reconstituted scheme for growers affected by Ash dieback disease. That is not an unreasonable request. I'm hopeful on this and I note Minister of State, Pippa Hackett's comments at the National Ploughing Championships that there may be provision in the budget to deal with the problem. If that group of people were to be dealt with positively it could be the greatest forestry promotion possible. The minimum they need is a commencement of their forestry premiums all over again."

HOME-GROWN CHALLENGES

Paddy agrees that all those issues can be dealt with internally, including a single comprehensive planning process, encompassing all actions from planting to felling: "There is no reason why that could not happen. It's not the EU's responsibility. It is within the remit of our own policymakers and legislators. Compare forestry to organics. The same minister has responsibility for both. I look at the growth in organic farming with awe. There are people in charge within the department, with the powers and responsibility necessary to deliver on the organic programme and because of this we have seen an upsurge in people going into organic farming. That's Irish policy being implemented successfully. We can do the same with forestry if the determination is there. Unfortunately, it looks like the minister in charge does not have the same level of interest in afforestation. That's unfortunate, but not irreversible. There is great scope for action if the willpower is there. In organics, it is now possible to claim the organic farming scheme, the agro-forestry premium, Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS), all on the same acre of land. That's a huge financial incentive.

"For farmers, the premiums on the 12 new forest types are payable for 20 years. That's five years longer than non-farmers. That's bringing back the differential for farmers and that's a very important provision in the new forestry programme."

MEETING AMBITIOUS TARGETS

Tardiness in implementing the new forestry programme has meant a loss of several planting seasons, Paddy notes: "These are the facts. The current target set by the DAFM is 8,000 hectares (ha) per year. To meet our climate change mitigation targets, we need to be planting 18,000ha every year. If radical actions are not taken, then 8,000ha, not to mention 18,000ha, is pie-in-the-sky. That's why we need real governmental focus. Every year the slippage in planting continues, the need to plant increased acreage annually becomes greater. That's why I have been saying for some time that the failure in the department's

> THERE IS A BIG QUESTION MARK OVER WHAT CAN BE DELIVERED IN THE YEARS AHEAD

afforestation policy is, ultimately, going to impact on the rest of agriculture, because if we don't get the levels of planting required to mitigate emissions, there will, logically, be reductions in production in other sectors and that would seem to mean reducing the livestock herd."

MIXING AND MATCHING

Paddy notes there are significant changes in the mix of tree types supported under the new programme: "It is more environment-focussed. I'm all for the right tree in the right place for the right reasons. The incentives are now geared more towards broadleaved species, native woodlands, and native tree areas. The planting of land adjacent to watercourses under the Native Tree Scheme, should assist in improving water quality. These will be very attractive options for farmers."

But, Paddy says, he has some concerns that the move towards these tree species 'may have gone too far'. "We cannot forget that the rafters in every house are made from coniferous timber because it is produced at the most optimum price. If we don't continue to incentivise the planting of Norway and Sitka Spruce, we will have less timber available for use as a building material. That will add to construction costs.

"We can grow conifers in Ireland at almost double the growth rate achievable anywhere else in Europe. That is our natural competitive advantage. We cannot allow uninformed commentary on forestry dictate our planting policy. Conifers are good for the environment. As well as being fast-growing and producing commercial timber, they absorb carbon more quickly than slower-growing deciduous species. Conifer production generates rural employment through planting, managing, harvesting and processing in our sawmills. It is also good for biodiversity, a fact that is not commonly understood or acknowledged."

LAND AVAILABILITY

There is plenty of suitable tree planting land across the country, Paddy says. "Teagasc surveys show there is over one million hectares most suitable for afforestation without impacting other sectors. A farmer can make more money from planting that land, and retaining their basic payment, than continuing current farming practices.

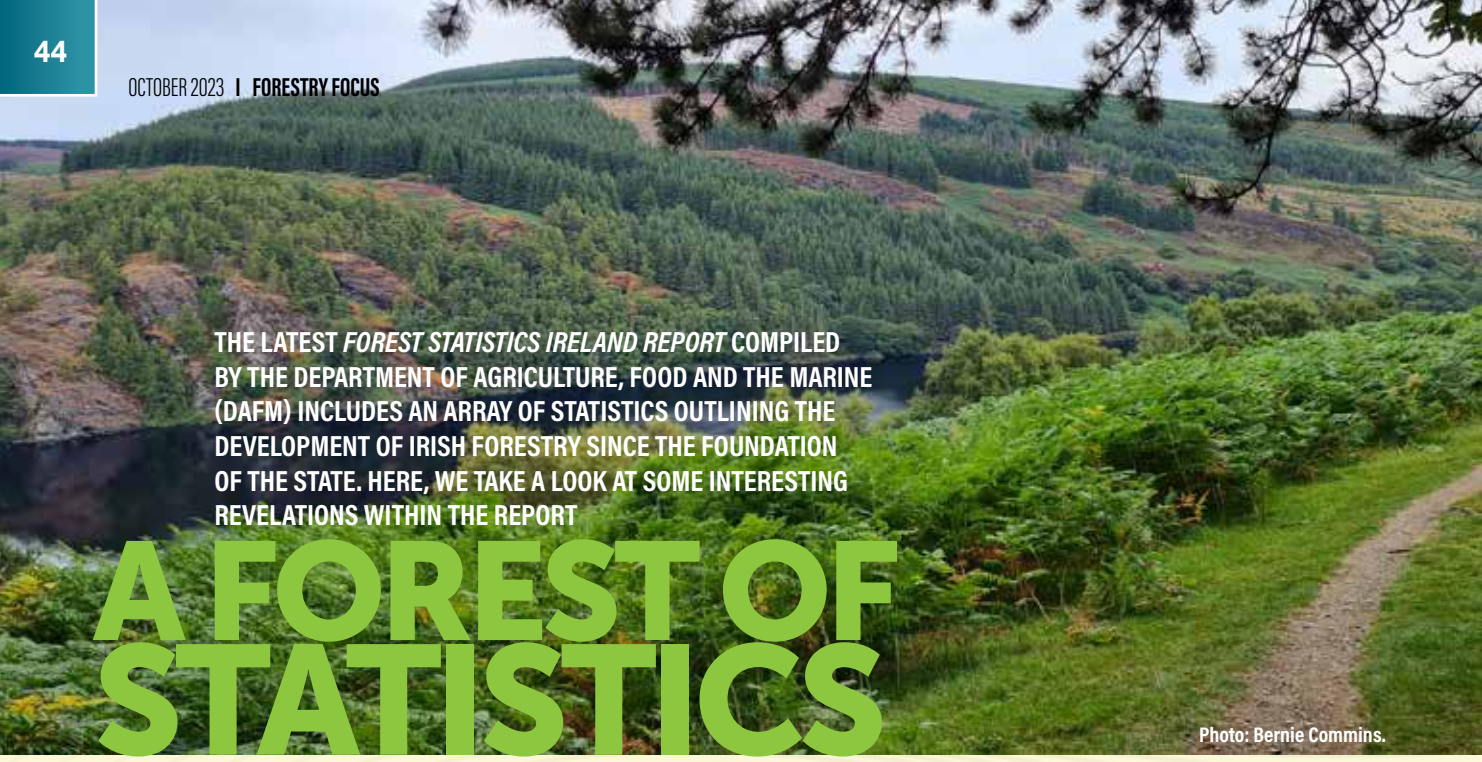
"Under the new programme there are greater restrictions on the land that can be planted, including high-nature-value farmland, deep peatlands and bird habitats, with a much stricter application process for each piece of land. We are looking at a situation where land being proposed for afforestation may be restricted to certain tree species or disallowed from planting altogether. Our role in assisting landowners interested in planting, has become more difficult, with more intensive assessment of each site, not only for the physical characteristics, but additionally, for all the environmental factors involved in site selection and its compatibility for planting. It can be done; it just takes more time."

LAND COMPETITION

And Paddy fully appreciates, there is increasing competition for land for different uses including biomethane, solar, wind turbines and nitrates strategies: "Nitrates is a big one, where farmers look to offset stocking reductions. Increased land demand, for whatever purpose, will impact the quantity available for forestry.

"Ultimately, forestry is now extremely competitive as a land-use option for many farmers. They can retain their BISS and have an income-tax free premium. Essentially, there is much more joined-up thinking to promote forestry than was there previously."

The Afforestation Scheme is aimed at supporting the expansion of the Irish national forest estate on both public and private land. The target of the scheme is to reach 18 per cent forest cover in Ireland by the end of 2027 – compared to 11.6 per cent today – by establishing 8,000 hectares per year of new diverse, multifunctional and climate-resilient forests. Under the scheme, the aid will take the form of direct grants, covering up to 100 per cent of the eligible costs. The scheme, which will run until December 31, 2027, will be open to companies of all sizes in the forestry sector.



THE LATEST *FOREST STATISTICS IRELAND REPORT* COMPILED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND THE MARINE (DAFM) INCLUDES AN ARRAY OF STATISTICS OUTLINING THE DEVELOPMENT OF IRISH FORESTRY SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE STATE. HERE, WE TAKE A LOOK AT SOME INTERESTING REVELATIONS WITHIN THE REPORT

A FOREST OF STATISTICS

Photo: Bernie Commins.

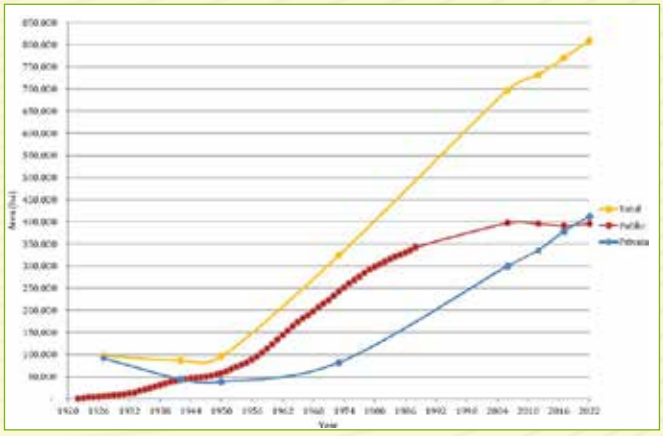
Having suffered the almost complete denuding of the country's forests during the 15th and 16th centuries, the country has gradually replenished its tree stocks over the past century to the extent that we now have a forest cover of 11 per cent. Add in hedgerows and other random arboreal growth and there is a legitimate claim that the totality of tree and hedge acreage covers up to 18 per cent of our land base. That is no small achievement, given the baseline in 1921 when tree cover accounted for a paltry one per cent of our land mass.

AN ACTIVE AFFORESTATION POLICY

The report confirms the strides that have been made, especially since the middle years of the last century. The balance between private afforestation and State-owned forests is reasonable and due credit should be given to Coillte and its predecessors for the success they have achieved in terms of planting large acreages of trees across the country. As a result of that and, latterly, more widespread private planting, the Irish economy has benefitted from the development of a viable timber-processing sector.

A YOUNG FOREST

Compared to forests across Europe and further afield, Ireland's forests are, for the most part, young. The report confirms that the majority, 70 per cent, of Ireland's forests consists of trees that are 30 years old, or less. The age structure of the national forest estate differs according to ownership: 64.4 per cent of the public forest is aged 30 years or less; 89.3 per cent of the private (grant-aided) category is aged 30 years or less; and 45.3 per cent of the private (non-grant-aided) category is aged 30 years or less. These statistics show that until the last two decades of the 20th century, the majority of tree planting was undertaken by public bodies, now mainly under the Coillte umbrella. Private afforestation from the 1980s onwards surged ahead supported financially by the Irish government and the EU. Even State afforestation activity was relatively low up until the 1950s, and then gained momentum up to the year 2000. The successful outcomes from the financial supports introduced for private afforestation can be easily appreciated from the report's statistics in that regard: 306,266 hectares (ha) of private forests were established between 1980 and 2022. A policy decision was made in the early 1990s to encourage an increased proportion of broadleaves in plantations and, on average, 19 per cent of all afforestation since that year has included deciduous species. Because of disease challenges among some tree species in latter years, there is a far more discretionary attitude in the choice of broadleaf trees being planted. Tree diseases such as *Phytophthora ramorum* (mainly affecting larch) and *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, or Ash dieback, now influence species diversity with neither of these tree species now being a viable option for planting.

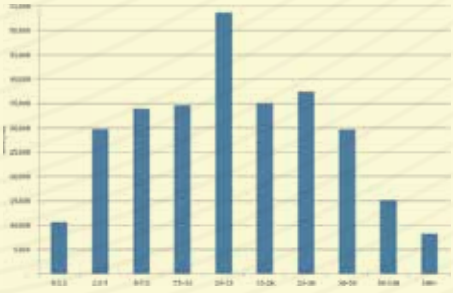


Forest area change since the foundation of the State, 1922-2022.
Image: *Forest Statistics Ireland Report.*

PRIVATE FOREST PROFILE

Rather than the large acreages planted by Coillte and its predecessors, the size of private, grant-supported areas planted between 1980 and last year was 8.6ha. Since 2002, only 20 per cent of afforestation parcels have been greater than 20ha. And in the last 10 years, no individual forestry application greater than 50ha has been established. Since 2001, all afforestation applications are screened to determine whether they require an environmental impact assessment (EIA) and in 2010, all developments over 50ha have been subject to a mandatory EIA. Presently, the report says, 32 per cent of the total afforested area between 1980 and 2022 has consisted of plantations greater than 20ha, 62 per cent are greater than 10ha and 74 per cent are greater than 7.5ha in size. These figures illustrate the fact that most planting has been carried out on privately-owned individual

farms where all, or part, of any one farm has been devoted to forestry.
Since 1980, 82 per cent of the forests planted have been done by farmers. Since 1980, almost 24,000 individual private forest owners have received grant aid to establish their forests.



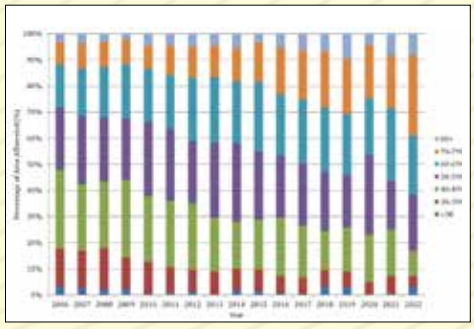
Size class distribution of private grant-aided afforestation, 1980-2022. Image: *Forest Statistics Ireland Report.*

The report also illustrates the decline in planting levels over the past decade. It amounts to a virtual collapse in new planting and the new forestry programme, a greatly enhanced version of previous programmes, financially, was specifically designed to reinvigorate planting in the coming years.

Area of applications received, technical approvals and actual afforestation. Image: *Forest Statistics Ireland Report.*

FOREST OWNER AGE PROFILE

While most of our Irish forestry is relatively young, the opposite is true of our forest owners. In 2022, 62 per cent of the area afforested was owned by people aged 60 years, or more, while 59 per cent of the total area that received premium payments was, again, owned by people aged 60 years, or more. This suggests an active mindset by older farmers with suitable land, deciding to take at least a step back from active farming, mainly drystock farming, and utilise their land for a more profitable and dependable income stream through afforestation. Forestry, for many of this age cohort, is akin to a dependable pension pot, with guaranteed annual income and an increasingly valuable asset, literally growing out of the ground.



Age profile of forest owners at the time of when their land was afforested, 2006-2022. Image: *Forest Statistics Ireland Report.*

RDS Irish Forest & Woodland Awards 2023

In June, the RDS Irish Forest and Woodland Awards were presented to the following winners :

Production Forestry Award
Winner – Desmond and Elaine Drew, Co. Dublin
Runner up – Liam and Helen Bresnan, Co. Limerick

Teagasc Farm Forestry Award
Winner – Sean Creamer, Co. Leitrim
Runner up – Isabella Donnely, Co. Westmeath

Community Woodland Award
Winner – Knockranny Wood (Colonels wood), Co. Mayo
Runner up – 12 O'Clock Hills, Co. Clare

Knockranny Wood (Colonels wood), Co. Mayo
Community Woodland Award Winners

Desmond and Elaine Drew, Co. Dublin
Production Forestry Award Winners

Sean Creamer, Co. Leitrim
Teagasc Farm Forestry Award Winner

These Awards recognise and reward farmers and woodland owners that have adopted Climate-Smart Agricultural practices on their properties. These practices include sound commercial management, environmental protection, and biodiversity. The twin goals of promoting the economic and environmental benefits of good forestry and farming are fundamental to what the RDS hopes to achieve through its agriculture and rural affairs programme.

http:// www.rds.ie/agriculture

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

NEW FOREST-CREATION SUPPORTS FROM TEAGASC

TOM HOULIHAN, TEAGASC FORESTRY SPECIALIST, OUTLINES THE SUPPORTS THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO LANDOWNERS CONSIDERING A FUTURE IN FOREST CREATION

The Forestry Programme 2023-2027, is open for new planting applications and provides excellent opportunities for farm forest creation. There have never been more planting options or stronger incentives available to support your objectives, including improving farm finances, enhancing the farm environment, and developing an excellent resource on the farm. Teagasc forestry staff are available to support you on your farm forestry journey.

The new forestry programme includes strong financial incentives for the variety of forest options available (called forest types), each with their own silvicultural, environmental, and practical objectives. There are planting options suitable for all farms, regardless of enterprise or scale. These include native woodland, agroforestry (combining farming and trees on the same land) and the more commercially focussed conifer and broadleaf options. There are also attractive options for planting smaller areas under the new Native Tree Area Scheme.

WHOLE FARM PLANNING

Advance planning is essential when considering a new forest enterprise. Teagasc forestry staff are available to provide comprehensive decision supports to farmers considering the forestry option with regard to your farm and family. Availing of Teagasc advice and adopting a whole-farm planning approach will support good decision making. This approach considers, in detail, how planting land can fit in with your farming enterprises, farm finances and how it interacts with farm schemes. In general, these interactions are very favourable.

Fitting in with your farming

Qualifying applicants can plant a forest and also claim the Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) scheme payments in addition to receiving the annual forest premium. The Complementary Redistributive Support for Sustainability (CRISS) scheme is an annual decoupled payment, per eligible hectare, to farmers entitled to basic-income support. For eligible applicants, CRISS payment is available on the first 30 eligible hectares claimed. This can include eligible forestry.

Photo: Bernie Commins.

A RANGE OF SUPPORT OPTIONS

The Teagasc Forestry Development Department provides a variety of support mechanisms for farmers who are considering a new forest venture, and for existing forest owners.

- You can arrange a consultation with your Teagasc forestry advisor, either face to face, by phone, or online. The forestry section of the Teagasc website (www.teagasc.ie/forestry), is jam-packed with useful information, including technical advice, up-to-date, detailed information on forestry grants, research project updates, scientific publications, staff contact details and much more.
- You can sign up for the Teagasc forestry e-newsletter and receive it directly by email. Teagasc Forestry eNews is free and is a great way to keep on top of the latest Irish forestry news, forestry grants, valuable forest management tips and much more.
- The Teagasc Forestry YouTube channel has almost 120 useful and informative videos.
- Teagasc's various social media platforms are also a great way to keep in touch and to find out the latest forestry news.

UPCOMING INFORMATION MEETINGS

Teagasc, in association with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, is also organising a nationwide series of 20 public information meetings on the new Afforestation Scheme. These meetings, highlighting opportunities for new forest types, how they can have a significant role on your farm and their interactions with other farm schemes, will run between October 10-19, 2023.

Teagasc strongly encourages all considering forest creation options to attend and to get insights into new forestry grant structures that have been introduced and farm forest opportunities open to you.

For details of a forestry information meeting taking place near you, please see accompanying advert and log onto www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/events/.

This month, I offer a summary of the 2023 Moorepark Open Day. Please note, this is not a complete summary of the day. The event was themed around excellent grassland management and genetically elite animal genotypes form the basis of a successful, profitable and environmentally friendly pasture-based dairy system.

By Matt Ryan

SECURING SUSTAINABILITY

» Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- From agriculture, they were the same in 2021 as they were in 1998.
- Dairy cow numbers are the same now as they were in 1984.

» Cow welfare
- Irish cows graze outdoors for 75% of the year.
- The key animal welfare indicators are:
  - Lameness: A recent survey showed that only 6% of cows had sub-optimal mobility, while only 1% showed severe sub-optimal mobility;
  - Somatic cell count (SCC) has declined significantly over the last 10 years to 180,000 now; and
  - The number of calvings per cow per year has increased from 3.3 in 2014 to 3.6 in 2022.

» Calf welfare
- Calves produced by the dairy herd provide the beef industry with a significant opportunity to reduce GHG emissions per unit of product.
- In 2023, there were 300,000 (projected to be 800,000 in 2029) sexed semen dairy straws available, which will result in 100,000 fewer male dairy calves with the consequential increase in dairy-beef calves.

» Carbon footprint
- For the period 2017-2019, the carbon footprint for Irish milk was 0.97kg CO_2 (the last global figure available is 2.4) per kilogramme of milk fat and protein corrected milk yield (FPCM) and, when carbon sequestration is included, it is approximately 0.86.

» Ammonia (NH3) emissions
- Agriculture accounts for 99.4% of all national NH3.
- In 2018, Ireland produced 135,200 tonnes versus the target of 116,000 tonnes of NH3.
- Average nitrogen (N) usage decreased by 14%.
- We are making some progress on this front due to decreased livestock numbers, reduced fertiliser N, and low emission slurry spreading (LESS).

» Water quality
- Water quality has deteriorated slightly over the last number of years but has begun to show positive signs.
- Water footprint: A recent survey showed the consumption of six litres of water per kg FPCM; this compares very well with Australia and the US, where consumption is 108 and 125, respectively. We can improve on the six litres by reducing leakages, recycling plate cooler water, using high pressure washing to clean yards.

» Biodiversity
- Side trim hedges from a wide base to a triangle profile; maintain riparian buffer strips along streams and riverbanks. Quantity these for your farm and make a plan to increase.
- 54% of Irish surface water is classified as good or high compared with 44% in the EU.
- 92% of Irish groundwater has good status compared with 80% in the EU.

DAIRY SYSTEMS: FARM TODAY WITH TOMORROW IN MIND

» **Irish dairy sells 1.7 million tonnes of product to over 130 world markets. The average herd size is now 93 cows.**

» **The following comprise the target performance indicators necessary to achieve a sustainable dairy income in a sustainable environment:**
- EBI: €225+;
- Mature herd (number of calvings/cows): 4.5+;
- Optimum soil fertility (% farm area): 100%;
- Fertiliser N (kg/ha chemical N): less than 150;
- Calving rate (% calved in six weeks): 90%;
- Grazed pasture in diet: 70+ %;
- Pasture utilised (t DM/ha): 13.0 tonnes;

» **Three key management practices dairy farmers must focus on to future-proof their businesses**

1. Refocus on prudent financial management:
- With input cost inflation being 41% over last two years, farmers must focus on cost. Farmers should get multiple prices when sourcing farm inputs.
- Feed cows based on the following relative costs of feeds.
  - Grazed grass.....100
  - Grazed grass-white clover.....98
  - Pit silage – two-cut.....225
  - Baled silage – two-cut.....250
  - Purchased concentrate.....500

In summary, pit and baled silage are 2.5 times more expensive than grazed grass while meal is five times more expensive. The target is 70% grazed grass in the cow's diet. This equates to 265 days of herd grazing days and feeding 500kg meal per cow per year.

2. Achieving appropriate stocking rates (SR):
- Being stocked at the appropriate SR for the farm will result in:
  - Minimising external feed and capital costs;
  - Reduced workload; and
  - Minimising environmental impact.
- Unfortunately, while there has been miniscule increase in overall SR, the SR on the milking platform (MP) has increased substantially to 2.8+ cows per hectare. And there was no real increase in pasture utilised per hectare. This resulted in:
  - Increased purchased meal and silage;
  - Increased labour costs; and
  - Increased capital cost.

The result being that overall costs increased 1.6 times the feed costs alone. Therefore, if growing 13 tonnes of grass on MP, the suggested overall SR is 2.4-2.5 cows/ha and 2.7 cows /ha on MP. Farming above these targets is considered to be farming 'marginal cows.' They have to be fed by total purchased/imported feed, in other words, a total mixed ration (TMR) diet. Research in Ireland and New Zealand has shown a linear decline in profitability as SR increases, as well as increased nutrient losses.

3. Simplifying workload to achieve a sustainable work-life balance on-farm.
- Become a 50-hour-per-week farmer. A survey shows that the most labour-efficient farmers work 51 hours per week compared

with 72 for the least efficient. They generally start at the same time – 7pm – but the least efficient farmers finish at 8pm (approx.) – 1.5 hours later than the best farmers.
- The big labour-demanding tasks are milking (31% of time) and feeding calves (20% of time).
- A 16:8-hour milking interval puts structure to one's day and reduces the working day.

SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE BREEDING AND REPRODUCTIVE PROGRAMMES

» Optimal breeding and reproductive programmes contribute approximately half of the gains in performance on most farms,

» Sexed semen is a must-use. The following strategies were suggested to maximise success with sexed semen.
- AI bulls
  - Pick the highest EBI bulls.
  - Use a large team.
- Dams: Use the top 50% of herd based on EBI
  - Heifers
    - Target liveweight and BCS 3.25+.
    - Cycling regularly.
  - Cows
    - Choose from lactations 1-4.
    - Must be calved greater than 50 days'.
    - BCS of 3.0 or greater.
    - Cycling regularly.
    - No post-calving disorders or uterine disease.
- When to use?
  - During the first three-weeks of breeding.
  - Within the first 10 days, if possible.
- Timing of AI
  - 14-20 hours after the onset of heat.
- Fixed time AI
  - Costly, but minimises risk.
  - Facilitates targeted use of sexed semen on mating start date (MSD).
  - Using FTAI on heifers, there was an 18% increase in pregnancy by delaying AI by eight hours after the last GnRH injection.
- Straw handling on the day
  - Organise sexed semen straws into one goblet.
  - At max, thaw two sexed semen straws at a time.
  - Thaw straws at 35-37 degrees centigrade for 45 seconds.
  - Load straws into pre-warmed AI guns and keep warm.
  - Deposit semen into uterine body.
  - Complete insemination within five minutes.

» Using EBI, choose bulls and cows for replacements with a genetically good carbon footprint – new to EBI.

» The commercial beef value (CBV) of calves will be a game changer; therefore, dairy farmers must use dairy-beef AI bulls.
- Because of genetic improvement for dairy traits on dairy farms, over the last 10 years, the beef traits of the offspring to a dairy dam and sire have disimproved.
- Consequently, dairy farmers must now choose a sire with high beef traits and use the DBI to choose beef bulls for non-replacement calves on farm.

» The use of in vitro produced embryos from elite cows and AI bulls will facilitate future genetic gain to counteract fewer male dairy calves.

» We now have genetic days for each and AI bull for somatic cell count, lameness, mastitis and recently added TB and liver-fluke.

» Every €10 increase in herd EBI results in 1% reduction greenhouse gas per kg milk solids.

» COW on the ICBF site makes identifying cows for culling easier, because it predicts the cows that have greatest future potential profit in the herd. An important tool to now use if destocking because of the new regulations.

» The benefits of genomic DNA testing are enormous: it predicts an animal's genetic potential at birth, identifies genetically elite animals, verifies parentage (mistakes are made at calving), animals with genetic defects or beneficial genes are identified.
- You will be able to avoid using sexed semen on cows or heifers you will be selling.
- Your herd may have some elite cows that could be used for embryo transfer for the provision of future AI bulls.

» Increasing the feed conversion efficiency of a herd: All you need is cow body weight (BW) in June (or convert the cow maintenance figure to BW) and mild recorded milk solids per cow/year (MS).
- In the survey animals varied from 0.42-1.47kg MS/kg BW; it varied between herds from 0.73-1.14.
- The high-efficient Friesians and Jersey-Cross gave 1.06 and 1.21kg MS/kg BW.
- This information will allow you breed your replacements from your most efficient cows.

- This study validates the significant improvement farmers can make within their herds to get higher MS per cow from the feed input available.

» **Automated heat detection can improve heat detection and decrease time and cost of it. But investment in same depends on, herd size, current herd performance, time devoted to it, technology cost and capabilities.**

GRASSLAND

» **The key factors that influence grass yield per hectare are:**
- Soil fertility
  - Whole farm must be over 6.3pH, and be in Index 3 or 4 for phosphorous and potash.
- Whole farm reseeded to the best grass varieties
  - Reseed 10% per year once the farm has all 'new' grass.
- Achieving 10 grazings per year
  - Each extra grazing increases yield by 1,300-1,600kg DM/ha.
- Achieving target covers throughout the year
  - 900kg DM/ha opening AFC in February.
  - 550-600 kg DM/ha AFC in early April.
  - 160-180kg DM/LU in mid-season.
  - 1,100kg DM ha in mid-September and, from mid-August rotation. length, must increase by two days/week to 40-day rotation on October 1.
  - Closing AFC of 650-750 on December 1.
- The key factors driving grass utilisation are
  - Stocking rate and supplementary feed.
  - If growing 14 tonnes/ha, the appropriate SR is 2.5 cows/ha while feeding 500-700kg meal/cow.
  - The nitrogen in grassland farming comes from
  - The soil in the form of background N (100-200kg/ha/yr).
  - White clover through N fixation (approx. 100kg N/ha contributed).
  - Applied N by way of chemical or slurry.
  - In Moorepark and Clonakilty the overall N supplied, kg/ha, by these three sources was 405 and 470, respectively, for a grass only sward and a grass-clover sward.
  - Nitrogen use efficiency is only 35% when pH, P and K are very low but it improves to 63% when all three are on target.

» **Clover (20% content) will increase the kilogramme of milk solids by 20kg, increase nitrogen use efficiency by 18%, from 40% to 58% and reduce N surplus/ha 78kg to 63; nationally, the N surplus is 176kg N/ha.**
- Over-sowing in April-May works if conditions are 'right' and yielded 13.3 v 9.9 t/DM/ha when compared with direct reseeding in the year of sowing.
- On clover 150 farms, data for 2020, 2021 and 2022 showed
  - That farm gate N efficiency improved from 31% to 33% and 39% year-on-year.
  - Chemical N, kg N/ha, use decreased from 232 to 206 to 158.
  - Nitrogen fed through meal (kg N/ha) increased from 41 to 43 to 52 (worrying).
  - Area (%) under clover increased from 10% to 45% to 64%.
  - Herbage production (t DM/ha) decreased from 14.4 to 14.1 to 13.2.
- White clover swards
  - Increase cow daily DM intake (+0.5-1.1kg), milk yield by +1.1-1.3kg) and milk solids (+0.07-0.11kg).
  - Can fix up to 200kg N/ha (162 units/acre).
  - On wetland type soils, clover performs as well as perennial swards (PRG)
  - Yielded the same amount of grass 12.8 tonnes on 91kg N/ha less.
  - Feeding 456kg more meal in this trail across both clover and PRG swards only yielded 31kg MS/cow more.
  - Clover can lower the carbon footprint by 25%.
  - Bloat must be managed by letting all cows out to graze together, 12-hour blocks, bloat oil, addition of fibre, grazing high covers in September and extra fibre (2kg DM/cow of wilted silage/haylage 30-40% DM) in October when lower covers are being grazed.

» **Protected urea grew the same amount of grass as CAN and 455kg DM/ha more than urea but with much less environmental losses. In the same trial, 250kg N/ha grew 2.2t DM/ha more grass than 150kg.**

» **Applying 60kg N/ha (compared with 30 or 90) in two applications (33:66 ratio February and March) provided the optimum combination for DM production, N response and N recovery.**

» **Silage feeding during the first six-weeks in spring had very little effect on yield, % F or % P, compared with having to feed it during the following six weeks.**
- Greater grass DM intakes and reduced silage feeding in early lactation resulted in lower methane emissions, methane intensity and methane yield.
- The quantity of silage required depends on milking platform (MP) stocking rate and tonnes of grass grown on MP.
  - When growing 12t DM/ha on MP and stocked at 2.5 V 3.2 cows/ha.
  - 52% of silage will have to be sourced off MP compared with 75% for the 3.2 stocking rate.
  - 44% V 56% quality silage will have to be made because milking cows at the higher SR will be on silage for longer; dry cows need 68-70% DMD silage while milking cows need 74+% DMD.
  - The annual silage (t DM) required per cow will be 1.33 for the 2.5 and 1.69 for the 3.3 stocking rate; in other words, 1.8 tonnes/cow more.
  - For the higher MP stocking rate a farmer will require approximately 1 tonne DM per cow while only 0.5 tonnes are required for the low SR.
- First-cut silage cutting date influences yield and DMD
  - Going from May 26 to June 6 cutting increases yield by 0.9t DM/ha but, DMD is reduced from 73- 65%.
  - There is very little difference in the cost per utilisable ton DM.
  - Generally, if the second cut is taken in late July (it must be to extend the grazing season), there is no difference in overall yield between taking the first cut early or late. But there is much more digestible feed/energy available by an early first cut system.
- Red clover silage, not really suitable for grazing, can produce high yields of silage without any N because it can fix in excess of 300kg N/ha but it must be cut every six to eight weeks. It should be seriously considered for off-milking platform silage.
  - It needs a pH of 6.5+, be index 3 and 4 for P & K. Taking four or five cuts of silage results in K being depleted by 300-375kg/ha. Therefore, all slurry and an extra K will be required to maintain K indices at 4.
  - Sulphur (S), where necessary, should be applied using 8% Super or through compound.

» **Reseeding**
- Do 10% of farm every year in April. May or early June; it cost €750/ha approx.
- There is no loss of yield for that field if sown on those months,
- Select varieties from the pasture profit index (PPI), sowing 25-28kg grass plus 2.5-5kg medium leaved white clover/red clover.

- Multispecies: The inclusion of white clover is crucial to increase their DM production. Research (two years) indicates that they are comparable to ryegrass pastures or ryegrass/clover mix in terms of yield, they require fewer fertiliser applications and increased milk solids/cow.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

» **Participate in the Teagasc free Signpost programme.**
- All technologies and practices, if implemented, will both improve the environment and farm profitability.
- The key ones are
  - Use all protected urea as a source of N.
  - Whole farm must be optimum for pH, P and K.
  - Spread slurry at advised tome with LESS slurry equipment.
  - Improve herd genetics (EBI &DBI), so that:
    - Replacement rate is reduced;
    - Age at beef slaughter is reduced; and
    - And genetics is improved year on year.
  - Incorporate clover.
- Attend the Teagasc Signpost demonstration farm walks.
- Join the AgNav Sustainability Programme, a digital platform on ICBF/Teagasc sites that will help commercial farms monitor their environmental performance for carbon (CO_2) and ammonia (NH_4).

» **Sustainability report 2021**
- Economic indicators
  - Dairy farms had three to four times higher incomes than cattle farms.
- Environmental indicators
  - Dairy farms had two to five times higher greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions than other farm enterprises.
  - But the trend was reversed per Euro of output.
  - Consoling, CO_2 and NH_4 emissions decreased between 2014 and 2021 (on three-year rolling averages).
- Social indicators
  - Dairy farmers are more socially sustainable with lower household vulnerability, have a better age profile and better agricultural education but are at risk because of isolation and long working hours.

» **Enteric methane (fermentation within the animal's rumen) accounts for 63.1% of Ireland's total greenhouse gasses, and it has to be reduced by 25% by 2030.**
- Methane from cows (g/day) is lowest in spring, increasing significantly in June and remaining such for the remainder of the season.
- Research measured enteric methane is 9% lower than that used presently in the greenhouse gas inventory.
- Feed additives will reduce enteric methane but need to be in the diet consistently – as of now that is not possible in pasture-based systems.

» **Research has shown that low-emission fertilisers (nitrous oxide) can result in 40 per cent reduction in nitrous oxide and can be achieved by using pro-urea, 18:6:12 or 10:10:20 but 24:2.2:5 was less efficient, as were some other high N compounds.**

» **Hedgerows: They store carbon in wood and leaves above ground but also below ground in the roots and in decomposing litter. The amount of storage depends on width, height, species, and structure and especially management regime.**

» **Carbon organic stocks in Irish grassland soils are estimated to contain 30 years worth of carbon emissions – 1,800 million tonnes of CO_2. However, as of now no baseline soil organic carbon has been determined.**

» **Sow native trees on farm where there is a high risk of P loss so as to protect water.**

» **Nitrate loss to rivers has many sources, such as, soil, clover, chemical N, urine patches and soil mineralisation.**
- Avoid applying N to soils when it is not needed.
- When water is moving through the soil profile or on the surface.
- Weather and soil type have a significant influence on nutrient loss to water and can override source pressures (farming intensity).
- There is also a time lag between farming pressures and improved water quality.
- Imposed measures need time to be adopted by farmers because practice adoption is slow.

» **Improving N use efficiency through breeding – Teagasc is working on this.**
- Of the N eaten by the cow she uses it to:
  - Produce milk protein, milk urea N;
  - Protein in meat; and
  - And some goes to waste in the environment by way of urine (40%) and faeces (30%).
- But some cows are 10% more N efficient, producing 8.5kg N/yr. less than other cows; hence, the role of genetics.

» **The way we manage our soils strongly impacts below ground biodiversity.**
- The more diverse grassland swards can have a positive effect on soil biology and functions; hence the case for legumes, herbs or multi species swards.
- Get the Teagasc self-assessment programme on biodiversity management practices from Teagasc.

"For every animal displaced from the Irish beef herd, 7-8 tonnes of carbon will be added to global emissions."
Paul Crossan, Teagasc.

NEW EVION COMPLETES RESTRUCTURING OF CLAAS COMBINE RANGE

CLAAS RECENTLY EXTENDED ITS COMBINE HARVESTER PRODUCT RANGE BELOW THE TRION AND LEXION SERIES WITH TWO NEW FIVE-WALKER MACHINES. THE EVION CLASSIC IS A 'PERFECT FIT FOR FAMILY FARMS AS WELL AS FOR CONTRACTORS AND AGRI-BUSINESSES WITH SMALLER FIELD SIZES' ACCORDING TO CLAAS. WE LOOK AT THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS NEW SERIES

The arrival of the Evion completes the restructuring of the entire Claas combine harvester range which began with the new Lexion in 2019. As successors to the Avero and the smaller Tucano models, these three five-walker combine harvesters round out the lower end of the range below the Trion.

"The Evion is a very important product for Claas," says Claas CEO, Jan-Hendrik Mohr, who is also responsible for the grain business unit. "With these new combine harvesters, we are able to offer modern, yet affordable machines for smaller-scale farms who want their own grain-harvesting equipment. We're a family business ourselves and we want to continue to offer the right machines for smaller farms across all our product segments."

TECHNOLOGY

The technology of the Evion is based on a modular system which is used to build almost 40 versions of the Lexion and Trion. "For the Evion, we are drawing on tried and trusted technology which has proven itself in thousands of machines," Jan-Hendrik notes.

STRAIGHTFORWARD THRESHING

The Evion is equipped with a single-drum tangential threshing unit with a large, 600mm threshing drum and a synchronised impeller combined with five 4.4m-long straw walkers and a feeder housing width of 1,420mm. This results in an impressive threshing concave area of 0.95m^2 and a separation area of 6.25m^2 provided by the straw walkers. Complemented by the standard pre-concave flaps under the threshing drum, this arrangement enables high throughput while also delivering excellent grain quality, Claas claims.

The threshing drum speed in the Evion Classic is infinitely adjustable over a range of 480-1,150rpm (420-1,080rpm with reduction kit) using the Cemis 700 terminal. Concave clearance adjustment is performed hydraulically from the cab and features integrated overload protection provided by a diaphragm accumulator to prevent blockages from occurring in the threshing unit. As the threshing concave in the Evion Classic is a multicrop unit, conversion measures are only needed rarely, if ever, when switching between common threshing crops. When conversion is required, the concave segments can be swapped out easily through the stone trap.

In order to provide more effective secondary separation and greater throughput, the centre risers of the straw walkers have been redesigned to loosen the crop mat even more effectively and to enable a faster transfer to the next straw walker racks. Another important factor (in addition to the threshing concave overload protection) in ensuring operating reliability is the sensor-based monitoring of the crop flow on the straw walkers. As soon as any blockages begin to develop there as a result of difficult harvesting conditions, the operator receives early warning both in the form of an audible alarm and as a visual alert on the Cemis 700 terminal display. In addition, the optional Cemos Auto Crop Flow automatically deactivates the front attachment and the feeder unit in the event of any imminent risk of blockages on the threshing drum or serious belt slippage so that no more crop is fed in. This avoids unnecessary downtime.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE CLEANING

Despite the compact exterior dimensions, the development team were able to integrate an extremely efficient cleaning system, says Claas. The sieve pan works with the upper and lower sieves moving in opposite directions and has a total sieve area of 4.8m^2.

The sieve design, which features frogmouth openings with optimised flow characteristics, has already proven itself over and over again in the Lexion and Trion under extremely varied operating conditions.
In addition to electric sieve adjustment, the standard equipment for all Evion models includes a loss measurement system. Adjustment of the speed of the radial fan is performed from the cab – and can even be controlled automatically with the optional Auto Slope functionality when harvesting uphill or downhill. An inspection window allows the returns to be viewed conveniently from the operator's seat. Available as an option is the 3D cleaning system, which is able to compensate for a lateral tilt of up to 20 per cent when harvesting on slopes.

LARGE GRAIN TANKS AND POWERFUL ELEVATORS

The grain tank integrated behind the cab holds 5,600L in the Evion 410 and 6,500L in the Evion 430. Sensors alert the operator when the fill level reaches 70 per cent and then 100 per cent. In addition to this functionality, a large grain tank inspection window gives the operator a direct, comprehensive view of the fill level and grain quality. When it comes to unloading, all three Evion models benefit from the 330mm diameter of the grain tank unloading auger and the resulting 90-litre-per-second unloading rate – meaning that offloading can be completed in 1-1.5 minutes. The 105-degree pivot angle of the grain tank unloading auger ensures that the operator always has a perfect view of the offloading process. A pivoting unloading spout, as already used in the Trion and Lexion, is available as an option to provide high-precision control of the grain stream directed at the transport vehicle.

POWERFUL CUMMINS SIX-CYLINDER ENGINE

Common to both Evion models is the 6.7L Cummins B6.7 engine which meets the Stage V emission standard. This is the same common-rail six-cylinder unit used in the Trion and is notable for its ability to deliver high torque at low revs. The full rated output of 204 (Evion 410) and 231hp (Evion 430) is available at just 1,900rpm, while the idle speed is a low 800rpm (1,200rpm with active hydraulic functions). Dynamic Power engine management ensures that the engine only delivers as much power as is actually required at any time. This system can reduce fuel consumption by up to 10 per cent. When the grain tank unloading system is active, the highest output level is enabled automatically.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- High-performance grain elevator operating at 34L/s;
- Straw chopper with 52 or 72 knives, optionally with chaff spreader;
- High-torque at low revs from Cummins six-cylinder engine;
- Dynamic power engine management for fuel saving of up to 10 per cent;
- Three-speed hydrostatic drive;
- Soil protection with tyre diameters up to 1.85m at front and a maximum of 1.5m at rear;
- Spacious cab with automatic climate control, air-suspended seat and ergonomic control armrest including Cemis 700 and CMOTION;
- LED lighting package for perfect evening/night illumination of work area;
- Cemis 700 with job management and differentiated logging of fuel consumption;
- Simplified maintenance enabled by three compressor connection points, LED maintenance lighting and excellent accessibility all round.

NOEL DUNNE
Machinery editor

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

The National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) are over, and the year is rolling on. Up next is Agritechnica in November, and we wait in anticipation of what's on offer from the big European machinery players for 2024. Some of us have even booked our trip to LAMMA next January.
But back to the Ploughing. It is the jewel in the crown of agri-themed shows here and worldwide. It is unique and has become a celebration of Irish agriculture and all that's good about our industry. The National Ploughing Association (NPA) saw potential in commercial activities back in the 1980s, with trade and machinery stands, food halls and government agencies increasingly populating the site. Financial institutions, political-party tents and a plethora of service industries, supermarkets and other commercial outlets all followed to the extent that the Ploughing has grown from 17 stands back in the day to 1,700 stands this year. Anna May McHugh and her team's vision has developed an event to be proud of.
The NPA has hosted several World Ploughing Championships and our plough men and women regularly bring world ploughing honours to Ireland.
This year brought changes. The decision to sell tickets online was inevitable. The NPA had no choice but to go down this route for safety and efficiency reasons. Many GAA fixtures use online ticketing and it's a matter of time before agricultural shows follow suit.
Despite keyboard-warrior criticism, there is nothing the NPA can do about the weather and running an outdoor, mobile event is hazardous in the best of conditions. Heads and hearts sank among the exhibitors and NPA staff when the rain came to undo all the good work setting up the site and car parks, which had been completed in Mediterranean-type conditions in the previous weeks. I witnessed it all and felt the pain and disappointment of everyone involved as the heavens opened in the days leading up to the event in Ratheniska.
However, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, as I walked in the rain and short bursts of sunshine, business was being done and many companies felt it was one of the best ploughing championships they had attended. Despite the weather and carpark woes, the mood was upbeat with smiling faces consuming ice cream, burgers and more exotic food items; kids were splashing in the mud; and throngs of young and older people dancing away through it all. What's not to like about the Ploughing?
Until next month farm wisely, farm safely.

NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR KRONE RX AND ZX FORAGE WAGONS

The largest model range is the ZX with capacities of 43-56m³ while the smaller RX range comes in 33-40m³ volumes. Included on both wagons is the new OptiGrass 28 and 37 cutting system. This new technology allows the incoming grass to be cut to the shortest lengths possible producing feed of the highest quality," the company says.

INTEGRAL ROTOR WITH SPLITCUT

Central to the new OptiGrass 28 and 37 cutting system is the integral rotor that distributes the grass evenly across the full cutting width. Measuring 88cm in diameter, this rotor is capable of handling heavy crops at high speeds making it a great choice for contractors. The knife blades on the rotor cutter are arranged on the sides of the feeding plates, making perfect scissor-like cuts without squeezing the grass, a technique that is gentle on the crop and economical. Depending on the size of the cutting system, the feed plates are 17mm or 22mm wide and all are made from high-tensile steel for heavy-duty and long-lasting performance. The incoming grass is reliably fed to the middle of the rotor by 22cm long augers out on the ends of the integral rotor. Krone SplitCut splits the grass flow on the outboard knife blade, and feed tines reverse the flow which is then guided to the middle of the rotor by deflector plates for cutting. These features ensure optimum chopping capacity across the full working width ensuring not a single blade of grass enters the wagon uncut.

OPTIGRASS FOR FINEST CUTS

The new high-capacity cutting system is available in two versions – the OptiGrass 37 with 40 blades and nominal cuts of up to 37mm and the OptiGrass 28 with 54 blades for a nominal chopping length of up to 28mm, which is the ideal length for wet silage. In addition, the OptiGrass cutting system with its scissor-like precision not only produces quality feed but also provides an unprecedented level of operator comfort. Potential blockages are removed by dropping the knife bank hydraulically and then raising it again after the blockage is removed. The knife bank also pulls out to the left side for convenient replacement of the individually overload protected blades. All blades are released from a central lever and replaced without the need of tools.

THE PERFECT DRIVELINE

The wide rotor is powered by an in-board planetary gearbox and a PowerBelt for maximum output. This PowerBelt on the RX transmits about 25 per cent higher PTO revolutions per minute (RPM) compared with the predecessor. On the ZX, the PTO power flow has increased by up to 10per cent.
The belt drive concept ensures optimised performance with less wear and lower maintenance requirements while the increase in speed reduces lower power requirements, operating more efficiently while reducing component wear. Another new feature unique to Krone are the two interchangeable pulleys. These can be swapped easily and quickly to adjust the processing speed, allowing the wagon to adapt to varying harvest conditions while still ensuring the space behind the rotor is always loaded to capacity for high pre-compression and the best possible cutting quality.

GREAT RIDE COMFORT IN ANY TERRAIN

The RX and ZX models run on tandem or tridem axles that distribute the weight uniformly to all wheels, making them stable and comfortable to drive as well as protecting the ground. The new articulated drawbar with hydraulic height control and standard suspension also improved driver comfort. Slim and compact, the bar makes for excellent operator visibility of the pick-up and enhanced maneuverability. In combination with the intelligent caster-steer axle and the optional and contactless electronic forced steering system, the ground is protected and tyre wear is minimised.

LARGE CHOICE OF OPTIONS

Various options such as crop covers, a weighing system and the integral silage additive applicator with a 200L tank and four flat fan nozzles on the pick-up or rotor cutter are available. The new electronic filling level sensor, which is standard specification, monitors the filling level by measuring the advance of the chain-and-slat floor and displaying the reading on the terminal on a scale from 0 to 100.
All machines come with software that allows operators to customize the lubrication intervals for the central lubricator. On top of this, there is a standard premium LED lighting kit which lights the vicinity, the crop flow system, the load space and the lubrication points. As for control units, the ZX and RX models are available with a variety of control units, ranging from the DS 100 head unit to the premium-level Isobus CCI 800 and 1200 terminals that provide intuitive user interface.

The future is full of challenges. In order to continue producing high-quality food, smart and courageous decisions are needed. It needs people who think ahead and lead the way. It needs leaders. Fendt is by your side.

FENDT

PAYING DEARLY FOR CHEAP IMPORTS

Tom Murphy
Professional Agricultural Contractors of Ireland

Thanks to all who contacted me following last month's article. I'm delighted to say all the comments were positive. I am probably one of the sad people who read President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen's State of the Union address. Among other things, she stated that Europe is a continent of forests, which must be protected, while also defending the policy of food security in harmony with nature, both important objectives. No mention, however, of the Commission policies that undermine both of these goals. I speak, of course, of the Mercosur agreement. This is a trading block with Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay and flies in the face of the idea of protecting forests and food production in harmony with nature. If the Mercosur agreement is so beneficial to the agricultural sector, then why are our farmers not dancing in the aisles? I'll tell you why. Because they know that as the cheap imports flood the market, the Commission will, again, be able to cut Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments. It would be a mistake to think that we can maintain food security in our Member States and at the same time rely on cheap imports – more about the power blocks that are emerging in Latin America on another day! I also note our Taoiseach and Tánaiste at the United Nations were espousing the same sentiments on food security. This is a new theme for them. I wonder if they read the *Irish Farmers Monthly*, and maybe even my many articles on this subject?

> **IF THE MERCOSUR AGREEMENT IS SO BENEFICIAL TO THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR, THEN WHY ARE OUR FARMERS NOT DANCING IN THE AISLES?**

THANKS FOR THE SUPPORT, FOOD VISION TILLAGE GROUP

PAC Ireland very much welcomes the support for agricultural contractors in a report from the Food Vision Tillage Group. It confirms the role of agricultural contractors in underpinning the future of the crops sector and urges the government to review the omission of contractors who do not have a herd number, and are therefore not eligible for Government-funded farm-support schemes. This excludes them from funding that would allow them to invest in new machinery systems and technologies to drive the tillage sector forward.

Addressing the labour shortage and the need for young people to seek a career in contracting, the group also called for better training and education programmes for contractors. They pointed out that a lack of apprenticeships for tractor drivers or equipment operators was a major hurdle, limiting the future growth of the contracting sector (are you listening, Teagasc?). The report stressed that contractors can be the all-important conduit between the tillage and livestock sectors and better trained contractors will also help drive forward the ambition of achieving a lower carbon footprint across Irish agriculture.

This report from the Food Vision Tillage Group highlights many of the issues that PAC Ireland has been petitioning the government and farm-advisory bodies to recognise for decades. I couldn't have written it better myself, it's a nice feeling to be vindicated! Thank you, Food Vision Tillage Group.

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FURLONG APPOINTED AS KNIGHT SPRAYER DISTRIBUTOR FOR IRELAND

Furlong Equipment Services, based near Stradbally in Co. Laois, has been appointed as the new sales, service and support specialist for Knight Farm Machinery's full range of self-propelled, trailed and mounted crop sprayers across the island of Ireland.

Founded in the early 1980s as an offshoot of what began as a farm engineering diversification, Knight Farm Machinery is today one of the largest sprayer manufacturers in the UK, operating from a modern premises near Stamford, eastern England. It offers a full line of sprayers designed to meet the needs of all farm types and sizes, from the largest arable units to smaller specialised and mixed farms. Knight manufactures self-propelled and trailed models of 3,500-6,000L with booms of up to 40m, plus mounted sprayers of 1,300-1,900L with booms of up to 30m.

Knight technological innovations include the MAXImizer fluid control system with low-volume plumbing and full circulation for fast nozzle switching and auto agitation, 4D Active Boom Control for quick and accurate ground contour following, and Vario Select nozzle control. Knight also offers specialist sprayers including a JCB Fastrac forward-control conversion and machines for airport runway de-icing.

Like Knight Farm Machinery, the Furlong Equipment Services' business grew out of a family-farming operation, the Furlongs having farmed in Stradbally for four generations from the 1950s. Since starting to work with sprayers in 2009, Furlong has supplied and supported farmers and farm machinery firms across Ireland and further afield in Europe, selling new and used sprayers and building a reputation for customer support and satisfaction. Much of that has come from dedicated in-house 24/7 technical and operator support, and stocking a large range of spare parts to ensure customers experiencing any issue are up and running again as soon as possible.

"Our team of service engineers know sprayer products inside-out, as we've sold and serviced sprayers for many years," says Noel Furlong, company managing director.

"We have established a strong name in self-propelled sprayers for larger arable farmers and contractors, but the agreement with Knight means we can take this much further, with not only additional self-propelled models, but also a full range of mounted and trailed sprayers, to serve the needs of all types and sizes of Irish farm."

Paul Harrison, overseeing network development at Knight, says: "We're delighted to have appointed a company of the calibre of Furlong to represent Knight across Ireland.

"The Irish market is hugely important to us in terms of both grassland and arable farming, and the process of picking the right partner to work with in Ireland is one into which we've put a lot of work. Furlong is hugely experienced and very professional, and we're looking forward to working with them to help show Irish farmers exactly what Knight sprayers can offer in terms of quality, capacity, technology and cost-effectiveness."

TEAGLE'S TOMAHAWK RANGE GETS A REVAMP

The Tomahawk range of bale processors from Teagle has been revamped. The 2023 winter housing season will see the new 8200 model available. It has been redesigned from the ground up, but retains all the strength of the 7100 and 8100 models that the 8200 range replaces. The new 8200 line from Teagle includes two models:

- 8200 for feeding and bedding, available either mounted or trailed; and
- 8250 for precision straw processing, also either mounted or trailed.

An updated Synchro control system in both variants offers the operator the ability to:

- Pause/resume the flow of material at the touch of a button;
- Adjust bale restraint position to optimise output with straw/silage;
- Simplify operation by electronically synchronising bed chain speed and bale restraint position via a single control; and
- Operate a loading setting, to prevent contact between the bale and the crossbeater on startup

All of the above are managed through Teagle's tried and tested Bluetooth control desk that has been updated to include the new functions, and reconfigured to improve operator comfort.

SPREAD, SHRED, CHOP AT THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON

The unique 8250 Dual Chop design for processing short material has been substantially updated with a 40 per cent increase in the speed of the chopping system to provide a fine and consistent chop length, designed specifically to suit the needs of total mixed ration (TMR) and poultry/cubicle bedding applications. The blade beam can be disengaged to allow material to be spread without chopping, or engaged at the push of a button for short chop mode.

The 8200 feeding and bedding models also now benefit from the largest diameter crossbeater on the market to ensure smooth delivery of processed materials. Material then passes through an updated fan and swivel chute with improved material flow and blow distance. Hardox is now included as standard in the chute components.

A REVISED LAYOUT

A new monocoque body provides strength in the mounted versions, and has been designed for improved material containment and clean, safe operation with all horizontal surfaces removed. The bale chamber can accommodate round bales, either 1x2m or 2x1.5m, with capacity for full size rectangular bales up to 2.8m long. Bales can be self-loaded and retention is improved with a rigid bale beam at the rear of the tailgate.

All greasing points are easily accessible, with the recently updated BS EN703:2021 safety standards taken into account. A drop-down hatch at the rear of the machine allows for easy removal of stones.

Almost all components are now robot welded and a modular design ensures straightforward maintenance. The machine can be configured to European specifications, which ensures safe road use, according to Teagle.

KVERNELAND'S 2024 OFFERINGS

KVERNELAND HAS UNVEILED SOME SHINY NEW EQUIPMENT FOR 2024, AND HERE ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS

FRONT HOPPER F-DRILL

Kverneland has expanded its range of front hopper f drills, and now has the f drill maxi plus, which has been designed to offer both farmer and contractor more flexibility. It allows for seeding and fertilising in one pass. It has a 2,200L capacity.
The hopper is divided into a 60:40 split, the new metering system allows for the application of two types of seeds or just seed and fertiliser in one single pass and at different application rates.

KVERNELAND ROC

The introduction of the ROC merger to Ireland last year by Kverneland expanded its extensive forage range. Kverneland's ROC excels in delivering clean forage while significantly reducing swath pollution – a must when creating quality silage.

TWINFILL SOFTWARE

Kverneland has now added a new software programme, TwinFill, to its iXtra front tank in combination with the iXtra B rear-mounted sprayer unit. This new system is an automatic filling programme that allows the operator to fill the chemical in one go for both the front and rear tank. This gives a more accurate spread of chemicals in both front and rear tanks. This system reduces downtime, there is no waste of spray and clean water, and the operator can start spraying immediately as both tanks are accurately calculated.

ROTAGO F

Kverneland recently unveiled its next generation of power harrows, the Rotago F, for efficient seedbed preparation to ensure even seed emergence and strong plant development. The Rotago F is available in a basic option, or Isobus compatible, but the game changer is that both versions come with the option of a hydraulic adjustable levelling bar and working debts can be changed on the move. This is a completely new machine and will come in widths of 4m, 4.5m, 5m and 6m, all folding for ease of transport.

HELIOS ROTARY HOE

The new Helios rotary hoe is part of a wider range of mechanical weeding equipment now on offer. This new system can carry out several different tasks in one single pass like pulling up weeds, breaking up soil, aerating the soil, and much more. The Helios is fitted with cast iron ground-driven star wheels. It can work at both low and high speeds and in difficult conditions. The unique design system allows for weeds to be lifted with little impact on the crops.

ONYX INTER-ROW CULTIVATOR

Kverneland's new Onyx inter-row cultivator is fitted with a double H shaped frame. Its unique design and adaptability and its ease of operation make it an ideal machine to use in row crops and cereals. This machine comes with a full range of accessories like ridger discs and finger weeders. For more accuracy, this machine can be fitted with Lynx guidance interface system coupled with cameras. Additional cameras can be added for better plant protection. The Onyx can be paired up with the iXtra sprayer for band spraying and the a-drill and f-drill for the application of granual fertiliser or companion crops.

The new S Series spans 280-420hp across its six models. Photo: Bernie Commins.

PRODUCTION OF VALTRA'S 'MOST POWERFUL' S SERIES RETURNS TO FINLAND

Finnish tractor brand, Valtra, has launched the latest generation of its flagship high-horsepower tractor, the S Series, nicknamed 'The Boss'. Production of this S Series will take place on home soil in Suolahti in Finland for the first time since the start of this century. The S2, S3 and S4 have all been produced at sister company, Massey Ferguson's factory in Beauvais, France.

According to the Agco-owned company, significant investment in Valtra's home factory in Suolahti facilitated the production of the sixth generation of the S Series.

At 280-420hp, this new S Series is Valtra's largest and most powerful tractor, promising high torque at low revs, the company said. The 8.4L Agco Power engine and CVT transmission offer a 5 per cent reduction in revs and up to 10 per cent decrease in fuel consumption, depending on conditions, compared to its predecessor, the company claims.

Several new features and improvements differentiate the sixth generation S Series. A new design, improved access, a new and spacious cab, an increased number of lights (all of which are LED), and more versatility for all tasks are just a few of the features.

As expected, the factory fitted TwinTrac reverse drive system and SmartTouch user interface feature, as well as a range of suspension options for front axle and cab. The S Series tractors can also be fitted with Valtra's Skyview cab option, and the entire S Series is now available with Valtra's Unlimited customisation options, the company said.

THE S SERIES GLOBAL LAUNCH

The sixth generation S Series marks the first global launch of a Valtra tractor. Serial production is being ramped up in the second quarter of 2024 and first deliveries in Europe can be expected in the summer. Deliveries to regions with less-regulated emission standards, such as South America, are planned to begin in the second half of 2024. Valtra will present the S Series in field and customer events worldwide from November 2023. Valtra will be showing the sixth generation S Series at Agritechnica in Hanover, Germany from November 12-18.

JOHN DEERE AND DELAVAL FORM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

John Deere and DeLaval have joined efforts to create the milk sustainability centre (MSC), aimed at helping dairy farmers improve the efficiency and sustainability of their operations.

Dairy farmers will use the digital MSC to monitor nutrient use efficiency (NUE) for nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, and carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e), for their entire farm, specific fields, or their herd. The MSC will also provide data to allow dairy farmers to compare their performance to other dairy operations and identify key areas for improvement, the companies have said. The MSC aims to serve dairy farmers independent of farm machinery brands and herd management software.

"Dairy farming is perhaps the most complex agriculture business today with no system integration between crop and animal performance," said Dave Chipak, director, dairy and livestock production systems at John Deere. "Dairy farmers often use five to seven different, non-connected software solutions to run their business. The MSC will enable dairy farmers to calculate, benchmark, simulate, and optimise NUE and CO_2e for sustainable and profitable decision-making," he said. After farmer authorisation, data from DeLaval Plus and John Deere Operations Center (sic) will be automatically pulled into the MSC. Manual data input will be reduced, ensuring high data quality, and ultimately helping an entire farm system – fields, cows, employees, advisors, machines, and other assets – work efficiently together.

MSC is cloud-based for desktop or mobile devices, built and powered by Dairy Data Warehouse BV (DDW), a Dutch-based company in operation for the last 10 years offering data solutions for sustainable dairy. The launch of the John Deere-DeLaval partnership will be a key focus in the John Deere booth at the Agritechnica 2023 trade show, November 12-18, in Hanover, Germany.

PICTURE THIS: PLOUGHING 2023

THE 2023 NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS IN RATHENISKA, CO. LAOIS WAS HIT WITH BOUTS OF EXTREMELY INCLEMENT WEATHER THAT CREATED CHALLENGING CONDITIONS FOR ORGANISERS, EXHIBITORS AND ATTENDEES. BUT DESPITE THE RAIN, THE WIND, AND THE MUCK-FEST THAT ENSUED, WE ALL PLOUGHED ON REGARDLESS. HERE IS JUST A SNAPSHOT OF THE MACHINERY COMPANIES THAT BRAVED THE ELEMENTS AND SHOWCASED THEIR GOODS, CELEBRATED MILESTONES, AND WON AWARDS

Pictured at the Pearson Milking Technology stand: Celebrating 75 years in business were David Pearson, Pearson Milking Technology; Minister of State, Martin Heydon; managing director of the National Ploughing Association, Anna May McHugh; Alan Pearson and Lloyd Pearson from Pearson Milking Technology.

Pictured at the Vogelsang stand: David Whelehan and Mark Hughes.

Managing director of the National Ploughing Association, Anna May McHugh presenting export sales manager with SpreadPoint, Niall Tiernan, with the Machine of the Year Award.

Pictured at the Fullwood JOZ stand: Paul Kirwan, Courtwood Dairy Services; Andrew Condy, Fullwood JOZ; and John Corcoran, Courtwood Dairy Services.

Sam Thompson, sales manager, Kubota Equipment Ireland, pictured at the Kubota stand where there was a complete range of equipment on display.

Pictured at the McHale stand: Paul McHale, McHale Engineering and Declan Wilson, Coolroe, Co. Laois.

WHAT A WASTE!

IRELAND'S ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) RECENTLY PUBLISHED ITS LATEST FIGURES ON PACKAGING WASTE IN IRELAND. *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY* HAS THE LOWDOWN ON WHERE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE, AND WHERE IT NEEDS TO IMPROVE

> WITH IRELAND'S PACKAGING WASTE EXCEEDING 1.2 MILLION TONNES PER YEAR, WE NEED TO INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO AVOID UNNECESSARY PACKAGING USE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE

According to the EPA, Ireland is meeting current EU recycling targets and achieving high recycling rates for some streams such as glass, paper/cardboard and ferrous metals. However, in 2021, the overall recycling rate for packaging waste fell by 4 per cent to 58 per cent putting the 2025 target of 65 per cent at risk. While the quantity of packaging waste being recycled is increasing every year, it cannot keep up with the total increase in packaging waste being generated in the first place.

Plastic packaging waste recycling rates remain low, at 28 per cent. Most plastic packaging waste was sent for incineration, with less than one third recycled. Ireland will face significant challenges in meeting the 2025 and 2030 recycling targets for plastic of 50 per cent and 55 per cent.

The majority of Ireland's recycling is done abroad, with just 18 per cent of packaging waste (225,000 tonnes) recycled in Ireland in 2021, mainly glass and wood

KEY POINTS

- Ireland generated 1.2 million tonnes of packaging waste in 2021.
- Ireland is continuing to achieve high levels of recycling for glass (84 per cent) and paper/cardboard (73 per cent).
- Plastics present a serious challenge. Only 28 per cent of plastic packaging waste was recycled in 2021, a long way off the 2025 EU target of 50 per cent. The majority of Ireland's plastic packaging waste is being incinerated.
- Ireland's overall recycling rate fell from 62 per cent in 2020 to 58 per cent in 2021. It must reach 65 per cent in 2025.
- Fiscal measures to incentivise householders and businesses are also urgently needed. The new levy on waste sent for recovery, and increases to the landfill levy, will reward better practices of segregation of waste.
- Approximately 247kg of waste packaging was generated per person in 2021, up from 225kg per person in 2020.
- In 2021, 58 per cent of waste packaging was recycled, exceeding the current EU target (55 per cent). This is a drop of 4 per cent from 2020. The future recycling targets that will apply from 2025 (65 per cent) and 2030 (70 per cent) will be challenging for Ireland to meet.
- The majority of Ireland's recycling is done abroad, with just 18 per cent of packaging waste (225,000 tonnes) recycled in Ireland in 2021, mainly glass and wood.

The EPA compiles official statistics on waste generation and treatment in Ireland. These are used for reporting on Ireland's performance in meeting its legal obligations, for policy and waste management planning purposes and to inform the general public. Data are compiled through surveys of waste operators and administrative data sources, in cooperation with other public authorities.

Commenting on the figures, Micheal Lehane, director of the EPA's Office of Environmental Sustainability said: "Urgent measures are needed to reduce the quantity of packaging waste generated in Ireland each year. Our current rate of production and consumption of packaging represents a poor use of materials and energy and is a growing source of emissions.

"With Ireland's packaging waste exceeding 1.2 million tonnes per year, we need to intensify efforts to avoid unnecessary packaging use in the first instance. Packaging waste can be avoided and reduced by replacing single-use with reusable packaging;current examples include pallets, boxes and trays, and through better product design such as lightweighting packaging."

OTHER FINDINGS

Poor segregation practices at businesses and homes are leading to high volumes of packaging waste being diverted to energy recovery. This includes materials which can be recycled.

Improved separation by householders and businesses at source is needed to collect higher quantities of recyclable packaging materials. Ensuring waste charges to businesses and householders are clearly incentivising reduction and recycling of packaging wastes will support better separation of materials. Continued awareness and enforcement measures are also needed to support better behaviours.

Warren Phelan, programme manager of the EPA's Circular Economy Programme noted: "The fall from 62 per cent to 58 per cent recycling in 2021 is disappointing but not unexpected. Better practices are needed by householders and especially businesses, where there are significant opportunities to divert good quality materials from the residual bin. The new levy on waste sent for recovery, and increases to the landfill levy, will reward better practices of segregation provided customer charging is appropriately incentivised."

Pat McCormack, President, ICMSA

AN ABJECT SURRENDER

It is a very old axiom for any kind of competition or match that, while there is no disgrace in losing, there is shame in not attempting at all. And that's one of the reasons why I don't think I can ever remember so much fury over the actions – or inactions – of an Irish Government in relation to the farming and wider agri-sector that is our national pride. Minister McConalogue and his cabinet colleagues can spin all they want, but the 220kg nitrogen (N) reduction is a massive reverse and blow to our sustainable dairy sector. The net effect of this reduction is that (at least) hundreds of medium-sized family dairy farms will be tipped into unviability. The cost or impossibility of adding more land or the alternative reduction in cow numbers will mean that their family income margin will now disappear. No one seriously disputes that this will be the net result here and no one can seriously dispute that that has been the aim of some of those who agitated for this punitive measure under the guise of 'improving our water quality'. They are what they are, and they do what they do.

PROBLEM

We have much more of a problem with a minister and a Government that do not appear to understand what 'they' are and what 'that' means in terms of acting in the national interest. The performance of the Irish Government in relation to their defense of our absolutely legitimate derogation from the Nitrates Directive has been shameful and abject. Ireland has already introduced a raft of measures aimed at improving water quality and those measures are already working with evidential data emerging all the time. The European Commission needed to know this! The Commission's approach seems to have been that because other Member States with multiple times worse water quality had been forced to destock, then Ireland should have to follow suit. By comparison with other Member States, Ireland's water quality is pristine and there was no basis in logic or science to contemplate the kind of reductions in N per hectare that are now on the way and that will undermine hundreds of farmers and negatively impact thousands. The non-defense of our national position has been so wretched, in my view, that one would have to ask the question why this was the case?

> **EVEN TODAY, EVEN AFTER THIS SURRENDER, FARMERS CANNOT CHECK THEIR NITRATES FIGURES ONLINE AND THERE'S NO FIRM DATE FOR THIS ONLINE CHECK FACILITY TO BE PUT IN PLACE**

The ICMSA wanted to believe that the more realistic elements of this Government understood that the continuation of Ireland's 250kg derogation from the Nitrates Directive was eminently possible if we were willing to mount a skillful campaign based on the evidence that is already emerging. No such campaign was ever mounted by this Government and this minister and consequently we have had our N limits reduced despite the evidence that shows improvements are being made – economic and environmental – that the existing 250kg is perfectly compatible with improving water quality while maintaining the production capacity so indispensable when prices are falling.

IMPACT

Because this is the vital point: this blow to production capacity and viable volumes comes on top of a ferocious downward pressure on farmer milk price that has us and other farmer groups in the EU seriously contemplating a re-run of the 2016 voluntary production reduction scheme. The ICMSA estimates that falling milk price this year will deduct in excess of €2bn from Irish dairy farmer income. That is the background against which we see this additional burden heaped on the already groaning shoulders of our family dairy farms. Fiddling around with the maps and trying to localise the impact just compounds the concession and fools no one. Even today, even after this surrender, farmers cannot check their nitrates figures online and there's no firm date for this online check facility to be put in place. The degree of real commitment shown by our Government can be gauged by the fact that they didn't even travel over to Brussels to make the case. A Zoom call was deemed sufficient.

It is up to us to try – and not for the first time – to 'make some fist' out of the absolute mess in which the Government has landed those 3,000 farm families. That's why we went into meet the minister and his officials. There's no time for tokenism and grandstanding anymore – if ever there was. Our family farm members are entitled to look to us for a defense of their farms and incomes that their Government was either unable or unwilling to mount. We must at least try.

New quad bike regulations

CIARAN ROCHE, FBD RISK MANAGER, OUTLINES THE NEW QUAD BIKE REGULATIONS DUE TO COME INTO EFFECT FROM NOVEMBER 2023

The new legal requirements regarding quad bike operation under the 'Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations' come into effect on November 20 this year. In recent years, the number of fatal and serious work-related accidents involving quad bikes, in particular in agriculture and forestry, has given rise to significant concern. These new regulations are being implemented to address this in an effort to reduce the number of accidents and serious injuries involving quad bikes.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR FARMERS AND CONTRACTORS?

These regulations require that all quad bike (ATVs) operators in the workplace must successfully complete a quad bike training course provided by a registered training provider to a QQI Standard or equivalent. Additionally, all such operators must wear appropriate head protection while operating a quad. The lead-in time before these regulations come into effect was designed to allow sufficient time for training bodies to build capacity and to allow enough time for the operators of quad bikes to do this training.

A quad bike is a fantastic aid for farm work; it is designed to cope with a wide variety of terrain types. However, if it is operated unsafely, it can create significant risks of death or severe 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 operating 'farm type' quad bikes is at least 16 years' old and it's usually clearly stated on the quad.

CAUSE OF DEATH OR INJURY

The main causes of deaths or serious injury associated with quad bikes are from:

- being thrown off during vehicle overturns or after loss of control;
- collisions with structures, trees, poles, other vehicles, etc;
- being trapped/asphyxiated/drowned under an overturned machine; and
- pedestrians being struck or run over by a quad bike.

The underlying causes are usually one or more of the following:

- lack of formal training or experience;
- poor physical mobility;
- excessive speed, especially turning at excessive speed;
- carrying a passenger or an unbalanced load;
- tipping on a bank, ditch, rock, rut or bump;
- a steep slope combined with other factors, e.g. ground or load conditions;
- towing excessive loads with un-braked equipment; and
- poor quad maintenance.

GET TRAINING AND USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

All quad bike operators must be trained. This will provide them with the operating skills and knowledge to operate a quad bike safely. The training must include the use of any towed equipment or attachments, if applicable.

Head protection is vital. A helmet can significantly reduce the severity of serious head injuries. Operators should always wear an approved helmet. Refer to your quad manufacturer's recommendation. A helmet should fit your head comfortably and securely. Wearing a helmet with a face shield or goggles protects your eyes and will help your vision. Additional PPE such as gloves and safety footwear should also be worn.

Never carry a passenger on a quad bike. The long seat is for active riding: allowing operators to shift their body weight backwards or forwards as required for different slope conditions and is not intended for carrying passengers.

Overloading your quad can lead to an imbalance in weight distribution. This can negatively affect braking. Ensure all riders know the manufacturers recommended towing capacity and drawbar loading limit. Always operate within these requirements. Remember that carrying a load or towing a trailer reduces your ability to control the quad with your body movements.

Risk assessment is key. When selecting trailed equipment look for:

- overrun brakes;
- swivel hitch drawbar;
- bead lock rims on wheels;
- a low centre of gravity and a wide wheel track;
- a long drawbar; and
- attachment points for securing a load.

Quad bike maintenance and checks are essential to ensure the quad is in good working order and is therefore safe to drive. Tyre pressures should be checked regularly, servicing should be undertaken in accordance with manufacturers' guidelines. A poorly maintained quad bike can lead to accidents.

Remember: Always think safety first when operating a quad bike!

MATT O'KEEFFE
EDITOR

ORNUA CO-OP SERVES US WELL

The imminent departure of several top executives from Ornua in the coming months has raised spurious questions about the future direction of the co-op.

The loss of John Jordan, Róisín Hennerty, Ken Maguire and Iarlaith Smith, all top executives at Ornua, creates some uncertainty at a time when margins and sales volumes are under pressure across international dairy markets. However, the critical role of Ornua as a primary route to market for Irish dairy remains intact in large part due to those and previous executives who have built an effective marketing structure and secured long-term customer relationships. Add on the investment in promoting Kerrygold butter as a premium, world-class dairy brand, and any temporary disruption in the organisation's leadership chain should have minimal impact on the co-op's marketing effectiveness.

KERRYGOLD IS KING

The jewel in the Ornua crown is the Kerrygold brand. Historically, it was used exclusively for the marketing of Irish butter. In recent years, the brand has been extended to other premium products including cheese. Kerrygold is one of the most valuable food brands Ireland has ever created. The fact that Ornua has well-established routes to market, especially in the UK, EU and across the US, backed up by well organised logistics hubs, adds significant value to the Irish dairy industry.

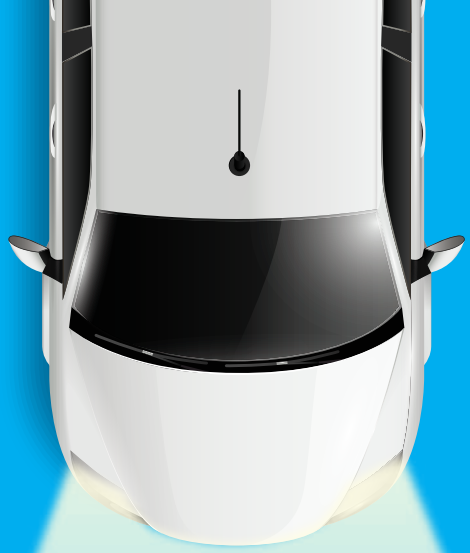
The eight cooperative owners of Ornua provide the products, including the cream for Kerrygold butter manufacturing, which Ornua sells internationally. If, as suggested in a recent newspaper report, there is some discussion around hiving off the Kerrygold brand under a standalone Plc structure, that idle chatter should be treated with contempt. Such a change would not be in Irish milk producers' best interests, and neither would it be in the best interests of the Irish milk processing sector.

> INSTEAD OF ANY KITE-FLYING AROUND CASHING IN ON THE VALUE OF THE WORLD-CLASS KERRYGOLD BRAND, WE SHOULD FOCUS ON BUILDING THE FOOTPRINT OF THE MUCH-RESPECTED BRAND ACROSS THE GLOBE

MAXIMISING RETURNS

The Plc is modelled on the profit motive, with scant regard for suppliers of raw materials over and above what is required to keep them supplying those materials. The Irish milk-production sector has benefitted from the co-operative model, refined and developed over generations since its inception by Horace Plunkett. Yes, it is not a perfect model, but then, perfection is often described as the enemy of progress. Instead of any kite-flying around cashing in on the value of the world-class Kerrygold brand, we should continue to focus on further building the footprint of the much-respected brand across the globe. The benefits of that strategy should primarily accrue to Irish milk producers. Would those milk producers be better off sharing that value with international investors, including insurance and pension funds? The answer is almost certainly in the negative. The ambition must be to maximise return from the consumer market, not the stock market. Full ownership of the Kerrygold brand through our co-ops has served us well, with the cooperative ethos of Ornua feeding through to milk price with bonus payments accruing from the marketing of Kerrygold-branded and other Irish dairy produce. Sharing the asset value of the Kerrygold brand with external investors could only diminish that value to future generations of Irish milk producers. The family silver can only be sold once.

Demand for a wealth-extraction mechanism in co-operative type shares is understandable. Share spin-outs from Kerry and Glanbia have whetted the appetite for realising a cash return for the latent value held in co-operative shareholdings. It has not been without positive outcomes. The Glanbia restructuring process allowed the return to farmer coop members control of their milk processing assets. The Kerry experience has, so far, not been as positive in utilising Plc assets to secure the destiny of Kerry milk producers.



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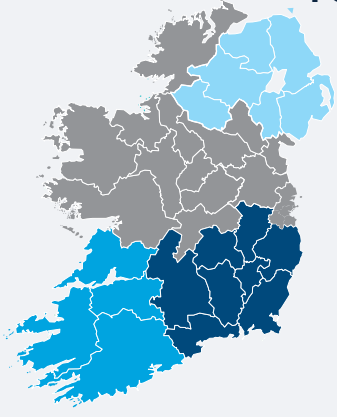

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