

www.irishfarmersmonthly.com

FEBRUARY 2024

IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY

NEW

FOCUS
CALF HEALTH

EDUCATION
UCD EXPANDS FOOD
AND AGRI PROGRAMME

CIARAN FITZGERALD
ADDRESSING THE ANTI-
FARMING NARRATIVE

INTERVIEWS
DENIS DRENNAN
FRANCIE GORMAN



McHale

FIXED CHAMBER
BALER RANGE



CALL TODAY

Finance*
Available



* Offer Available in Ireland Only.
Terms and Conditions Apply. For Full Details Contact McHale.

NEW
Adaptive Intake
AS STANDARD

F5500

15 Knife Fixed Chamber Baler



AS STANDARD



2.1m Pick Up
with Adaptive Intake

AS STANDARD



15 Knife Chopper Unit
(Selectable Knives Optional)

AS STANDARD



Wizard Plus
Control Console

Adaptive Intake Features

- + Automatically adjusts for light and heavy crops
- + Larger Rotor
- + Larger Augers
- + Camless Pick Up (Optional)

||| **CALL TODAY**

Irish Sales Rep.- James Heanue- 087 247 2399

McHale Superior Forage Solutions



www.mchale.net

FEBRUARY 2024

EDITORIAL



Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

LIVESTOCK-WELFARE VIGILANCE IS MORE NECESSARY THAN EVER

Our calf-health focus in this issue prioritises best practice in relation to the management and care of calves in the critical early stages of life. We also explore the contrasting management practices of calves in New Zealand. There, the early slaughter of non-economically viable calves is an accepted part of livestock management. In Ireland, there has been limited recourse to early calf slaughter, with increasing restrictions, including the imposition of a minimum age requirement from this year. Clearly, there is no appetite to allow early slaughter of calves to become an integral part of Irish livestock management. Whether logical or not, the general public's attitude towards premature slaughter of newborn calves is negative and livestock producers cannot afford to ignore the increasingly assertive opinions of consumers. There is ever closer scrutiny of farming practices by media, regulatory authorities, and the general public. Lapses in animal welfare will not go unnoticed and we, as farmers, must do everything possible to meet the highest standards expected of us as primary carers of the animals on our farms. If that sounds somewhat sanctimonious, it is only a statement of fact. We can neither ignore nor condone any animal care, handling or transport practices off-farm which could fall short of the highest standards. Otherwise, we risk putting our livelihoods in jeopardy. Ignoring public opinion is an ostrich-like reaction which would not serve us well. We must be constantly aware that there are well-funded, anti-livestock farming advocates engaged in lobbying, producing sensationalist advertising and always ready to jump on any shortcoming in farmed livestock management. The timescale between the videoing of an animal-welfare infringement and the sharing of that video among thousands of viewers is a few seconds. Ultimately, it is not fear of exposure that motivates livestock owners. We

take pride in our livestock welfare standards. By any measure, including low early morbidity in our calves, we are among the best livestock managers anywhere in the world. We have a positive story to tell and, apart from those who cannot accept farmed animals as a food source under any circumstances, there is a receptive audience among the public who appreciate our role as food producers, always provided that our standards around livestock management are exemplary and open to scrutiny. Elsewhere this month, we interview the new leaders of the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association and the Irish Farmers' Association. We wish Denis Drennan and Francie Gorman well in their endeavours on behalf of Irish farmers. We also express the hope for increasing cooperation among all farm organisations. Division and dissension would not serve us well as our food producers face significant headwinds in the years ahead. We are delighted to announce that agri-food economist, Ciaran Fitzgerald, has joined the *Irish Farmers Monthly* team and will provide regular economic insights around the Irish and international agri-food sectors. Ciaran previously served as chair of Meat Industry Ireland for 12 years and is a staunch advocate for Irish food. In his first contribution for *Irish Farmers Monthly*, he explores the critical value of the Irish agri-food sector to the Irish rural and national economy. In recent years we have seen the contribution of foreign direct investment (FDI) – to Irish employment levels, corporation and other taxes as well as to our export figures – grow in almost exponential terms. It has been an entirely positive economic policy dating back more than 50 years, and long may it continue. That should not, as Ciaran emphasises, preclude us from safeguarding and promoting our agri-food sector as our largest, permanent, indigenous economic powerhouse.

CONTENTS

- 4 **Upfront**
- 8 **News**
- 12 **Farm Safety**
- 14 **Interview**
IFA president, Francie Gorman
- 16 **Interview**
ICMSA president, Denis Drennan
- 18 **Feature**
MACC: To aid and abate
- 22 **Agri-economy**
Ciaran Fitzgerald addresses the anti-farming narrative
- 24 **IFM 50**
A trip down memory lane as we celebrate our 50th birthday
- 50 **Feature**
New sustainable food-systems course at UCD
- 52 **Management Hints**
- 56 **Machinery**
- 67 **ICMSA**
- 68 **Rural Life**
- 70 **Very End**

FOCUS
CALF HEALTH

- 28 **Calf management down under**
- 32 **Disease-prevention strategies in calves using non-antibiotics**
- 36 **Well-established calf-rearing regime**
- 38 **Preventing milk fever**
- 40 **Why it pays to feed high-quality milk replacer**
- 44 **Successful rearing from birth to weaning**



Editor: Matt O'Keeffe Deputy Editor: Bernie Commins Editorial Director: Miriam Atkins Machinery Editor: Noel Dunne
Production: Martin Whelan Advertising Manager: Brian Murphy
Commercial and Advertising Manager: Anna Douglas Accounts: Tricia Murtagh Administration & Subscriptions: Sue Nolan
Chief Executive: Rebecca Markey Printing: W&G Baird Publishers: IFP Media Subscription: €46 per annum
Irish Farmers Monthly, Castlecourt, Glengary, Co. Dublin.
Tel: +353 1 7096900 • Email: miriamatkins@ifpmedia.com and berniecommins@ifpmedia.com • www.irishfarmersmonthly.com
Copyright IFP Media 2024. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any material form without the express written permission of the publishers.



WWW.IRISHFARMERSMONTHLY.COM



**JIM BERGIN
EXITS TIRLÁN**

Next July will mark the end of an extraordinarily successful career in the Irish dairy sector for Tirlán CEO, Jim Bergin. A 'lifer' with

Avonmore/Glanbia/Tirlán, having worked in the organisation(s) for 40 years, Jim epitomised the straight talking, shrewd, and effective model of co-operative management. Never one to shirk the pricing challenges associated with volatile international dairy markets, producers always respected the fact that Jim Bergin was, despite all milk-price arguments, firmly dedicated to the co-operative ethos. Nevertheless, he understood the necessity to run a profitable and efficient business. His years of management roles under the constraints of a profit-focussed Plc business model prepared him well for the ultimate decision by Glanbia Co-op shareholders to reassume total control of their milk-processing assets through the establishment of Tirlán Co-operative. It was a gradualist approach with former Glanbia CEOs John Moloney and Siobhan Talbot, as well as senior management including Jim Bergin, involved in the various phases of the buy-out.

In addition to his close involvement in the financial structuring of the purchase of Glanbia's remaining milk processing assets by Tirlán, Jim and his management team have overseen a €600m investment in expanded milk-processing facilities since quota abolition, including the new cheese-making facility at Belview, which was the subject of some controversy when An Taisce took an ultimately unsuccessful legal case to prevent its establishment. Tirlán's milk and grain producers are acutely aware of the importance of the co-op's importance to their financial wellbeing as the co-op pays out an estimated €2bn to its suppliers, annually. Seán Molloy, who is currently chief ingredients and agri-business officer and a director of Tirlán for the past 12 years, will assume the role of CEO next August.

BIG BIRD BRINGS BEEF BONUS

It's probably a stretch to suggest that the main reason the Chinese Premier, Li Qiang, paid a visit to Dublin was to personally deliver good news of the reopening of Irish beef exports to help feed the burgeoning middle classes in the Peoples Republic, who are developing an increasing desire for Western-oriented diets. Still, it was an impressive sight to watch the Boeing 747 Max8 land on an Irish runway. It was the largest commercial jet ever to come into Dublin and certainly beats the Pony Express for delivering good news to Irish beef producers.

The message of renewed access, after a short spell when an atypical BSE case

closed the Chinese market to Irish beef, was well received and, even though it will take some time to ramp up beef tonnages to China again, it did provide an early year confidence boost to the Irish beef sector. As usual, the purists were out criticising our trading with China at all, given their less than pristine human rights record. The reality is that if we were to cock our nose in the air over exporting to any country with civil or human rights or environmental or any number of issues, we would have very few countries to trade with. It's not so long ago when our own record in relation to basic rights we now consider normal and legal would not withstand close scrutiny.



SHEEP NUMBERS IN DECLINE

Despite sheepmeat prices remaining at a considerable premium to beef returns, the ongoing decline in the Irish breeding ewe flock continues, as Seamus McMenamin, Bord Bia's sheepmeat sector manager, confirmed at the food promotion body's annual meat-marketing seminar last month.

This is reflective of a general reduction in sheep numbers across the EU, which has been in evidence for several years. There is certainly no fortune to be made in sheep, unless a producer has very large numbers and even then, the labour demands of managing big flocks quickly erode margins. It takes a lot of lambs to make the average industrial or even minimum wage. Apart from the financial returns from sheep production, some of the decline can be traced to an ageing of the shepherd population. Handling sheep is a physically demanding occupation,

even with excellent handling facilities. In regions where sheep milk is the production focus – more than sheepmeat – there are also challenges. Cypriot Haloumi cheese production is declining to the extent that market demand is unlikely to be met. Likewise, as farmer numbers decline in the mountainous regions of Spain, the country's famous Manchego sheep-cheese production may come under increasing pressure.

As Irish cow-milk production faces ongoing challenges from environmental regulations, nitrates restrictions, planning objections, and labour deficits, will more enterprising farmers consider milking sheep instead? There are commercial Irish sheep and goat milk farms selling high quality milk and cheese products at premium prices. More are required if the sector is to build further traction and service increasing demand at home and internationally.



IFAC REVELATIONS

IFAC's annual farm report, published in January, included a comprehensive analysis of farmer attitudes and concerns for 2024.

Some of the concerns expressed by the farmers surveyed are easily recognisable and understandable. Rising input costs were the greatest concern. The number of farmers with a positive outlook for 2024 was down by 10 per cent on the previous year. As business owners, there must be concern that over 20 per cent do not create budgets for their farms. The percentage of farmers who do not expect to be farming in five years' time showed a substantial increase on 2023 figures and that has all kinds of implications, not only for farmer demographics, but also for how they will live out their lives post-farming. To that end, the IFAC survey showed a worrying lack of understanding around the implications of the Fair Deal scheme as a draw on farmers' assets should they have to avail of nursing home services. Ninety per cent of respondents declared little or no knowledge of the scheme. Half of all farmers still have no will made and only 33 per cent can rely on a non-state funded pension in old age.

As a general summary, the IFAC report indicates significant uncertainty among farmers around income, succession and financial planning. While confidence was low when the survey was conducted towards the end of 2023, there are indications that the mood may be slowly improving as we enter the second month of 2024. Commodity prices are improving, input costs may have at least plateaued and, optimistically, the weather can hardly be as bad as it was in 2023. Can it?

TRACE MINERALS & FERTILITY

Kate Ingram BVetMed MRCVS

Topping up trace minerals in cows prior to breeding helps ensure optimum levels are available when the cows' reserves may otherwise be depleted. The final trimester of pregnancy is a high-demand period for trace minerals with the fast-growing foetus depleting its dam's stores and the onset of colostrum production also requiring trace minerals.

Calving and the onset of lactation do nothing to decrease this demand and this, coupled with the requirements of the immune system to defend against fresh cow challenges such as mastitis and metritis, is why the transition period is considered one of the highest-demand periods of the production cycle of dairy cows.

It is no wonder, therefore, that this is the period where even well-supplemented cows and heifers can tip into sub-clinical deficiency if their intakes cannot keep up with this high demand.

For block-calving herds it is paramount that cows return to cyclicity soon after calving. To achieve the aim of one calf per cow per year, cows have only 12 weeks to get back in calf or risk slipping back in the block. A multitude of factors can delay how quickly a cow will return to oestrus after calving, for example issues such as dystocia, metabolic diseases and uterine infections. Avoiding problems at calving, preventing fresh cow diseases and ensuring good nutrition all contribute to minimising these issues. Ensuring adequate trace-element supplies at this time will also help as they are not only important for immune function and reducing the impact of oxidative stress but are needed for a variety of roles within the reproductive system.

Manganese – required for the production of hormones such as progesterone, oestrogen and testosterone, which are critical for the reproductive cycle.

Zinc – essential for the onset of oestrus. Also vital for the lining of the uterus to repair after calving, for the return to normal oestrous and maintenance of the uterine lining for embryo implantation.

Selenium – deficiency causes neonatal mortality, increased rates of retained foetal membranes, metritis, mastitis, abortions, poor fertility and increased susceptibility to infections in ruminants.¹

Copper – low levels can result in poor fertility, manifested as delayed or suppressed oestrus.²

Iodine – when lacking may lead to early embryonic death, foetal resorption, abortion, stillbirth or the birth of weak young. It is also commonly associated with prolonged gestation and parturition, and retained placentas.³

Cobalt – the most common indicator of deficiency of this trace mineral is a reduced conception rate.

ASK YOUR VET ABOUT STRATEGIC TRACE MINERAL INJECTION.

Although supplementing cattle is important to meet their trace-mineral demands, oversupply can have negative effects so it is important to take advice from your vet or nutritionist when considering a supplementation programme. Factors such as the current mineral status of the animals, additional sources of trace minerals and the likely demand for minerals should all be taken into account when formulating a mineral-supplementation plan.

Ensuring optimal trace mineral levels in cows and heifers prior to breeding helps: replace stores lost during the transition period; minimises the impact of sub-clinical deficiency on immune function; and aids the return to cyclicity and fertility.

Talk to your vet about how injectable trace minerals may benefit your herd at high-demand periods such as pre breeding.

References on request



Agri Aware chair, Shay Galvin at the launch of Agri Aware's new Farm Safety programme, Safe Farm Futures.



Last month, Minister of State with responsibility for farm safety, Martin Heydon, launched a new Agri Aware initiative, the Safe Farm Futures, which will be available to primary schools across the country and aims to educate and raise awareness of the importance of keeping safe on farms.

In 2003, 16 deaths occurred in the farming

sector and already, sadly, another fatality was recorded last month. The programme has separate plans for junior and senior level primary school children, and comprises of three learning-plan topics that teachers and their students will engage with. All three topics will be accompanied by a suite of resources including activity lesson plans, webinars and activity sheets. Getting the

safety message out to young people who then carry it home is recognised as highly effective. Farm accidents and fatalities are a terrible trauma for families and communities affected and Agri Aware's initiative is welcome and timely.

Recently, we heard the Health and Safety Authority raise awareness through radio adverts and other media outlets around the dangers associated with animal handling on farms, especially around calving time. It, too, was a timely intervention and, in association with a series of farm inspections to highlight danger points, should help to reduce the inherent dangers of farming-related activities. A recent two-week farm safety inspection campaign focussed on the safe management of livestock during calving season when the risk of injury to farmers increases significantly. In the last five years, 80 people lost their lives in farm-related work and 18 of these involved working with livestock.



FTMTA CONFERENCE

'Navigating the Evolving Agricultural Machinery Landscape' is a conference being held this month in The Heritage Hotel in Portlaoise. The event is for the farm-machinery trade only and features a series of interesting discussions which include mastering the art of sales behaviour, and the power of connecting with your audience. A panel discussion on the challenges and opportunities in the industry will also take place featuring motivational speaker, Paul McNeive; CEO of IFAC, John Donoghue; operations director and company secretary of SIMI, Emma Mitchell; and director of VFM Associates Ltd, Ian Fairbairn. The conference will be moderated by broadcaster and journalist, Sean O'Rourke and is sponsored by FBD Insurance, Irish Farmers Journal, AIB and Kubota. The event provides a timely platform to discuss the challenges facing the farm-machinery industry.

TALKING SHOP OR CONSENSUS BUILDER?

Ursula von der Leyen's grand gesture to shape a consensual approach on the future of European agriculture has all the looks of another glorified talking shop. The Commission president's Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture in the EU will bring together stakeholders from across the agri-food chain and far beyond. Food producers and processors, rural communities, civil society, banks, researchers, EU Council and Parliament representatives and NGOs, are among the disparate list of participants for von der Leyen's all-encompassing strategic dialogue. We wish the chair, Professor Peter Strohschneider, the best of luck in developing a viable and widely acceptable approach to the future shape of European agriculture with that broad range of participants giving their tuppence worth to the exercise. In a previous incarnation as chair of Germany's Commission for the Future of Agriculture, the professor managed to produce a report that was big on aspirations and vague enough on specifics. What other outcome could be expected when just about everyone who is anyone's opinion on an ideal form of food production and land use was accommodated? In Ireland, we already have our own version of this pseudo-democratic, consensus-building structure in the form of the Citizen's Assembly. Why bother with the democratically elected Dáil, all set to be bigger if not better than ever after the next general election, the decidedly undemocratic Seanad, the Government, the EU Commission and Councils of Ministers, the European Parliament et al? Why are we paying the people who populate these political structures if not to make decisions on behalf of the people who elect them? Any outcome above a few anodyne and vague aspirational declarations from von der Leyen's strategic dialogue would be welcome, if unexpected. Maybe we will be surprised by recommendations which recognise and fully support the dedication, professionalism and critical value of Europe's food producers.



PHYSIOLITH

PHYSIO PRO

Soil Conditioner

with Root Stimulant



THE PRODUCT



Marine Calcium Soil Conditioner

25.7% Ca – 1.5% Mg

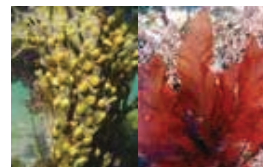
Higher solubility, porosity
and reactivity than
conventional lime



Root Stimulant

Seaweed Extracts

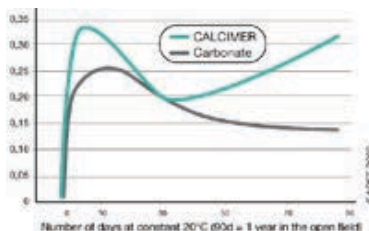
Plant hormone
stimulation for root,
plant growth and health



BENEFITS

Soil Surface pH

- ✓ Liming agent to maintain soil pH
- ✓ Higher solubility and reactivity than standard (carbonate) lime

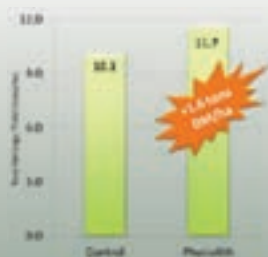


Source of Calcium

- ✓ Essential plant nutrient
- ✓ Soil structural benefits
- ✓ Balancer for high soil magnesium to improve soil structure

Grow & Use more Grass

- ✓ Higher grass yield
- ✓ Healthier swards and faster recovery after grazing
- ✓ **1.6 t/ha of additional DM** measured in on-farm trials
- ✓ Unlocking upto 50kg of additional N from the soil reserves



Soil

Grass

Animals

Soil Health

- ✓ Optimised soil pH for soil biology and earthworms
- ✓ Porous nature of Calcimer® provides habitat for essential soil bacteria and fungi to flourish



Nutrient Uptake

- ✓ Soil pH optimises nutrient availability in the soil and efficiency of fertilisers
- ✓ Root stimulant allows better nutrient uptake by the plant roots
- ✓ Natural source of trace elements
- ✓ Breakdown of organic matter and slurry to release nutrients

Grass Quality

- ✓ Nutritionally superior grass with higher Calcium and Phosphorus contents
- ✓ **13-18 % increase in P content**
- ✓ **8-17 % increase in Ca content** (On-farm grazing trials comparing mineral contents in grazed grass with or without physiolith application)

InTouch

CALVING IN FULL SWING

CATHAL BOHANE
HEAD OF INTOUCH NUTRITION

Calving season should now be in full flow on many farms around the country and despite this super busy period, we should be asking a few key questions.

How is it all going? Are we seeing anything concerning? If so, how can we nip it in the bud before it develops any further? There are many suppliers and advisory sources that can help you with any issues that you might be experiencing before they snowball.

Metabolic issues like milk fevers are some of the biggest issues around calving time. An open mind or independent view is always important here, as sometimes the solution is not just a quick fix to the diet or to minerals. As per previous articles, it can also be linked to body condition and management and, in some cases, it is not related to the dry cow at all. Some questions to answer would be:

- ▶ What is the body condition score, and is it increasing?
- ▶ -What are the cows eating – quantity and analysis?
- ▶ -What is in the mineral bag?
- ▶ -What quantity of the minerals should they be getting, and how much are they getting?
- ▶ -Are there stress points for cows in the system, in housing, feeding, water or movement?
- ▶ -When are milk fevers happening – at calving or after?

Knowing the answers to these will go a long way toward undoing any issues on-farm. Maintaining good body condition score – while minimising calcium and potash and keeping magnesium levels up before calving – and maximising minerals and especially calcium immediately post-calving, are key requirements. Body condition is always an elephant in the room and is increasing as we move onto higher quality, first-cut silage, running tight on straw. This will cause issues, especially with later-calving cows that have been dried off early.

It is also now important to complete a feed budget. While we cannot determine the weather, we need to prepare for every eventuality, hoping for the best but expecting the worst scenario. Silage and straw are being used up quickly on-farm. While there is a cost in the replacement, this will only increase if we leave it until later. Consider the use of concentrated forage extender if silages and alternatives are proving costly.

KEENAN
an Alltech company

Alltech

RESEARCHERS DEVELOP AI FLOOD EARLY-WARNING SYSTEM

CeADAR, Ireland's centre for applied artificial intelligence (AI), is using AI and satellite technology to develop an early-warning system for Irish communities at risk of severe flooding.

Researchers used data collected by the European Space Agency's Sentinel-1 satellite to map historical flooding events in flood-prone areas of Ireland. The maps were then fed into an AI model designed to predict the extent of future flooding events in these areas. The model is accurate, researchers say, up to a distance of approximately 20m. Areas studied as part of the project include Carrick-on-Shannon in Co. Leitrim, Midleton in Co. Cork, Athlone in Co. Westmeath, and Limerick city. It is hoped the model will soon be used to forewarn threatened communities ahead of periods of heavy rain, providing local authorities with time to take emergency measures to limit damage to homes and businesses, evacuate residents, and protect livestock. The flood-prediction model forms part of CAMEO, the €9m project led by University College Dublin to develop an earth observations (EO) services sector in Ireland and explore the potential impact of EO data in the areas of climate, agriculture, and the marine. The project is funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, and Enterprise Ireland under the Disruptive Technology Innovation Fund.

Many parts of Ireland have experienced significant flooding events in recent months, with flooding following Storm Ciarán, Storm Debbie, and Storm Babet badly affecting residents and businesses in the west and southwest of the country in particular. Flooding in Ireland is certain to worsen in the coming years due to climate change, with increasing concentrations of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere leading to more intense precipitation events during winter, worse floods in historically vulnerable areas, as well as in areas that never flooded previously. Earlier this year, the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council warned that extreme flooding events resulting from climate change could cost the State around €500m a year by the end of the decade. However, the report also estimates that a one-in-10-year flooding event in Dublin could cost the exchequer up to €2.9bn with more than 14,500 properties at risk.

Dr Omid Memarian Sorkhabi is the post-doctoral researcher leading the development of the model at CeADAR. Dr Sorkhabi monitored the Midleton flooding in real-time during Storm Babet with the Sentinel-1 satellite, which uses advanced radar technology to penetrate heavy cloud cover, measuring soil moisture and water bodies at any time of day and night. Data gleaned from the event, Dr Sorkhabi says, will help refine the model and improve its accuracy. "Flooding events like the one that hit Midleton during Storm Babet are devastating for households and businessowners whose properties are worst affected. The silver lining is that Sentinel-1 was right over the area at the time so we have gathered a lot of valuable data that will help predict the extent of the next event and ensure that future damage is limited.

"We're in the process of developing, testing and validating the tool. But there's huge potential for it to be made available to local authorities and other research projects. There is also a global scope to this. Sentinel-1 is always monitoring, so there's a lot of historical data on other parts of the world on which we could train and expand the model."

Director of Applied Research at CeADAR, Dr Oisín Boydell, said: "Predicting when and where a flood will strike allows time to organise mitigation measures, like preparing sandbags and evacuating people and livestock from certain areas. Traditionally flood prediction and mapping would have been based on weather models and low-resolution elevation maps, whereas this one is very much data driven, based on events over the past decade and the current situation in a given area. This creates an accuracy level that's down to approximately 20m. The fine-grained and detailed picture would be an invaluable resource for many and we look forward to seeing it scaled up in the coming years."



Damien O'Reilly
EU Affairs and Communications Manager, ICOS

LETTER FROM BRUSSELS

The sight of thousands of German tractors lined up at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin in January was a throwback to 21 years ago when Irish farmers used a similar means to highlight their frustration at Government policy. The Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) were once masters of the protest and in January 2003, then president, John Dillon, led 3,000 tractors driven by farmers from the four corners of the country to Government buildings. They were protesting about low incomes and budget cuts.

The German protests are in a similar vein. Proposed cuts to tax breaks prompted the German Farmers' Association, the DBV, to lead angry farmers onto the streets of Berlin which forced the Government into somewhat of an about turn on some of the cuts. European farmers have never been shy when it has come to protesting, with the French most renowned for their very militant tactics.

Since 2019, Dutch farmers have protested Government plans to literally shut down livestock farms. The offshoot of that anger was reflected in the ballot box last year with the election of the Farmer-Citizen Movement party, the BBB, founded in 2019, to become the lead party in the upper house of parliament in provincial elections.

In the November general election, their vote was just over 4.5 per cent and they won seven seats, an increase of six on the previous parliament. As the EU elections approach in June, poll watchers are carefully analysing the possible make-up of the next European Parliament. The continuing narrowing of the middle ground and growth in nationalist sentiment in several member states points towards more MEPs aligning with the more right-wing groupings in Brussels and Strasbourg. This has led to carefully crafted commentary from some quarters linking farmer protests with far-right populism and suggestions that the European Green Deal will be under threat if there is a strong right-of-centre coming together in the new Parliament. The blurring of the lines between farmers protesting for their rights and other non-farming populism seems deliberate to drive a wedge between European farmers and their traditional political allies.

Protesting farmers is nothing new; it goes back decades. The rise in the sort of anti-immigration, anti-lockdown protests and groupings is a more recent phenomenon. The rights of farmers to defend their livelihoods should not be confused with far-right ideology. You can be guaranteed that most protesting farmers are only interested in protecting their incomes and nothing else.

Delivering the aims of the European Green Deal will continue to be a priority during the lifetime of the next EU parliament, particularly as outgoing Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, is likely to be reappointed. Her top priority will continue to focus on reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. On that journey there will continue to be hard decisions facing all of us, and farm organisations have a duty to represent the views of their members as part of the dialogue which is central to all decision making from public consultation stage to legislative publication.

And they should be allowed exercise this fundamental democratic right, as they always have done since the establishment of the Common Agricultural Policy over 60 years ago without being accused of populism.



Quality Colostrum is key for calves

Maeve Regan,
Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

Calves that receive a sufficient level of high quality, clean, fresh colostrum have proven to be 24 times less likely to suffer from a scour-related sickness in the first weeks of life. The importance of colostrum management protocol cannot be overlooked, with the majority of scour-related issues experienced on farms being directly correlated to insufficient passive transfer.

Feeding colostrum on farm

3-2-1 Rule:

1. Offer milk from the dam's first milking
2. Within the first 2 hours of birth
3. Offer at least 3 litres (approx. 10% of birthweight)

Typically, there is large variation in colostrum quality within a herd, with Teagasc research showing that approximately 20% of a herd may have poor quality colostrum, i.e., insufficient antibodies for the calf. Many farmers have started to test colostrum quality using a refractometer to ensure calves are receiving a high-quality first feed, with the threshold of a Brix value $\geq 22\%$ being the quality standard.

Pooling colostrum is often practiced on farm due to labour constraints, however combining colostrum from several cows will increase the risk of disease spread (e.g., Johnes), reduce passive transfer and dilute high-quality colostrum. Where possible, aim to offer calves a 'one-dam-to-one-calf' system to avoid such issues occurring.

High standards of hygiene are necessary when collecting, feeding and storing colostrum, with research indicating that clean (no dirt contamination) colostrum allows for increased antibody absorption. Bacterial contamination will compete with antibodies at gut level, resulting in reduced passive transfer. Recent results from a Teagasc Moorepark survey of 48 commercial farms highlighted that stomach tubes and bottles with teats had the greatest quantity of bacteria present.

Boosting Colostrum Quality

If an issue with colostrum quality on farm is identified, feeding soyabean meal to the in-calf cow in the final two weeks pre-calving can boost overall quality. Feeding rates will be silage quality dependant but typically range from 0.25-0.75 kg/head/day.

For more information and calf rearing advice, contact your local Agritech Sales Advisor.



www.agritech.ie

FARMERS ENCOURAGED TO CAREFULLY MANAGE WINTER FEED

Fifteen per cent of farms could see significant feed deficits if February/March weather conditions are poorer than normal, a recent online meeting of the National Fodder and Food Security Committee (NFFSC) heard. The challenge around availability of straw was also highlighted at the meeting.

A presentation from Teagasc Livestock Knowledge Transfer specialists, Joe Patton and Pearse Kelly, outlined how the fodder situation is relatively stable on both dairy and beef farms. They highlighted that the risk of shortages is dependent on spring weather and managing turnout of livestock to grass. It was estimated that 15 per cent of farms could see significant deficits if weather conditions in February and March are poorer than normal. They also pointed out that silage is available to purchase, and that some farmers had included the option of purchase fodder in their winter-feed budgeting plans. Beef farms are judged to be in a relatively secure position, with feedback from the commercial farms participating in the knowledge transfer programmes that they are currently in a good position for feed. Head of the Grassland Research Department in Teagasc, Michael O'Donovan, presented the grass growth figures for 2023, which were in line with the 10-year average. He particularly pointed to the grass growth over the winter period, which has yielded

strong pasture covers on farms. This grass will be available for grazing once cows calve and are turned out. It was also pointed out that farmers should plan for early nitrogen and slurry applications to improve spring grass production, while following with best practice guidelines on managing risks of nutrient losses.

Michael Hennessy, head of Tillage Knowledge Transfer in Teagasc, provided an update on the tillage crops in the ground over the winter, and the plans for spring planting. He urged growers to carefully inspect winter crops, which are patchy due to the rainfall levels over the winter. He said it might not be profitable to re-plant. In terms of the upcoming spring crop planting season, he advised growers to maximise the planting of winter wheat up to the middle of February, spring wheat, beans, and oats and to explore forage market opportunities. Given that seed availability will be very tight or may be not available when needed, he advised farmers to assess their seed requirements as soon as possible and order from their merchant.

Following contributions from the wide range of stakeholders represented on the committee, the chair of the NFFSC, Mike Magan, summarised the meeting highlighting a number of key messages and advice for farmers in the coming weeks and months. Overall, there is consensus of overall

fodder availability to be sufficient, but that individual farmers need to assess and take early action around securing feed where necessary.

The concern about straw availability will give rise to farmers prioritising straw for calving and lambing. There are some reports of straw being imported, and the potential risk around issues such as potential blackgrass seeds was highlighted as needing consideration when handling and moving imported straw. The committee discussed how greater ongoing attention to the national requirement for straw and ongoing monitoring of stocks in a similar way to fodder would be beneficial, as would the ongoing efforts to increase the overall tillage area. Potential for linkages between tillage and livestock farmers for supply contracts of forage crops is also an important option, with the Teagasc template for these contracts being a useful tool to establish these contract agreements.

The concern over future grass growth capacity amidst a reduction in fertiliser nitrogen inputs will require continued attention to maximising clover, soil phosphorus and potassium fertility and lime, as well as acting early to plan nutrient applications and secure appropriate fertiliser supply so that spring grass growth and silage yields in the coming season can be maximised.

COWS WITH CALVES INVOLVED IN MORE FATAL INCIDENTS THAN BULLS

Health and Safety Authority (HSA) data show that attacks by a cow with a calf account for one third of all fatalities involving livestock, and cows with calves were involved in more fatal incidents than bulls over the 10-year period 2014-2023.

During the busy calving season, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with special responsibility for farm safety, Martin Heydon, is urging farmers to prioritise safety during the calving season. "Calving is underway on many farms and the next few weeks will be a very busy period. I urge all farmers to take the necessary steps to protect themselves and everyone working on the farm during the calving season. Farmers must prioritise safety and take time to assess potential hazards and risks around

the farmyard and farm. Time spent managing farm safety is time well spent."

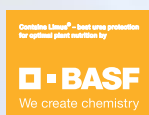
Reflecting on the HSA data, Minister Heydon said: "Cows will naturally be anxious at calving time and will defend their calves, not just after giving birth, but throughout the grazing season in the case of suckler cows. We must be conscious of the risks when working with cows, even those we consider to be quiet animals. Keeping a barrier such as a gate between yourself and the cow when treating or tagging the calf is an important measure to prevent an attack." Older people are particularly vulnerable when it comes to livestock, with livestock accounting for over a quarter of fatalities among farmers over 65 years of age. Minister Heydon said: "As our mobility

reduces with age, I would urge older farmers this calving season to avoid situations where they may not be able to react in time to avoid an incident and to reach out for help when the need arises."

The long working hours during the calving season can also lead to tiredness which increases the risk of an incident. Good planning and preparation in advance of the calving season helps improve efficiencies and helps reduce the risk of an incident. Minister Heydon reminded farmers of the TAMS 3 Farm Safety Capital Investment Scheme, which has a higher rate of payment of 60 per cent for an expanded range of farm-safety-related investments including calving gates, livestock monitoring cameras and handling facilities such as cattle crushes.

IFI TOPPER N-SURE RANGE

Protected urea with Limus[®]



Limus[®]

Topper N-Sure: 46% N

Super Topper N-Sure: 38% N, 7.5% S

Topper Boost N-Sure: 29%N, 0%P, 14% K, 3.8%S

IFI Protected Urea, the leading technology to reduce
Green-House Gases on Irish Farms





NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF CALVING TIME

CIARAN ROCHE, FBD RISK MANAGER, OFFERS A GUIDE TO FARMERS TO ENSURE SAFETY ON THE FARM DURING CALVING

Calving time is a critical and busy period on the farm, demanding heightened caution due to the unpredictable behaviour of freshly calved cows. As a farmer, it is crucial to prioritise your safety and the safety of those working on the farm, especially when working with livestock at calving time. Last year, there were 16 farming fatalities and five of these involved livestock. Fifty per cent of accidents on the farm are caused by livestock and, over the last ten years, attacks by cows at calving time accounted for one-third of all livestock-related fatalities.

Cows at calving time can be nervous, agitated, excited and aggressive, even animals that are normally very docile. Particular caution is required where dangerous behavioural warning signs are identified pre or post calving. Remember that any cow at calving time can have a sudden change of behaviour.

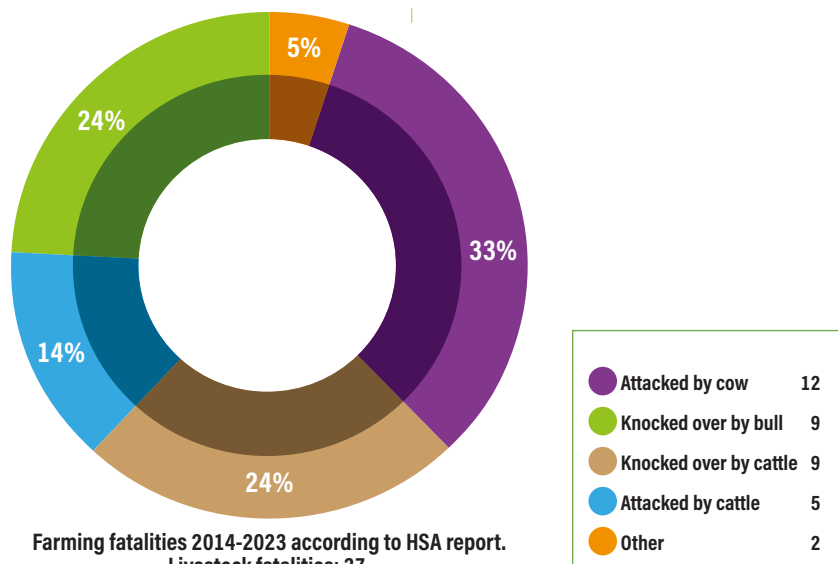
CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

To mitigate risks, your calving facility should be well-designed, tidy, and well-bedded with clean, dry straw. It should be designed to minimise direct physical contact between the farmer and the cow or heifer. A pen with a calving gate pivoting from a pillar at the front of the pen beside the head-gate provides added protection to the farmer during calving. When assisting with calving, ensure the cow is securely held in a fully operational calving gate. Establish a physical barrier between yourself and the cow, and never turn your back on the cow after calving. Always have adequate assistance on hand and consider using a calving jack where appropriate to reduce the risk of back injury.

Well-designed handling facilities, including securely fenced fields, good holding pens, suitable cattle crush, sculling gate, calving facilities, and bull-handling facilities, contribute to safe cattle handling. Investing in such facilities not only enhances safety but also improves work efficiency.

POST-CALVING AGITATION

Cows often become agitated directly after



calving. It is advisable to leave the cow and calf alone for 20 to 30 minutes to allow them to bond and the cow to calm down. If it is necessary to assist a newborn calf with suckling, safely put the cow back in the calving gate and assist the calf to feed or alternatively feed it colostrum using a bottle or bucket with a teat.

When tagging a calf they often bawl, which can cause the mother to become protective and aggressive. Ensure the cow is securely isolated from you during this process. Remember, all cows with calf will be protective of their young and this makes them potentially very dangerous. Keep children away from calving cows and cows with a newborn calf. If calving aggression lasts for more than a few days, cull the cow after calf is weaned as aggression is a genetic trait.

CATTLE HANDLERS

Experienced, competent, and agile cattle handlers are essential. Good stockmanship skills minimise stress to cattle and reduce the risk of injury to handlers. Pay attention to cattle demeanour, watching for signs of aggression such as head or tail positions, bellowing, and pawing the ground. Always ensure that there are enough people on hand to carry out the task safely.

In conclusion, safety should always be the top

priority during calving time. By understanding the risks and implementing the appropriate precautionary measures, farmers can create a secure environment for both themselves and for their livestock.

Always think, safety first.

GOLDEN RULES FOR LIVESTOCK HANDLING

- ▶ Always be vigilant and aware of the risks.
- ▶ Watch for warning signs of animal aggressiveness, especially in bulls and newly calved cows.
- ▶ Cull fractious and difficult bulls or cows promptly.
- ▶ Invest in safe handling facilities.
- ▶ Always have an escape route for emergency situations while working with livestock.

For more farm safety information scan the code





FBD STANDS FOR **SUPPORT** WITH
15%* OFF NEW FARM INSURANCE WHEN
YOU HAVE AN EXISTING FBD POLICY

To find out more **visit your local branch**
or call us on **0818 617 697**

SUPPORT.

IT'S WHAT WE DO.



FBD
INSURANCE

*15% discount for existing motor/home/farm/business policyholders or when getting multiple quotes. Normal underwriting criteria and T&Cs apply.

Underwritten by FBD Insurance plc. FBD Insurance Group Ltd trading as FBD Insurance, is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

FRANCIE GORMAN HAS RECENTLY BECOME THE SEVENTEENTH PRESIDENT OF THE IRISH FARMERS' ASSOCIATION (IFA). IN CONVERSATION WITH **MATT O'KEEFE**, HE REVEALS HIS AIMS AND ASPIRATIONS FOR HIS FOUR-YEAR TERM, A PRIORITY OF WHICH INVOLVES PROTECTING AND IMPROVING FARM INCOMES

READY FOR ACTION

Francie Gorman addressing the recent IFA AGM. Photo: IFA.

"Incomes are always front and centre," Francie says. He adds: "We have issues around nitrates and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the cost of doing business, but all that impacts income. If we get those issues right, it should follow on that there will be a positive effect on income." And it is not just about prices anymore; it's a multifaceted challenge, he says. "There's the cost of doing business, regulation, those issues are hugely important as well. For most of us, the markets are playing an ever-increasing role on bottom-line margins. You can't totally depend on markets the whole time, especially in the vulnerable sectors. That's why financial supports are so important."

LAND USE

Land is a farmer's most important asset and that needs to be protected, too, he says. "There are so many different calls on land use now. A land-use policy is something we're going to have to look at because how we use our land to meet climate-change ambitions, is going to impact land availability. Farmers, within reason, must be given the freedom to farm their land in the way they wish. Almost every scheme requires a hectare of land

to be part of it. Re-wetting policies, forestry, organics, solar, they are all going to impact on land availability and how we use our land efficiently down the road. This has a huge impact, particularly on more intensive farmers, who are more dependent on the marketplace to give them a margin."

SEISMIC CHANGE

Francie's term will coincide with huge changes in agriculture: "The initial discussions on the next CAP have started already, and there's going to be another look at that all-important Nitrates Directive. CAP is hugely important, but if you were to ask me what's the most important immediate issue, it has to be the Nitrates Directive, and protecting that 220kg limit at the very least, with the ambition that, if we can get water quality heading in the right direction, there may be a possibility of getting that back up towards the 250kg figure.

"It's hugely important that we're together on this in the IFA, and that we have other farm organisations with us. We need everyone working together on this. Processors also must come on board with the farm organisations in a way that they haven't before. Teagasc will play a hugely important

role as well because we need the science to back up our stance. I believe the measures already implemented will deliver over time on water quality."

This affects everyone, not only dairy farmers, he points out. "Drystock farmers, tillage farmers, young farmers starting off. It affects everyone. It's going to tighten up land availability in a huge way for everybody. "On the dairy side, it's most definitely going to make what is an efficient way of producing milk, an awful lot less efficient. It's going to put huge pressure on people's abilities to meet commitments. It's absolutely imperative that we get our message right on this issue, and we get everybody on board and we protect that derogation."

A BIGGER CAP?

Does he believe that an enlarged CAP budget is possible to meet food-production and environmental demands? "I don't believe there is any other choice," he says. "The European Union is going to reach a tipping point at some stage where they're going to have to say, are we going to prioritise food production in Europe? Northern Europe has the most sustainable climate in the world for producing food. Generally, we don't irrigate,



President and deputy: Francie Gorman and Alice Doyle pictured at the recent IFA AGM. Photo: IFA.

certainly in Ireland, to produce most of our food products.

"In contrast, it's a challenge in developing countries. It's fuelling migration into Europe. Ireland is a food-producing country and we need to be able to produce as much food as possible. If Europe is to deliver on its environmental ambition the budget must be expanded or risk completely undermining the viability of our agri-food sector. It's not just at farm level, but further up the chain. Ultimately, if we want to meet environmental targets, it must be financed out of a separate environmental budget.

The same rationale applies to Ireland, he adds: "We have plenty of money to put into the environmental side of the house, and yet when we look for supports for agriculture, it feels like we're almost robbing people. Our Government needs to get its priorities right and decide if it is going to support agriculture."

FOOD REGULATOR

In December 2023, Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue formally established the Agri-Food Regulator

under the Agricultural and Food Supply Chain Act 2023. The regulator is charged with protecting our agri-food suppliers, in particular, farmers, fishers and small food businesses, from 'unlawful and unfair trading practices in the agricultural and food-supply chain and will bring greater transparency to the agri-food sector' according to the minister. Francie shares his thoughts: "People are already wondering whether it is capable or has the powers to produce more fair play for primary producers. When it was set up initially, it looked more designed towards larger-scale horticultural producers that deal directly with the supermarkets. I'm not sure if it has been given enough teeth, but if the CEO and the board have the ambition, they can deliver something.

"You can have all the regulation in the world, but if you don't have people with ambition, regulation won't deliver it. Vegetable growers and liquid-milk producers are exiting because of lack of profitability. Supermarkets cry 'wolf' but it is the primary producer who takes the real hit time and again. The big retailers' and meat factories' accounts should be open to scrutiny by the regulator.

CONTROVERSY OVER BEEF INDEXES

November 2023 saw changes introduced to terminal and replacement indexes, which suckler farmers have used as breeding tools since the introduction of the Beef Data and Genomics Programme in 2015. The changes have caused issues, according to Francie.

"We have cows in calf that are going to calve down and produce replacements that will be used in that herd before the end of the scheme that may not meet the four- and five-star criteria. That's an issue for those closed herds. It's an issue for pedigree breeders.

"The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) needs to demonstrate the economic advantages of following these revised breeding parameters if we change our practices. Economics must be the first driver, and environmental and social aspects after that are the issues I'd like to see taken into account. It's got to be re-looked at, because farmers are not happy about the changes. And if you can't bring farmers with you, you're not going to get that change."

VAT REBATE UNEASE

The Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, recently made some off-the-cuff remarks that suggest he's amenable to compromise on the issue of VAT rebates. Did the IFA president read that into his remarks? "Absolutely. When you have the Taoiseach saying that this is an issue that can be resolved, Revenue needs to go back and ensure that this is resolved. To me, it seems like there's a different interpretation of a regulation that had been there for many years. People were still getting their refunds on certain types of equipment up to very recently."

FORWARD LOOKING

What do the next four years hold for Francie? "I am looking forward to the next four years. I'm looking forward to working with Alice Doyle, our first female deputy president of the IFA. I think we'll work well together. It's about bringing everybody together with us within IFA.

"We have a resounding mandate, and a goodwill factor as newly elected representatives. It's about us harnessing that goodwill factor, bringing people with us. Why wouldn't I be looking forward to it?"

GET A 15%* DISCOUNT ON A NEW FARM POLICY
if you have an existing FBD Motor, Home, Farm, Tractor or Business policy

Visit your local branch or call 0818 617 697 to find out more.

*Terms, conditions and normal underwriting criteria apply. 15% discount available on a new policy when you have an existing FBD Insurance policy in place or get multiple quotes at the same time.

Underwritten by FBD Insurance. FBD Insurance Group Ltd, trading as FBD Insurance, is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

SUPPORT.
IT'S WHAT WE DO.





EMBRACING THE CHALLENGE

KILKENNY MAN, DENIS DRENNAN WAS ELECTED UNOPPOSED AS PRESIDENT OF THE IRISH CREAMERY MILK SUPPLIERS' ASSOCIATION (ICMSA) LAST DECEMBER. HE COMES TO THE ROLE WITH SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCE OF AGRI-POLITICS AND AFTER SEVERAL YEARS OF HOLDING LEADERSHIP ROLES WITHIN THE ORGANISATION. MATT O'KEEFFE CAUGHT UP WITH THE NEW PRESIDENT RECENTLY AS HE EMBARKS ON HIS TENURE

Denis has a history of community involvement stretching back to his activities in Macra. He was a vice president of the organisation, as well as a member of its National Council and Executive, and he was heavily involved in the organisation locally in Kilkenny. "I subsequently took up the role of Leader chair in Kilkenny for 12 years. I have also been involved with the Nore Trust, a rivers and water catchments trust group in Kilkenny. As chair of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs committee in the ICMSA, a member of the Dairy Committee for several years and latterly as deputy president, I gained huge experience in the whole area of agricultural policy and that should stand to me in my presidential role," he says. "The pace of change in Irish and European agriculture is so fast that it is difficult to set

out a complete agenda for the next three years, knowing that circumstances and policies are changing so rapidly," he adds. Putting this comment into perspective, Denis explains: "There is a three-year cycle in a cow's life from insemination to first calving, with all the planning, breeding, feeding and management that goes into that cycle. Compare that to a situation where planning for the future of your farm is subject to constantly changing policies and regulations. The role of that cow, while pre-determined at breeding, has, in the meantime, been changed by nitrates regulations, cow-banding, slurry-storage changes, lower fertiliser usage, as well as dietary changes. All that affects a farmer's management plans and makes it difficult to cope, given that the farmer made fundamental breeding decisions

three years ago in the reasonable expectation of a stable future life cycle and management practices for that cow that no longer exist."

CHALLENGES

Commenting on the major, immediate challenges facing farmers, Denis says: "The whole environmental challenge is front and centre. Then, there's the milk-price versus production-cost challenge, because the margin is simply not there. That must be first and foremost because we are being asked to change our practices practically every week. Nutrient-management plans, fertiliser registers, new herd-production limits and stocking rates based on cow-banding and lower nitrates ceilings, are only a few of the new impositions on producers. All these rule changes and regulatory processes are



THE MAIN AIM MUST BE TO BREED CALVES FIT FOR PURPOSE AND MANAGE THEM WELL, WHATEVER THEIR DESTINATION

costing the farmer money, and the margins simply are not there to cover them.”

ACHIEVING BALANCE

Denis is adamant that there must be a balance between what is expected of farmers and what can be reasonably achieved, at the same time as safeguarding the economic production model that allows farmers to make a decent living: “We acknowledge that farmers are part of the solution to achieving climate change mitigation and improved environmental outcomes. A farmer must be economically viable to be environmentally sustainable. There are three legs on the stool to achieve economic, environmental and social stability. If the financial leg is not strong, it is very difficult to make the changes that are being demanded of farmers.

“The VAT refund issue* is another example of farmers having their financial leg pulled out from under them, after making plans based on expected outcomes that are suddenly changed. Farmers who made significant investment, secured long-term finance and reasonably expected a TAMS grant and a VAT rebate on their farm investment. Now the financial plans don’t add up because of a sudden VAT refund ineligibility on some inputs. It’s another example of having to plan without any certainty of expected outcomes being still there.”

POLITICAL COMMITMENT OR SOFT WORDS

Reflecting on the presence of several leading politicians at the ICMSA’s AGM, and what they had to say, Denis comments: “Despite the words of praise and support from Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar and Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan, it is a reality that farmers are regularly criticised on TV, radio, and other media, whenever issues around climate and the environment are being discussed. “Talk of Just Transition-supports to help in

making the changes expected of farmers is one aspect, and alternative sources of income are promoted, but these great words are rarely backed up by the required budgets to help farmers make the changes asked of them. That’s where the problem is. Talk is cheap, actions require finance.”

Denis gives an example of how supports have been eroded over time: “When the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) was first introduced almost 30 years ago, the average payment was £5,000. Now, the average payment for the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES) scheme is €5,000, and that’s without taking account of the inflationary effects of purchasing power in the meantime. If the Government is serious about turning the ship around and wants to protect food production in this country, then it needs to step up and accept the financial responsibility.”



EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT ALTERNATIVES, BUT WE MUST ASK WHERE THE INCOME IS, APART FROM NON-MARKET SUPPORTS

THE ALTERNATIVE CHALLENGES

The ICMSA president asked pertinent questions in relation to options being proffered: “Take organic farming, for instance. There has been a lot of interest from farmers. Yet, as a farmer representative on the Organics Strategy Group, when I asked where the markets are for organic produce, I was told that there are limited market opportunities. We had a Danish organic milk producer tell our Council last October that he is going broke because the consumer is not willing to pay the necessary premium for

organically produced milk. Everyone talks about alternatives, but we must ask where the income is, apart from non-market supports, which, while welcome and necessary, are not a long-term viable solution.”

BREEDING DECISIONS

The Irish Cattle Breeders Federation star values changed recently, and Denis had this to say about the issue: “It’s unbelievably frustrating that a farmer purchases a five-star bull, observing all the scheme requirements and then the latest ratings make the bull a three-star sire. The farmer has acted in good faith and should expect that his actions will not be undermined by these changes in ratings. No other sector would tolerate this, and farmer frustration is fully understandable.” He emphasises that calf management and sale options are critical in the years ahead: “The system is coming under increasing pressure, between age of movement off farm, exports and the value of progeny coming off dairy farms. Farmers do need to make decisions before the cow is even put in calf as to the calf’s purpose, how it will be managed before sale and whether the calf is a viable purchase for calf-to-beef producers. Specifically, in relation to farm-to-farm movements, where there is good cooperation and no issues at all with calf welfare, there is no reason to impose further restrictions. Our calves going to veal units in Europe are considered healthier than locally sourced calves. That is an endorsement of our high management and welfare standards both on farm and during transport. Further restrictions on movement will only serve to damage a viable calf outlet. The main aim must be to breed calves fit for purpose and manage them well, whatever their destination.”

**At time of print, this issue was ongoing involving negotiations between Revenue and farmer organisations.*

MACC: TO AID AND ABATE

AT BORD BIA'S RECENT MEAT-MARKETING EVENT, PAUL CROSSON, RESEARCH OFFICER AND BEEF ENTERPRISE LEADER AT TEAGASC, TOOK US ON A JOURNEY ALONG THE ROADMAP TO REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FROM BEEF FARMS. **BERNIE COMMINS** SHARES SOME THE MAIN POINTS ABOUT HOW THAT ROADMAP IS BEING NAVIGATED BY FARMERS

In outlining Teagasc's latest findings on the beef sector's potential to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, Paul said that while strides are being made, we cannot take our eye off the climate-target ball.

"If we look at the 2025 carbon budget [for

agriculture], the target we are looking at is [abating] 295 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (e). That's our total budget and we have almost half of that used already," he said. "From 2026 to 2030, the target is 200 million tonnes and anything we miss now in terms of the first carbon budget period, will go into the second one," he explained.

Beef farm systems generate in the order of 4,500 tonnes of CO₂e per hectare.

Teagasc's Marginal Abatement Cost Curve (MACC), Paul explained, is the foundation of the current roadmap to reducing emissions on farms: "It is a visual representation of the mitigation options ranked from least to most expensive. It is a simple concept but a very detailed piece of work. Within the scope

of the analysis, we have three mitigation scenarios and two mitigation pathways," he said. The first scenario, he explained, is the most likely one, where we have about 6.8 million cattle by 2030; the second scenario involves low-animal numbers of 6.5 million cattle; and scenario three is the high-animal scenario of about 7 million cattle by 2030. The two mitigation pathways comprise moderate-adoption pathways and ambitious-adoption pathways. Paul chose scenario one and ambitious-mitigation adoption to illustrate a number of abatement achievements. Indications below and above the line in Figure 1, reflect the cost of the measure. The further below the line, the more cost-effective the measure is, and the further above the line, the more costly the measure. The width of the bar reflects the level of abatement anticipated, Paul explained.

"The likes of dairy EBI, liming, and reduced age of finishing are below the line. Dairy EBI, in particular, is strongly below the line, reflecting that, yes, it reduces emissions but it is also a really economically sensible thing for farmers to do and that is why we are seeing the level of progress on the dairy genetics side."

Addressing the lack of reference to beef genetics on the graph, he said: "We have beef genetics in the overall MACC, indeed the likes of 'age of finishing' would be captured to some extent in genetics but the bar for beef genetics might be quite a bit narrower than the dairy EBI bar, reflecting that the level of uptake in terms of progress is somewhat lower but the depth of the bar is just as low so the benefit at farm level is just as great." Moving to the right-hand side of the graph, we see the likes of low emission slurry spreading (LESS) sits above the bar – it is expensive technology but there are benefits in terms of reducing nitrous oxide emissions, Paul explains.

REDUCED AGE OF FINISHING

The reduced-age-of-finishing target is three months by 2030, relative to 2018, and, according to Paul, we have already achieved 1.1 months of those three months. "We still

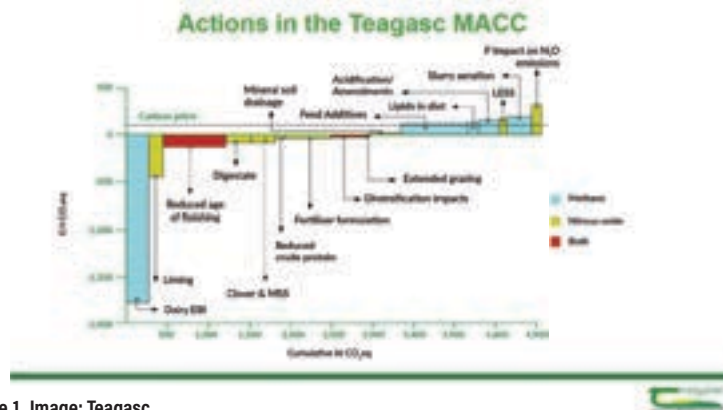


Figure 1. Image: Teagasc.

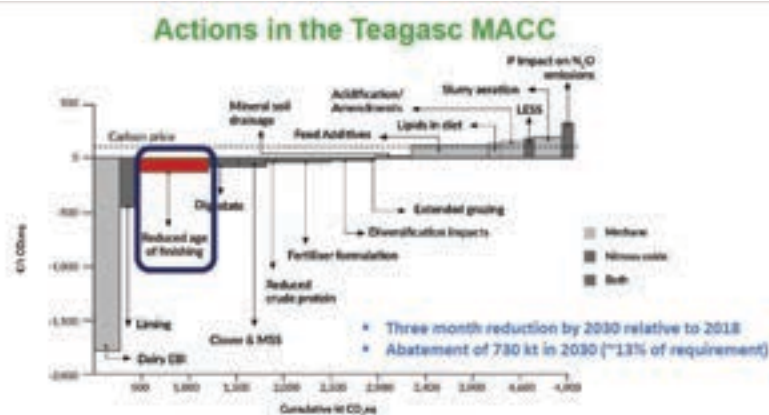


Figure 2. Image: Teagasc.



**FOR ULTIMATE EFFICIENCY AND
ACCURACY CHOOSE EMC**



Cork Machines, Carrigrohane Rd,
Co. Cork (T12 PF53)



Killian Griffith - 0861839842



Mike Dillion - 0879957254

have some way to go but we are trending in the right direction," he said.

"Achieving those three months, it is anticipated that it will give us an abatement in the order of 730,000t by 2030 – that is about 13 per cent of the overall requirement (see Figure 2).

"If we look at the finishing age of beef cattle (2021 data), we have seen really strong reductions in finishing age on cattle farms over 10 years, or so, particularly in the first five years within that decade, when we were achieving close to nine days per year reduction. The second half of that decade, it was closer to four days.

"The point is that farmers have already made very substantial progress. If we put the level of progress made at finishing age, into emissions terms, at current animal numbers, we have abated in the order of 450,000t from the beef sector, and that is really substantial!"

INCREASED OUTPUT

In answering the question of whether abatement will require farmers to compromise on their ability to satisfy the market demands or their ability to create revenue at farm level, the data is clear: "If we look at the data between 2011 and 2021, we actually increased our beef output by 14 per

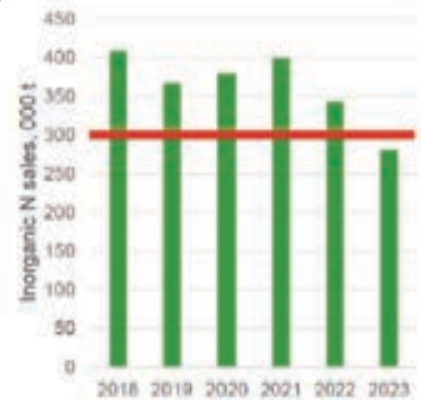


Figure 3. Image: Teagasc

cent, while reducing the age of finishing," he said. This figure was also achieved because there was an additional 166,874 cattle in the system. "When adjusted to compare current animal numbers relative to 2011, at constant population, we have reduced age of finishing by just over six days per year and increased our beef output by 2 per cent, so that is a really, really positive story on one of the key measures within the MACC."

NITROGEN-BASED ACTIONS

The ambition, Paul explained, is to reduce inorganic nitrogen to less than 300,000t by 2030 and to replace 75 per cent of our CAN and 100 per cent of our urea with protected urea by 2030. "Similarly, in terms of magnitude to reduced age of finishing, this will give us an abatement of 840,000t of CO₂e by 2030, or about 15 per cent of the requirement.

Paul explained how we are doing: "If we look at protected urea, it is a bit of a slow burner especially on the drystock side. I think we have seen really steady progress on the dairy side. But it is a relatively new technology/fertiliser at farm level, we know that farmers will use new technologies if they work and are proven to be effective, and we are starting to see that. So, in the dairy sector, about 14 per cent are using protected urea, and about 4 per cent in the beef side."

There has been a really positive discovery around total inorganic nitrogen use. "We were already below the 2030 target in 2023. Clearly a big driver here – and we have to be realistic about why – it is a behavioural response to price, particularly in 2022 when we saw a very sharp reduction."



Turn your roof into a source of power

Solar is one of most reliable ways to help cut energy costs and reduce carbon emissions. We offer quality and reliable solar solutions for Irish farmers. With our combined expertise, we'll assess the options for your farm business, provide end-to-end support and real-time data.



**For more info
call 0818 989 498
or visit ifa.ie/solar**

WE'RE FUTURE FOCUSED. ARE YOU?



Your future starts here. UCD is a catalyst and canvas for enquiring minds. Shaping students to rise to the future and leave their mark on the world.

Find your degree at [UCD.ie/CAO](https://www.ucd.ie/cao)



ADDRESSING THE ANTI-FARMING NARRATIVE



Ciaran Fitzgerald
Agri-food economist

In this first instalment of his regular feature in *Irish Farmers Monthly*, agri-food economist, Ciaran Fitzgerald, explores how to best confront the anti-agriculture narrative, and suggests that we must find a better metric to articulate the economic value and relevance of the sector

In 2004, a formal Government-initiated review of Irish industrial development policy, entitled *Ahead of the Curve* concluded that the Irish agri-sector was a sunset industry, and that Ireland Inc. should place all its bets on the 'modern economy' sectors like pharma, medical devices and IT. The key metric used by the review process in 2004 for the assessment of contribution/value to the Irish economy was gross value added (GVA). Given the fact that the agri-food sector is a low-margin business and we had had both foot-and-mouth and BSE issues in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Irish agri's GVA figure was low, at the time. Moreover, the economic commentary at the time declared that modern economy development 'naturally' involved the replacement of agriculture with industry, and the subsequent replacement of industry with services and so on – a seamless economic development narrative that fell apart in the great recession from 2009 onwards.

Economic realities

Furthermore, in reality, the GVA contribution of the modern economy sectors, which was dominated by multinationals, while quite large on paper, lost 60 per cent of its value when transfer pricing and profit

repatriation was taken into account.

The scary part of this farce was not just that agriculture was dismissed but that the multinational sectors – which were very transparently being incentivised to invest in the Irish economy through our low corporate tax regime – would, as proposed in *Ahead of the Curve*, be further incentivised by the creation of a €1bn-plus development fund, while the agri-sector would be left to paddle its own canoe. Indeed, only the onset of the economic crash in 2008 killed off the proposed modern economy fund.

The real value of agriculture

My point in raising this issue after the last three years of the anti-agriculture onslaught, is not just to remind ourselves that we have been here before, but to suggest that we, in the agri-food sector, need to find a better metric to articulate the economic value and relevance of the sector. The reality is that, despite many public statements that purport to understand the unreliability of Ireland's formal gross domestic product (GDP)-based economic accounting figures, we in agriculture have yet to come up with and express a more meaningful metric that captures the true economic impact and underlying value of the broad agri-food sector. I would suggest that this is important, not just in terms of economic sobriety, but also to prevent the shrinking of the agri-sector through ignorance of its true value and, in particular, its unique contribution to the rural and regional economy.

Studies by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and National Economic and Social Council (NESC) have highlighted how, even under current economic development patterns, in excess of 60 per cent of all additions to the Irish population could end up on the already-crowded east coast. Constraining Irish agriculture will only further skew regional economic development.

Selling power

Moreover, the point about the GDP distortions is not a defensive one on behalf of agriculture because it doesn't suit. GVA is, effectively, a measurement of profits and I would suggest that profit levels are a measure of selling power. So, the mobile-phone sector and the pharma sector have selling power and producers of these products set their own retail price. These companies make huge profits and huge GVA. The agri-food sector, in contrast, is not allowed by law to set retail prices under the resale price maintenance (RPM) regulations introduced in the 1960s. And, whereas food producers have none or very little

selling power, we know that supermarkets and other large retail distributors and discounters have buying power and moreover account for 96 per cent of grocery sales in the Irish market. So, given that GVA understates the value of the agri-sector and overstates the contribution of the multinational sector, an alternative metric is needed. Looking at the Irish agri-food sector from within, the key milestones and barometers of performance over the last number of years could be:

- ▶ The exemplary performance through the Covid-19 years 2020–2022 when global restaurant/café and hotel sectors, which constitute 30 per cent-plus of the broad food consumption market, were effectively shut and yet Irish agri-sector exports (which constitute more than 90 per cent of its total Irish meat and dairy production) saw no factory closures or product being dumped, unlike our near neighbours in the UK and elsewhere.
- ▶ Growth in the value of gross agricultural output from €6bn to just over €12bn between 2012 and 2022, even though there has been something of a fall off in value in 2023 (CSO).
- ▶ Export values – overall exports to around 110 countries when non-food products are included – reached €18.5bn in 2023 (CSO and Bord Bia).

Additionally, the key metric of Irish-economy spend increased to over €17bn annually, with the agri-food sector spend being three times more in the Irish economy than that of any other business sector, including the pharma and medical device sectors (Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment [DETE]: Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact). As a result, employment – direct and indirect – reached 220,000 jobs across the rural and regional Irish economy in 2022 (CSO).

Surging output

On a more secular, granular level, milk production post quota abolition reached just over 9bn litres, up 70 per cent. Beef exports consistently run at more-than 600,000 tonnes with Ireland the sixth biggest exporter in the world.

At the same time, and in line with environmental and sustainability ambitions, there has been a 360,000-tonne reduction in fertiliser usage in 2022 and 2023 and a 2 per cent reduction in carbon emissions from the sector in 2023 when compared to the 2018 baseline year.

Net and gross export figures

There is plenty of substance in all the above, I would suggest. Clearly, there are occasions when annual reports will highlight some or most of the metrics outlined above but without some additional context, how meaningful are, for instance, export figures? An annual total value of exports of €18.5bn represents a huge achievement for the agri-food sector, up from €11bn euro in 2016, but the official CSO export figures, which include multinational transfers, would show total annual Irish economy exports valued at €330bn,

“We have yet to come up with and express a more meaningful metric that captures the true economic impact and underlying value of the broad agri-food sector

thereby seeming to diminish the value of agri-food exports.

I have argued in the past that the Irish economy expenditure figures produced annually by Enterprise Ireland, the IDA and DETE are, by far, the most relevant metric of true Irish economy impact, in that they clearly and specifically reflect Irish economy activity as distinct from global transfers, intellectual property or patent registration or accounting adjustments that have low or no real Irish economy impact.

The chart below from a DETE annual report highlights the relevant figures by sector for exports, value added and Irish economy expenditure. This illustrates, I would argue, a much more balanced Irish economy than the distorted GDP figures represent.

6.2 Summary Table of Key Business Indicators (current prices), 2021

	2021 (€bn)			Share of Total 2021		
	Foreign-owned	Irish-Owned	All	Foreign-owned	Irish-Owned	All
Sales	332.1	51.4	383.5	86.6%	13.4%	100%
Exports	208.5	27.3	245.8	84.1%	7.8%	100%
Value Added	126.8	18.1	144.9	86.9%	12.1%	100%
Direct Expenditure	31.5	29.8	61.3	51.5%	47.1%	100%

Note: Rounding may affect totals

And just to be clear, the intent is not in any way to diminish the value of the foreign direct investment (FDI) sector. There is no conflict between having a thriving agri-sector and a thriving FDI sector and a lesson learned, surely, from the blow-up of the Irish economy through the property and banking boom was that we need several economic horses in the broad development race.



FIVE DECADES OF MEMORIES

WELCOME TO OUR SECOND TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE, AS WE CELEBRATE A MILESTONE 50TH YEAR FOR *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY*. 'THE MONTHLY' AS IS IT COMMONLY AND FONDLY KNOWN, WAS FOUNDED IN 1975 AND HAS BEEN A FAMILIAR AND DEPENDABLE SOURCE OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL-LIFE NEWS EVER SINCE. THIS MONTH, WE TRAVEL BACK TO THE MID-NINETIES WHERE WE HAVE SELECTED SOME INTERESTING TOPICS AND ADVERTS THAT WERE OF THEIR TIME BUT ARE STILL RELEVANT TODAY. WE HOPE YOU ENJOY THIS TRIP DOWN *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY* MEMORY LANE WITH US

Over Quota?

Many farmers are over quota, with a prospect of sizeable fines. There are still two months to go until the end of the quota year. Teagasc Adviser **Matt Ryan** suggests what might be done in that time to alleviate the problem.

Some Solutions!

In this article from 1996, Matt Ryan, who is our current Management Hints maestro, wrote about an issue that was familiar to many dairy farmers back then as they produced more milk than their quotas allowed. "Yet again, we are asking dairy farmers to do what is almost impossible - do not send milk to the creamery during February or March" and there was the 'ominous possibility of a super levy bill of €20m for farmers' he wrote. In this piece, Matt has some solutions for farmers who were in this predicament, one of which involved reducing meal levels 'if they are to make any significant reduction in milk sales'.

THE SINGLE SEX ISSUE

MATT O'KEEFFE on the huge benefits control of the sex of calves through techniques such as semen sexing should bring the farmer in the not so distant future.

In the January edition of *Irish Farmer Monthly* I referred to a number of developments which I felt would become normal practice on farms over the coming years. The one which excited most comment related to the sexing of calves. Another - publication recently closed on the same issue but from a slightly different direction. Professor Paddy Cunningham suggested that sexing would become the norm through automation. The sex, he suggested, would be in the region of 90%. This technology already exists commercially at a

price in comparison to the cost of breeding to the female. That with a proliferation of 10 minutes (and) it doing a considerable job for the farmer, together with increased efficiency during insemination and insemination. This new development is automatically change and breeding across the world. It is an innovation to 'regulate' the calf sexing into a controlled one represents the power breeding in such breeding that it will be introduced. The cost per calf, and to get pregnant one, is that it develops can live up to the

of calves.

In 2000, Matt O'Keeffe, now our editor, was writing about the benefits of sexed semen for farmers. The advantages are obvious, he wrote: "No more unwanted Friesian bull calves. Ditto unwanted or unprofitable beef heifer calves [...]. A proliferation of bull calves from suckler herds entering the beef system will increase production significantly. There is no guarantee of a market for this extra beef."

REPS REWARDS

Farmers who join REPS make more money, a conference in Wexford was told. An EU official warned that all farmers in future will be expected to care for the environment as part of the payoff for direct payments.

It appears to be REPS, according to an extension of the scheme, which will be in place from 1994 and 1996. Direct farm income per hectare increased by 40% on farms in REPS. If REPS payments were not available, income from such farms would have declined by 10%.

The analysis was carried out by Oliver McGee, of Teagasc, and he presented the results at the annual REPS conference held in Wexford on 14th March.

However, there are some method issues relating to calculating the REPS payments, based on the cost of the farm.

Oliver McGee pointed out that the introduction of REPS is a complex matter, pollution, disease, and phosphorus and nitrate, but the impact on the scheme remains unclear, and the resulting loss in participation, although the number of other

considerable effect and some criticism. However, farmers who joined REPS are seen to be better placed financially to give

"Society will not support agriculture unless it gets what it wants - a clean environment."

of increased resources in pollution control and in improving the living landscape, in which

Warning to All Farmers

That James of the Department of the Environment, Ireland

that there are now 40,000 in REPS and this is well up. They have a total of 3.7% area, or over 30% of the total. They have a higher level of participation, however, than the rest of the country. He stressed that it is becoming clear that the govt of the environment will pay and more to all farmers, particularly those who are in REPS.

This morning was held and close to Wexford. Head of the Agricultural, the Environment, Ireland

In this article from almost 30 years ago, attendees of a conference in Wexford were told that 'farmers in the future will be expected to care for the environment as part of EU payments conditions.'



In 1997, Ralph Riege wrote that the 'fabled Greenhouse effect is beginning to move from myth into serious reality'. "There is little doubt that farming patterns will be radically altered by a change in the nature of the seasons," he said. Back then, winter temperatures were rising, and there was record rainfall. The Met Office admitted, he wrote, that in the 15-20 years before this article's publication, the contrast between the seasons had eroded.



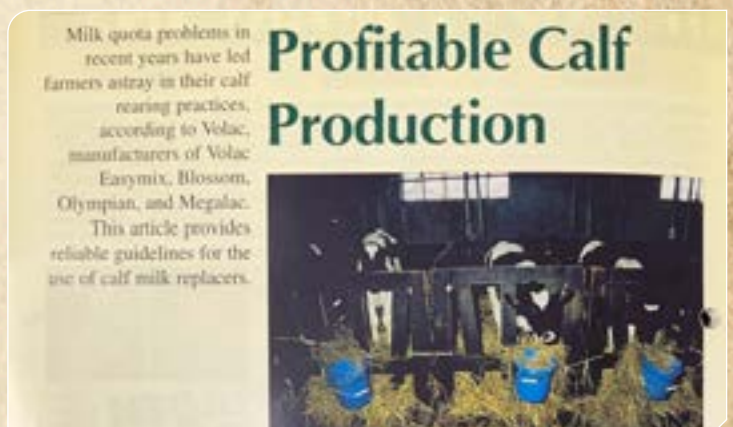
In February 1995, we drew attention to a striking ad campaign involving supermodel, Naomi Campbell promoting milk and sporting a milk 'tache that Magnum PI would be proud of. "The American equivalent of the NDC is spending millions of dollars to urge their good citizens to drink more milk," we wrote. A picture, as they say, paints a thousand words! It was a different time.



This article featured in our Home Farm section of the magazine - now Rural Life - and told the positive tale of how Mary quit the 'fags' with encouragement and support from her children, and became a finalist in a smoking-cessation competition! From a language perspective, it is interesting to see the topic of smoking being written about in this style. The subject matter and tone would be treated quite differently today but back then the language and personal experience shared in this story would have been very relatable to any smoker at that time.



A cool graphic advert from Bridgestone, celebrating 60 years.



**A partner promotion
piece from 1996
providing information on
calf milk replacer.**



**BEST IN GLASS
GUARANTEED**



**GARRY RINGROSE
RUGBY INTERNATIONAL**

ndc.ie

A close-up photograph of a black and white cow looking down at a small black and white calf lying in straw. The cow's head is in the upper left, and the calf is in the lower right. The background is filled with dry straw.

FOCUS

CALF HEALTH

IT'S PAST MIDSUMMER IN NEW ZEALAND AND OLIN GREENAN'S YEAR HAS GONE REASONABLY WELL SO FAR. HERE, HE UPDATES *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY* ON NEW DEVELOPMENTS DOWN UNDER, THE KIWI APPROACH TO DEALING WITH SURPLUS DAIRY-BRED BOBBY CALVES, AND GENERAL MANAGEMENT OF THE CALVING SEASON

CALF MANAGEMENT DOWN UNDER

Despite predictions to the contrary the prices and weather have, in the main, played ball, Olin explains: "It started with some price turmoil and predictions of a dry summer. Instead, milk prices have stabilised and are improving while the weather has been reasonable," he says.

"We had good rain before Christmas and the farm is looking well, so it's typical for this time of year. Milk yields are back a little on targets and that's because of a wet start to the season. But I've been farming long enough to know it's a game of averages, so we'll hopefully get a win somewhere along the way to the end of the season.

"We've seen several lifts in the GDT. In addition, China and New Zealand signed a free-trade agreement in January removing tariffs. We can get product into China tariff-free where

other countries are still paying tariffs. The exact impact on price is unclear, but there is increasing optimism. Global milk supply is contracting so hopefully we might be in the start of another upward cycle."

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Since our last New Zealand report, Olin and his family have moved to a new property in the Waikato region: "The previous property we were on was sold and we managed to secure a larger share-milking contract in the Waikato. We wintered 780 cows there and then took on a smaller unit milking 240 cows. So, there's plenty going on but thankfully the farms are within a half an hour of each other. We have ample staff, mainly from Ireland."

Olin plans ahead to accommodate extreme weather events: "The climate has changed



IT'S A TRICKY ONE FOR A GOVERNMENT IN TERMS OF HITTING THAT SWEET SPOT TO ENSURE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT. AT LEAST THERE'S NO TALK OF CULLING COWS

somewhat, and I think the key thing is having a rolling buffer of feed. It doesn't always go in where it might have in the past, but once you've got that reserve account of feed, you just manage whatever you meet."

The environmental challenge for farmers in New Zealand has reduced somewhat, as Olin explains: "We had a change of Government in October, and we're back to what one might call the farmer-friendly National Party Government. Already, there's indications that they're going to relax some of these compliance things that were imposed on us over the last six years by the previous Government. The signals are good. It's a tricky one for a Government in terms of hitting that sweet spot to ensure economic prosperity and protect the environment. At least there's no talk of culling cows."

CALF CARE

"We're livestock farmers and do everything we can to nurture that pregnant cow to have a live calf. First and foremost, our replacements are bred off our higher index cows. Our lower tiered animals, up to 25 per cent of the herd, are put to beef breeds. The issue then is what to do with the surplus dairy-bred bobby calves. "We had a massive overhaul in how those calves are treated from when they leave the farm to being processed because of the spotlight on the issue some years ago. Protocols are very strict. There's responsibility on all parties involved. Farmers must make sure that they're well fit for transport and there are traceability forms to fill in. From the husbandry viewpoint, nothing has changed on our farm in terms of feeding colostrum whether it's a bobby calf or a replacement. We give three litres of colostrum within six hours if that's possible. Our replacement calves will continue getting two feeds per day for about 14 days. Then we transition those calves over to five litres once a day. Looking at a crossbred calf, we target weaning weights of

90-100kg, normally at around 10 weeks of age. It's a tried-and-tested method with five litres of milk up to eight weeks, then tapering that back, with the aim of having them eating a kilogramme of ration before weaning. Then, the calves go to the grazing block at that stage at a minimum 100kg of weight. They are fully transitioned to grass at that stage with no ration."

WHOLE MILK FEEDING

Olin explains that they bulk store surplus colostrum using yogurt to stabilise it and a pump to prevent a skin forming. He



WE HAD A MASSIVE OVERHAUL IN HOW THOSE CALVES ARE TREATED FROM WHEN THEY LEAVE THE FARM TO BEING PROCESSED BECAUSE OF THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE ISSUE SOME YEARS AGO

IS BRD BOTHERING YOU?

HIPRABOVIS[®] SOMNI/Lkt **NASYM[®]**

BREATHE EASY

NOTE: Hiprabovis is a registered trademark of the Hipra Group. It is a combination of a live attenuated virus and a bacterin. It is used for the prevention and control of Bovine Respiratory Disease (BRD) in calves. Nasym is a registered trademark of the Nasym Group. It is a combination of a live attenuated virus and a bacterin. It is used for the prevention and control of Bovine Respiratory Disease (BRD) in calves. Both products are used in conjunction with good husbandry practices.

WARNING: Hiprabovis and Nasym are live vaccines. They should be stored at 2-8°C and not frozen. They should be used within 30 days of opening. They should be used in accordance with the instructions on the label. They should be used in conjunction with good husbandry practices.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Please contact your local Hipra representative or visit our website at www.hipra.com.

HIPRA The Reference in Prevention for Animal Health

HIPRA UK AND IRELAND
Forthall Lodge, Forthall Road, B67 6LH, Nottingham, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0) 1773 855 000. sales@hipradownload.com www.hipra.com



Images from the new farm that Olin and his family are leasing



continues: "We then feed it to older calves in a 50:50 ratio with fresh milk. Feeding whole milk is cost effective for me because the lease contract allows us to rear our calves out of the milk. If I was to buy powder, that cost would be all on us. It also keeps things simple. The whole milk, I think, is a little bit more forgiving. With the milk replacer, you've got to be very consistent with your mixings. On a larger farm, it's a little bit harder to get that consistency across multiple people.

"One thing I should note, generally I'll have one person assigned to the role of the calf rearing, so there's responsibility on that person. If you have three or four different people and there's a breakdown of communication, that's when scour can sneak in. One guy here from Ireland has done a phenomenally good job on the calves and he'll delegate out on his day off and whenever he needs an extra hand. That works quite well. We have a weight gain bonus, so there's an added incentive to weigh the calves and get them weaned at target weights. We've got a bit of a competition between the two farms on who can rear the heaviest calves, but there's a caveat around how much meal they're allowed to use, so no stretching the truth."

COST CONTROL

ID calf tagging has not been widely adopted on New Zealand farms, but Olin has looked into it with a view to reducing labour requirements: "But the barrier is the capital involved and the fact that the farm lease

contract is finite, while the investment is long-term. In addition, the surplus calves are the ones that take up a lot of time and it's hard to justify an investment like that for calves that are leaving at four days old. ID tags and automation are nice-to-have additions. I look at the money involved and would put that into other areas to grow more wealth. Maybe later on when we're fed-up feeding calves and a bit more comfortable, financially, it's something we could look at."

OUTDOOR REGIME

The bulk of the Greenan replacements are reared outdoors. There are limited sheds on a lot of farms and that means getting those calves out into the paddock as soon as possible: "On the positive side, you avoid overcrowding and the calves have access to outdoor shelters. We just feel the calf does a lot better outside. At peak calving there is a lot of pressure on calf pens, and generally things can start to go wrong towards the end of calving when the pens have had a lot of pressure with bacteria.

"We get them out to pasture and get them nibbling on that grass and it works well once they have access to shelter. They're bred for outdoors. In terms of health protocols, we BVD-vaccinate the calves before they move to the grazing block. I'm not trying to say other vaccinations are not needed. It's down to individual circumstances. It is another strain on the animal-health costs."



ICMSA

THE FAMILY FARM ORGANISATION

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

IF COWS COULD CHOOSE, THE CHOICE WOULD BE NEOMILK

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



© 2021, Cargill, Incorporated. All Rights Reserved - www.cargill.com



Contact your
Cargill Animal Nutrition
expert for more information

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





DISEASE-PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN CALVES USING NON-ANTIBIOTICS

DR TOM BARRAGRY PHD, MSC, MVM, MVB, MRCVS, DIP ECVPT WHO ACTS AS INDEPENDENT TECHNICAL ADVISER TO PROVITA EUROTECH LTD, OUTLINES THE PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES FOR DISEASE IN CALVES USING NON ANTIBIOTICS

Antibiotic resistant pathogenic bacteria (superbugs), currently responsible for 700,000 deaths a year, could kill more people than cancer by 2050 at a cost of £63 trillion to the global economy, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

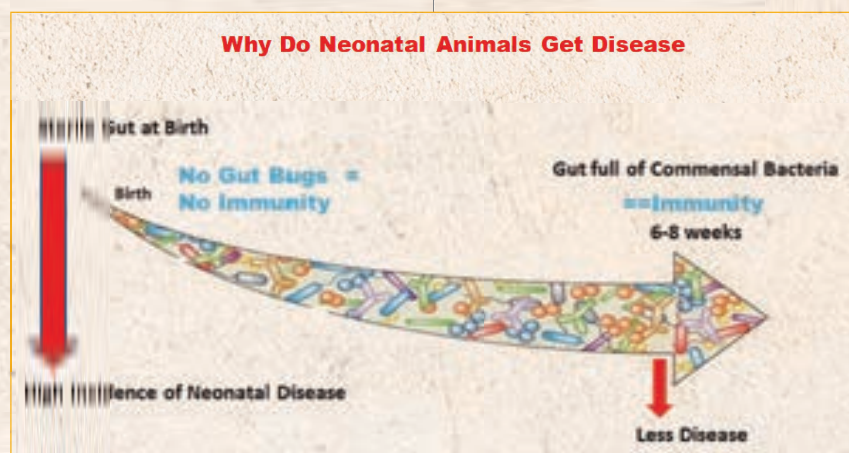
Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) – the ability of microorganisms to resist antimicrobial treatments – has a direct impact on human and animal health and carries a heavy economic burden due to higher costs of treatments and reduced productivity caused by sickness. AMR is responsible for an estimated 35,000 deaths per year in the EU. It is also estimated that AMR costs the EU €1.5bn per year in healthcare costs and productivity losses.

According to WHO projections, the number of cases of resistance is expected to double in more than ten years. By 2050, the number of cases will be four times more than today. The 'post-antibiotic' era is near, according to reports released by the WHO. The decreasing

effectiveness of antibiotics and other antimicrobial agents is a global problem, with the looming threat that some bacteria may become fully resistant to antibiotics. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) expects a 45 per cent rise in the demand for animal proteins by 2050 and the world must face the double challenge of meeting demands for cheap

animal proteins while reducing the risks of AMR. The answer lies not in the increased use of antibiotics but rather in the replacement of them with suitable safe and effective alternatives.

Such a solution can be found by using evidence-based, proven probiotics – only products approved and authorised by a regulatory authority such as the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). The prophylactic use of effective probiotics from birth has been demonstrated under field



TAKE A MOMENT
TO REFLECT.

DON'T JUST FEED
FOR GROWTH,
FEED FOR A
HEALTHIER
FUTURE.

Volac's Lifeguard range of milk replacers all contain Imunopro™, our unique concentrated milk protein, which enables better development of the early life immune system and stimulates the young calf's digestive system, crucial for fast, healthy and sustainable growth.

feedforgrowth.com

volac 

**FEED FOR
GROWTH**



conditions to enhance gut health, reduce infection rates, and enhance digestion and growth, while amplifying the immune status of the animal.

REDUCING THE NEED FOR ANTIBIOTICS

The gut contains billions of organisms (the gut microbiome) and is now known to be the biggest immune organ in the body. A healthy gut microbiome and a healthy immune system will reduce the risk of infectious disease and, therefore, curb the reliance on antibiotics. Antibiotics can be regarded as having a subtractive gut effect, insofar as they strip not only pathogens but also useful immunostimulant commensals from the gut. AMR is also a huge risk with repeated oral antibiotic usage. Probiotics on the other hand have an additive effect on the gut, by seeding beneficial organisms (commensals) which competitively excluding pathogens from establishing in the gut, and also act by stimulating the body's immune system. Much American research on rearing pre-weaning calves has shown that early antibiotic usage actually lowers the animal's immunity, and that calves treated with antibiotics pre-weaning have lowered milk production and reduced productivity as adults.

NEONATAL GUT AND IMMUNITY

In neonates, the gut microbiome is underdeveloped, and so it is no coincidence that neonatal animals and human infants are immunologically vulnerable and are most susceptible to diseases immediately after birth. The gut is sterile in utero and becomes populated gradually after birth. It is now well established that a clear immunological link exists between the gut microbiota, the immune system and the presence or absence of neonatal disease.

Several seminal studies in neonatal germ-free animals have unambiguously demonstrated that the absence of microbial colonisation in the neonatal gut results in sub-optimal immune functioning, altered gut epithelialisation, poorer growth, and more frequent disease occurrence. Thus, the gut microbiome and the immune system are connected.

The gut microbiome consists of a population of billions of commensal organisms (good bugs) which provide many beneficial effects for the body, and in fact the gastrointestinal

tract is now known to be the largest immune system of the body. This gut microbiota contain more cells than the entire number of somatic cells in the body and this repository of gut-derived DNA is now established as the principal driver of immune health in the newborn. Augmenting this gut microbiome with probiotic organisms at birth is one way to enhance the gut commensal population which upregulates the immune status and thus helps to prevent *Escherichia coli* infection.

USE PROBIOTICS PROPHYLACTICALLY

Although the gut microbiome and the immune system are intimately connected, this dual system can only be effectively utilised if probiotics are given prophylactically to all young animals immediately after birth – a pre-emptive strike, in other words. A neonatal gut microbiome infused with early commensal-rich probiotics has been shown to reduce the subsequent incidence of scour and respiratory disease and to propel the young animal immediately up to a higher level of better health and productivity. Waiting for disease to occur and then endeavouring to deal with it by therapeutic firefighting is a waste of time, money, and the animal's health and long-term productivity. Antibiotics will always be needed and will always be necessary to treat serious outbreaks of clinical infectious diseases. What is at stake here is reducing the frequency of their usage, and indeed, if possible, to prophylactically head off outbreaks of disease before they establish. The usefulness of any antibiotic is inversely proportional to the frequency of its

usage. The regular application of oral broad-spectrum antibiotics is a particular problem insofar as it is a very blunt instrument, which affects not only gut pathogens, but also the resident population of beneficial commensals.

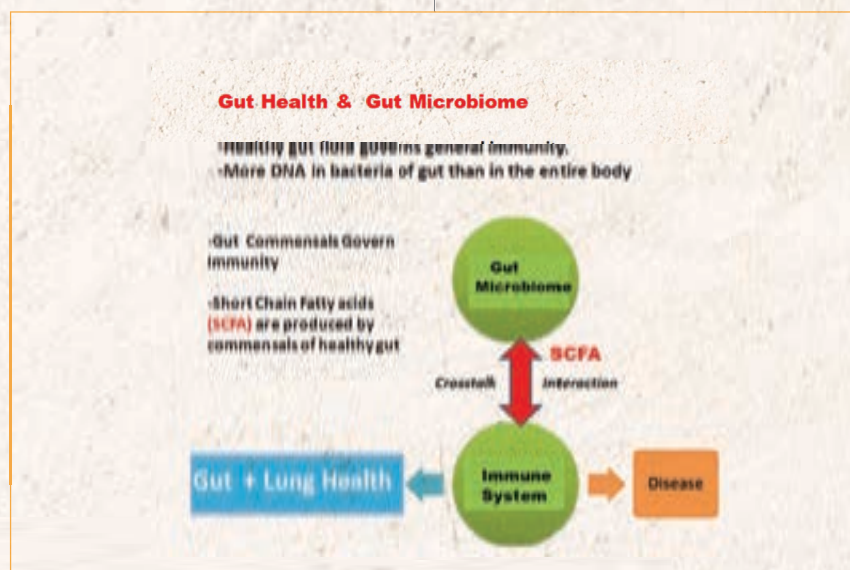
SOME EFFECTS OF PROBIOTICS

- ▶ Maintain normal intestinal microflora by competitive exclusion and antagonism to pathogens.
- ▶ Stimulate the immune system and provide gut immunity.
- ▶ Improve feed intake and enhance digestion.
- ▶ Seal tight junctions of the gut.
- ▶ Provide gut immunity.
- ▶ Release bacteriocins and immunomodulators.

IMMUNOLOGICAL 'CROSS-TALK' FROM GUT TO LUNGS

Medical research has demonstrated the beneficial effects of quality probiotics on commensals of the gut, which result in an augmentation of the signalling from the gut microorganisms to the immune system via short chain fatty acids (SCFA) and other signalling inducers. Cross-talk exists between the gut and the lung in terms of the amplified gut microbiome facilitating not just local immunity in the gut but also protection in the respiratory system, the brain and other tissues.

The lungs, in particular, show higher levels of antibodies and immunoglobulin A (IgA) following probiotic administration



and respiratory disease has been shown to be reduced following gut probiotic administration. Response to flu vaccine in human patients has been shown to be improved by concurrent probiotic administration.

In other words, disorders, and imbalance in the gut microbiome (dysbiosis) adversely affects not only the gut defences but also the immunological defences in the lungs. Eubiosis in the gut (i.e., a healthy gut flora) is associated with high SCFA whereas dysbiosis in the gut (pathogenic organisms) is associated with a decrease in SCFA.

RESULTS FROM FIELD TRIALS WITH A PROVEN PROBIOTIC

In field trials with one proven and authorised probiotic, not only was calf scour reduced by 80 per cent, but respiratory disease incidence was also reduced by up to 70 per cent. This is a significant extra beneficial effect. This product also showed a 10 per cent increased weight gain achieved to weaning, a 33 per cent increase in average daily gain (ADG), and a reduction in respiratory disease incidence of 70 per cent. In animals, it is established that calves that have had scour, are approximately 20 times more likely to develop respiratory disease problems.

In human medicine, it has been repeatedly established that a dysfunctional gut microbiome (dysbiosis) is associated with respiratory problems. This is evidenced by the fact that when gut disorders such as irritable bowel disease (IBD), or coeliac disease exist in humans, they are commonly associated with a higher incidence of respiratory infections and related asthma-like conditions.

PROBIOTIC ACTIONS

In recent years, some very significant advances have been made in elucidating, with more precision, on the scientific mechanism of action of probiotics with respect to their interactions with the gut microbiome and on the development of immunity in the gut barrier itself. Probiotics contain *Lactobacilli* and *Enterococcus* microbial species which have the following beneficial effects within the gut by enhancing the local commensal population:

- (1) Crowding out pathogens, blocking *E. coli* adhesion, and neutralising pathogenic toxins (competitive inhibition);
- (2) Influences on the gut barrier itself, including sealing of tight junctions, increasing trans epithelial electrical resistance (TEER), prevention of leaky gut syndrome, stimulation of local gut immunity and the release of natural anti-microbial substances such as, bacteriocins and more;
- (3) Immunological effects by the release of chemical signalling agents from the commensal organisms, leading to heightened immunity in the gut mucosal barrier, and in other organs such as the lungs. This immunological potential of probiotics has now come centre stage and has become a primary focus of attention. In addition, peer reviewed papers have clearly demonstrated the positive interaction between probiotics and the gut microbiome and the gut mucosa, in terms of gut barrier protection, sealing of tight junctions, and immunostimulant. Tight junctions are a critical structure in restricting trans-epithelial permeability

of pathogens. Chemical signals sent from the microbiota, e.g., via SCFA, such as butyrate, promote fortification of the epithelial barrier through upregulation and sealing of tight junctions, receptor binding to various ligands, and associated cytoskeletal protein. Many scientific publications have shown that in various species, both *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Enterococcus faecium* (microbial components of probiotics) can seal the tight junctions of the gut, thereby restricting pathogen entry.

- (4) It has recently been postulated that probiotic organisms can enhance the response to certain vaccines and may enhance the titer level of antibodies obtained post-vaccination. This is an exciting new area of study. It has also been shown that colostral antibodies and probiotics have synergistic action and provide a solid defence wall in the newborn.

SUMMARY

Judicious use of probiotics from birth can undoubtedly help to populate the young gut with beneficial bacteria, which can then confer numerous health benefits on the neonate: gut health, gut stability, and higher immunity. The probiotic, in short, helps the animal to help itself. These microbial compounds are not therapeutic agents, but rather they act as prophylactic agents to seed the gut, when given to all calves shortly after birth. Apart from improving digestion and growth rates, they also reduce incidence of disease and, thereby, lower the need to have recourse to antibiotic usage.



Available in 20L, 10L and 1L

Over the last 18 months, **Irish farmers and vets** using **Precision Microbes** for calves have been advocating the **long-term benefits**:

- Reduce **interventions and antibiotics**
- Aid in **speed of recovery** from calf scour
- Improve calf **performance and health**
- Reduce **digestive upsets and severity of calf scour**



Scan for more information

ASK YOUR VET ABOUT PRECISION MICROBES



THE SIMPLE 'KNEE TEST' IS USED TO ALWAYS ENSURE A DRY LIE FOR THE CALVES

LAURA HANNON IS FARMING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HER PARENTS NEAR DRUMREE, IN CO. MEATH. SHE SPOKE AT THE RECENT IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION'S (IGA) DAIRY CONFERENCE ABOUT HOW THE HANNONS MANAGE THEIR NEWBORN CALVES AT THIS TIME OF YEAR. MATT O'KEEFFE WAS PRESENT AND REPORTS ON THE FAMILY'S CALF-MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Ensuring that the calving season runs smoothly for the mutual benefit of the family as well as the animals is a priority, Laura said. In what is a particularly stressful and tiring period, minimising disease and avoiding any additional hardship and work is critical.

WORKING IN ADVANCE

The work, as Laura describes it, begins as soon as the previous season ends with all calf sheds cleaned out, power-washed, and disinfected as soon as the last calf vacates the facilities. Housing disinfection is repeated before calving begins. An overall health plan is established in conjunction with the Hannon's vet at the start of the year, encompassing a look back at any hiccups from the previous season as well as developing and reinforcing preventative health protocols for the time ahead. The Hannon herd is given a scour vaccine prior to calving and, in addition, a plan of action in the event of an outbreak of scour is developed, with sufficient flexibility to cater for different types of scour that may occur.

A PRACTICAL APPROACH

Laura acknowledged that the calf shed on the Hannon farm are not new, purpose-built facilities. Nevertheless,

Laura Hannon, a farmer from Drumree, Co. Meath.

WELL-ESTABLISHED CALF-REARING REGIME

they have been renovated and extended over time to be made fit for purpose. The replacement heifer calves are housed in indoor silage pits that have been set up to accommodate automated calf feeding, with high hygiene standards to compensate for any rough surfaces and other potential bacterial havens. The calving shed has 13 individual pens, well capable of coping with high throughput, which peaks in February when 250 of the herd are scheduled to calve. Despite the absence of a night calver, there have been no issues with night-time calvings. This may be reflective of the fact that care is taken in breeding the cows to easy-calving bulls. The biggest challenge is to ensure the calves receive adequate colostrum in the optimum timescale. The calves are blood-tested annually to establish immunoglobulin levels and to ensure that the calf/colostrum feeding management is providing adequate colostrum immunity levels to the calves.

JOHNE'S DISEASE PREVENTION

Prevention, as far as possible, is the

strategy regarding Johne's. With cows calved in individual pens, risk is minimised. Furthermore, regular testing takes place to confirm absence of the disease in the herd. Any suspects are managed individually to minimise contact around calving and are bred to non-dairy bulls. Right along the course of the calving season, the emphasis is on high hygiene standards. All interactions with calves are managed to that end. Footbaths are placed outside calving pens. Calving pens are bedded daily or twice a day when under pressure, with calf pens bedded every other day. The simple 'knee test' is used to always ensure a dry lie for the calves. All of the 10-teat calf feeders are rinsed and drained after each feed and intensively washed once per week and dipped into a peracetic solution.

MINIMISING DISEASE VECTORS

Heifer and bull/beef calves are reared separately to minimise disease risk from buyers entering the farm to purchase calves. Fresh waterproofs are introduced at the start

of the season and replaced as necessary. Gloves are always worn for all calf handling and feeding operations. Labour division to prevent cross contamination between cows and calves, for instance, is practised as far as possible and practical. That normally means one person staying in the milking parlour, one person feeding the older calves and one person dealing with the newborn calves.

COLOSTRUM FEEDING

The well-stated early colostrum feeding principles are followed on the Hannon farm with three litres of colostrum fed in the hours after birth. With large numbers of cows calving in a short time period, milk pooling is practised, and the pooled colostrum tested with a refractometer to ensure high quality. There is a vaccination programme in place, reflecting the 'prevention before infection' principle. Calf stress is kept as low as possible across the various calf management practices, from dehorning to feeding and general handling. Consistency and regularity are high priorities, whether that is regarding the individual managing the calves or in the

feeding and bedding operations. Last year, the Hannons introduced an automatic calf feeder to the calf-rearing regime, which is regularly calibrated, and it has worked well, Laura confirmed. Again, high hygiene standards are practised with regular washing and teats replaced regularly and washed daily to prevent scours and bloat.

POST-WEANING PROTOCOLS

After the calves are weaned, they continue to receive a small meal input, which, along with the nutritional benefit, has the additional purpose of making it easier to identify any off-form calf. For the grazing season, a leader-follower system is practised. Calves are weighed every four-to-six weeks to ensure all are thriving. Calf weights are compared to the EBI maintenance figure on the HerdApp and that provides a comprehensive view of individual calf performance. There are two calf groups, to allow more TLC for those below growth and weight targets. Animal Health Ireland has been running a Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health

(TASAH) programme for several years and the Hannons are participants. This has delivered cost savings in reducing the number of doses required. Last year, no worm dose was applied until September, based on regular dung sampling to assess the level of worm burden. Coccidiosis treatment was avoided entirely, again based on dung sample analysis.

Scour is an annual challenge in some calves on the farm in April time and the Hannons first identify the scour type with a rainbow test and then adopt the appropriate treatment regime and medication. At all times, efforts are made to prevent disease rather than having to cure it. As one example, lush after-grass is generally avoided because of the low levels of fibre in the forage, which could be sub-optimal for the developing rumen in the young, weaned calf.

In conclusion, while there is nothing spectacular about the Hannon calf-rearing regime, it is a prime example of the positive impact of maintaining high standards and management practices across a range of well-established protocols.

Twenty20™
BEEF CLUB

Our pioneering Calf to Beef Club supports farmers in developing sustainable beef businesses through leading genetics, market-leading pricing, and technical support.



Greater Beef Price Certainty

Twenty20 Club bonus results in an extra €100 to €200 a head, always above market price.

- ✓ Hereford and Angus breeds 50c/kg bonus
- ✓ Limousin, Charolais and other Continental breeds 40c/kg bonus
- ✓ Friesian breeds 30c/kg bonus

**OPEN
TO NEW
MEMBERS**



For further information, please contact:

Ross Brady
rossbrady@tirlan.ie
086 783 4252

Tirlán - www.tirlanfarmlife.com

Edwin Carroll
edwin.carroll@kepak.com
086 145 4772

Kepak - www.kepak.com

Tirlán | KEPAK

Tirlán **SUSTAINABILITY
ACTION PAYMENT**



Andrew Claxton, pictured with his daughter Sarah.

‘We give every cow a bolus to prevent milk fever’

ANDREW CLAXTON IS CURRENTLY IN THE MIDDLE OF CALVING 530 COWS AND HEIFERS ON HIS DAIRY FARM IN STRADBALLY, CO. WATERFORD. HERE, ANDREW SHARES HIS SUCCESSFUL MILK-FEVER-PREVENTION STRATEGIES

In the six weeks from mid-January onwards, 80 per cent of Andrew's herd will have calved with stragglers going through to mid-April. Heifers are synchronised to help achieve a tight calving period and the farm has been using Censortec collars for three years. At this busy time of year, it's important for cows and calves that nothing gets missed.

“During calving season, the farm has someone on duty 24 hours a day and we have a system in place for every cow that calves,” says Andrew. “Within 10 minutes of the calf being born, both cow and calf are checked over and the cow is milked for colostrum to go to the calf. The

calf is tagged. We clip the tail and the area around the freeze brand, and then raddle to show that she's calved. While she's in the crush, we give every cow a Calcitrace D3 bolus to prevent milk fever.”

While some of these activities are fairly routine, it's the adoption of a standard operating procedure for the prevention of milk fever that sets Andrew's farm apart. “I probably need to give a bit of history as to how we got here,” explains Andrew. “We have a Kiwi-Jersey-cross cow, and they are particularly susceptible to milk fever. We had tried a few different products to prevent milk fever, but with no real success.”

Milk fever occurs when the cow does not respond quickly enough to the sudden increase in calcium requirements caused by the production of colostrum and milk in early lactation.

The majority of cases occur within 24-72 hours of calving. If the cow is unable to activate the release of sufficient calcium from her reserves – mostly from bone – she will develop milk fever.

Although most farmers instantly recognise clinical milk fever as a 'downer cow', for every clinical case another three to six cows in the herd are likely to be sub-clinical. Affected cows will have an increased risk of ketosis, impaired immune function, and reduced milk yield. Studies have shown that milk fever also affects fertility.

"About three years ago, we began using the Calcitrace D3 bolus from Norbrook. The first year, we gave the bolus to cows at risk of milk fever, which was basically fourth lactation, plus. The following year we gave it to second calvers, onwards. Now we give a bolus to every cow that calves, including heifers. Any cow deemed 'at risk' of milk fever will also get a second bolus after 12 hours." Calcitrace D3 contains 45g of calcium in both fast- and slow-release forms, to ensure that blood calcium levels start to improve shortly after administration as well as helping to provide a sustained increase in calcium levels. As well as high levels of calcium, Calcitrace D3 also contains vitamin D3. Vitamin D is required to stimulate calcium absorption from the intestine. "We also use the Ketonor+ bolus on any suspect cows that have maybe had a difficult calving or twins. It seems to do them good, and they get back

eating and drinking very quickly," Andrew adds.

Two Ketonor+ boluses given at calving provides readily available energy sources to aid in the prevention of ketosis and encourage the cow to start eating and drinking as normal. The formulation also contains niacin, cobalt and yeast to support the liver, rumen and immune system. Ketonor+ can be used as a supportive treatment in sick or convalescent cows alongside non-steroidal pain relief and antibiotics

when deemed appropriate.

Andrew's preventative approach to metabolic disease has saved him and his team labour and stress. "At a time of year when everyone is busy milking and calving 24/7, it means that milk fever has reduced down to around one case a year in a herd of over 500. We've also noticed that the incidence of retained placenta after calving has all but disappeared. Fingers crossed, we're set up now for a busy, but rewarding calving season this year."

SCAN
TO WATCH
THE VIDEO



MANAGING MILK FEVER in dairy cows

Clinical



CALCIJECT

40
Solution For Injection

Licensed for the treatment
of hypocalcaemia in cattle

Subclinical



CALCITRACE D3

Bolus (New formulation)

Each 175g bolus contains 45g
calcium and 40,000 iu vitamin D3

Subclinical



CALCITRACE P

Liquid

Each 500ml bottle contains 59g
calcium and 45g phosphorus

Milk fever is a common metabolic disorder of dairy cows and impacts their welfare and productivity. Readily available forms of calcium can be given orally around the time of calving to reduce the risk of clinical and subclinical milk fever, or as a supportive therapy following intravenous infusion of calcium.

USE MEDICINES RESPONSIBLY. Calciject® 40 manufactured in NI by: Norbrook Laboratories Limited, Station Works, Newry, Co. Down, BT35 6JP.
Legal Category: L3. Each 400ml contains: 11.8g calcium (provided by calcium borogluconate), 6.5% w/v boric acid. For further details on this product including the dosage regimens, side effects, precautions, warnings and contraindications please see the summary of product characteristics (SPC) available at www.hpra.ie/homepage/veterinary/veterinary-medicines-information/find-a-medicine/. Advice on the use of this product should be sought from the medicine prescriber. | Calcitrace® D3: Dietary mineral feed (dairy cows). Calcitrace® P: Dietary complementary feed (dairy cows). Distributed in ROI by: Norbrook Laboratories (Ireland) Ltd, Rossmore Industrial Estate, Monaghan, County Monaghan. | 5161-LA(C)-v2a-ROI-29/01/24

Norbrook
www.norbrook.com



WHY IT PAYS TO FEED HIGH-QUALITY MILK REPLACER

FEEDING YOUR DAIRY CALVES A HIGH-QUALITY CALF-MILK REPLACER (CMR) DURING THOSE IMPORTANT EIGHT WEEKS OF EARLY LIFE WILL PAY OFF ONCE THESE ANIMALS ENTER THE ADULT HERD, SAYS VOLAC MILK REPLACERS R&D MANAGER, DR JESSICA COOKE

Heifer calves reared on a concentrated whey protein-based calf milk replacer are younger at first calving (AFC) and more fertile than those receiving lower quality milk protein in early life. Significantly, this younger AFC benefit alone is worth more than €3,800 to a 200-cow herd with an average replacement rate, according to Dr Cooke.

Dairy heifers at AFBI Hillsborough in Northern Ireland fed different milk protein-based diets

as pre-weaned calves in 2018-19 have been monitored from birth up until their third calving. Dr Cooke explains: "This work clearly showed that the presence of skim is not the fundamental element within a calf milk formula influencing optimum calf growth. There was no significant difference between the calf growth or health from the different milk replacer formulations. If the important milk components are processed correctly, both skim and whey proteins will be highly

digestible by the high milk fed pre-weaned calf and will deliver good performance."

Dr Cooke stressed that good nutrition and calf performance are linked to more than just the type of dairy protein included in the finished milk formula. "Important differences in amino acid and fatty acid profiles, amount of lactose, vitamins, minerals and trace elements, processing conditions and overall digestibility also all contribute to calf performance," she says.



Buy over 4 tonnes
of GAIN Dairy Feed &
1 tonne of GAIN Calf Feed
and get

€80 OFF

BUY another tonne of
GAIN Calf Feed & get

€50 OFF

T&Cs apply

**A premium quality,
calf feed range for
high performance
dairy heifer calf and
calf to beef rearing
systems.**



GAIN
MOMENTUM
PROGRAMME

HERD NUTRITION
ENHANCING NUTRITION AT EVERY STAGE



Lo-call number
0818 321 321

Email
info@gainanimalnutrition.com

Order in-store, in-yard or tirlanfarmlife.com

 **Tirlán**
FarmLife

GAIN THE ADVANTAGE
WWW.GAINANIMALNUTRITION.COM



LATER LIFE

The data confirmed that high-quality pre-weaned calf nutrition favourably influences better lifetime productivity. "Although high-quality, skim-based milk replacer fed calves and those fed a high quality, concentrated whey protein-based (CWP) pre-weaning diet will perform similarly in later life, some performance differences start to emerge when you compare calves fed CWP with

those fed a lower quality, simple whey powder-based (WP) milk replacer.

"While the CWP fed calves were only five days younger than their counterparts at first breeding, there were some fertility differences. For example, the CWP-fed group only required 1.4 services per heifer, while the WP-fed group required two services per heifer. First service conception rate was better too in the CWP fed group (60 per cent)

versus 50 per cent in the whey protein-fed group."

However, Dr Cooke says that a particularly important performance difference starts to emerge when you compare the AFC data.

"On average, the CWP-fed calves calved first at 729 days of age, whereas the WP-fed animals calved down at 751 days – 22 days later. What's more, 80 per cent of the CWP-fed heifers had calved down by 24 months or

age, as opposed to only 33% of the WP-fed heifers.

"With AHDB figures suggesting each day delay beyond 24 months AFC costs you €3.34, this performance difference alone is worth €73.41 per heifer. Or, to put it another way, a €3,800+ cost to the dairy farm business every year for a 200-cow herd with a 25 per cent annual replacement rate." Dr Cooke says that this research confirms that high-quality early-life nutrition pays dividends.

"However, always be cautious about how whey protein is described on the label when comparing milk replacer. If favouring a skim-based calf milk replacer, always opt for a high (>40 per cent) skim content," she stresses.

"Bear in mind, too, that the different types of whey differ in both protein and lactose content. Concentrated whey protein typically contains 35 per cent protein, whereas whey powder only contains 12.5-13 per cent protein. Consequently, always look for a proven, precision-formulated calf milk replacer based on concentrated whey protein. This will provide everything the modern, high milk fed calf needs in early life – and improve lifetime performance."



Calving'24 Keep it Simple

1 Strip

1 Tagger

1 Action



**No Waste & No Mistakes
Job Done!**

**Scan the QR code
to watch our easy
to tag video**



093-52385 • info@cormactagging.ie

ONE-SHOT PROTECTION

for the next generation

For dairy and beef production

- Broad spectrum calf scour protection
- Convenient one-shot vaccine in cows and heifers
- Wide and flexible vaccination window: 12 - 3 weeks pre-calving



Ask your vet how Bovigen Scour can help protect the next generation of your herd.



Bovigen® Scour emulsion for injection for cattle contains inactivated antigens: Bovine rotavirus strain TM-91, serotype G6P1, Bovine coronavirus strain C-197, *Escherichia coli* strain EC/17 (F5 / K99 antigens).
UK: [POM-VPS] IE: [POM]

Advice on the use of this medicine must be sought from your veterinary surgeon.

Further information available from the package leaflet, SPC or from Virbac Ltd, Woolpit Business Park, Windmill Avenue, Woolpit, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 9UP. Tel: +44 (0) 1359 243243

UK: Email enquiries@virbac.co.uk <https://uk.virbac.com>
IE: Email enquiries@virbac.ie www.virbac.ie

Use medicines responsibly. www.noah.co.uk/responsible www.apha.ie

Shaping the future
of animal health

Virbac



SUCCESSFUL REARING FROM BIRTH TO WEANING

RAISING HEALTHY DAIRY CALVES IS A KEY COMPONENT TO ACHIEVING FUTURE HIGH PRODUCTION AND INCREASING THE LIFETIME PERFORMANCE OF THE DAIRY'S COWS AND BULLS, WRITES EMMA SWAN, INTOUCH FEEDING SPECIALIST AT ALLTECH

A successful heifer-rearing programme would include a healthy calf, achieving optimum growth rates and a successful weaning while hitting performance targets so she can calve down into the herd at 22-24 months, giving her the best opportunity to reach her future lifetime milk production. Getting the basics right from day one needs to be a priority for all calves born on farms this spring. There are five key areas that must be considered to rear healthy calves and keep mortality to a minimum, these include:

- ▶ Colostrum;
- ▶ Early life nutrition;
- ▶ Rumen development and immunity;
- ▶ Environment; and
- ▶ Successful weaning.

COLOSTRUM

The first few hours of a calf's life are critical in determining its future health. High-quality,



CALVES SPEND 80 PER CENT OF THEIR TIME LYING DOWN AND NEED A DRY, DRAUGHT FREE BED WITH GOOD AIR FLOW, SPACE AND LIGHT

clean colostrum given at the right time, and in the right amount, provides a foundation for success during any calf-rearing season. A calf is born with no active immune system to protect against disease and depends solely on passive immunity from colostrum feeding. After the first few hours of birth the ability for a calf to absorb essential antibodies from colostrum reduces significantly as the gut barrier loses permeability. Quality of colostrum also needs to be considered; high quality colostrum contains at least 50g/L of immunoglobulin G. Colostrum should be

measured with a refractometer – these are widely available and quite inexpensive. The golden rule is to get at least three litres of colostrum into the calf within two hours of birth for the first feed. This is the '3-2-1' rule. It is important to maintain this high standard for colostrum feeding throughout the entire calving season.

EARLY NUTRITION

During the first few months, a calf is most efficient at turning feed into weight gain. One of our targets is to double the birth weight by time of weaning. To achieve this, a 40kg calf needs to gain 0.6kg per day. Current recommendations for feeding dairy calves include offering 15 per cent of its body weight in whole milk or milk replacer mixed at 125g/L of water. This equals six litres per day.

Remember, as calves grow, they will require more energy, so volume and concentration must be increased.

During colder weather, calves will have a higher energy requirement because they will

Making the transition easy



**PREMIER
MOLASSES**
Delivering Solutions

Premier Glycerine

Research proves, that including a **glycerine** source to transition cow diets prevents the onset of both ketosis and fatty liver disease while also reducing the associated negative energy imbalance.

Introducing **Premier Glycerine** to early lactation diets, will not only prevent the onset of these metabolic disorders, it will also act as a **glycogenic** precursor and promote increased water intakes, thus, allowing for greater milk production.

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

Harbour Road,
Foynes,
Co. Limerick.



use a lot of energy to stay warm rather than put on weight. It is important to increase the volume and concentration of milk replacer in response to cold weather.

When it comes to milk replacers, it is important to know what you are purchasing. To achieve optimal growth rates, a milk replacer should contain 20-25 per cent crude protein, 18-20 per cent fat and less than 8 per cent ash, and it should be matched to meet the desired growth targets.

RUMEN DEVELOPMENT AND IMMUNITY

Calf rearing will take up a large proportion of the morning and evening routine on most farms. It can be time-consuming at the best of times but can be particularly frustrating if calves' immunity is compromised. At birth, the rumen is underdeveloped and cannot contribute to digestion. A well-developed rumen is essential for optimising feed efficiency and ensuring weight gain targets are achieved before and after weaning. To develop the rumen papillae, we must provide

the calf with concentrates, fibre and water to allow rumen microbes to grow and multiply. The calf will only eat small amounts in the first few weeks. It is important that they are offered coarse ration from day one. As the calf starts to eat concentrate, they start to digest starch, which produces volatile fatty acids called propionic and butyrate.

The use of 8-10 per cent of chopped straw as part of the calf concentrate can encourage rumen strength and papillae development. When forages are digested, they predominately produce volatile fatty acid such as acetate. Feeds high in fibre give a warming effect to calves as acetate is produced. Acetic and propionic acids are absorbed through the rumen wall and are converted to metabolites as an energy source for growth. Butyric acid is not absorbed through the rumen wall, but it is converted to an energy source for rumen-wall growth.

Water is a vital part of calf nutrition and one that is often disregarded if they are on milk. Clean, fresh water should be readily

available from week one. The development of calf starter intake depends on water intake. It is important to remember that milk goes into the abomasum, bypassing the rumen, hence there is no water/moisture to aid the digestion of the calf concentrate in the rumen. Scours are responsible for nearly 30 per cent of deaths in calves, while also resulting in poor growth and poor performance, and a lot of work for the farmer. Prevention is better than cure, and a lot can be done to help prevent diarrhoea problems on a dairy farm.

ENVIRONMENT

Suitable calf housing is an important factor to consider for rearing healthy calves. Calves spend 80 per cent of their time lying down and need a dry, draught-free bed with good air flow, space and light. The shed should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected with a broad-spectrum disinfectant before calves arrive. While in use, pens should also be frequently disinfected to prevent the build-up of disease organisms.

For a healthier start and to improve gut condition, digestion and growth rates



RESPOND NOW!



Choose from 2 different delivery methods:



Response Paste,
15g (single application)
or 35g (double application)
given at birth



Response Capsule,
2 given at birth

Your calves will benefit from colostrum, beneficial bacteria, egg powder and vitamins.

For more information contact:

T.P. Whelehan on **(01) 5742410** or email **info@provita.co.uk**



Provita Eurotech Limited, 21 Bankmore Road, Omagh, Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland BT79 0EU
Telephone: +44 (0)28 8225 2352 Facsimile: +44 (0)28 8224 1734 Email: info@provita.co.uk www.provita.co.uk

ACTIGEN®

Build a diverse gut health environment to guarantee the right start for outstanding performance and profitability



Actigen® is a unique product derived from a select strain of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* yeast using a proprietary process developed by Alltech. When incorporated into the calf's diet, Actigen supports gut integrity and overall performance. Part of the Alltech® Gut Health Management program, Actigen is key to building a foundation for performance and profitability in dairy production.

Mode of action

It is well known that bacteria are present in the gut; some helpful, some harmful. Beneficial bacteria play an important role in the breakdown of food and absorption of nutrients in the gastrointestinal tract.

Beneficial bacteria do not interfere with the gut wall and assist in:

- Regulation of cell turnover in the gut wall.
- Creating competitive exclusion of pathogens.
- Stimulating metabolism of mucus secretions.
- Modulation of mucosal immunity.

Pathogenic bacteria attach to the villi on the gut wall, causing:

- Decreased nutrient absorption.
- Damaged villi, reducing surface area.
- Release of toxins.
- Depressed immunity.

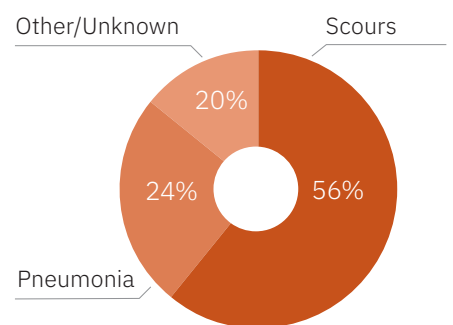
Supporting gut health

Establishing gut health and development in calves is essential for building a foundation of performance and profitability in the future herd. Actigen focuses on supporting animal performance by promoting good bacteria, building immune defences and maximizing growth and efficiency.

Key benefits of Actigen®

- Increases starter intake, body weight gain and efficiency
- Improves growth performance
- Contributes to immunity development
- Improves immune response
- Improves the metabolic profile in calves
- Effective in milk replacers and starter feeds

Why do calves die?



Key Facts:

62%

of all calf deaths occur by 21 days of age.

USDA: APHIS Dairy 96

>50%

of calf deaths caused by scours.

NAHMS 2014

Calves require dry bedding at all times and like to be nestled down in the straw, so a deep bed is required. Test it out: Try kneeling down in the straw for two minutes. If your knees are damp after two minutes, a fresh dry bed is needed. With a shortage of straw this year alternative bedding may need to be considered, such as wood chip or peat, these may need to be topped up regularly to ensure it stays consistently dry. Calves lying on a cold and wet bed use energy for warmth rather than growth.

Hygiene around milk feeding is also important, cleaning all feeding equipment is necessary for maintaining healthy animals, and prioritising younger animals first, along with rinsing before feeding the other batches, will help mitigate the spread of disease.

SUCCESSFUL WEANING

For a successful weaning process, reduce stress and disease to minimise disruption

of growth rates. Weaning should be done gradually by reducing the volume of milk or number of feeds over a period of seven to 14 days. Keep an eye on the amount of concentrate a calf is consuming during the weaning process. Ideally, a calf should be eating 1kg of concentrate daily for three consecutive days before the calf is weaned.

A good rule of thumb: A calf should double its birth weight at weaning. Continue to offer chopped straw in calf racks. Try to feed chopped straw instead of hay because hay can give calves a pot belly.

All aspects of calf rearing require attention to detail that must be second to none. Speaking to your nutritionist to come up with a feeding plan that works for your herd, and working

with your local vet to create a health plan for vaccinations will lead to a successful calf-rearing season.

DIARRHOEA RISK MANAGEMENT

Emma says: "Actigen inclusion in the diet will benefit all calves by modifying and improving the intestinal microflora composition. They have been proven to help manage the risk of diarrhoea in calves and improve feed conversion efficiency, as well as increase starter intake and weight gain. It can provide calves with the best possible start to building up a good immune system, helping to reduce the severity of scour in calves and optimising feed efficiency. It can be included in the milk replacer or calf ration at an inclusion rate of 1.5g/day."

ADVERTORIAL



Pat Farrelly farms on two milking platforms outside Carnaross in Co. Meath. The cows are split into an autumn- and a spring-calving herd. Pat is calving 270 cows in the spring herd and 180 cows in the autumn herd on separate farms. All of the cows are milked through Lely robots. The calves are reared on Auctus Opti-Skim Calf Milk Replacer. The Opti-Skim is a 60 per cent skim product, with 24 per cent protein and 19 per cent oil and fat contents. Since he changed to Opti-Skim last year, calves have been significantly healthier. "It's like the calves have been on whole milk," Pat said.

Once calves are born, they are given three litres of colostrum from the dam and put into pens of six for a period of seven days. All calves are fed transition milk for these seven days. The cows are vaccinated for rotavirus between one month to six weeks before calving. After seven days of age, the calves are brought into bigger pens, where they are fed Opti-Skim from Auctus. The calves are separated into heifers and bulls. They are fed through a JFC computerised feeder with two stations in the training shed.

The JFC feeder is set at 125 grams per litre or 12.5 per cent solids. The feed curve is set with a two-day training period at four litres per calf per day split into three feeds. This is then ramped up to 6.5 litres per day over the next nine days. The calves are fed Opti-Skim at 6.5 litres per day until they are 49 days of age, then they are weaned off gradually over the following 17 days. The calves are weaned completely off milk at 66 days of age. The group pens are filled up to a maximum of 30 calves, where they are kept on this training feeder for between one and two weeks, depending

on the speed of calving.

Once the pen is full and calves are fully trained onto the feeder, then the complete pen is moved to the second farm, where there is a second JFC computerised feeder with four feed stations. The calves remain here until weaning when they have reached between 90kg and 95kg. Calves are weighed using a belly band.

On the beef side, after a certain date of British Friesian AI, Pat switches to beef straws. A deal has been agreed with a purchaser where the beef buyer will select the cows they want AI'd, supplies the straws they want at their cost, and have agreed a price for the calves, both bulls and heifers. The calves are collected from the farm at two weeks of age. The purchaser has selected all Aberdeen Angus straws for this year's spring-calving herd. The introduction of Opti-Skim has meant that weight targets are met at weaning, and this has carried through so far to ensure bullock weights are also on target, according to Pat. Cian Shryane is the calf manager for both farms and commented that the calves look great with 'great coats on them'.

All Auctus products are competitively priced in the market and are very much worth considering when making a decision on which calf milk replacer to use.



You can contact Auctus in the following ways:

Phone: 043 6683200

Email: info@auctus.ie

Contact: Your local business manager:

Brian Geraghty

087 1175971

brian@auctus.ie

Donegal, Monaghan and the west of Ireland

John Linnane

087 7996247

john@auctus.ie

Midlands and southwest of Ireland

Daragh O'Rourke

087 1170803

daragh@auctus.ie

Cavan, southeast of Ireland

Lorraine Killen

0044 7342 259225

lorraine.killen@auctus.uk

Northern Ireland

Closing Date:
29th February 2024

Teagasc/FBD Environmental Sustainability AWARDS 2024



The Teagasc/FBD Environmental Sustainability Awards aim to promote environmentally sustainable farming and recognise the progress that farmers are making to lighten the load of farming on the environment, while continuing to produce high quality, nutritious food, in a profitable manner.



Prize Fund: €30,000

Scan the
QR Code
to apply!



teagasc
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FBD
INSURANCE

A close-up photograph of a hand gently holding a small green seedling with two leaves, growing out of a mound of light brown soil. The background is blurred, showing a person's face and a stylized city icon in a blue circle. Overlaid on the image are several white, glowing circular lines that suggest a cycle or process.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

UCD IS EXPANDING ITS FOOD AND AGRICULTURE PROGRAMME OFFERINGS. FROM THIS SEPTEMBER, STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO UNDERTAKE A BSc IN SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS. ZOE MCKAY - BAgRSc, PHD, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF GRASS AND FORAGE SCIENCE AND PROGRAMME DIRECTOR FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS, UCD - TELLS US MORE

'Sustainability' is an inescapable term right now, whether you're a food producer or consumer. As a growing population increases food demand, and challenges environmental resources, we need fresh ideas on how to maintain our ecosystems while feeding seven billion mouths (and counting). UCD's new course, a BSc in Sustainable Food Systems, is a four-year Bachelor of Science degree, with classes beginning this September. It sits alongside 13 other programmes in UCD's School of Agriculture and Food Science.

This programme promises to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the entire food chain, from on-farm production to human consumption and the scientific principles underpinning it. It will explore the complex challenge of sustainably producing food to meet the nutritional requirements of a growing world population, while protecting the planet's limited natural resources. Students will develop knowledge of food production systems, policy, principles, practices and technologies alongside developing their understanding of the three pillars of sustainability (environmental, social, and economic) and the impacts on food production and consumption. Skills to analyse and evaluate sustainable food systems will be developed as well as how to apply knowledge learned to a practical real-world industry setting through engagement with peers, lectures, guest lectures and professional work experience.

Zoe McKay is programme director of the course, and her background is in the area of grass and forage science. "I've led the team," she says, "who have expertise spanning from environmental [disciplines], rural business and agri-development, animal and crop science through to food science and consumption. There's representation from across the school in addition to having insight from industry stakeholders regarding the needs of the programmes and what they need from graduates".

"We have a broad range of programmes in agricultural science and related disciplines, but we didn't have an offering that looked at the whole food chain from farm to fork and how we look at agri-food businesses in a sustainable system."

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Climate change impacts all people and just about every industry, but those working in agriculture and food production are especially impacted. "If we think about where the agri-food sector is today, climate change is the biggest challenge," says Zoe. "Additionally, food production has increased and intensified, which can lead to declines in water quality and biodiversity".

"Many companies are developing sustainability teams and managers. Just five years ago those roles didn't exist. There are roles for people to advise and work with farmers and agri-food companies to achieve their sustainability targets, but also to link all pieces of the food chain together. So, there is a need for people with a knowledge and skillset around the issue of sustainability as it relates to the food system."

GUEST LECTURES AND INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT

The prospectus for this course mentions guest lectures and industry experience. When it comes to the former, Zoe envisions a broad range of speakers and ideas. "What I hope is that through the modules offered there will be opportunities for students to learn from guest lecturers and industry representation from across the whole food chain," she says. "One objective is engagement from industry to hear about both the challenges and the solutions that companies have; and building networks within the industry".

"Then," she continues, "third-year has an industry work placement. We're trying to

Dr Zoe McKay.



IF WE THINK ABOUT WHERE THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR IS TODAY, CLIMATE CHANGE IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE

build collaboration between students and potential employers they might work for one day."

EVOLVING ENVIRONMENT AND CURRICULUM

As technology, policies and our environment change, so too must a course like this. And Zoe ensures that it will be dynamic.

"We have developed new modules to ensure a focus on what's relevant," she says. "Some modules are new, around sustainability challenges, and there is a new module around developments in food systems which looks at what's new and groundbreaking. Also, within the school, staff that deliver modules on the programme are 'research active' and they bring that new knowledge to students. That will be a highlight as well." Zoe says that students are keen to learn about all things sustainable: "A lot of that interest is from young people focusing on all aspects of their lives and asking how sustainable is it," she says. "It's a novel and niche topic, and timely and relevant for those

students who have interest in this area as a possible career choice."

And, on the industry side, the course has already received some endorsement.

"We've spoken to a number of people [in sustainability jobs]," says Zoe. "We talked to Dr Aoife Marie Murphy who works in Kerry as a sustainable nutrition manager. Her role didn't exist three years ago! And she's done a testimonial for us. In time to come we will have student testimonials, but for now we are grateful to have her support as through her role she sees this whole area opening up and the opportunities it brings."

DIGGING DEEPER

The modules delivered on the BSc in Sustainable Food Systems programme will cover foundations in the basic science initially, before becoming more granular, and eventually giving students the chance to learn about the key aspects of the food system.

"It's not industry specific," says Zoe. "When you think of food systems, one of the challenges is that it's broad. Students will learn about many elements. It's not specific to any industry in agri-food, it's to give an understanding of the core concepts from managing soil and the environment to food production, processing, and packaging... all those components. And we're then layering environmental, economic and social aspects on to those."

"When we think about the structure of the programme, the first year will focus on the science that is grounding and underpinning a lot of technical developments and agri-tech. Specificity to the agricultural sector, there'll be modules on Soil Science Basics, Agri-Environment Nutrient Management, Sustainable Animal Production, Principles of Crop Science and a module on 'Land Use and the Environment'. We'll also cover agricultural environmental policy, which is an important topic for students to understand.

"While there are core concepts that students must learn about, there are option modules (later in the degree) for students to select modules relating to disciplines they are especially interested in. So, for example if students have more interest in beef production or food processing industries, they'll be in a position to learn about that specific industry in further detail through option and elective modules.

MESSAGES

- Make a plan to overcome the challenge of low milk price and high costs.
- Manage meal-feeding levels down by planning.
- Use slurry and protected urea as per a plan.
- Milk record to identify your 'worst' cows.
- February is an important month for cow and calf care.
- Bulling heifer targets – weigh and act now.
- Plan to use contractors more this year.



By Matt Ryan

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

- » **Milk price is 40-45c. Milk cost is 39-42c. What's your plan?**
- » **A wise man once said 'a bad year doesn't break you but a good one does.'**
 - There are two messages from this statement:
 1. Farmers didn't heed it after the great year of 2022. They overspent, even though milk prices were predicted in January to be 40-45c/L. in 2023.
 2. We are now coming out of one of the most difficult years in the last 15 years – bad weather, high purchase costs, and milk price down by over 20c/L. So, we want dairy farmers to be positive. Plan and monitor progress and we will overcome this tight sales-cost balance and do reasonably well in 2024.
 - As a result, farm incomes decreased by over 70% in 2023. Many farmers now have cashflow issues.
- » **But lessons must be learned, and farmers must take action. The following is a summary from my groups:**
 - Milk price down from 62.1c/L to 44.25c/L due in greater part to market conditions but % fat increased by 0.04 while % protein decreased by 0.02% – the highest milk price achieved was 48.1c/L.
 - March and April had an awful adverse effect on % protein – it never really recovered subsequently.
 - The kilograms of milk solids (MS) produced decreased by 23kg with a small decrease in meal costs of 0.65c, but the quantity of meal fed increased – bad weather didn't help!
 - The kilograms of MS per kg cow body weight decreased to 88% of cow's body weight but a lot of meal is being fed – 2.3kg meal per 1kg MS, whereas the target is 1kg or less.
 - The comparative costs of producing a kilogramme of MS decreased from €3.67 to €3.59. With some farmers as low as €2.20, this indicates that there is vast room for improvement. This is a very big concern going forward and all farmers must now plan to reduce costs in 2024.
 - Comparative profit per kg MS reduced from €4.40 to €2.15 – a decrease of 51%. That is a big hit!
 - Somatic cell count (SCC) increased by 17,000 – very worrying with the new antibiotic use rules, cow cull rates were over 24% (up 2%) – uneconomic!
 - Grass utilised remained the same at 9.9t DM/ha, even though stocking rates decreased a little, both overall and on milking platform (MP).
 - Feed efficiency (kg MS produced from the farm per tonne dry matter [DM] available) remained more or less the same at 77 compared with a target of 90). This is an interesting figure

which is driven by:

- Feeding the correct meal levels at the correct time of year, having cows that can respond to meal feeding, age of herd, quality of grass and meal.
- Interesting that this group of farmers increased EBI and cow fertility by over €10 and €9, respectively, each. This is one of the few ways of insulating yourself against input cost and milk price volatility – a more efficient cow!
- » **All farmers should measure grass growth with PastureBase. The following summary will be of interest:**
 - The yield of grass in 2023 is down 1.1t DM/ha to 12.5t. In 2023, we came into the spring with 20kg less average farm cover (AFC), 950kg DM, but carried higher pre-grazing covers all through 2023 at 1,179kg (spring), 1,430kg (summer), and 1,590kg (autumn). These are way below Teagasc Moorepark targets of 1,450kg, 1,600kg and 1,800kg, respectively.
 - Surprisingly, the grazing season was the same in both years.
- » **Grass utilised per hectare: using a Moorepark programme, I have come up with the following information:**
 - Farmers utilised less grass – 9.8t in 2023 compared with 9.7t in 2022 DM. Not bad as it was a tough year to manage grass, starting in March.
 - The percentage grass (home grown grazing and silage) in the diet was 81% in 2023 compared with 82% in 2022 – that means when you don't grow the grass, you substitute with meals. The target for max profit is 90%.
 - As mentioned above, the feed conversion efficiency, kg MS/t DM, was 77 while my target is 90. You can conclude from this that there is big scope for improvement here.
 - The grazing season decreased by five days – a bad autumn being responsible. There will be a difference between this and PastureBase. This programme takes into account the calving pattern of the herd so, if cows are not calved, they will not be let out. Hence, the lower figure.
 - Interestingly, fertiliser costs are down €300/ha to €820 – fertiliser price being the main reason.
- » **A lot of good messages can be derived from these stats. But the big one is we must control costs on farm. They are out of control on many farms – over 45c/L.**
 - Many farms are overstocked both on total farm and particularly on milking platform. This increases cow-production costs and reduces the cow's ability to maximise performance.
 - As a result, over 60% of high-stocked farmers are buying in forage and some are zero grazing – all of which complicate a system, making it more labour demanding and less profitable.

MEAL FEEDING LEVELS ARE OUT OF CONTROL

- » Farmers must take active actions so as to reduce meal feeding from an average of 1,300kg/cow/year.
 - The advice is to feed 1kg meal per kg MS, or 0.1kg/L produced.
- » Table 1, suggestions by my discussion groups, outlines various levels of meal that can be fed each month depending on the annual meal feeding goal they wish to achieve.
 - You need to set this plan based on grass grown on the milking platform (MP).
 - Nobody, but nobody, stocked at advised stocking rate (SR) on the MP should need to feed more than 900kg meal/cow.

Table 1: Suggested meal feeding and % protein levels per month to achieve various annual meal feeding targets. Source: discussion groups.

Month	Feeding rate kg/cow/D	Feeding rate kg/cow/D	Feeding rate kg/cow/D	Feeding rate kg/cow/D	Protein %
February	2	2	2.5	4	16
March	4	4	4	4	14
April	2	2.5	3	3	12
May	1	1	1.5	2	12
June	0	1	1	2	12
July	0	1	1.5	2	12
August	2	2	2	2	12
September	2	2	3	3	12
October	2	2	3	3	12
November	2	2	3	3	14
December	2	2	3	3	14
Total	500kg	600kg	800kg	900kg	

- » **Why are farmers feeding so much/too much meal annually? The usual reasons/excuses are:**
 - Not enough grass in spring and autumn – controllable.
 - Grass not good enough in summer – controllable.
 - Cows won't go in-calf in May-June – myth.
 - Milk price is great – no logic.
 - It helps cashflow, particularly, in spring and late autumn – myth.
- » **Surprising honest reasons arose:**
 - Feeder calibration was 20-30% incorrect – controllable.
 - Staff took it on themselves to 'feed whatever they wished' – become the boss.
 - Feeders need adjusting for various types of feed – controllable.
 - 'Look, I never really planned the amounts' – controllable.
 - Quantity being fed was never adjusted for availability of grass – controllable.
 - Too slow to react when grass became plentiful – controllable.
 - On all my group visits, I use George Ramsbottom's programme: Predicting milk solids yield per cow.
 - To use this simple programme all you need is farm SR, from EBI, the milk sub-index, the fertility and maintenance sub-index, plus the meal fed.
 - I have done it for many farmers, costing meal at €400/t and milk at 45c/L.
 - One farmer fed 1,170kg and if reduced to 570kg/cow milk yield would be reduced from 5,828L to 5,466L.
 - That means for the extra meal, costing €240 you got/will get €162 per cow. This definitely makes no economic sense!

USE SLURRY TO BACK UP NITROGEN

- » We need to adopt practices that help us reduce the amount of bag N we use due to the high cost of nitrogen, and environmental pressures.
- » The following suggestions should be practised:
 1. Apply a max of 29kg/ha (23 units/acre) in spring of protected urea to the area planned for bag N – that will be 60% of the grazing area – will get no slurry until grazed.
 2. Use slurry strategically instead of bag N, as it contains 6-8 units N, 5 units P, and 30 units K per 1,000 gallons if the slurry DM is 7-9%.
 - 2,000 gallons/acre on the 40% to be grazed from March 17 to end of the first rotation.
 - 2,000 gallons on the first 15% of area grazed from let out to mid-February.
 - 2,000 gallons on the 15% area grazed from mid-February – March 1.
 3. Apply bag N four to six weeks after the first application – the higher the SR, the shorter the period but with good use of slurry, you should be able to get to April 1 with one bag of protected urea.
 4. Plan to replace some of the bag N with slurry for first-cut silage.
 5. Make as much first-cut silage as possible as this saves on N as well as reducing overall contractor costs – these are now very high because of labour, diesel, and machinery maintenance.
 6. Diluting slurry with soiled water will increase the efficiency of utilisation of N in the slurry.
 7. Avoid making a second cut of silage if possible – hence the need to do winter feed budgets early.
 8. Keep records of quantities and dates of application N on PastureBase – then study the outcomes.
 9. White clover swards should, more or less, get the same N up to early April.
 10. Plan to sow clover, in April-May, red clover on 'outside' land because you will grow 16-18t grass DM/ha with little or no nitrogen – a 'no brainer'; but order both white and red clovers NOW as they are likely to be scarce.
- » **Remember the following facts (research) on nitrogen use efficiency on grassland. It is:**
 - 63% when the pH, the phosphate (P) and potash (K) are optimum.
 - 54% when P is deficient.
 - 57% when K is deficient.
 - 53% when P and K are deficient.
 - 35% when P, K and lime are deficient.
- » **I hope you can deduct from all of this what element has the greatest effect!**
- » **LIME – a 28% reduction in the efficiency of nitrogen.**
 - All soils have background N (averaging 140kg/ha) and it won't be released to its max without lime.
 - The message is clear for 2023 – bring ALL fields up to pH 6.5 this year. No excuses about weather, grass cover, silage – plan to make it happen.
 - P and K must be brought up to Index 3 and 4 levels so as to

grow adequate grass with less nitrogen – be convinced.

- More meal is not the solution to less N as the following economic annual returns show:
 - Increased soil P & K levels = 152% return.
 - Reseed full farm in eight-year cycle = 96% return.
 - Increasing meal to increase milk = 3.2%.
- For the life of me, I can't understand why we are so committed to meal at the price of it and less to applying lime, P, K and sulphur (S).

MILK RECORD

- » Many farmers, as a result of major expansion over the last few years, are overstocked on the milking parlour with 20% 'bad cows' in the herd. Money can be made by clearer thinking on this dilemma.
 - By weighing cows in June-July, inserting the data on ICBF, you will be able to rank the cows based on kg MS produced per kg cow body weight.
- » Take the case of a 100-cow farmer producing 450kg MS per cow, making an average profit/cow of €700, with the lowest 10 cows doing 340kg each and a profit of €400/cow. We did a partial budget on the scenario of selling off the '10 bad cows':
 - On the negative side, the farmer will lose the profit on 10 cows €4,000 (10x €400).
 - On the positive side he will save 55t DM (10x5,500kg) or 63.21t meal equivalent, which is worth €25,284. He would be milking one row of cows less, which is a saving of 20 minutes/day for 280 day or 93 hours at €20 per hour, equals €1,860.
 - Therefore, for a decision of doing less work the farmer will be €23,144 'better off'. This figure is derived by adding €25,284 and €1,860 (money saved) and subtracting €4,000 (profit per 10 cows). They will also have 10 cows, probably late calvers, to sell at probably €1,200 each, which can be put to productive use.
 - Ironically, the 90 cows remaining will only have to milk 38kg MS more each to make up the loss of 3,400kg MS produced by the 10 'sold' cows.
 - This is a 'no-brainer'.
 - Do you appreciate the value of using the word 'average' to make decisions?
 - This farmer's average figures per cow for his 100-cow herd were 450kg MS; 4% fat; and 3.5% protein; and profit per cow was €700.
 - Once you know the average, you should do something with the figure as I have demonstrated with the kg MS.
- » My point is this: milk record in 2024 so that you have the knowledge to identify the 'bad cow'. Arising from this you will have the cow's own worth (COW) which will identify the most profitable cows for you in the herd for the next five to seven years.
 - You will also know your best cows so that you can breed 'your best to the best'. This is a terribly important concept to increase EBI, fertility and particularly % fat and protein.
 - If you now have the 2023 milk-recording data, use it for this purpose and to identify serious SCC offenders.

COW CARE NOW

- » Make sure all dry cows are getting 2-3oz per head of a good dry-cow mineral.
 - Easy to slip up on this as you are now heavily focussed on milch cows.
- » Within two to three weeks of calving, make sure cows and

heifers are kept on very clean cubicles – their immune system is very low and now, there are increased amounts of infectious bugs around.

- » Lamé cows or cows tender on their feet should be looked after now. Get the FRS to do this job because you are too busy and don't know the job well enough.
- » Encourage daytime calving by feeding silage during the night (removing leftovers in the morning) only. It is some help!
 - For this to work well, cows should be exposed to this feeding routine for seven to 10 days before calving.
 - Keep those cows and cows with 'tender' feet in a straw 'maternity' shed.
 - Talk to a neighbour. They might be interested in doing nighttime calving for you and a neighbouring dairy farmer for €150/night. The advantages are immense!
- » Do not rush in with the jack at calving. Why? 'Damaged' cows will not go back in calf.
 - 'Infected' cows (easily done with hands and equipment) will be slower to go back in calf.
 - The worst outcome could be a 'downer' cow.
- » From the time the calf's crubes (hooves) appear:
 - Leave heifers two hours and cows three hours before moving in to give help.
 - Leave enough time for the muscles to relax and the pelvis to open.
- » Feed a little meal (0.5-1kg) for two weeks before calving:
 - Heifers, in particular, benefit from this.
 - Allows you move on to full meal feed within days of calving.
 - Slowly increase meal feeding after calving (seven to 10 days) because the cow's intake is low and a lot of meal relative to roughage will result in acidosis and other problems.
 - Post calving this year, farmers should feed 2-4kg meal with grass and minimum silage. Very heavy covers exist now on some farms, but most farms have lower overall covers, confirm for yourself.
 - Farmers should be restricting the quantity of good silage being eaten by late calvers in very good body condition by feeding 2-3kg DM of straw.
 - Cows calving in body condition scores (BCSs) greater than 3.3 are at great risk of losing more than 0.5 BCS from calving to mating which will result in both submission and pregnancy to first service being reduced by up to 50% and 20% respectively.
- » Most farmers have over 80% six-week calving rates and that bring calf-housing issues:
 - If selling male calves at two weeks (per 100 cow herd) you need housing for 50 calves or 85 square meters.
- » Prevent the spread of Johne's disease by timely removal and feeding of calf as from Johne's-free cows and milk replacer.

CARE FOR BULLING HEIFERS

- » A very high proportion of our heifers going to the bull are underweight and calving down under target weights.
- » As the bulling weight targets of most heifers on May 1 must be 320+ kg and they are likely to put on 0.8kg/hd/day between February 1 and then, they now should weigh at least 250kg.
 - For every kg they are less than that, they must be fed 4-5kg meal. If they are 30kg below target, they must get 120-150kg meal (16-18% P) between now and May 1 or 1.5 kg/hd/day over whole period or twice that over half the time.
 - With excellent care, aggressive meal feeding, delayed bulling

until May 20 and then synchronising them, you will be able to serve heifers that now would be considered very small at 200-210kg.

- This is a very good option if you are planning to sell these animals or expand.
- Let all out to grass in early February, feeding meals to those who require it.

SHORT NOTES

- » **Feeding colostrum early is the most important way to prevent calf-rearing problems associated with scours and pneumonia. Follow the '1,2,3 rule'**
 - Use colostrum from the first milking for the first calf feed.
 - Give colostrum within two hours from the calf's birth.
 - Give at least three litres.
 - Give another two litres within the next six hours.
 - A stomach tube (done correctly) alleviates some of the feeding problems. Most farmers now use it as a time saver and guarantees consumption of two to three litres in that first feed.
 - To check the quality of the colostrum, use a refractometer – many farmers now do!
- » **Because February is a crucial month to set things up for the year. Discussion groups should meet on farm for a quick technical meeting to check what is happening on each other's farms so as not to make mistakes that are preventable.**
 - If your farm cannot run for two hours while you are away,

something is wrong with the way you organise things.

- However, by using technology, we can stay in touch by using WhatsApp or a Zoom chat to stay on top of technical issues and overcome current challenges.
- » **Use contractors more in 2024 where on-farm labour is tight or you are working too hard, for:**
 - Dehorning calves.
 - Feeding out silage and cleaning yards twice per week.
 - Spreading fertilisers in bulk and slurry with the umbilical system (the only way to do it!).
 - Contract rearing of calves and heifers.
 - Contract labour for all or some farm chores (large units).
 - All reseeding work.
 - All lameness preventative care.
 - All capital investment work- farmers must refrain from this as it is putting huge strain on the labour to run the farm and efficiencies suffer and personal health suffers.
- » **From what I see on PastureBase, average farm covers (AFC) are low on some farms. So as not to run short, a spring rotation plan must be used to allow you feed grass every day but ration it.**
- » **Get your adviser to do a fertiliser plan and stick with it to save costs.**

REMEMBER WHAT THE WISE MAN SAID:

"A bad year doesn't break you, but a good one does."



AMAZONE

CENTAYA - ADP MOUNTED SEED DRILLS

Choose an option to suit you

A

0%* APR on 1+2 annual payments
Available on maximum of
50% of the purchase price

B

3.9%* APR on 1+4 annual payments
Available on up to 100%
of the purchase price

C

4.4%* APR on 1+9 half yearly payments
Available on up to 100%
of the purchase price

D

Subsidised 'off scheme' finance
packages available to suit your needs

**0%* FINANCE PACKAGES
TO SUIT EVERY FARMER**



*For Business Users Only. This is a Fixed Rate Business Hire Purchase Agreement. Lending terms & conditions apply. Finance is provided by Amazone Finance, which is a trading name of First Citizen Finance DAC. First Citizen Finance DAC is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. A Completion Fee of €1 is payable. Offer is available on all new machines except Amazone sprayers and trailed drills. Offer only available to Republic of Ireland customers. Warning: You may have to pay charges if you repay early, in full or in part, a fixed-rate credit facility.



For more information on Amazone finance please speak to
your local Amazone dealer or call Ben Buckley on +353 87 758 6746





A STRONG CASE FOR THE VESTRUM IN 2024

THE VESTRUM HAS CAPTURED NOEL DUNNE'S IMAGINATION, AND HE DEVOTES THIS MONTH'S FROM THE CAB FEATURE TO THE RANGE WHICH NOW HAS THE OPTION OF THE ACTIVE DRIVE 8 POWERSHIFT TRANSMISSION

Case IH has extended the transmission choices for the 100-130hp Vestrum tractor range with the option of the ActiveDrive 8 powershift transmission in lieu of the CVXDrive continuously variable transmission (CVT), to offer potential buyers a broader range of specification to suit their needs.

Previously available only on the 115-150hp Maxxum tractors, the ActiveDrive 8 eight-step/three-range powershift option means Vestrum customers not requiring the full capabilities of CVT now have an alternative which comes at a lower price point, yet still provides a high level of fuel efficiency and ability. Range one offers a 0-10.7km/hr speed band

to suit heavy draft work, while range two, with a speed bracket of 4.3-18.1km/hr, meets most work needs. For road travel, the transmission can start in range three, with a 0-40km/hr speed range, a skip-shift function allowing quick powershift step progression. A creep speed option allows speeds down to 190m/hr for specialist applications.

"By adding the ActiveDrive 8 eight-step powershift option to the Vestrum line, we are aiming to broaden its appeal by offering a greater range of specification to customers in this power segment, to meet a wider range of needs," says Christel Diebolt, Case IH product marketing manager for Vestrum tractors. "This is a true powershift that uses our

double-clutch technology so there is no loss of drive or traction during speed or direction changes. It also allows the tractor to move off in the highest range, increase field speed without interrupting power to the wheels, deliver almost imperceptible gear changes and, via the Active Clutch II feature, come to a standstill using only the brake pedal."

TWO SPECIFICATION LEVELS

Vestrum ActiveDrive 8 tractors are available with a choice of two specification packages. 'Selection' models are equipped with mechanical remote valves, an 80 L/min or 110L/min hydraulic pump, three-speed PTO, front linkage options. There are two roof options: a low roof version of 2.7m features a panoramic window for loader work, while a standard roof alternative comes with a height of 2.83m. Air conditioning, passenger seat and



cab suspension can be chosen. The alternative 'Advanced' specification features additional equipment including, front linkage with Front Hitch Management, electro-hydraulic remotes, plus optional features such as Advanced Headland Management, auto guidance managed via the AFS Pro 700 Plus display, and Isobus options.

ESTABLISHED FEATURES

Whether specified with CVXDrive or ActiveDrive 8, Vestrum tractors use the same FPT NEF 4.5L/four-cylinder Stage V engines. Developing up to 10hp more than their rated output between 1,700rpm and 1,900rpm, they produce maximum torque at 1,300rpm. The standard implement coupling package includes a Cat II/III N 5,600kg rear hitch, while a 2,300kg front hitch is optional, as is a 1,000rpm front PTO with wet clutch. Manoeuvrability is aided by a 4.5m turning circle.

With noise level of 69dB(A), the suspended cab options include a loader joystick with transmission control buttons. The AFS Pro 700 Plus touchscreen terminal comes with a quick-start menu and up to four camera inputs. AEF Isobus certification for Universal Terminal and Task Controller functionalities guarantees compatibility with AEF Isobus-certified implements. Optional AFS Connect telematics capability allows remote monitoring and instant data capture. Additional features including AFS AccuGuide auto guidance and AFS AccuTurn Pro automated headland turning technology are also available.



NOEL DUNNE
Machinery editor

A GOOD START

Well readers, I hope you got over the January blues. We are now entering the first month of spring 2024 and you know, I am very surprised at the positive vibes I am getting regarding the up-and-coming year.

Irish beef is heading back to China, the livestock trade is steady, milk prices are too, and the tillage sector will recover as there will be demand for more Irish grain. The weather this spring will determine a lot, however, so let's put the best foot forward and plough on.

Now, down to business, and what a blistering start we have had to spring 2024. The machinery show season is in full swing; the Millstreet show was first up in the Green Glens Arena. Stand numbers were up and crowds attending were up year on year. The mood was mixed but, overall, positive for the year ahead, and many manufacturers took the opportunity to launch some new products. Next up was the UK's flagship show, LAMMA, which ran in the INEC in Birmingham on January 16 and 17. This was, in my opinion, the biggest and best attended LAMMA show since it moved indoors a number of years ago. There was a large Irish attendance – probably the biggest ever. All the major players were there except for a few household names. Case, New Holland, Massey, Valtra, Fendt, McHale, Malone and JCB, to name but a few, showed new products, and the mood was upbeat from both UK and Irish farmers and contractors attending the show. Easy access from Ireland and the UK is now cementing this show as the go-to event coupled with the fact that it is at the start of the buying year.

As we were about to go to press, the FMTA announced the return to an indoor format for their show, which ran in July for the last two years and traditionally in the month of February before that. The show will be held at Punchestown from Tuesday to Thursday, November 12-14. This will be the 35th edition of the very popular show and moving it back to a winter date is based on demand from the machinery importers and distributors both here in Ireland and in the UK. This is a key decision-making time of the year.

January certainly started off strong with appointments and changes in machinery dealers in Ireland. In a few short weeks we saw Meath Farm Machinery move to Dundalk to take over what was Hanlon Machinery, which used to be a John Deere dealer in the Louth area. This will be a full line John Deere dealership operating out of the Dundalk branch.

Argo Tractors Ireland, importers of both Landini and McCormick tractors, appointed Keane's Farm Machinery in Balla Co. Mayo as a McCormick tractor dealer. This family-run dealership is in business over 40 years, and are also agents for Pöttinger, Abbey, Malone, Mastek, Fleming, McKenna and Bridgeway equipment. In Co. Waterford, GT Bunning has appointed Jim Power Agri Sales Ltd as a main dealer for its very popular rear discharge spreader. Basak tractors, the well-known Turkish tractor brand is back on the hunt again to appoint dealers in Ireland. Further information can be requested from: export@basaktractors.com.tr And, finally, the Irish machinery industry lost one of its great characters in January – Michael McCarthy, founder of Lynch and McCarthy Ltd in Cork. Michael was a great supporter of the machinery trade and the FMTA golf society, and a true friend to all whom he met. He passed away just short of his 90th birthday. I extend my deepest condolences to his sons, Peter and David, and all the family on the passing of what we would consider a legend of the trade. Until next month farm wisely, farm safely.

**Tom Murphy**

Professional Agricultural
Contractors of Ireland

SHOW A UNITED FRONT

Looking at the election of the new leaders of the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), two remarkable things happened. Firstly, history was made as Alice Doyle became the first woman to be elected to the high office of IFA deputy president. Over the years I have had the pleasure of working with Alice on the Health and Safety Authority's statutory committee, the Farm Safety Partnership Advisory Committee. Taking on a senior position in a large organisation is always a challenge but I know Alice will meet that challenge head on. With her experience in farming, she will be a voice for all farmers in the many negotiations she will be at the centre of. She will also bring a valuable female perspective, which is often overlooked in negotiations and

policy making.

Francie Gorman, the new IFA president, stressed in his speech at the AGM that Irish farmers must develop and influence policy, particularly in the next CAP negotiations. Moreover, they should be rewarded for their positive contribution to the environment, biodiversity, and climate change. Some years ago, at a meeting in Brussels, I recall the words of then Commissioner Phil Hogan: "Farmers are not the problem, they are part of the solution." This still holds true today. I would be the first to recognise the enormously difficult job and responsibility the president of the IFA carries in leading an organisation with more than 70,000 members and far be it from me to offer advice. However, I have never been backwards in coming forward and speaking my mind. So, my main objectives would be to focus on two main issues. One, to secure a fair farmgate price for all farmers, including small farmers, and if that means loading the subsidy for small-acreage farmers, so be it. The requirement to negotiate on so many fronts can bog you down causing you to take your eyes off other issues, particularly the long-term survival of Irish small-acreage farms.

I recommend the IFA leadership study a report I came across recently when doing some research. *The impact of EU trade agreements on the agricultural sector* produced in December 2016. It deals with the future of agriculture in Europe, in particular small-acreage farming. It's a long report, but for me it set the building blocks for CAP reform over recent years and into the future. Future policy is going to favour larger farms

at the expense of small farming, to quote one paragraph: 'Due to structural change and technological progress in the agricultural sector, agricultural production in the EU takes place on fewer, larger and more capital-intensive farms. The total number of farms in the EU has thus dropped by 26 per cent from 2005 to 2013, and the consolidation process is expected to continue. Declining farm numbers have also led to larger farms and an increase in output per farm as well as a drop in employment in the agricultural sector.'

Farmers and agricultural contractors have every reason to be concerned for their future, particularly contractors who commit themselves to considerable financial investment to provide a service to farmers.

President Francie and Deputy Alice have a difficult task ahead of them and I hope that all farmers and contractors will rally around and show a united front. I say this because at the top of this article I said two remarkable things happened in the election of the IFA leadership. The second is how the country was split in the voting for the president you could almost draw a line across from Clare, Tipperary Waterford and all counties below voted for Martin Stapleton and all counties above voted for Francie Gorman. Effectively, the country was split in half. And the voting for the deputy president indicated a clear divide between the west and east of the country. On behalf of PAC Ireland, I wish them both well on their road ahead.

And, just one last thought. Who better to approach as an advisor to the IFA, than someone who has extensive inside knowledge of what the future policies for European agriculture are and the effect they will have on Irish agriculture. That someone, in my view, is Phil Hogan. No matter what your politics, he would be worth his weight in gold and if he accepted the offer, he'd frighten the bejaysus out of Brussels.

**Celebrating
60 years in
Ireland**

60/60 CashBack!

Get up to €360 cash back on select models

Contact your local BOGBALLE dealer

Agriquip	Littleton	0504 44214
Atkins	Birr	057 9125366
Atkins	Cork	021 4933420
Burke FM	Tipp. Town	062 51140
DH FM	Gort	091 630827
Farm Services	Coolgreaney	0402 37147
Igoe Agri	Roscommon	086 0597771
Keanes FM	Mayo	094 9365064
Joe O Toole & Sons	Tullow	059 9151354
Leinster FM	Duleek	041 9814404
Meath FM	(Cavan)	087 2897351
Mervyn Shorten	Croom	061 397588
Murphy Machinery	Kilkenny	056 7721920
Youngs Garage	Portarlinton	057 8623177

ActiveDrive8



TRUST THE RED THIS SPRING

Delivering the perfect balance of agility and power, our ActiveDrive8 gearbox is now available on the Vestrum family of tractors, featuring advanced Dual Clutch transmission for seamless shifting.

Experience this for yourself and take advantage of our great Spring offers, which include 0% finance*, available for 5+55 months. (ROI Business Users only, T&Cs apply. Ends 31st March 2024.)

Speak to your dealer today.



caseih.ie



Finance for Republic of Ireland Business purposes only. Subject to acceptance and affordability checks. Applicant must be 18 or over. Valid for new retail contracts only. Offer valid to 31/03/2024. The 0% offer is subject to a maximum balance to finance of 50% of RRP. The finance product offered under this promotion is Hire Purchase with a profile of 5+55 monthly payments. A documentation fee of €100.00 is due on signing. An option-to-purchase fee of €50.00 will be collected with the final payment. The customer will own the machine when all payments have been made. Terms and Conditions apply. Alternative finance options are available. Images are for illustrative purposes only. Finance is provided by DLL Leasing DAC trading as DLL, Hyundai Construction Equipment Europe Finance, HP Integrated Financial Solutions Managed by DLL, and Apple Financial Services is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland. Registered office: 7th Floor, 76 Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2. Registered No. 392788. Phone: +01 4814192

CASE IH



A DEMO DAY WITH KUHN

TOWARDS THE LATTER PART OF 2023, KUHN CENTER IRELAND HELD A VERY SUCCESSFUL TILLAGE DEMO DAY ON CONDELLS FARM IN ATHY, CO. KILDARE. THE COMPANY SHOWCASED AND DISPLAYED SOME OF THE LATEST MACHINES FROM ITS TILLAGE AND SEEDING RANGE. HERE, WE BRING YOU THE HIGHLIGHTS OF A GREAT DAY IN THE FIELD

Cultimer L300 and L4000

Part of Kuhn's cultivator range, which is available in models from 3m to 6m trailed. Versatile working depths from 3cm to 35cm depending on the type of cultivation being carried out. Working depth is maintained by Kuhn's double-spring non-stop safety system with a trip out force of 600kg at the point. Bevelled deflector on the leg ensures excellent mixing of the soil. The Cultimer offers three functions in one pass: mixing and loosening; levelling; and soil tamping.

Range of tips 80mm and 50mm with carbide as an option. All models have an independent row of levelling discs, hydraulic roller and hydraulic front depth wheels. The Cultimer is compatible with

Kuhn's SH cover crop seeders. Please note: the L4000 and L300 differ in terms of axle and front wheel depth.



Espro 4000 RC

The Espro 4000 RC - seed and fertiliser - is part of Kuhn's trailed drill range which runs from 3m up to 6m and has a 40%:60% split 4,000L hopper.

Kuhn's SH hopper can be integrated to offer the possibility to sow three different crops in one go. The Espro is equipped with the Crossflex double-disc seeding units complete with press wheels. The unique wheel design allows the drill to be used in conventional plough-till sow systems as well as min-till and direct-drill systems. The offset wheel allows for the free movement of soil through the drill and avoids any bulldozing even in sticky conditions for speeds of up to 18km/h.

The Espro has Isobus, as standard, and offers its own built-in programmable headland management system for efficient ins and outs. It is equipped, as standard, with the Vistaflow distribution head, enabling any tramline no matter the drilling working width, it also incorporates seed flow monitoring. The wheels are braked and the centre section lifts up for road use.



Optimizer L5000 Disc Harrow

The Optimizer range is available from 3m to 12.5m working width, combining intensive mixing, high speed and easy adjustment. The range has 510mm diameter discs, with small or large notches, mainly dedicated to surface stubble ploughing and soil preparation down to 10cm. The Optimizer XL is equipped with 620mm diameter discs to cut and incorporate residues down to 15cm



Venta 3030 Double Disc Drill

Available with Quantron control box or full Isobus system, 1,500L hopper, hinged steel lid that folds over 90 degrees for ease of loading. It has 20 Seedflex double-disc seeding coulters with press wheels ensuring fast and homogeneous emergence even at high drilling speeds. The drill is roller mounted for ease of depth adjustment. Designed to work in both ploughed and min-till conditions. Independent covering harrow and a universal metering unit suitable for all seeds without the need to change the entering wheel. This cultivation tool consists of two rows of discs and a packer roller. It can be swapped out with a 3030 power harrow in under 15 minutes. Marker arms are mounted on the cultivation tool offering superior strength and flexibility.



Kuhn VM 153 6 Furrow Plough

The Kuhn Master 153 mounted plough range is available from 3 to 6 bodies in Multi-Master and Vari-Master (VM) versions. This plough can be used with tractors up to 280hp. It has a strong construction 150mm beam, 80cm under beam clearance, and 96cm point-to-point clearance. This plough is available with: ZRL skimmers; excellent trash-burying qualities; one-piece headstock; NSH hydraulic reset; hydraulic ari width 12 inches to 20 inches; range of depth wheels from standard to combi; large range of bodies available with triple-layered steel; long-wearing points; and carbide points available.



CAVALLO ZEUS Twin Disc Fertiliser Spreader

- Basic model 18cwt with stainless steel extensions available to increase capacity to 1 tonne or 2 tonne capacity
- Stainless steel spinning discs, vanes and vibrating pans
- Hydraulic shut off on either side as standard
- Protection bars fitted
- Central Gearbox controlling spinning plates
- Spreading width between 12 and 18 metres

OPTIONAL EXTRAS:

- Filtering grid
- PVC Covers
- Lighting Kit
- 24 metre vanes can be fitted for wider spreading width



COSMO Fertiliser spreader

- High Precision Spreading
- 12 Metre Spreading Width
- Fibreglass Hopper
- Frame is heated, primed, with an oven baked paint finish for high corrosion resistance.
- High Quality Gearbox

MAIN IMPORTER
AND DISTRIBUTOR
IN IRELAND

TM TractaMotors

Dublin Road, Cavan Tel: 049 43 75900 / 087 681 1085 / 087 211 1540
www.tractamotors.ie email: james.clarke@tractamotors.ie



SHELBOURNE REYNOLDS STRENGTHENS DEALER COVERAGE IN IRELAND

Shelbourne Reynolds, the UK-based manufacturer of hedge trimmers, diet feeders, muck spreaders and other equipment, has strengthened its Irish dealer network with the appointment of a Borris-based dealer, complementing coverage provided by dealerships in Cork, Waterford and Kilkenny.

With depots at Borris in Carlow and Abbeyale in Laois, Kellys now represents Shelbourne Reynolds across those counties. The family-run business was established in 1957, and today is one of Ireland's largest stockists of new and used agricultural and plant machinery. Its other major franchises include Claas, JCB, Horsch, Dal-Bo, Sully and Tanco. Kellys has been appointed to sell and support the full range of Shelbourne Reynolds farm equipment, including Powermix vertical/ auger-type diet feeders with capacities from 9-30m³, Powerspread side-discharge manure spreaders with capacities from 8,000-14,500L (1,600-3,200 gallons) and hedge trimmers with maximum reach from 5m to 8m. Other machines manufactured and sold by the company include flail mowers and cubicle bedders. The appointment of Kellys complements the existing Irish dealer network supported by Shelbourne Reynolds, which comprises McCarthy Agri Sales in Co.

Cork and Murphy's Motors in Waterford and Kilkenny.

"We are really pleased to have filled some gaps in our offering with the Shelbourne Reynolds range of products, and to represent the firm across Carlow and Laois," says Maurice Kelly, managing director.

"Our demo fleet now includes a Shelbourne Reynolds 7060T hedge trimmer with telescopic capability that gives the machine 6.0m reach, and features the company's digital proportional joystick for ease of control. It can be booked for a demo at any time, and we're looking forward to showing the area's farmers and contractors what it can do. We're also keen to talk local farmers and contractors through the features of Powermix diet feeders and Powerspread muck spreaders."

Neil Smith, sales and marketing director at Shelbourne Reynolds, which is based in Suffolk, eastern England, says the company is pleased to have appointed a company of the calibre of Kellys to sell and support its products in Carlow and Laois.

"This is an excellent fit with our existing dealer network in Ireland, and it underlines our long-term commitment to the Irish market, in which we have been present for over 20 years."



A Shelbourne Reynolds 7060T with 6m telescopic reach is available for demo.

MALONE

GRASSLINE TECHNOLOGY FOR PROFESSIONALS

FEARNAHIL CONNOLLY
 +353 (0)87 0011 333
SALES
 +353 (0)84 9360 500
[SALES@MALONEFM.COM](mailto:sales@malonefm.com)

PROCUT 285/320

1. Quick Fit Blades
2. Walterscheid PTO
3. (Drive Shield Module) Protection in Cutter-Bar
4. Direct Drive with Friction Clutch
5. Hydraulic Flotation Suspension
6. Search Wheels

PROCUT 210/240/280

1. Quick Fit Blades
2. Walterscheid PTO Shaft with Overrun Protection
3. (Drive Shield Module) Protection in Cutter-Bar
4. Galvanized Folding Frame
5. Power Band Belt

PROCUT 3000 MP

1. Quick Fit Blades
2. Walterscheid PTO
3. (Drive Shield Module) Protection in Cutter-Bar
4. Direct Drive with Friction Clutch
5. Hydraulic Flotation Suspension
6. Search Wheels
7. Heavy Duty Cutter-Bar with 25mm Gears

TEDD-AIR 570/840

1. Hook Time
2. 7 Time Arms Per Roller
3. Walterscheid PTO with Radial Pin Clutch
4. Hydraulic Stabilisation
5. Headland Management
6. Light Kit
7. Spare Wheel

PROCUT 3000 TC

1. Quick Fit Blades
2. Walterscheid PTO
3. (Drive Shield Module) Protection in Cutter-Bar
4. Direct Drive with Friction Clutch
5. Spring Super Flotation System
6. Belt Driven Steel Time Saver Sowing Conditioner
7. Heavy Duty Cutter-Bar with 25mm Gears
8. Spreader Vents

TEDD-AIR 846T

1. Hook Time
2. 7 Time Arms Per Roller
3. Walterscheid PTO Shaft with Overrun
4. Cam Clutch Protection
5. Light Kit
6. Spare Wheel
7. Excellent Ground Contour

PROCUT 3000 MC

1. Quick Fit Blades
2. Walterscheid PTO
3. (Drive Shield Module) Protection in Cutter-Bar
4. Direct Drive with Friction Clutch
5. Spring Super Flotation System
6. Belt Driven Steel Time Saver Sowing Conditioner
7. Heavy Duty Cutter-Bar with 25mm Gears
8. Spreader Vents

**FINANCE
AVAILABLE
FOR ALL**



THE AWARD-WINNING McCORMICK X5.120 P3-DRIVE: THE IDEAL DAILY UTILITY TRACTOR

The McCormick X5.120 P3-Drive proudly topped the podium in the 2024 Tractor of the Year Best Utility section at the Agritechnica trade fair in Hanover, Germany last November. Compact, robust and versatile, the McCormick X5.120 P3-Drive has been described as 'the ideal utility vehicle for daily use on the farm'. Its main new feature is the P3-Drive transmission: 36+12 or 48+16 with creeper, designed and manufactured entirely in-house by Argo Tractors. It allows a combination of three PowerShifts (HML) with four robotised gears for each range, offering 12 automatically controlled ratios.

Despite the reduction in transmission, the P3 offers the same level of functionality as the P6, while there are separate operating modes for its in-field and on-road operations. The X5.120 P3-Drive is controlled by the ergonomic SmartPilot joystick, taking advantage of the Auto PowerShift (APS) function both for field operations (AutoField) and road transport (AutoRoad). Equipped with a 3.6-litre, 4-cylinder, 16-valve, Stage V compliant FPT F36 engine, the range delivers 95-114hp with maximum torque ranging from 395-460 Newton metres, all in a compact tractor with a wheelbase of 2,354mm.

Other special features include the Advanced Driving System+ (ADS+), which allows advanced steering

functions, while the combination of suspended axle and cab ensures high operator comfort.

Weighing 4,000kg unladen and featuring guidance, fleet and farm management systems, the X5.120 P3-Drive's versatility has already been proven to award-winning levels. Its triple-pump hydraulic system provides 82 litres per minute and a further 32 litres for steering, which route into its five spool valves in addition to powering the loader. The model's ISOBUS socket provides excellent connectivity and control while its rear hitch can lift up to 4,500kg. Meanwhile, its optional front lift can carry 2,200kg.

Argo Tractors is still basking in the double Tractor of the Year success it recorded at Agritechnica 2023 where the Landini Rex 4-120GT RoboShift Dynamic also came out on top in the Best of Specialised category.

"This is a great satisfaction that rewards and certifies our group's commitment to the production of state-of-the-art tractors, capable of responding comprehensively to the needs of operators and the world around us, with a focus on sustainability and being proactive towards the future," said Argo Tractors president, Valerio Morra. Mr Morra felt that the Tractor of the Year jury perfectly grasped the unique features of the company's products, which, he said, are always at the cutting edge thanks

to the company's extraordinary work and the commitment of its R&D department. "Argo Tractors is aware of the fundamental role it plays in the global agricultural mechanisation sector and that it has concrete possibilities, capabilities and tools to continue its business activities with determination and success. These triumphs confirm the strength and determination to implement products and services of excellent quality."

Welcoming the double-award success, Kevin Phelan, country manager for Argo Tractors Ireland, said: "To see McCormick claim the Best Utility prize for the second successive year is tremendously satisfying, given that the McCormick X6.414 P6-Drive was similarly recognised last year. And to see Argo Tractors also selected by the adjudicators in the Best of Specialised category through the Landini Rex 4-120GT RoboShift Dynamic represents a significant success for our company and a tremendous boost to our staff. "From Argo Tractors Ireland's perspective, this double accolade, recorded just five months on from our official Irish launch in July 2023, provided a tremendous confidence boost that will put further wind in our sails as we move into 2024."

For further details, visit
<https://www.mccormick.it/ie/>



TOMAHAWK C120 'CALIBRATOR'

The Tomahawk was first released to make it easier for farmers to bed straw in loose housing or feed baled silage for livestock.

That role has been extended to meet the needs of operators looking for precision-processed straw for bedding or feeding in modern total mixed ration (TMR) systems, according to its manufacturer, Teagale Machinery. Tomahawk models are now also found processing biomass for use in anaerobic digesters, or pelleting and briquetting applications, with electric-drive Tomahawk models now available.

These applications require precision in the length and condition of material being produced and increasingly high outputs to meet the needs of contractors and large-scale dairy units. In response, in 2017 Teagale launched the Tomahawk C12 Tub Grinder, which is now in use in over 20 countries. The C12 enables single operator use and homologation for safe use on roads. Importantly the machine allows quick screen changeover (direct from the ground), so that the operator can 'calibrate'

the material to precisely meet the needs of the application, from 100mm to an ultra-fine 5mm straw powder.

In its latest development, Teagale has released the Tomahawk C120 Calibrator for spring 2024 with a focus on increasing output further still, up to 15t/hr, and capability to process damp materials, with a focus on biogas applications. The popular grain milling hopper, an optional accessory, can now process up to 30t/hr. The new Tomahawk C120 updated features include:

- ▶ Ease of use – a round tub for straightforward loading (folding sides ensure legal transport width on roads).
- ▶ Greater output – a wider, longer and stronger twin ram conveyor, fed by an upgraded wider rotor housing system.
- ▶ Improved durability – Sintered Tungsten Carbide hammers as standard.
- ▶ Easier maintenance – auto-greasing of main driveline bearings and auto oiler for tub drive chain.

Components for the machine are now finished in a two-coat powder paint system.

Launched 40 years ago, the Tomahawk brand from manufacturer Teagale Machinery, based in Cornwall, has become synonymous with bale processing, with machines being shipped to over 40 countries worldwide every year.







- GPS SECTION CONTROL AND VARIABLE RATE APPLICATION
- 100% ISOBUS COMPATIBLE AS STANDARD
- ELECTRIC VALVE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
- WORKING WIDTHS FROM 18 TO 40 METRES



KVERNELAND ITRACK T-SERIES

OPTIMAL STABILITY AND ACCURACY

EVERY DROPLET IN THE CORRECT PLACE

PRECISE, EASY AND COST EFFECTIVE SPRAYING

BERNARD HENDERSON: 087 147 5137 | GREG TENNISON: 087 200 9489 | ALLAN WETHERINGTON: 0844 7826544630

WHEN FARMING MEANS BUSINESS www.kverneland.ie



SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH TILLAGE FARMER, IVAN CURRAN'S TESTIMONIAL ON HIS T4



QUICKE RELEASES NEW MANURE AND SILAGE GRAB

Quicke's Multigrab M+ is designed for use with front loaders, compact wheel loaders and up to medium sized telehandlers, and is available with M16 L Bolt on hook system.

The open bucket gable design and the circular movement of the rounded grab head minimise

the power requirements for easy handling of both manure and silage. The grab head can open 160cm, enabling you to drive up to a wall with the bucket cutting edge to scoop up that last material without tines touching the wall when the grab head is fully open, according to the company. Several accessories

are available to adapt the Multigrab M+ depending on the materials you are handling:

- ▶ **Clamp edge** – this serrated edge is bolted to the grab head tines and is perfect when you want to hold on to the material to prevent spillage. It is also recommended when handling irregular sized objects like construction debris, stumps and logs.
- ▶ **Clamp bar** – this round bar is optimal when you need to hold down the material and efficiently prevents material from getting stuck in the grab. Recommended when handling compost and branches.
- ▶ **Tine sleeves** – prevent any grabbed material from becoming pierced and stuck on the tip of the tine. Another advantage is that it also works as wear protection for the tine tips.
- ▶ **Cylinder guard** – bolted to the cylinders to protect the cylinder couplings and hoses from long and bulky debris.

FERTILIZER SPREADERS

SPREAD SUCCESS!

With **Spica**, **Tauri** and **Polaris**, LEMKEN offers the right fertiliser spreader for every farm. Clever technologies not only minimise losses, but also increase efficacy and spreading pattern. In other words, this is where maximum reliability and sophisticated technology come together.

OUR DRIVING FORCE: **YOUR SUCCESS!**

FOR EVEN GREATER PRECISION:

SpeedControl – the automatic spread rate regulation adapted to driving speed.*

*standard for Polaris 14 SpeedControl and Polaris 16 SpeedControl



Find out more on
[lemken.com](https://www.lemken.com)

Contact: Derek Delahunty, LEMKEN Area Sales Manager
d.delahunty@lemken.com

LEMKEN THE AGROVISION COMPANY



FTMTA SHOW: NEW DATE, OLD FORMAT

The Farm Tractor & Machinery Trade Association's (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show is reverting to its traditional indoor format for 2024 and will be held at the Punchestown Event Centre from Tuesday, November 12 to Thursday, November 14. The 35th edition of the show has moved to its new winter date in response to industry demands according to FTMTA executive director, Michael Farrelly.

"FTMTA 2024, in its most familiar guise, as the country's flagship indoor farm machinery show and running over three days, is well and truly back," he said.

"Having previously been associated with February, the show is now moving to November and will revert to being held on a bi-annual basis and will therefore take place out of sync with Agritechnica."

He explained that since the pandemic, the ordering cycle for farm machinery has shifted significantly. "A typical February nowadays involves machines being delivered into dealers' yards while most serious conversations about new machinery now tend to be had in and around the previous November. So, taking that key factor into account, along with the busy spring-calving and lambing seasons from the typical farmer's perspective, moving the show to November was a logical step to take."

Highlighting why the FTMTA Farm Machinery Show stands alone in an Irish context, Michael added: "As is our tradition, we'll have the manufacturers on site at Punchestown, talking directly with the visiting public who consistently seek out that first-hand level of detail from the industry's experts. That's a unique level of interaction that our show prides itself on providing."

According to FTMTA president, Karol Duigenan: "Exhibitors and visitors alike will be delighted to see our show returning to its indoor format while moving to a new slot in the farming calendar. The industry is constantly evolving and FTMTA has always recognised and reacted to emerging trends and developments. Taking the show back indoors was something we had always envisaged following the pandemic so we're delighted to have taken this significant step."



FTMTA executive director, Michael Farrelly.

Tel: 01 8259289 www.farmec.ie

Free Hopper Cover
7 Year Paint Warranty

FERTITEST

Irish Fertiliser Spreading Charts

▶ SPREADING ACCURACY SAVES MONEY
▶ SIMPLEST SETTINGS ON THE MARKET

TAMS for GPS spreader extended to all farmers

YOU CAN OWN A DX20 FROM €85 PER MONTH

CONTACT OUR SALES TEAM

Stephen 087 9543332 Garry 087 2503491

*T&Cs apply



Denis Drennan
President ICMSA

THE EXCLUSION OF FARMERS IS ABSURD

The ICMSA was asked to comment on the publication of *Ten-Point Action Plan on supporting Dairy Calf to Beef Systems in Ireland* and while it is obvious that the plan has merit, it's equally obvious that its potential was hugely undercut by the complete lack of any consultation with the very farmers who would implement the bulk of the actions. We described this approach as both absurd and disappointing and noted this was yet another in the increasingly long line of state initiatives where the Government decided on measures without consulting the stakeholders, published their proposals and then engaged in token consultation with the stakeholders afterwards. This approach has been hugely damaging and wasteful and the Government needs to reacquire itself with the actual meaning of consultation.

GET REAL

This 'after-the-fact' token 'consultation' becomes even more inexcusable if you believe – as we in ICMSA do – that a vibrant dairy-calf-to-beef system can be developed in Ireland that will deliver probably the most climate-efficient beef-production system in the world. ICMSA was the first farm organisation to identify this option and we have been the most consistent supporter of the rather half-hearted attempts on the Government's part to get it up and going. But we are long past the point where the minister is going to have to get real. Dairy beef production accounts for in excess of 60 per cent of total beef production in Ireland, delivering billions in net foreign earnings for the country while the minister allocates a measly €6m per annum to support dairy-beef production. This is in sharp contrast with organic farming with an annual budget of €56m and forestry with a budget of €110m for 2024.

If the Government is as serious about

climate change as it insists it is, then it must invest in low-emissions beef production. We need to see a dairy-beef-calf scheme with a substantial exchequer budget that will deliver a payment for both the calf rearer, subject to certain conditions, and also a payment for the beef finisher. Secondly, the beef price grid needs the long-overdue reforms that stop the ridiculous penalising of dairy beef that now comprises most of the total Irish beef production.

We could have pointed all this out and helped design a real plan with real capacity to solve a real problem. But we weren't even asked. Sooner or later, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is going to have to question the wisdom of continuing to have these 'consultations' with themselves only to then come forward with plans that contain glaring gaps that could have been filled if only they had asked other parties.

AND SPEAKING OF GLARING GAPS...

Farmers will react with fury to media reports of a last-minute scramble on the part of the outgoing EU Commission to conclude a Mercosur Agreement. As far as we are concerned, any such deal will end forever the right of the EU to comment or develop policy in relation to climate change. Realistically, it is most unlikely that agreement will be reached given the scale of current farmer protest and dissension in both France and Germany. But even the idea that a deal could be rushed through before the Commission's mandate expired was as astonishing as it was demoralising. The Taoiseach must signal immediately Ireland's opposition to any such cynical attempt to 'race for the line' on the part of those elements who had never given up on their attempt to facilitate mass importation of South American beef regardless of the entirely predictable environmental disaster

that would entail.

The principal commodity that the Mercosur countries want to export to the EU is beef and other less important agri-products. In the event of a trade agreement being reached, those exports will be increased and produced off cleared forests – that's not the opinion of farmers groups, it's the opinion of every reputable analysis of the situation. So the proposed Mercosur Agreement boils down to this: To facilitate EU tech and financial exports to South America, the EU proposes to facilitate South American beef imports here that will wipe out what's left of indigenous EU beef production, while inflicting cataclysmic damage to the most important forestry left on the planet. Is there any sentient person in the EU Commission or the Irish Government who imagines that that is a tenable policy? You'd really have to ask.

ON THE LINE

What's amazing here is the 'political deafness' of the Commission and the 'political hypocrisy' of governments like our own, who are happy to ram through measure-after-measure on the grounds of sustainability and climate mitigation that hit farmers – and only farmers – while allowing the Commission to aspire to agreements like the Mercosur Agreement that would, at a stroke, negate every single environmental measure that the EU has carried through in a decade. What's the point of this? Where is the consistency? Where's the logic of shutting down beef production in Ireland and driving it into a dysfunctional forestry sector, while signalling the Brazilians that they can start clearing what's left of the rainforests to raise lesser quality beef to export to us? Nothing less than the credibility of the EU or the Irish Government to ever again comment on the environment is on the line here.



A VERY GOOD INDICATION

A NUMBER OF IRISH BRANDS AND PRODUCTS HAVE SECURED SPECIAL INDICATIONS THAT CAN HELP TO ESTABLISH UNIQUE SELLING POINTS; THE MOST RECENT OF THESE WAS THE PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (PGI) STATUS GIVEN TO IRISH GRASS FED BEEF AT THE END OF 2023. HERE, WE EXPLORE THESE PRODUCTS AND THEIR COVETED INDICATIONS

PDO AND PGI – WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) is a name which identifies a product: (a) originating in a specific place, region or, in exceptional cases, a country; (b) whose quality or characteristics are essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors; and (c) the production steps of which all take place in the defined geographical area. Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) is a name which identifies a product: (a) originating in a specific place, region or country; (b) whose given quality, reputation or other characteristic is essentially attributable to its defined area of origin; and (c) at least one of the production steps of which take place in the defined geographical area.

Differentiating products or brands can be a challenge but there are ways that certain products can be set apart from the competition. Geographical indications (GI) include protected geographical indications (PGI) and protected designations of origins (PDO). These are a type of intellectual property right, protecting food product names that are linked to a particular territory or to a production method. Well-known examples are French Champagne, Gouda cheese made with milk from Dutch dairy farms, and Prosciutto di Parma PDO, which is aged raw Italian ham. According to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), the EU's GI scheme is beneficial to producers as it allows for the identification and protection of names of specific agricultural products which have particular value-adding characteristics linked to their place of origin. GI recognition enables consumers to trust and distinguish quality products while also helping producers to market their products.

Until recently, Ireland had eight registered PDO/PGI food product names: Clare Island Salmon (PGI); Imokilly Regato (PDO); Timoleague Brown Pudding (PGI); Connemara Hill Lamb (PGI); Waterford Blaa (PGI); Oriel Sea Salt (PDO); Oriel Sea Minerals (PDO), and Sneem Black Pudding (PGI). Three spirit drink names, Irish Whiskey, Irish Cream, and Irish Poitín, have GI status.

IRISH GRASS FED BEEF

In November 2023, Irish Grass Fed Beef was announced as an all-island PGI, and it refers to cattle that derive at least 90 per cent of their feed intake, as determined by the Grass Fed Beef Standard, from grass. This is primarily grazed grass, with winter feeding of conserved grass (silage and hay); and spend a minimum of 220 days per year throughout their lifetime grazing pasture. In addition, only carcasses from certain higher-grade beef animals are eligible to be classified as Irish Grass Fed Beef as follows:

ACHILL ISLAND SEA SALT

Achill Island Sea Salt also achieved PDO status in 2023. The company was founded by the O'Malley family in 2013, inspired by the tradition of salt production on Achill Island. The unique characteristics of Achill Island Sea Salt come from the mineral content of the grade A wild Atlantic waters, creating salt flakes with a distinctive taste and texture. Achieving PDO status will mean that producers of Achill Island Sea Salt may use the PDO logo on their products. This, according to the Irish Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConologue, provides both recognition of the exceptional quality and unique characteristics of this hand-harvested sea salt from the waters around Achill Island. Maebh O Malley, sales and marketing manager at Achill Island Sea Salt, explained the process to *Irish Farmers Monthly* in a little more detail.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO PURSUE THE PDO?

"We decided to pursue it to give Achill Island Sea Salt the recognition for its unique link to the geographical region (Achill Island) and the way and which it is made. The PDO will signify to our consumers the provenance and heritage of our product. It will give consumers the confidence that they are buying the genuine Achill Island Sea Salt product. Achill Island Sea Salt, with its PDO status, stands as a symbol of provenance and rich culinary heritage of Achill Island."



DO YOU FEEL A PDO IS IMPORTANT WHEN EXPORTING YOUR PRODUCTS?

"We ship all over the world via our online shop and I think the PDO will help Achill Island Sea Salt when exporting in the future. PDO is a well-recognised and understood status and signifies to customers the quality and provenance of a product."

WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESPONSE TO THE PDO SO FAR?

"The response has been extremely positive from our current customers, and from the Irish food industry as a whole. It's a great boost for Achill Island too, to have a PDO food from the area."

Steers and heifers aged up to 36 months with conformation better than 0- and fat score between 2+ and 4+; and Beef cows of up to 120 months with conformation better than 0+ and with fat score between 2+ and 5.

Jim O'Toole, Bord Bia's chief executive said that Irish Grass Fed Beef has now joined an illustrious club of European food and drink products afforded protected geographical status. "This is positive news for the Irish beef sector. From spring 2024, we plan to embark on a marketing campaign to promote the PGI for Irish grass-fed beef to key customers in European markets," he said.

He added: "The initial focus will be around building awareness among trade customers, followed by targeted consumer marketing when product is available in market. PGI status is widely recognised in continental markets, and Bord Bia will leverage this opportunity for the benefit of Irish beef farmers and the wider beef sector."



CERTIFIED IRISH ANGUS BEEF

Another Irish product has applied for PGI status. In November the DAFM announced it has launched the national opposition procedure for a PGI for Certified Irish Angus Beef. Certified Irish Angus Beef is the name given to meat derived from certified Angus/Angus-cross cattle. A national opposition procedure is a stage in the application process for a PGI which must be undertaken before the application can be formally submitted to the European Commission. The application for a national opposition procedure follows scrutiny by the DAFM and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, UK, in accordance with the EU requirements. The opposition procedure provides the opportunity for any natural or legal person, having a legitimate interest and established or resident in Ireland, to lodge an opposition to the applications.

Commenting, on this positive all-island application, Minister McConologue said: "It follows the all-island application for the Irish Grass-Fed Beef PGI. This joint application demonstrates the strong ongoing cooperation between my department and its counterparts in Northern Ireland on agricultural matters."

WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH IDLE CHATTER ABOUT INDUSTRIAL, INTENSIVE FARMING AND UNSUSTAINABLE IRISH FOOD PRODUCTION



MATT O'KEEFFE
EDITOR

GRASS IS OUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Let the facts speak for themselves.

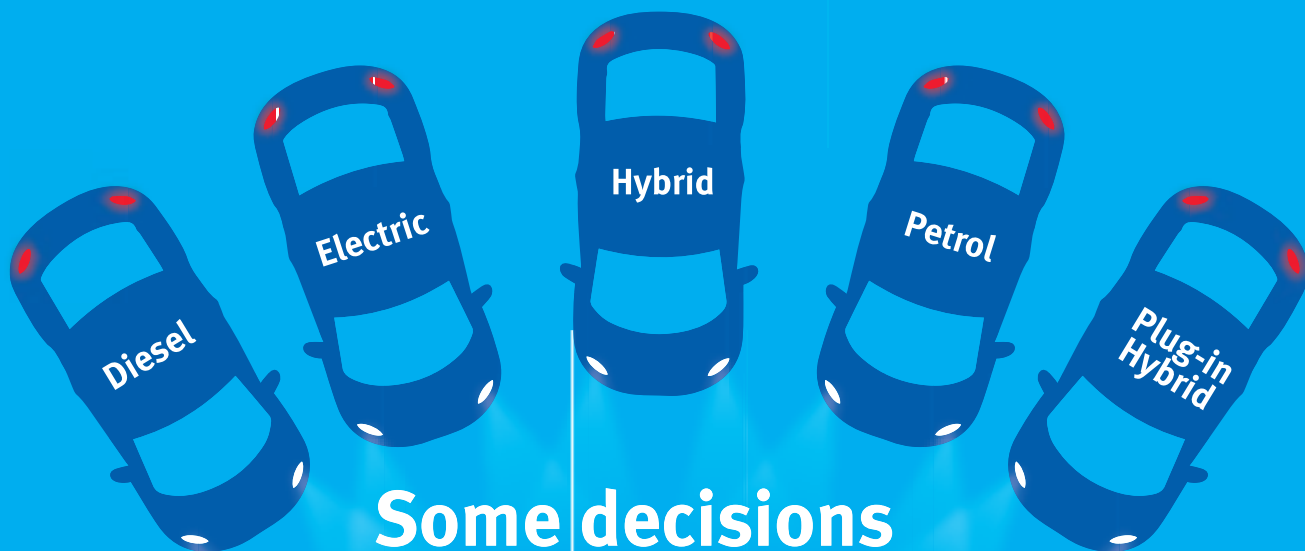
The average Irish milk-production herd comprises 93 cows. New Zealand's herd size is 435 cows. In the US, there are now 317 cows in the average herd. Dutch herds have 97 cows, on average, mostly producing milk in confined production systems and with almost double our intensity as measured by either kilogrammes of milk produced per cow or per hectare. Our suckler herds average 16 cows, one third of the size of the average US herd. The figure for Canada is 70 cows, itself a small fraction of the average Australian beef-cow herd.

We have had enough idle chatter about industrial, intensive farming and unsustainable Irish food production. The reality can only be confirmed through comparison with other food-producing countries. It is, and must be, a relative comparison. We all need food to survive and suggesting that livestock-based food-production systems are unsustainable is a nihilistic attitude. Insisting that only low-productivity and plant-based food production systems are sustainable is equally illogical. If only low-input/low-output food production is sustainable, given finite land resources, then how are we to produce enough food to sustain our global population? There is an

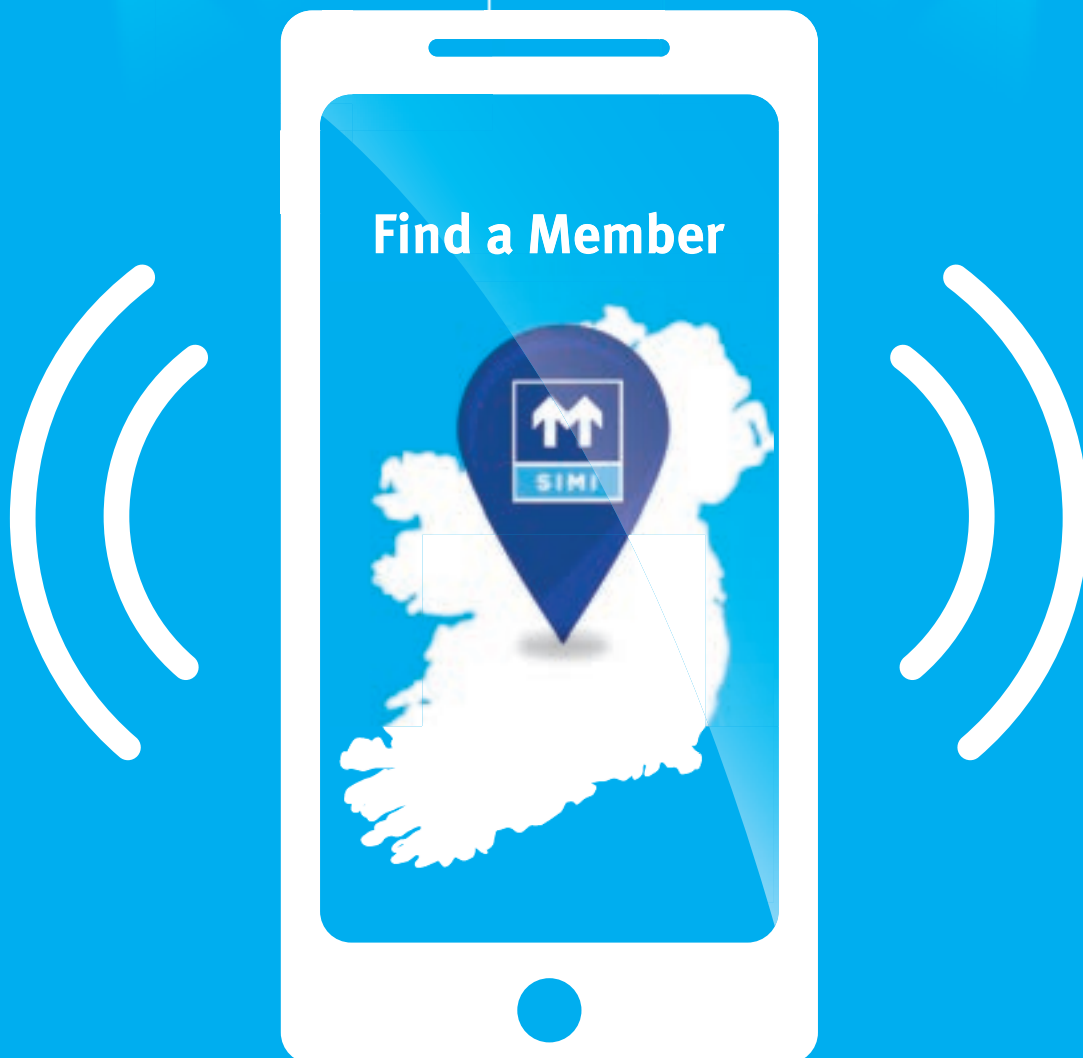
ongoing insistence that we need to change our diets towards plant-based food. Ignore the potential nutritional deficits in an entirely plant-based diet for a moment. There is the other reality that most humans want a varied diet, including meat and dairy, as well as plant options. This reality means that we should measure relative sustainability when making food choices. Irish milk and meat are among the most sustainably produced on the planet, as Tadhg Buckley, director of policy at the Irish Farmers' Association confirmed at last month's Irish Grassland Association's (IGA's) Dairy Conference. Our carbon footprint for milk production is a creditable 0.97kg CO₂ equivalent (e) and reduces further to 0.86kg CO₂e when carbon sequestration is included in the calculation. Now, make the comparisons. The carbon footprint of US milk production is 1.01kg CO₂e, again including sequestration. The figure for The Netherlands is 1.15kg CO₂e. Only New Zealand can claim a lower – 0.88kg CO₂e – carbon footprint than Ireland. There is another comparison worthy of examination. Freshwater is a valuable and globally scarce commodity. The volume of water used to produce meat and milk is a critical measure of relative sustainability. The Irish average fresh-water extraction rate per kilogramme of

fat and protein corrected milk (FPCM) is by far the lowest of the major meat/milk producers globally. We extract six litres of water from ground or surface sources to produce one kilogramme of FPCM. The figure for the US is 77 litres. New Zealand has a 78 litres demand and Dutch farmers need 60 litres to produce one kilogramme of FPCM. Tadhg also confirmed that Irish producers have one of the lowest water demands per litre of milk produced in the world. While humanity continues to favour a blended diet including livestock-sourced food, there is an unassailable argument that this food should be produced in the most sustainable manner. Ireland's grass-based production system fulfils that requirement. It also provides our single competitive advantage for all our livestock production farms. We are, as the IGA conference attendees heard, working in a high-cost economy. We need the highest minimum wage in the EU to sustain our lowest-paid workers who, with the rest of our population, pay the dearest electricity prices in Europe. Further erosion of our ability to efficiently turn low grade carbohydrate grass into high quality human-edible food protein will not only remove our competitive advantage, but it will also diminish our sustainable food production credentials.

**SIMI Retailers will help you choose a car
for your driving needs and requirements**



**Some decisions
are simple**



SIMI.IE

Brought to you by the Society of the Irish Motor Industry

**PNEUMONIA
VACCINE**



BE FIRST BE FAST

**ONLY Bovilis INtranasal RSP™ Live allows
you to vaccinate your calves from the
DAY OF BIRTH**



TALK TO YOUR VET ABOUT **BOVILIS INtranasal RSP™ Live**

Bovilis INtranasal RSP™ Live: contains live, bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV), strain Jencine-2013, live bovine parainfluenza virus type 3 (PI3), strain INT2-2013.

Withdrawal periods: Zero days. Legal Categories: ROI [POM(E)] NI [POM-V]

Use medicines responsibly

For further information see SPC, contact prescriber or MSD Animal Health, Red Oak North, South County Business Park, Leopardstown, Dublin 18, Ireland.

Tel: +353(0)1 2970220. E-Mail: vet-support.ie@msd.com
Web: www.msd-animal-health.ie

 **MSD Animal Health Ireland - Cattle & Sheep**
  **MSD Animal Health Ireland**  **@msd_ah**



MSD
Animal Health