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SEPTEMBER 2021



The future of farming:

A new landscape
for Irish agriculture

TARA MCCARTHY, CEO BORD BIA,
DISCUSSES THE KEY CHALLENGES
AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IRISH
FARMERS OVER THE COMING DECADE

INDUSTRY LEADERS AND
FARMERS GIVE THEIR VIEW ON
CAP REFORM, FOOD VISION
2030, AND THE CLIMATE AGENDA



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Balancing productivity and regulation

In this issue of the *Irish Farmers Monthly* we examine the immediate and longer-term prospects for Irish farming. One fact is clear: in the years ahead the prosperity of Irish agriculture, in its broadest sense, will be inextricably linked to environmental management as much as to efficiency levels and productivity.

In the past, our focus has been on maximising production while paying due regard to its impact on the surrounding environment. With increasing restrictions on inputs across crop protectants, antimicrobials and fertilisers, the focus will now shift towards optimising production and securing due recognition for the unique features of our production systems. We have already seen our food promotion bodies, including Bord Bia and Ornua, as well as our food processors and marketeers, highlighting those unique attributes. Some features, such as our family farm structure, are somewhat abstract, though highly valued by a cohort of informed consumers. Others are directly related to production features, especially grass-based livestock production and high environmental standards as evidenced through the Origin Green Programme.

On farm, our farmers must increasingly adopt those technologies that deliver economic returns without undue cost. These will include sward management, with clover inclusion playing an important role, optimising the use and effectiveness of liquid and solid farmyard manures and increased selectivity and application accuracy of fertilisers and other inputs. Fertiliser and spray machinery now have accuracy levels unheard of previously. Animal breeding still offers potential for huge efficiency gains. All of these management practices must be utilised to best effect if Irish farming is to be efficient, productive and viable in the years ahead. We can no longer rely on the merits of food production alone to promote our industry. That case must be accompanied by strong credentials and science-based facts supporting our reputation as environmentally aware food producers. The only way to counteract the glib criticisms of 'industrial farming' and 'greenwashing' is to re-confirm our high environmental standards again and again through science and farm management practices.

In this IFM issue we do not dwell on all of the challenges. That is not to ignore them but rather to highlight the positive attributes of Irish farming, which will ultimately bring success if we are, indeed, to succeed in protecting our interests and livelihoods. The value of research and the adoption of science-based agricultural and environmental practices are mentioned by many of our contributors in this issue. While change can be difficult, we must not be under any illusion that we will prosper without change. The outcomes of ongoing discussion and consultation around the next Common Agricultural Policy will demand huge change in our daily farming lives. An Eco-scheme is a nebulous term for the introduction of environmentally positive farming practices, some of which are already adopted on an ad hoc basis on many farms and will now demand widespread adoption. There will be additional regulatory impositions that will be costly, intrusive and restrictive on our productivity. Ultimately, the challenge will be to balance the necessity to adopt those eco-schemes, while attempting to ensure that they do not impede progress and productivity on our farms. Otherwise, we risk denying ourselves the financial supports necessary to continue farming. Much as we, the same as farmers across the world, want the 'freedom to farm', if we do not conform to the restrictive practices placed on our farms by CAP, Farm to Fork and Green Deal, we will not survive and thrive in the coming decades.



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The Future of Farming

Foreword by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue

This summer, I joined An Taoiseach Micheál Martin in launching the new pioneering strategic framework for the sustainable development of the agri-food sector: 'Food Vision 2030 – A World Leader in Sustainable Food Systems'.

The Strategy, developed by a broad group of stakeholders from across the sector, has set an ambitious vision – that Ireland will become a world leader in sustainable food systems over the next decade. We want this to deliver significant benefits for the Irish agri-food sector itself, for Irish society and the environment. Demonstrating that the sector meets the highest standards of sustainability – economic, environmental, and social – can also provide the basis for its future competitive advantage.

By adopting an integrated food systems approach, Ireland will become a global leader of innovation for sustainable food and agriculture systems, producing safe, nutritious, and high-value food that tastes great, while protecting and enhancing our natural and cultural resources and contributing to vibrant rural and coastal communities and the national economy. Food Vision 2030 proposes four high level Missions to deliver this:

- A Climate Smart, Environmentally Sustainable Agri-Food Sector
- Viable and Resilient Primary Producers, with Enhanced Wellbeing
- Food that is Safe, Nutritious and Appealing, Trusted and Valued at Home and Abroad
- An Innovative, Competitive and Resilient Sector, Driven by Technology and Talent.

Each of these Missions contains Goals and Actions for all stakeholders in the sector to implement.

Food Vision 2030 has put farmers and fishers, as our primary producers, at the heart of the 10-year Strategy.

This is only right – every other part of the agri-food chain, from processors to retailers, consumers and beyond, relies almost entirely on their produce. Our farmers and our fishers are the bedrock of our great

sector.

While grass-based livestock production will continue to account for the majority of agri-food output, the Strategy proposes that there should be better integration between sectors, and an examination of diversification and resilience at farm level.

Social factors such as generational renewal, gender balance, education and training, health and safety, mental health and wellbeing and broader rural development are central to the Food Vision 2030 strategy. Maintaining our model of family farming is a stated ambition and ultimately, addressing these areas will enhance the quality of life of those farm families and make an important contribution to their overall sustainability.

In relation to environmental sustainability, Food Vision 2030 acknowledges the challenges that exist for the sector across climate, water quality and biodiversity, but equally points to areas where good progress is being made. Food Vision 2030 provides a detailed pathway through which farmers can respond to environmental challenges, by not only producing nutritious high quality food, but also becoming providers of a range of eco-system services.

In the face of significant challenges in recent years, farmers have proven themselves adaptable and able to embrace change. Food Vision also identifies the need for others to play their part. From processors and retailers providing the necessary financial incentives and rewards, to consumers placing an appropriate value on the safe, sustainable high quality food from Irish farms, there is a need for everyone to step up to the challenge of sustainability. The combined efforts of many will deliver more rapid and just rewards for farmers, our environment and our planet.

Food Vision sets a hugely ambitious agenda for all of us in the agri-food sector. I am determined that the CAP Strategic Plan, currently being developed, will support farmers in achieving this ambition.

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The provisional beef movement



The Beef Plan Movement continues to disintegrate, reintegrate and generally adhere to the Brendan Behan maxim that an organisation's first item on the agenda is to organise the split. The latest iteration to appear is IBLA (Irish Beef and Lamb Association). While these developments may be a source of amusement for some, the harsh reality is that anything other than a united front of farming interests will be enough in the years ahead to defend farmers interests. While there is a generally optimistic atmosphere in farming circles now because of buoyant prices, the political forces in Europe and Ireland are not aligned towards allowing farming to continue to operate as it has in the past. While the Irish cattle sector is made up of a range of interests running through suckler farmers, store producers and fatteners, with any number of subsections in each category, having a dedicated representative organisation for every interest is neither practical nor profitable. It allows officialdom in the guise of DAFM, Ministers, EU policy makers and the allied forces of the anti-meat brigades to run roughshod over farmers. There are few enough of us left to defend ourselves against a myriad of vested interests. Some unity of purpose is our only viable defense.

VACCINATING LIVESTOCK THIS AUTUMN AND WINTER? TAKE 5 MINUTES TO READ THIS ARTICLE

Respiratory disease costs, on average, €93¹ per affected calf when considering the direct costs such as treatment and labour. The effect on growth rates can be an even larger cost—a moderate case of pneumonia can reduce daily live weight gain (DLWG) by up to 72g/day – equivalent to a 22Kg loss over a 10 month period and in severe cases a reduction of 202g/day (61Kg over a 10 month period)² has been recorded. During periods of stress such as weaning, grouping and housing, animals' requirements for trace minerals increase. Stress often results in animals' dry matter intakes (DMI) reducing which means that whilst demand for trace minerals has increased, intakes have actually decreased, and it is not uncommon to see weanlings, fall into poor trace mineral status during this period.

Many animals will also be vaccinated at the same time as weaning and housing. Vaccination increases the demand for trace minerals as they are required for the body to respond to a vaccine and create antibodies which will then provide protection against specific diseases. Selenium (Se), Copper (Cu) and Zinc (Zn) in particular are vital for vaccine response^{3,4,5}.

When a group of cattle are vaccinated the response to that vaccine by the individuals within the group will vary. Factors such as nutrition, stress, vitamin and mineral status, and the general health of the animal being vaccinated will affect how the immune system responds to the vaccine.

Therefore, stressors such as weaning and transport can exacerbate trace mineral imbalances which could lead to reduced response to vaccines⁶.

It is worth emphasising that trace minerals have poor intestinal absorption regardless of the source⁷. This poor oral absorption is further reduced by antagonists such as sulphur, molybdenum, calcium & iron⁸. Daily oral intake of trace minerals are essential to meet maintenance requirements in cattle, but at high demand periods like weaning or vaccination intake can fall in response to stress. Consequently clinical or sub-clinical deficiency can develop.

Studies from leading universities have demonstrated the beneficial effects of strategic injectable trace mineral (ITM) supplementation. In particular by enhancing the immune responses to vaccination^{9,10,11}.

The effects of ITM supplementation with concurrent vaccination have been measured. Compared to controls, animals treated with an ITM supplement at the time of vaccination had significantly greater neutralizing antibody titres against IBR on days 14, 30, and 60 post vaccination⁹.

Strategic ITM supplementation bypasses the harsh rumen environment, rapidly raising circulating mineral levels in cattle within 8-10 hours, and after 24 hours the trace mineral concentrations in the storage organs like the liver are at raised concentrations.¹²

Vaccination is a powerful tool to prevent infections; ask your veterinary surgeon how an injectable trace mineral supplement could help to enhance vaccine response and therefore immunity in your herd.

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The Dublin cattle market

Those of a relatively mature age will remember that cattle were run through the streets of Dublin to be bought and sold at the Cattle Market up to a mere half century ago. Declan O'Brien's treatise on the subject of the decline and ultimate closure of the cattle trading practice in the centre of our capital has done justice to the subject. Undertaken as a thesis for his MA, Declan recounts the many personalities associated with the Dublin Cattle Market and the origin and destinations of the cattle bought and sold in it. While much of the trade, certainly in the earlier days – and it dates back to the 1800s – was centered on securing store cattle to be shipped out of Dublin for finishing on English farms, the Market was also an important source of fat cattle for immediate slaughter. Dublin had its share of local, family-owned abattoirs and many of these secured their supplies from the Dublin Market. Such a trade would be impossible now and, apart from the traffic issues, would probably be a step too close to the reality of cattle and meat production for most Dubs who associate beef with a plastic-packaged product on a supermarket shelf or well-appointed butcher shops. The butcher stalls are in the minority and boutique abattoirs are a thing of the past. Declan's book is widely available.

Antibiotic alternatives

Setting good bacteria to fight bad ones is not a new concept, especially in health food shops. It is not widely practiced in animal medicine, yet. With increasing restrictions being placed on anti-microbial products, the need for alternative approaches to mastitis and a range of other livestock maladies must open our minds to novel remedies. Biotechnology company AHV Solutions promotes a range of products that may have roles to offer in countering infections and animal ailments. Danone is among the global strategic partners of AHV. With research undertaken and more ongoing, including work in WIT, there is a growing body of evidence, as outlined by the company, that the quorum sensing technology used has a role to play in inhibiting the actions of malign bacteria while assisting in the promotion of an animal's own natural resistance responses to disease. Applied in drench form, the products enter the rumen and then migrate to the relevant site, as explained in AHV Solutions literature. The proof, ultimately, will be in the results.



Setting the farm up for spring 2022

Maeve Regan,
Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

Although spring 2022 may seem some distance away, the success of this key period will centre on the plans and decisions that will be made over the next number of weeks and months.

Already, a bank of grass should be building on farm to allow for an extended grazing season, as well as closing the farm with sufficient grass available for an early turnout. Replacement heifers should be weighed at this point to assess if target weights are being achieved (30% of mature bodyweight at 6 months). Supplementation may be introduced at grass where a cohort of these heifers are below target.

Beyond this, now is the time to assess the main herd nutritionally and make timely decisions to reduce the chances of metabolic diseases during calving 2022.

Late lactation nutrition

Late lactation is the optimum time to manipulate body condition. If cows have a body condition score (BCS) < 3.0, energy intake needs to increase. The ideal scenario is to dry cows off in the same condition as when they calve down. This would result in only having to provide the cow with a maintenance diet over the dry period. Cows with a low BCS (<2.75) should be dried off early and fed accordingly to assist in achieving target BCS at calving.

Forage analysis

The importance of knowing the quality of your forage is often underestimated, as it allows us to make informed decisions. Winter supplementation levels for youngstock will be dictated by forage quality. Dry cow diets will also depend on the quality of silage in the yard, whereby dilution with straw may be required to avoid over-conditioned cows at the point of calving. For autumn calving herds, forage analysis is vital to ensure the cow is being allocated sufficient energy to avoid severe or prolonged negative energy balance.

A forage mineral analysis will also highlight possible risk factors associated with metabolic issues. E.g., high potassium (K) levels in silage reduces magnesium availability which is often associated with the increased risk of milk fever. Tailored dry cow mineral provision advice is required in such cases.

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Guild launch 60th video

Last month, the All-Ireland AGM of the Guild of Agricultural Journalists was held virtually. The event marked the official launch of a commemorative video to celebrate 60 years since the organisation was founded. The 20-minute video brings viewers on a journey across the rich landscape of Irish agricultural journalism and the important role the guild has played within the industry over the years. It features interviews from Guild founder Larry Sheedy and contributions from Michael Miley, Mairead McGuinness, and current President Richard Halloran. The video was produced by Agriland and sponsored by FBD.

Speaking at the unveiling of the video to members during the Guild's All-Ireland AGM, southern section chair, Amy Forde, explained the importance

of what has been captured on video. "To mark the 60th anniversary of the Guild, we decided to commission a video looking back at the six decades of the Guild's existence. We have captured a range of views from members from the northern and southern sections and I think it is something that will stand to the Guild in the future. I would like to thank FBD for their sponsorship and seeing the importance of creating such a video and for their ongoing support throughout the years."

Reflecting on the state of agriculture in the 1990s, Mairead McGuinness, former southern section chair and current European Commissioner for Financial Stability, Financial Services and the Capital Markets Union highlights the importance of having farmers' voices heard and the role

agricultural media play. Moving into present day media and the news cycle, former All-Ireland president, Michael Miley, acknowledges the dramatic change in how we receive and process information. Commenting on this new era of news, northern section chair Rachel Martin said: "In an era where we hear terms like 'fake news' in common use, independent, original journalism has never been more important, and that carries across to agriculture - one of our most important industries. The industry has several significant challenges facing it in the decades ahead with pressure over subsidies and emissions, so it is crucial both farmers and the public are kept well informed through commentary and analysis from professional agricultural journalists."

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Connolly joins Origin Enterprises



Former Chief Innovation officer for Alltech, Aidan Connolly has joined Origin as a non-executive Director. Connolly has over 30 years' experience in the agribusiness sector and is highly regarded by his peers. Aidan is an adjunct professor of marketing in the Smurfit Business School, and is President of Agritech Capital, a US-based strategy and investment firm which supports innovation and technology. Aidan is also CEO of the Irish start-up Cainthus, a company specialising in monitoring key farm management practices that impact on livestock nutrition. He will bring a wealth of knowledge to the Origin board. Commenting, Rose Hynes, Chairman of Origin said: "I am delighted to welcome Aidan to the Board. Aidan brings extensive international agribusiness experience and sectoral knowledge, including agtech expertise, which will further diversify and strengthen the range of skills and experience on Origin's Board and support the Group's continued growth and progression."

Herdwatch to double workforce over next 3 years



Rory Best, rugby legend, farmer and Herdwatch user with Fabien Peyaud, Herdwatch CEO and Co-Founder

Herdwatch, the leading farm management software company based in Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, has announced plans to double its workforce over the next three years. They expect to create an additional 40 jobs during that period, with 20 of the new roles located in the company's Tipperary headquarters. Herdwatch, which was co-founded by FRS Network, a farmer-owned co-operative, is already the market-leading and fastest growing farm management software in Ireland and the UK, used on more than 15,000 farms.

The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Leo Varadkar T.D. said: "This is really

great news. Herdwatch is creating 40 new jobs over the next three years, 20 of which will be based in Tipperary. The company is a fantastic example of an Irish owned and based company providing innovative solutions for the agriculture sector. I'm particularly pleased that all of these jobs will offer remote working opportunities. "This announcement is a strong vote of confidence in the Midwest region and further evidence of its attractiveness as a place to invest. I wish the team the very best of luck with this expansion and ambitious phase of growth."

The company is also supported by Enterprise Ireland in its international

expansion. Enterprise Ireland CEO, Leo Clancy, said: "At Enterprise Ireland, we welcome today's announcement in Tipperary by Herdwatch, highlighting the potential for innovative firms to succeed and grow in the Mid-West region. Ireland is a leader in the agriculture and agri-tech sector and this investment shows clearly how Irish firms can create digital platforms to bring these capabilities to a global farming community. Congratulations to Herdwatch and we look forward to supporting you as you continue to innovate and grow internationally." The additional jobs will support the further expansion of Herdwatch as it seeks to reach new markets and also to broaden their current service. This will include measures to help farmers meet the climate change challenge, beginning with the newly released farm mapping functionality. As part of its research and development programme, the company has released what they call "Farm Maps by Herdwatch", a new tool in the existing Herdwatch app which allows farmers to easily map their farm for free, using satellite imagery. This tool is seen as a foundation stone for more advanced upcoming developments in the environmental sector, from precision soil health in partnership with FRS (Farm Relief Services) to fertiliser and carbon emissions as well as carbon sequestration management.



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Embracing sustainability

Last month the Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConalogue called on farmers to play a significant role in carbon reduction strategies. However, the Minister said that the potential for additional reductions is limited, due to the direct correlation between livestock numbers and agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, the ex CEO of ABP Paul Finnerty proposed that embracing sustainability could help Irish food's bottom line. Finnerty, who is the co-founder of Yield Labs, urged farmers to be aware of new technologies and innovations which are being developed, which will assist farmers to reduce their environmental and climate change impacts. Yield Lab is currently working with four Irish Agri tech companies. The investment fund of €50 million is focusing on early-stage food sustainability and Agri-tech startups. Paul has also been on the stakeholder committee of the Tom Arnold-driven Agri Food Strategy 2030.

Minister McConalogue commends GLAS success



The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D., has announced that payments to date under the Green Low Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS) exceeding the €1 billion mark. Since the launch of GLAS in 2015, the scheme has been embraced by Irish farmers with almost 50,000 GLAS contracts currently active. GLAS delivers for Irish agriculture and our environment by supporting over 30 actions designed to benefit biodiversity, climate change mitigation and improve water quality. GLAS supports farm incomes with total payments to date to Irish farmers reaching €1.006bn. GLAS farmers receive up to €5,000 per annum under the general scheme with provision for payment up to €7,000 where the farmer is positioned to give exceptional environmental returns. Almost 3,400 GLAS participants quality for the GLAS PLUS extra payment. GLAS has also provided a knowledge resource to Irish farmers with training undertaken by all GLAS participants. Minister McConalogue was joined by former Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Simon Coveney, who initially launched GLAS, in marking this milestone. Minister McConalogue paid tribute to another former Minister Michael Creed who also ensured that GLAS was success: "Both Ministers Coveney and Creed played a key role in making GLAS a success. GLAS has been a tremendous scheme and as part of the next CAP programme, I am committed to bringing and even more ambitious agri-environmental scheme that will support our farmers and protect our environment."

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Norbrook® launches Solantel Pour-On® the first pour-on flukicide for cattle

Solantel Pour-on is the first single-active, pour-on flukicide for cattle to be licensed in the UK and Ireland. Solantel Pour-on contains 200mg/ml closantel and is licensed for the treatment of late immature (>7 weeks) and adult *Fasciola hepatica* (liver fluke) infestations in cattle.

Brendan McVeigh, Regional Head of Sales and Marketing Norbrook Ireland explains: "Norbrook is delighted to be launching this unique product into the Irish market. Solantel Pour-on provides an effective, stress-free, easy to use option for cattle that only require a fluke treatment. It joins our well-established and extensive range of fluke and worm products such as Closamectin, Solantel Sheep Drench and Taurador."

Maura Langan, Veterinary Advisor for Norbrook, says Solantel Pour-On can be incorporated into many herd health plans and offers a much-needed additional flukicide option for prescribers and farmers alike. "Liver fluke is a widespread problem in Ireland and has



significant impact on the welfare and productivity of cattle. Concerns around anthelmintic resistance mean that the industry is adopting more responsible approach to parasite treatment, so a stand-alone fluke treatment containing closantel, which has no known resistance in Ireland will be a valuable option for many." Solantel Pour-On has a meat withdrawal of 63 days and is suitable for use in dairy replacements up until the second half of pregnancy. Solantel Pour-On for Cattle is available in three different pack sizes (1L; 2.5L and 5L) and an appropriate dosing applicator is also available.

New Dean of Agriculture at University College Dublin



Congratulations to Professor Frank Monahan who was appointed to the role of Dean of Agriculture and Head, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science from the 1st September 2021. Professor Monahan previously held

roles as Associate Dean for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Head of Food Science and Nutrition in the School of Agriculture and Food Science at UCD. He is a Food Scientist, with a PhD in Food Science and Technology from University College Cork following a BSc in Biochemistry from UCD. Professor Monahan joined UCD after a postdoctorate at the University of California, Davis. His research and teaching focus mainly on animal-derived foods, including meat, with a particular interest in how farm production affects the composition, quality and authenticity of foods of animal origin. He has also had a deep involvement with UCD Volunteers Overseas, chairing its board of trustees for a number of years. Professor Monahan takes over from Professor Alexander Evans who completed a very successful two-year term as Dean from 2011 - 2021.

Dairymaster creates another 40 jobs for rural Kerry



Dairy equipment manufacturer Dairymaster is delighted to announce they are expanding their team with over 40 additional positions across all departments at their Global Headquarters in Causeway, Co. Kerry. There will also be other vacancies at their growing international bases in UK, USA, Germany and The Netherlands. Dairymaster who is a world leader in the ag space has customers in over 40 countries worldwide.

"We are delighted to be in a position to be expanding our team here at Dairymaster in a time that may feel uncertain for many. Our aim is to continue to meet the growing needs of farmers around the world. We have exciting plans; we are looking for people across a wide range of disciplines to join our fantastic team. Dairymaster is known for innovative hi-tech products which are providing long term solutions for a changing industry and we can only continue to develop with the support of our staff," comments John Harty, CEO Dairymaster. The announcement is great news for Kerry and a massive boost to the local economy.

InTouch

Getting the Basics Right for the Season Ahead

Cathal Bohane, Head of InTouch Nutrition

The arrival of September should see us all looking forward to the Ploughing Championships. But unfortunately, due to the times we are in, we need to save this anticipation for another year. Many of our customers would see the Ploughing as the line between last season and the beginning of the next feeding season. Nutrition for animals can be put, very simply, as energy in the form of feed and energy out in the form of product. The focus is to maximise the quantity and quality of the energy in and the output. Nutrition and management are really about managing the inefficiencies in between to maximise the output. One of the main inputs on-farm over the winter is silage, with most of it being grass-based. Understanding the quantity and quality of this feed would be a good start in preparing for the winter. Measure the length, width and height of the pit in feet and, based on the dry matter (DM) of the feed, you can divide by the approximate factor below to give you tonnes of fresh weight. For bales, determining their weight is a crucial step as they can vary a lot due to dry matter, grass type and baling method.

DM	Factor	Characteristics
19%	46	Very wet and water runs freely once squeezed
22%	50	Liquid drips once squeezed in hand
26%	54	Liquid sits between fingers once squeezed
30%	58	Once squeezed it will spring back out, but hand will be wet

It is important to understand the DM of the silage, as first and second cut can vary for the same farm due to weather over the last year or two, so using an average dry matter can be misleading. Using the characteristics of a properly performed squeeze test above can go a long way in determining the DM.

Testing the silage for other parameters, such as energy, protein and fibre, by sending a sample to the laboratory is also a vital step in determining the level of supplementary feed required to make up the shortfall to the desired level of production. In the year when concentrated feed prices, especially protein, will be higher, we must prepare now for the forthcoming season.

Finally, testing for minerals with the same sample has become more crucial every year, as farms encounter more health, production and metabolic issues, especially around calving time. It is essential that we know what is in our silage now and balance it accordingly rather than testing it next spring when you are in the middle of a storm. Getting the basics right can set us up for the season ahead.

Alltech Ireland announces new hires for pig and poultry teams



Alltech Ireland has announced the appointments of Dr Hazel Rooney as technical pig coordinator and Paula McCooley as poultry manager. They join Alltech with valuable education and experience in their respective species and will work closely with the sales, marketing and research teams to support customers and partners. Hazel will be responsible for coordinating and developing technical solutions for pigs for the Irish and European marketplace, working closely with the Alltech Ireland sales and gut health management teams and also as a liaison between Alltech’s marketing and research teams. “The Irish and European pig industry is currently facing a number of difficult challenges, and I look forward to working closely with those in the industry to overcome these challenges by improving pig health, welfare and growth performance,” said Hazel.

As the Alltech Ireland poultry manager, Paula is responsible for managing the poultry accounts across the island of Ireland. She will work closely with customers at all levels to advise, problem solve and provide solutions based on customer needs.

“The poultry industry is a thriving and progressive sector to be involved in,” Paula commented. “I look forward to working with producers and those in the industry to maximise on-farm potential and meet the challenges and demands that the industry faces.”

Moorepark '21

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14th, 15th, 16th September

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The Only Show in Town!

The Balmoral Show returns to Balmoral Park in Lisburn this September (22-25)

The event is expected to attract a large attendance from the ROI – it will be the first major show on the Island of Ireland for almost two years. In

2019, the show attracted over 100,000 visitors. This year Balmoral celebrates its 152nd birthday and its return will bring livestock, equine, sheep shearing,

national show jumping and fun events for the family.

Once again, Ulster Bank is on board as the principal sponsor of the show,

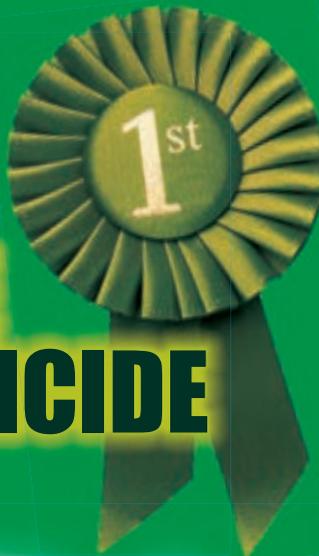
which prides itself on offering something for everyone. Renowned for its array of trade stands on offer, the Balmoral show will have farm machinery, fashion, food, country crafts and food.

Over the past decade, the show has moved to a more consumer focus, however most machinery manufacturers will have some sort of presence at this year's event, and companies like New Holland, John Deere and AGCO will be represented at the show by their local dealer. And, as Northern Ireland's largest agri-food event, visitors can tantalise their taste buds and sample delights from the region's top producers in the NI Food Pavilion.

So who is exhibiting at Balmoral? Many international dairy and machinery companies will once again exhibit; expect to see companies like Alltech, Volac, Moy Park, Dairymaster, Dale Farm, ABP, Agrimin, Herdwatch, Ulster Bank and Ulster Farmers Union to name a few. Household names like M&S, Tesco, ABP and Spar will also have stands at this year's show: they are platinum sponsors. Covid-19 has proved hugely challenging for organisers of events. The Balmoral Show has introduced, in line with Government guidelines, a number of safety measures.

NOVEL PRODUCT INNOVATION

INTRODUCING THE FIRST SINGLE ACTIVE POUR-ON FLUKICIDE FOR CATTLE



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Pour-On Solution for Cattle



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Solantel® 200mg/ml Pour-On Solution for Cattle contains 200mg/ml closantel. For full details on this product please see the summary of product characteristics (SPC)
available at: UK: www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/search | ROI: www.hpra.ie/homepage/veterinary/veterinary-medicines-information/find-a-medicine/
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Researching the future

Professor Frank O'Mara, Head of Research and the soon-to-be Director at Teagasc, offers an optimistic overall message on the upcoming changing landscape for our agri-food industry.



The fundamentals are very positive, we have a growing population with increasing demand for quality food across the world. Climatically, Ireland is a very good country in which to produce food and we have the resources in terms of our farmers and expertise. Our cost structure is competitive and we have a very good animal-breeding model. The industry is well structured and well supported by Teagasc and Bord Bia. While not minimising the environmental challenges, in terms of reducing emissions and improving water quality, we have a very sustainable farming system. We have relatively low stocking rates and a circular production system in that most of the animal feed is grown on our farms and the manure produced is

returned to the soil. Despite criticism, we have a strong reservoir of biodiversity on our farms. The amount of biodiversity contained in our hedgerows alone is very high by any international standard. There are a lot of positives on which to build and while we do have big challenges at least we're starting from a position of strength.

Research priorities

The really important priorities never go away. There are three key fundamentals on the livestock side. These include breeding, feeding, especially grassland management, and animal health and welfare. They are the three key components and putting all those together into a systematic approach to livestock farming is how we will succeed in the years ahead. For Teagasc, our research will continue to work on improving those fundamentals. Ireland has done great work on animal breeding, and particular dairy cow breeding. Now we have new targets around health and welfare and emissions. There are new challenges also around reducing our reliance on antibiotics and anthelmintics to counteract increasing pathogenic resistance. We will continue to maintain strong research programmes around those challenges.





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Harvesting carbon

In addition, we need to have very strong research around gaseous emissions and carbon sequestration. The environment is the additional big priority for Teagasc over the last number of years and I don't see that changing. There may be carbon sequestration opportunities for our farmers in the future. We are exploring that potential through the Signpost Programme and there may be both marketing and financial benefits for farmers. We will conduct research to identify the technologies to translate the concepts into practical initiatives that benefit both farmers and the environment. At the same time, we will stick to our knitting as well in terms of the fundamentals of animal breeding, grassland management and animal nutrition and health and welfare.

Nitrogen reliance

We are already on a trajectory of reducing chemical fertiliser use on our farms and we are a long way back from the peak levels of a decade ago. There is going to be pressure to reduce even further as part of a strategy of managing our resources most efficiently. That includes maximising the nutritional value of slurry. The ability of clover to fix atmospheric nitrogen is going to become more important in a scenario where we can use less chemical nitrogen. Our dairy, beef and sheep production models, where we grow and utilise grass as efficiently as possible, are still very resilient, both financially for producers and from an environmental perspective. I don't see that changing but we will have to use our resources efficiently and that will involve using a bit less chemical nitrogen than we have in the past.

Integrating all sectors

Ireland is a feed deficit country in terms of grains and proteins. We import a lot of grain for human and animal consumption. It's very important that we have a strong tillage sector so that we can produce as much of our own feed requirements as possible because it goes back to this principle of circularity and an integrated farm sector. The more we can produce here in Ireland the better for everyone involved. The opportunity is there and if the conditions are right, in terms of weather and price, we should maximise that potential. Teagasc recognises the challenges posed by cereal diseases and pests and fewer crop protectants in the future. That's a very active area of research, including assessing and monitoring the development of resistance to crop protectants. We have a network of monitoring sites around the country and we're using DNA analysis to identify genetic resistance to chemical controls. Adopting novel pest and disease control programs will continue to be an important aspect of our tillage research.

Food and human health

The relationship and the perception of the relationship between livestock products and human health is increasingly important. There is a narrative that we should

eat less meat and use fewer livestock products in general, both for environmental and human health reasons. In reality, there is a hugely important role for animal products in our diets. Teagasc has ongoing research on the positive impact of both dairy and meat products on human health. I can see that expanding and we have a very good relationship with UCC in the Alimentary Pharmabiotics Microbiome Institute. Areas that have been generating very exciting results include the impact of diet on gut health and the role of the gut microbiome. Dairy products, for instance, are shown to have positive impacts on your microbiome and overall health.

At another level, assisting food companies to develop new products and improve existing products is a very important research area for us. We have two new initiatives that are worth highlighting. One is the consumer foods centre at Ashtown, funded by the Department of Agriculture. It's a very broad sector and we facilitate companies developing processes and new products. It is an important asset for the food processing sector. Another initiative is the Bia Innovator Centre in Athenry, due to open by the end of 2021. It is a joint initiative with Galway County Council and others. It will be a resource facility for small and start-up food companies that can avail of expertise provided by Teagasc food technologists to help them develop and perfect their products and then provide them with facilities where they can get into the initial stages of manufacturing. There will also be expertise provided for marketing and business advice.

A positive outlook

The world's population is growing and that's going to mean an increasing demand for food. The global food production base is fairly static and Ireland is one of the best locations in the world for producing food. We have a tremendous reputation for food quality in its broadest sense, both from a safety perspective and a taste and eating experience. We have a family-farm dominated industry and, while some of those attributes are quite intangible, they matter to many consumers. There's always going to be a very strong demand for Irish food. Bord Bia is doing a great job in terms of projecting that image of Irish food to a world market. The future for the Irish food industry, I believe, is very strong. We obviously have huge strengths in the livestock sector, right across dairy, beef, sheep and the pig meat and poultry sectors. The latter two are small by international standards but their levels of efficiency and use of technologies is second to none. We need a strong tillage sector and our horticultural industry, while small relative to the Dutch, has some fantastic operators in field vegetables and the protected glasshouse-type crop production. There are other opportunities that we can capitalise on the coming years in the horticultural sector. I think there are there are great opportunities generally across all enterprises and potential to develop new farm-based and food processing-based initiatives.



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A greener future

Sustainability and the environment are at the heart of both CAP reform and Food Vision 2030. Both will set a new landscape for farming in Ireland over the coming decade. **Tara McCarthy**, CEO at Bord Bia, discusses why she believes the Irish farming community is well placed to meet the challenges ahead.

“We have been calling out for the last decade the challenges and the opportunities that sustainability will provide for Ireland’s food industry. This focus led to the establishment of Origin Green and now the industry has a unique infrastructure already in place as we look ahead to our targets. However, given the ambition of those targets, it is clear that there is still a body of work to be done. We have a familiarity with carbon footprinting inspections, with the language of sustainability. But the rubber will be hitting the road now and there are quite significant challenges ahead.

In research that we undertook earlier this year, 74 per cent of farmers said that they believed they needed to do more to improve sustainability measures. And 79 per cent said that they need a lot more guidance on how to do that. So, nobody is denying that more needs to be done – farmers are up for the challenge – but they need more assistance to translate that ambition on the farm. And all of these actions need to be scaleable – every farmer can make a difference but we need all farmers signed up.”

Bearing the burden

With many farmers believing that the burden of improving Ireland’s carbon emissions is being placed solely at their feet – particularly in our dairy production systems, where Ireland can boast one of the lowest carbon footprints internationally – Tara is keen to note that delivering the right message to the consumer is key.

“This is a really complex conversation. Clearly, agriculture is a huge contributor to Ireland’s overall emissions – we don’t have another industry like motor or mining. But communicating the messages around the work being done is really challenging. We see a lot of negative stories being crafted in the media at the moment – bad news always sells better



– but when speaking to the consumer it isn't easy to get them interested in reading about multi-species swards or low emission slurry spreading. How can we translate these topics to make them relevant or approachable to the general consumer? This was the motivation two years ago with the Meat and Dairy Facts campaign; bringing together the ICMSA, IFA, Meat Industry Ireland, Dairy Industry Ireland, the NDC and Bord Bia and looking at how we can speak to the Gen Z community, to urban mums and specifically target those who are wavering, who need to get informed on the facts. And we need to make those facts interesting and relevant. So we got influencers like Carl Mullen, chefs like Lily Higgins, dieticians like Orla Walsh, to speak on topics like health and taste and the fantastic work going on in farms across Ireland. And now we are creating short animated videos on a number of measures farmers are undertaking – the Signpost programme, water quality programmes etc – which will continue to tell that story. We are conscious change doesn't happen overnight but we need to run very mindful, targeted campaigns.” Looking to also ensure the farmer's voice is heard, Bord Bia launched their Farmer Ambassador campaign last year, which focused on issues that the consumer has an understanding of such as biodiversity, animal welfare etc.

Nobody is denying that more needs to be done – farmers are up for the challenge – but they need more assistance to translate that ambition on the farm.

Meat consumption

Commenting on the growing consumption of meat alternatives on a global stage, Tara notes that a lot of younger shoppers are increasingly attracted to plant-based diets and this new competition is presenting many challenges. “In tandem,” she adds, “we are seeing a lot of negative media commentary and social media activity around the meat industry – around its impact on health, the environment and animal welfare – and, even if this is factually incorrect or misleading information, this is compounding the challenge for meat producers. And there is a drive in the UK and EU, in the mature markets, to reduce red meat intake. We monitor this very closely and we want to know what consumers are actually buying and why. The

consumer today is looking to purchase less but better. So, we need to ask, what does ‘better’ look like? We would argue that this is grass-fed, quality assured, family-farm raised meat – the proof points that Ireland has been boasting for many years.” But does Tara believe the UK consumer will still value this ‘better’ option in a post-Brexit world? “We don't think it, we know it. In research we conducted in last quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021, 25 per cent of those surveyed in the UK had seen the Grass Fed logo and demonstrated a real openness to grass fed messaging. We found that at least one in two consumers in the UK are more likely to purchase Irish beef or dairy, particularly younger shoppers who are looking to do the right thing for the environment.”

Against the grain

On the issue of the environment, recent criticism from the Irish Grain Growers Group, which claimed that Bord Bia ‘chooses to ignore’ the carbon footprint of imported feed ingredients, is something that Tara refutes: “That comment was a misinterpretation on their part. Feed ration can come from loads of different origins and we believe it would be very difficult for farmers to know that information. However, we designed the imported animal feed into the calculations from the get go. We used the typical inclusion recipes for the feed rate for the target animal based on national import statistics rather than farm consumption. This is giving us the right answers without any extra work on the farmer's part. Also, it is important to note that it would be illegal for us to call for Irish farmers to use Irish growing grain – we cannot distort competition. But there are state recommendations for quality assured product over non-quality assured product and we have been in contact with the Group to discuss the logic around developing a standard for Irish grain, but that is up to them to decide.”

Activity for 2022

While the Irish Food Board, like many other organisations, were forced to adapt to virtual events and networking during Covid restrictions, Tara confirms that Bord Bia is signed up to 36 trade fairs already for next year. “We are confident that there is a real appetite to get back to in-person trade engagements, but we will also not forget the skills we have just learned, so all events going forward can be a hybrid.” The next key event on the calendar is a virtual trade mission to South East Asia in October, which will target 250 buyers and host in excess of 300 business meetings with Irish dairy producers over three days.



A social, economic and environmental **disaster**

The controversy over Lough Funshinagh in county Roscommon, which we have all heard about in the past few months, is personally familiar to Laurance Fallon who lives and farms within sight of the turlough. **Matt O’Keeffe** chats to Laurance about the situation.

He explains the problems that have arisen for the turlough itself and the people living close to it: “Lough Funshinagh has been part and parcel of our farm for generations and, indeed, for the surrounding 40 odd farms that come right into the middle of the lake itself. It’s a turlough by nature, which means it fluctuates up and down, unique in many ways in that it has five streams feeding into it but no overland drain out of it. It drains out through limestone rock at one end. Traditionally, it rose in the winter and fell in the summer. It is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) with high levels of birdlife and nesting grounds, high levels of plant life, some of them quite rare, and had 200 acres of reed bed which was a cleanser and worked

very well keeping the water purified. Since 2016 this lake has changed dramatically. It has risen in the winter continuously but it hasn’t gone down anything like it should have in the summertime. So, it’s gone from 600 acres in wintertime to 1,500 acres at its peak last April with a lot of farmland destroyed and all the nesting grounds and birds gone. The rare plants that would have been protected under the SAC are underwater for over four years and are mostly dead. The reed bed that was purifying the water died and when you kill a reed bed there is an additional pressure water quality. The Hooper Swans that used to graze there every winter are all gone because the water is too deep to allow them to feed.”



Families evicted

“But the biggest tragedy is that we have already lost one family with their house under water and next winter, if we can’t get the solution, we will probably lose three more families, together with three septic tanks, five farmyards and all the further pollution that that will tend to cause when this type of environment becomes part and parcel of the lake. I would have to say everything is dead in the lake. We had a solution to put a pipe in to take off just the excess water to allow the lake to rebalance itself. That got stopped in the High Court last month. The environmental disaster in the locality we live in is huge because, without remedial work, we are continuing to destroy the habitats of rare species, we are continuing to destroy the habitats where rare plants were growing and we are continuing to make a pristine turlough less clean. We are taking

“We are taking farmland and having it literally washed into the turlough. Hundreds of miles of whitethorn hedges, ash trees, furze bushes, you name it, have been destroyed, because what was once thriving farmland is now under water.”

farmland and having it literally washed into the turlough. Hundreds of miles of whitethorn hedges, ash trees, furze bushes, you name it, have been destroyed, because what was once thriving farmland is now under water. And none of those plants and trees can grow when they are permanently underwater.”

A piped solution

“This turlough is part and parcel of life here for all the farmers around it. Nobody wants to damage or get rid of the turlough. Roscommon County Council, of which I am a member, proposed using a piece of legislation that was enacted in 1949 under emergency work to put in a pipe to be set as a level above the normal high-water mark. Irrespective of what happened, it could never take water from the lake above the normal high winter level. The pipe was going to feed into a river leading into Lough Ree and it would take the water out whenever the turlough got above that level. The amount of water that would be taken out initially would be substantial, but immediately after that it might be entirely possible that it might not take water out again for several years once the lake got back into kilter. Meanwhile, an organisation called Friends of the Irish Environment sought an injunction against the work and it was decided that an environmental assessment was required before any work could be done. With all the planning detail that goes with such an assessment it will probably take two or three years. Last April, if we had waited two or three years to do this work, we’d be losing at least five houses and all the farmyards around. So, we couldn’t wait. And that’s why Roscommon County Council acted, wisely I believe, to get the work done. Our primary objective was to save families from being evicted, restore the environment, restore the lake for the value, the beauty and the contentment it offers to people both far and wide who come to see it.”

Future prospects

“If the future was that we could put this into cold storage, and hold it the way it is until we do an environmental assessment, and all the bells and whistles that go with that, you could say, well, at least we’re not doing any more damage. The reality is that if we cannot, by some manner or means, remove some excess water out of this lake before Christmas, we will further add dramatically to the environmental damage done to the area. We will further add to the huge hardship of evicting five families whose houses will be under water next April. The Council have done heroic work protecting these families up to now on the basis that we put in six pumps operating for six months as well as raising the road level to hold the water back. It is relatively safe to raise a road and hold the water back but if the worst should happen and that raised road structure should burst under water pressure and you end up with four feet of water in the houses, you could not say with reasonable certainty those people would get out alive. Rather than attempting to do the impossible, these people will be left with no option, given a normal winter rainfall, only to leave their houses and allow their homes and farmyards to be flooded with further environmental damage being done.”

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FUTURE OF FARMING FOCUS





John Bryan on the farming challenges ahead

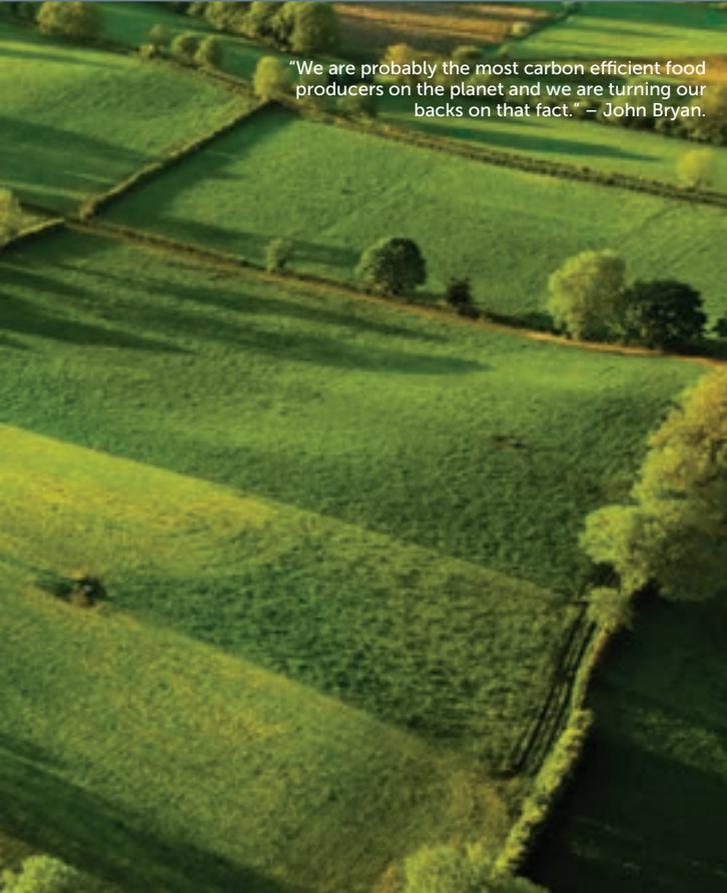
Farmers have invested heavily in the viability of their businesses. That was the response of **John Bryan**, former IFA president to a question on the future of farming in this country in the wake of the proposed changes to the Common Agricultural Policy.

“Teagasc have produced verifiable figures over the years showing that many thousands of farmers, particularly those who invested heavily in their cattle, grain, dairy and sheep enterprises, have a huge commitment to farming. Twenty per cent of Irish farmers account for almost 80 per cent of food production and create employment on foot of that production. Those farmers are going to be the big losers under the proposed CAP changes. Looking at those Teagasc figures, drystock farms are entirely dependent on the Basic Farm Payment with one hundred and forty per cent, on average, of their income accounted for by direct payments from the EU. They subsidise their production costs through those payments. Convergence, front loading and the redirection of payments from Pillar One to Pillar Two will result in those farmers taking at least a 30 per cent reduction in their EU payments. The Minister is highlighting the farmers who may gain from the changes and ignoring the thousands of farmers who will lose substantially. Statistics are used and we all know they can conceal as much as they reveal. The reality is that thousands of full-time farmers, especially in the drystock sectors, are looking at savage cuts in their payments and that is not reflected in the town hall meetings or consultation documents. These cuts are to happen at the same time as farmers are expected to devote a substantial

part of their reduced payments towards implementing environmental measures.”

Farmers left behind

John is adamant that it will be impossible for those farmers who had built up a reasonable payment to make up the difference through adopting eco-schemes: “Those payments reflect the level of investment made in their businesses. We hear about ‘just transition’ and ‘leaving no one behind’. I see no sign of that in these proposals. I see the train rolling on and rolling over people. New measures are being regularly invented that will cost farmers and will reduce their incomes. I don’t believe there has been a proper impact assessment to measure the outcomes of these measures on farmer incomes. At the same time costs across the economy are increasing and that’s reflected in farm costs in terms of feed, fertiliser, fuel, electricity and building materials. The cost of farming now is totally outpacing any return from improved prices. There is a total disconnect at Government and Department level around the erosion of competitiveness in Irish and European farming. Increased regulation, restrictions on inputs and more investment in slurry and housing and, at the same time, having to compete with lower standard imports that have access to all kinds of



"We are probably the most carbon efficient food producers on the planet and we are turning our backs on that fact." – John Bryan.

products that are banned in Europe: farmers will be left at a huge competitive disadvantage. I am convinced that no one in the Department of Agriculture or in Brussels is factoring these issues into their calculations."

Wrong focus

The former IFA chief rebuked the Department's thinking around suckler cow numbers: "It again shows the disconnection in thinking. What is the use of capping suckler cow numbers in Leitrim if we have a nitrates issue in Cork. It is nonsensical and illogical. The reality is that we are going to have to deal with water quality and buffer zones in more straightforward and practical terms. Wider buffer zones and improved management practices will address the issues directly. Most farmers are doing an excellent job and we need to ensure that every farmer is involved. The idea of capping suckler cow numbers on farms with low stocking rates makes no sense. If a proper carbon budget was done on those farms, most of them would be found to be sequestering more carbon than they produce. Suckler cow numbers are reducing, not increasing. It is unfair and badly thought out."

Threat to farm viability

John sees increasing farm costs and production restrictions as a threat to viability: "The review of the Nitrates Plan looks like including extra restrictions on spreading soiled water, a longer closed period, extra slurry capacity requirements, a likely requirement to cover all slurry storage. All these add costs to production. Even

building the required extra capacity in a short time scale is impractical. Planning permissions are being frustrated across every sector of society, including farming, by ongoing objections. This God-given right to object carries no cost for the objector. But the cost of delay for those seeking legitimate planning permission is enormous. On a larger scale the cost to Glanbia and its farmers of An Taisce's objections to the cheese making facility could be upwards of €200 million, between lost production, lost market opportunities, increased building costs and penalties on milk produced over the next two years. There is no cost to An Taisce. The whole thing shows an awful lack of balance. The fact that individuals and groups can interfere in legitimate business decisions and, through serial objections, make a business unviable is wrong. The forestry farce is another example. Everybody wants more forestry and at the same time objectors prevent planting, thinning, service roads and harvesting. What more negative signal could be sent to potential forest owners and yet no one seems to be attempting to rectify the situation in a practical way."

"We hear about 'just transition' and 'leaving no one behind'. I see no sign of that in these proposals. I see the train rolling on and rolling over people."

Making Europe uncompetitive

Is all this leading to a more uncompetitive European agriculture? "The Green Deal was pushed through by Frans Timmermans. No one would be left behind in this just transition, he said. Then a €750 billion rescue fund was established with one percent of that fund devoted to agriculture, while agriculture is expected to do much of the heavy lifting to make the Green Deal a reality. COPA and others have shown the huge competitive disadvantage in which the Green Deal will place farmers at a time when American, Australian and South American farmers are driving on with full access to many of the products and management practices that are banned in Europe. Cheaper inputs including fuel and labour are giving those countries an enormous advantage. Yet the EU is committed to more trade deals giving increased access to EU markets for their agricultural produce. Australia and Brazil are the biggest deforesters on the planet and we want to encourage that by providing greater market access for their farm produce. Balance and coherence in EU policy are lacking and yet we have an Irish government that seems to have no concern about the extra costs being placed on farmers. We are probably the most carbon efficient food producers on the planet and we are turning our backs on that fact."

Leading the way in animal health solutions



Fergal Morris, General Manager, MSD Animal Health, examines the big challenges ahead for animal health and welfare solutions and calls out the need for a focus on prevention rather than cure both locally and globally.

The two key areas that Fergal points to with regard to the changing landscape for Irish farming over the coming years, is the impact of EU legislation to reduce the use of critically important antibiotics and also the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions - and in both areas he notes that Irish farmers are already leading the way. "I think the main challenge at the moment are the new EU regulations that will be implemented in January 2022, which will restrict the use of antibiotics on farms. It is a regulation instead of a directive which means that member states have no opportunity to modify this legislation so there will be restrictions on the use of the critically important antibiotics and oral antibiotics that were effective for treating certain conditions in livestock, especially respiratory disease. What this will mean is that we will have to look more at prevention as opposed to treatment. We can reduce the incidence of disease through better management, better hygiene and biosecurity - not letting the disease onto the farm in the first place. And if we really want to reduce antibiotic use, the diseases where most antibiotics are used are diarrhoea and respiratory diseases so it makes a lot of sense to vaccinate against those diseases in particular. In addition, there are vaccines that can prevent infectious causes of infertility including BVD, Leptospirosis and Salmonella.

We will also need to consider the use of selective dry cow therapy. Up to now a lot of farms used blanket dry cow therapy, with the new EU Regulations we will need to justify the use of dry cow therapy in individual animals. We are fortunate that we have internal teat seals available and they are very effective at preventing mastitis. We can still use dry cow therapy for the treatment of mastitis during the dry period; there are higher cure rates with dry cow therapy compared with lactating cow therapy so if it is used in the correct way, effective dry cow therapy will reduce the need for lactating cow therapy in the following lactation."

Tackling GHG emissions

Secondly, reducing greenhouse gas emissions is going to be a big factor, he notes, however Fergal does not advocate for a reduction in our national herd. "It makes no sense for farmers in Ireland to reduce their cattle

numbers when Brazil plans to increase its cattle herd by 24 million by 2030. Yes, the agricultural industry has to play our part in reducing emissions but I think there are some key things to note here. From an Irish point of view, farmers are not being paid for storing carbon in their soil, grassland and hedges. There is about 1800 mega tones of carbon stored in Irish soil and plants (90 times more carbon is stored in soil and plants than is emitted by livestock in Ireland).

Vaccination can be used to prevent diseases that are known to increase GHGs. We know that certain diseases like respiratory disease, diarrhoea, IBR and Salmonella will result in higher carbon emissions in a sick animal versus a healthy animal. By preventing disease you are not only improving productivity but you are also reducing GHG emissions.

"There is a report on the use of antibiotics across Europe that shows that Ireland is in the lower third of users, with Italy and Spain the highest users in Europe. This is due to fact we have a predominantly grass-based production system so a large number of cattle and sheep in Ireland never receive antibiotics. Even our pig and poultry industries - while they are small, they are quite dynamic at reducing antibiotic use - in some cases there is no antibiotic used at all on these farms, such is the high standard of biosecurity, ventilation, diet, etc. Across all livestock sectors, many Irish farmers are leading the way in reducing the use of antibiotics."

Communication

Commenting on the need for Irish farmers' voices to be heard on these issues, Fergal stresses we need to keep communicating that the agriculture industry in Ireland is one of the most efficient from a greenhouse gas emissions point of view. "At the moment farmers in Ireland are not rewarded for storing carbon in soil and plants. It does not make sense for farmers to reduce cattle numbers if we end up importing beef from Brazil and Australia. It is predicted that there will be a need for 50 per cent more meat by 2050 to meet global market demand. In both Asia and Africa people are moving from a starch based diet to a meat base diet. At least 50 per cent of the land in Ireland is only suitable for grass-based production

systems and ruminants can take inedible vegetable protein and convert it into very high quality animal protein that we can then use.”

Driving innovation

“The mission of MSD Animal Health is the science of healthier animals. Our main focus is trying to prevent disease and for that reason we have a long history of developing vaccines to prevent diseases in all species. We were the first company to introduce a vaccine to prevent diarrhoea caused by rotavirus and the first company to produce a vaccine for respiratory disease caused by *Pasteurella*”.

MSD Animal Health has had some recent acquisitions that have complemented the company’s work in driving innovation in animal health solutions. In 2019 it acquired a technology company with monitors that are referred to as ‘cattle Fitbits’ that can detect when a cow is in heat or is sick and ensures more efficient farm management as a result. “In larger herds, it is inevitable some cows in heat will not be seen on time. Our Sensehub monitors will detect when a cow is in heat 24 hours per day. When the cow is in heat, you will receive a notification on your

phone or the cow can be automatically drafted at milking time for AI if you have a sort gate. The other benefit is for health, because the monitors will detect changes in rumination and movement, they will detect sick cows 12-24 hours before you will see the signs clinically”.

Another recent acquisition earlier this year saw MSD Animal Health acquire the assets of LIC Automation – a leader in automation and technology for the dairy industry, which facilitates integrated herd management systems and milk monitors. The monitors can accurately measure yield, butterfat, protein and Somatic Cell Counts for individual cows at milking time and will be available in Ireland next year.

Concluding, Fergal points to the constant need for collaboration across the industry to achieve our ambitious goals: “We see great collaboration in Ireland –Animal Health Ireland is a great example of collaboration where you have a lot of people in Ireland that collaborated for the benefit of the industry. We are very close to eradicating BVD and this is a great example of how collaboration can benefit the entire industry in Ireland. With less BVD we have less mortality and higher fertility levels resulting in lower GHG emissions”.





A new landscape

Tadhg Buckley at IFA offers his take on the current challenges facing the farming community today, against the backdrop of increasing pressure to tackle climate change and the changing direction of national farm policy

Over the past 12 months, the clear change in EU and national farm policy direction along with incessant media focus on Irish farming has left many farmers questioning what the long-term future holds. Irish farming faces challenges on multiple fronts.

From a policy perspective, reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has placed a hugely increased environmental burden on Irish farmers. However, instead of compensating farmers for this increased ask, they are asked to do more and more for less. Many of our more intensive farmers face massive cuts to their direct payments, regardless of meeting the increased environmental burden or otherwise.

Mainstream media coverage almost constantly paints Irish farming in a negative light. Irish farming is now consistently framed as the problem when it comes to climate change instead of constructive debate on providing a proper framework to allow farmers to be part

of the solution. Many of our politicians say they want farmers to be part of the solution to our climate challenge but are, as yet, unwilling to show how this stated ambition will be supported by national funding to achieve this objective.

Farmers are rightly annoyed at being made the scapegoat for the challenges we face from a climate perspective. They are annoyed because any objective analysis shows that they are far from the biggest culprits.

Based on CSO figures, livestock numbers have increased by only 7 per cent since 1990 – an annual growth of just 0.35 per cent per annum. In the same period, the number of vehicles in the road grew by over 5 per cent per annum – a growth rate 14 times higher. Yet, we have little or no media focus on the increase in vehicles or demands to cut the national vehicle fleet.

Some environmental commentators pour scorn on Ireland's carbon efficiency. However, the facts speak

for themselves. Teagasc estimate Ireland's recent dairy expansion helped displace approximately four million tonnes of carbon which would have been emitted had the equivalent dairy product been produced outside of Ireland.

This is the primary reason why agriculture constitutes such a large part of our national emissions; because we are one of the most efficient producers of food in the world. Unfortunately, we cannot say that for heavy manufacturing and for that reason there is no substantial heavy manufacturing industry in Ireland. This not the fault of Irish farmers, yet they are effectively blamed for this every time the proportionate size of Irish agricultural emissions is highlighted.

Proactive farmers

Irish farmers fully appreciate they will have to play their part in the challenges we face from a climate perspective. Already there are promising developments; sales of protected urea doubled in 2020 while c. €80m has been invested in Low Emissions Slurry Spreading (LESS) equipment.

In the past, farmers have proven time and again that they will respond positively to challenges where a viable solution is presented. This is the challenge our Government and Minister must address – asking farmers to do more and more without providing sufficient compensation will only lead to failure at all levels. Consumers must also accept they have a part to play in this challenge also. The cost of production for farmers is ever increasing with more to come. IFA estimate the latest draft Nitrates regulations will leave the average dairy farmer with a bill of c. €30k for additional slurry capacity and most likely will lead to a net margin reduction of 5-10 per cent per annum.

Yet, despite the ever-increasing cost of production, output prices are declining in real terms. Based on CSO data, output prices at farm level have grown by just 0.72 per cent per annum over the past 12 years. Irish retail food prices have fallen every year for the past seven years, declining by 11 per cent in that time. During the same period, alcohol and tobacco prices have increased by 15 per cent. This race to the bottom, led from the front by retailers, cannot continue.

The sustainability challenge is one that is presented to Irish farmers on a constant basis. However, this challenge is mostly looked at through one lens - environmental sustainability - while economic and social sustainability are downplayed. What is sustainable about ever-declining retail food prices or imposing a €30k bill on farmers with no state support?

Opportunity

However, the future is not necessarily bleak and can offer positive opportunities for Irish farming. There are reasons for optimism on a number of fronts. Firstly, despite what some environmental commentators may say, we are an incredibly efficient producer of food. It is therefore logical

that Ireland will continue to be a major food producer once our policy makers ensure a level playing field is maintained.

Future trade deals such as Mercosur cannot be countenanced if Ireland and the EU are serious about meeting the challenges facing us from a climate perspective. This was confirmed by the recent European Commission JRC report analysing the potential impact of Farm to Fork measures.

This analysis outlined that 66 per cent of the reduction in methane and nitrous oxide emissions would leak to other food-producing parts of the world should they choose not to adopt the same objectives the EU has set out. This highlights the fallacy of any future trade deal with Mercosur countries from a carbon perspective.

Carbon removals also offers a real opportunity for farmers. Agriculture is the only sector that can help remove carbon and is already doing so without any credit. Appropriately designed policy frameworks that reward farmers properly for carbon removals offers a win-win for all concerned. We cannot wait any longer for this area to be addressed.

Renewable energy is another clear and obvious opportunity, but Ireland lags way behind its European counterparts on this front. Ireland's adoption of renewable technologies at farm level is well below the European average.

In 2018, Ireland ranked 23rd out the EU-27 countries for renewable energy from agriculture, producing just 2.6 per cent compared with the EU-27 average of 12.1 per cent. Farmers want to be central players in Ireland's energy transition.

Bioenergy is a thriving industry across Europe. Despite our natural advantage in producing bioenergy due to our mild climate and fertile land, Ireland is ranked 27th out of 28 Member States in terms of its use of renewable heat (SEAI). There are opportunities for farmers to produce energy for their own use, but also to diversify their farm income.

However, this opportunity can only be fully exploited with appropriate policies that encourage farmers to invest in renewable energy, rather than the large-scale wind and solar projects that our Government seems completely focused on.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Irish agriculture, no different from its counterparts across other parts of the world, is facing significant challenges. However, much of the analysis relating to Irish farming's role in relation to the climate challenge is both unfair and inaccurate. Rather than making farmers scapegoats, there is a responsibility on our policy makers to help make farmers part of the solution.

This requires proper and appropriate policy design allied to substantial funding at both national and EU level. In doing so, we can ensure a positive future for both farmers and the environment, of which they are proud custodians.

Total commitment to

GRASS

Matt O’Keeffe chats to **Padraig Walshe** about grass-based production, the importance of science, and sequestering carbon



The Walshes, Padraig, his wife Ella and son Pat farm near Durrow, county Laois. It’s 30 years since Padraig won the Creamery Milk Supplier of the Year Award and he retains that commitment to grass-based milk production that won him the award.

“It’s hard to believe that was 30 years ago, it was a much smaller dairy enterprise then, we were milking about 70 cows at that time. We’ve been lucky enough to add on a couple of blocks of land to the farm since then, and we’re milking 200 cows today. But grass is still the most important feed on the farm. The last few springs have been slow to get going with a very cold, easterly breeze for most of the spring and very frosty nights, right up until the last half of May. The farm does tend to be subject to drought, and that can make things difficult. On the other hand, we can maximise grass production in the shoulders of the season. We can get cows out early, normally around the first of February and usually graze up until the middle of November.”

Harvesting grass

The Walshes grow high tonnages of grass annually: “We’ve averaged growing over 17 tonnes for the last seven years and we are utilising about 85 per cent of that. We use nitrogen to good effect while staying within the regulatory limits. There’s talk of reducing those limits further so we are trying to make better use of clover and it’s going to be more difficult to manage that clover-rich sward. It’s a whole new ballgame in terms of management and trying to make sure that it lasts in pastures and trying to balance it with chemical nitrogen. We will all have to learn to make better use of slurry and even dairy washings, which very often people have dismissed in the past. I wouldn’t want clover to become too dominant because you increase the risk of bloat. We haven’t gotten to that stage and I don’t particularly want to, but as was the case in the past we have to learn how to manage pastures differently in the future.”

Grass 10

Padraig Walshe is chairman of Grass 10: "The programme was set up by Teagasc and is sponsored by FBD, AIB, Grassland Agro, the Department of Agriculture and Irish Farmers Journal. The purpose of Grass 10 is to encourage people to get 10 grazings from paddocks per year and grow ten tonnes of grass per hectare annually. A lot of farmers, dairy farmers especially, are surpassing those figures. Grass 10 is about setting a target to bring every grass farmer up to that level. On drystock farms, sheep farmers tend to be reasonably good managers of grass. But I have noticed on many cattle farms the grass can get too strong before being grazed. Strip wires on drystock farms are becoming more popular but that has to be accompanied with protecting regrowths or the benefits are lost. Smaller grazing blocks with simple water systems would allow greater grazing flexibility and get more grass grown. It's very important for the beef industry to get more out of grass than has been the case in the past. It's a lot easier to get that message across to dairy farmers because they see the results in the milk tank every day, in terms of the solids the cows are producing, where it's a lot more difficult for drystock farmer to see the results immediately. The 10-tonne target isn't over ambitious. It doesn't mean spreading more nitrogen to get there. It's more about management and the decisions made on the farm every day. A few simple things like soil fertility are important and I would encourage people to do soil samples. If the pH level is too low, you're not going to grow as much grass. The ideal pH is 6.3 and anything lower means lower grass growth than optimum. There's no way tillage farmers would sow their crops if they hadn't the correct soil pH. Similarly, grass needs a certain level of pH and it doesn't matter what phosphorus, potash or nitrogen you put on, if the pH is not right, you won't get the response from the fertiliser. Lime is not expensive, it maximises the value of every other fertiliser input and gives a big return in the amount of grass grown. It's a simple message that we're trying to get across to look at the fertility in the soil and after that when you have the fertility right, start managing the sward better."

Reflecting on grass potential

"I heard comments recently that if we were to switch from beef production to forestry there would be economic benefit for the farmers involved. I totally disagree with that stance. On good permanent grassland we are sequestering carbon into our soils and, if we're going to solve the problem of carbon emissions, grassland farming

is definitely part of the solution. With permanent grassland you're not cultivating the soil and releasing carbon on a regular basis. I have pastures on the farm that are over 50 years old and while we're harvesting a lot of milk every year off those pastures, the soil stores more carbon all the time."

A view on Belview

"The misleading information put out by An Taisce is the most frustrating aspect. The driving force behind this cheese plant in the first place was to replace our dependence on cheddar cheese into the UK because of Brexit and that threat is still hanging over us. While there's a reasonable market this year, we don't know where that's going in the future. The intention with this cheese plant is to divert more of our product into the European market. Dairy farming has been a major driving force in the economy and the rural economy especially for many years with a lot of people dependent on it right through the food chain. If we limit production in this country, it just means the product will be produced in other countries where the carbon emissions are much higher in indoor production systems."

Believer in science

"The research undertaken at Moorepark over the years has shown how continuous improvement is possible in terms of grass-based production. That research is ongoing and is needed now more than ever to show us how we can continue to produce and be profitable in a new environment with reductions in inputs of various forms. Research is going to be crucial going forward. My father was a firm believer in science, I've always been a believer in science and Pat is of the same mindset. We continue to try and do things better, and that includes protecting the environment. I believe that demand for food is going to continue to grow for most of this century and there's no point in it being produced in parts of the world where there's going to be a much higher environmental impact. That's the message that I think that's getting lost in the criticism of Irish dairy production."

The future for Glanbia

The Walshes have always been shareholders and suppliers to Glanbia: "I see further developments over time. I'm not party to board decisions but I'm sure they look at various options from time to time. I think at some stage, pressure will come for the Coop to go below 25 per cent ownership because it will be seen as a drag on the Plc share price. As well as that, I think farmers

are very concerned about the 3.2 per cent margin that is continually insisted on that the Plc has to make on its investment in the milk processing business here in Ireland. I would always have been very strongly of the belief that Glanbia Coop would not go below fifty percent ownership of the Plc without gaining control of the main dairy processing assets here. Farmers now have majority ownership of those assets. Maybe the time has come when we should look at buying out the PLC equity in those assets altogether. It is something that should be reviewed, at least. Glanbia PLC is a totally different business today. It seems to be going quite well at the moment after some profit warnings over the last few years. We've seen the share price go up and down. I wish the company well, but it's not a business that I'm interested in on a day-to-day basis, unlike the milk processing businesses here in Ireland which are much more relevant to me and other milk producers. Dairy farmers have benefited over the years from having control of milk processing assets."

"I also think farmers need to look at how we elect our members onto the boards of these companies. I think we have to identify people at a younger age that have the potential to be effective board members and educate them properly and encourage them and reward them adequately for being there. That's something that we as farmers need to look at."

FBD

Padraig Walshe is chairman of Farmer Business Developments, a holding company with interests in FBD Insurance and a range of other investments. Padraig looks at ongoing progress: "Farmer Business Developments now has interests in leisure and hotel assets. The main reason why that happened is that up to the 2000s there was very little regulation in the insurance industry or the people in the Central Bank weren't, perhaps, as diligent as they are now. FBD got involved in leisure and hotel assets because it had resources, which it had to hold in case there was a big insurance claim. FBD was always very conservative in terms of resources and some of that money was invested in a few hotels around the country. Some of the investment was driven by tax measures that were in place at the time for the development of hotels. After the crash in 2007 at Central Bank got more active in regulating the insurance industry and put pressure on FBD Insurance to divest itself of those investments. Farmer Business Developments initially took a 50 per cent share in the hotels and eventually bought out the hotels and resorts completely. We now have three hotels here in Ireland with other investments at home and abroad, most of which have performed well and have been turning in profits for us over the last number of years. If you look back, pre-2007, Farmer Business Developments is one of the very few investment companies that were in business in the Celtic Tiger years that's still trading profitably today."

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Putting policy into practice

Michael Wallace – professor of Agriculture and Food Economics at UCD and a member of the DAFM CAP Post 2020 Consultative Committee – examines the policy shift for Irish agriculture that will be inevitable with CAP reform and within the framework of Food Vision 2030.

“This is quite a substantial change in policy that farmers are facing: it is performance based and much more strategic in its approach. There are positives to this – a more focused approach will give greater alignment with policy and the challenges we face, not least with the environment. The continuing monitoring of results of these policies against measures of performance will be important elements going forward. But the central feature is the increase in environmental ambition and that is where the greatest challenge is for farmers, with substantial targets being set. A reduction of 50 per cent of GHG emissions by 2030 is a massive target to meet. The climate ambition is one of the most striking challenges ever facing the industry and certainly eclipses all others, such as Brexit.

“Farmers face a high degree of uncertainty as well, specifically in how these ambitions are going to be delivered. There are tools there to mitigate emissions

but it is about getting farmers to take up these measures and there is a huge amount of work needed to deal with that at farm level. The new CAP implements its ambition through a new green architecture with enhanced conditionality. Farmers will have to implement certain measures – mitigating emissions, nutrient losses and so forth – with 25 per cent of funding in Pillar 1 attached to this eco scheme. Many are concerned about the level of uptake by farmers – they will need to engage or they will lose money. These will be the key challenges and we are still working through the detail of what those eco schemes will look like. It does seem like it will be a point-based system where farmers will have a menu to choose from to get points.”

Less budget

Michael adds that with a declining CAP budget after accounting for inflation, the pressure is increased. “So we

are addressing this great challenge with less money, which is immensely difficult. How do we sustain the financial viability of farmers' livelihoods, as their payments in real terms will be effectively declining? I believe we can do that based on our strong credentials for higher quality food and we need to demonstrate that we are living up to our environmental responsibilities." But will farmers be the beneficiaries of a higher value product on shelf? "One of the objectives of CAP reform is about rebalancing power in the food chain. Arguably, many will be disappointed that current policy does not go far enough. Delivering more sustainable farm incomes is key. Farmers are rightly frustrated and aggrieved by the often low share of that value they achieve – I would have liked to have seen stronger measures on rebalancing power in the food chain and it is one of the weaker areas of CAP reform in my opinion. Looking at how we can deliver a better return to farmers by marketing those sustainability credentials is quite a challenging thing to achieve in a competitive marketplace."

Win/win

While there will be costs associated with implementing some of these measures required to meet our targets, Michael is also keen to stress the 'win/win' side to some measures. "If you look at areas like genetic improvement and livestock health: we can reduce emissions and also improve farm incomes. But if we look at curtailing levels

of production, that is obviously output sacrificed to achieve environmental payment and farmers will need to weigh up the options and decide if the payment is sufficient to offset lower revenue from reduced output." However, Michael is positive that Ireland is in a strong position to move forward. "There is a legacy of work done to reinforce the sustainability of Ireland's food industry and so much has also been done to promote innovation at farm level. And we have a strong system of knowledge transfer. So, there are a plethora of supports to the industry that facilitate a positive environment to help the industry grow. Many of our competitors internationally are looking at what Ireland is doing with great interest. We are ahead of the game when it comes to promoting sustainability at farm level. But there is still a lot more work to do. The next step is to encourage more farmers to adapt to meet the targets in place. It is ambitious and farmers are understandably concerned about the significant financial impacts that may arise. There are real constraints hitting the industry and it is creating a lot of uncertainty for the farming community. What is important is that we need farmers to have a basic level of financial viability in their business in terms of income in order to be able to make the investments needed to meet these targets.

"Customers globally are looking to buy products that have strong environmental credentials. We can sell our products into this market and add value. This will be key as we try to deliver higher returns to farmers."

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Sustainable systems

New research from the European Milk Forum* looks at consumer perceptions around sustainability and the dairy sector.

Ireland's dairy farmers are hard at work on family farms producing sustainable and nutritious Irish milk and dairy. Our temperate weather and abundance of rainfall mean our 1.5 million dairy cows spend 9-10 months of the year outdoors foraging on fresh, natural grass – the way cows have been sustainably farmed on the island of Ireland since Neolithic times.

Today, new generations of men and women are taking the reins at family farms across the country. Innovative new Irish agri-food businesses are joining household names in bringing Irish dairy products to kitchen tables around the globe, delivering €4.4 billion annually to the Irish economy, predominantly to rural and regional communities. Here at home, we are seeing a record increase in dairy consumption amongst Irish consumers, particularly in younger age groups (under-35), as the

Covid-19 pandemic has made them more keenly aware of their diet and where their food is produced.

When it comes to environmental sustainability, Ireland is the most carbon-efficient producer of dairy in the European Union. But dairy farmers recognise that more needs to be done. Each of Ireland's 18,000+ dairy farmers is at a different stage in their journey towards a more environmentally sustainable farm – it does not have a finish line or cut-off point; this journey will be ongoing. There will always be more to learn and adapt to as we strive to meet the challenges of a changing climate and continue to provide a source of sustainable, healthy and nutritious food for generations to come. But we know that Irish dairy farmers are committed to leading the way in sustainable dairy production, while maintaining our heritage of family farming.

Consumer Insights

As part of the 'Dairy in A Healthy and Sustainable European Food System' campaign, the European Milk Forum conducted national research of over 1,500 Irish adults seeking to understand consumers' perceptions of sustainability and the dairy sector. It revealed that:

- 77.4% believe dairy products deliver good nutrition
- 83.9% say that Ireland is a suitable place for dairy production given its climate
- 61.5% of Irish consumers want to follow a more sustainable diet
- 60.4% are more conscious of the location where food is produced post Covid-19 pandemic
- 55.3% say clearer sustainability labelling would help them follow a more sustainable diet

Zoe Kavanagh, spokesperson for the European Milk Forum in Ireland and Chief Executive of the National Dairy Council said the research findings underscored consumers' desire to eat more sustainably, as well as the value they place on locally produced Irish dairy.

"This research clearly highlights the high regard Irish consumers hold for our indigenous dairy industry – recognising that fresh Irish dairy products deliver essential nutrition and that a climate like ours couldn't be more perfect for the production of sustainable grass-based milk, cheese and yoghurt."

"The research also identifies a clear desire from most consumers to follow a sustainable – or even more sustainable – diet. The consumer demand is there, and it is time for everyone on the supply side – from producers to retailers – to step up to the mark."

IRISH CONSUMERS ARE NOW MORE CLIMATE-CONSCIOUS

Sustainability actions undertaken by Irish consumers in the past 12 months

- 90.4% Recycling
- 83.3% Reducing food waste
- 52% Choosing regionally-produced foods
- 49.3% Purchasing Fairtrade products

* The European Milk Forum (EMF) is a non-profit organisation that plays a vital role in driving the strategic development, management, and exchange of integrated information initiatives on milk and dairy across Europe.

DAIRY INNOVATION

The VistaMilk SFI Research Centre is a unique collaboration between dairy farmers and cooperatives, state and third-level research institutes, and leading agri-food and technology companies seeking to positively impact the environment, animal well-being and the health of consumers through innovation and enhanced sustainability across the dairy supply chain.

One strategic goal of VistaMilk is to address the targets set out in Ireland's Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill by trying to reduce the quantity of methane emitted by cows, and benchmarking and evaluating strategies to enhance the capture (known as sequestration) of carbon by Irish grasslands. VistaMilk possesses the only four machines in Ireland that measure methane in cattle. A two-phase research trial is offered to companies wishing to evaluate feed additives for reducing methane emissions. The first phase is a short initial trial to test the efficacy of the product, and the second is a longer-term study to look at the impact on yield, composition, processing characteristics and sensory aspects of the milk. Several additives have already been tested and these machines are also in use to research the impact on emissions of including clover in the sward, as well as breeding low emitting dairy cows.

VistaMilk, in conjunction with Dairy Research Ireland, has also launched a €1.4m collaborative research project to scientifically quantify how much carbon is being captured by Irish soils. Accurate data is essential to ensure the true carbon footprint of farms can be accurately measured from both outputs and inputs, an issue which is now recognised by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021.

According to Donagh Berry, Director of VistaMilk, the work undertaken by VistaMilk researchers will be of benefit to the sector, to society and to ensuring we meet our global commitments: "The dual objective of reducing emissions per cow through management and breeding strategies, while stimulating greater capture of carbon will clearly and scientifically demonstrate the huge arsenal of tools available to farmers in playing our part to delivering a more sustainable environment for our children as well as ensuring a secure and sustainable dairy sector for future generations to come."

Meat market outlook

Bord Bia's Joe Burke is cautiously optimistic on meat prices for the period ahead, as he told Matt O'Keeffe.

Joe looked at beef price developments through the year: "Even though prices started off in a mediocre place they picked up strongly and we are now looking as an eight year high in July/August. On average, at the start of August, an R3 steer averaged €4.26/kilo, excluding VAT. Irish prices have been tracking the UK where prices have also been very strong. In early August, the UK R3 steer price averaged €4.71/kg, about ten percent higher than our prices. That reflects tight supplies and an increasing preference for native beef. Several British retailers only buy British beef. That trend has been growing. We continue to have a very strong market share making up eighty per cent of UK beef imports. Longer term, there are threats to that position. We've seen trade deals discussed and also finalised in relation to Australia. In the short term that is not going to have any perceivable impact because Australian beef is at record prices and their beef herd has reduced due to droughts and is currently rebuilding. Right now, the prospects for Irish beef in the UK are bright."

EU markets

"More generally around Europe, cattle prices have strengthened, but from a much lower base, and to a lesser extent, than for Ireland or the UK. R grade bull prices for France, Germany, Italy and Spain are tending between €3.80 and €3.90. They are considerably more competitive than ourselves or the UK. Looking at the first six months of 2021, our exports to the UK market were down by 11 per cent, mainly due to a carryover of stock after very strong exports to the end of 2020. With a lot of Irish beef in storage, our exports to the UK were down from January until March by 20 per cent. Despite that, our exports for the first six months were only down by 11 per cent after a strong performance since March. What has compensated for that decline has been a higher proportion of our

exports going into continental EU markets. For the year-to-date we've seen an 18 per cent increase in the volume of Irish beef going to Europe. Those markets are more price competitive, but there are also some higher value opportunities in the likes of the German or Italian markets where there are preferences for certain cuts and where there's a strong resonance and a strong reputation built up for Irish grass-fed beef. In some cases, they would be commanding higher prices than local beef."

International beef markets

"Our international export markets have been increasing year on year with a record high in 2020. In the context of the last decade, where we saw 12 per cent of Irish beef export volumes going into non-EU markets, that has contracted somewhat for the year to date. Access for Irish beef exports to China is still restricted. China is really the major global importer, driving the performance of many major exporters, including Brazil and Australia. Though volumes are down, China continues to be their major market."

"We continue to supply other non-EU markets. The Philippines is the most significant. Because global exporters are mainly focused on China, we're getting a secondary benefit, gaining a higher market share. Hong Kong has been a long-standing market for Irish beef. It tends to take lower value products including frozen trimmings and offal. North America has also been strong in recent years, and we've seen a growing volume go there including a lot of fore-quarters quarter beef for further manufacturing."

Value up as volumes fall

"Overall, Irish beef export value has risen by 8 per cent for the year to date which is positive because we've seen a

contraction in volume of 2 per cent on account of lower production and lower throughput. For the year to date we've slaughtered just above 70,000 fewer cattle than the same period last year and, based on our best estimates and projections, we expect there will continue to be fewer animals available for slaughter from now until the end of the year at least. There are likely to be somewhere between 100,000 and 120,000 fewer animals available for slaughter for the year as a whole. Looking ahead for 2022, we expect to see some recovery in supplies. Covid restrictions meant fewer calves exported due to lower demand. They will be reared to slaughter from next spring."

What is driving sheep prices?

"Prices have been running at a euro higher per kilo compared to previous years. Part of the price rise is down to reduced competition from the UK. They have always been our biggest competitor on the European market and have less volume now for export. Over the past year, the UK has imported less sheepmeat from the southern hemisphere. That has resulted in more staying within the UK, resulting in a tightness around Europe, which has been to our benefit. For the year-to-date, even though volumes are down, our sheepmeat exports into Continental Europe are delivering 15 per cent higher value. There were fewer hoggets carried over from last year and it's only in the last month that we've seen spring lamb supplies picking up. That hasn't had a big depressing impact on prices so far, certainly not in comparison with last year's levels."

"We are optimistic for 2022 because the retail and food service sectors were not as impacted by the lockdown as other sectors and volume and demand remained a lot more robust than expected. Increasingly, a lot of volume is focused on ethnic opportunities. Some of that is it for Halal product. The sheepmeat market is more resilient than anticipated. Looking forward, not just around those Muslim festivals, demand for sheepmeat generally around Europe looks to be very robust."

Pork prices

"Disease in the Chinese pig herd has been a major contributing influence on pork prices. Chinese production declined so significantly that there wasn't enough product on the global market to satisfy demand. If we look forward over the next six years, in spite of a steady recovery in Chinese pig production, they'll not get back up to the level that they were at, which was quite close to self-sufficiency. They will continue to be a major importer of pigmeat going forward. As their own domestic production recovers, the import volumes might not be as strong or as significant as they were in 2020. Higher volumes are being imported into the Chinese market this year as well, though there is more instability and that's partly because of government intervention. They are releasing stocks onto the market, that they had bought up themselves from international suppliers, the US in particular. It's



"With a lot of Irish beef in storage, our exports to the UK were down from January until March by 20 per cent. Despite that, our exports for the first six months were only down by 11 per cent after a strong performance since March."

also partly because of continued impacts of ASF-related culling where they are declaring ASF-infected zones, as well as individual farms that have outbreaks, and that is leading to panic selling. Some farms that were speculating on the price going higher, were feeding pigs into much higher carcass weights. When they have disease outbreaks within their region, there are restrictions on where they're allowed to sell their pigs. You then get short-term dumping of stocks and pigs onto the markets over a short period That resulted in Chinese prices falling by more than fifty percent over the first four months of 2021. Any price recovery has been very slow since then. Imports into China are still at very high levels and I expect we will see further price recovery because they don't have the production to meet their domestic consumption needs. The autumn historically, is a time when pigmeat consumption rises. That should lift prices, though probably not up to the very high levels that we saw twelve months ago."

"The other factor is the significant increase that we've seen in feed prices, not just in China, but across all markets. That is going to put pressure on production of pig and poultry meats and red meat as well and we could anticipate some upward price pressure on all meats because of higher production costs."

The future for western farming

Laurance Fallon has been a suckler and sheep farmer all of his working life. Here, he gives his views on the future of the sectors in the west of Ireland.

Unlike other parts of the country, there are large tracts of the west of Ireland that do not lend themselves to tillage. Because of farm fragmentation dairying is not an option either, so in many ways, it's not by accident that we have a lot of suckler and sheep farmers in the west of Ireland and for that reason, our options are fairly limited. Certainly, some farmers have gone into dairy and are doing quite well, I have no doubt. As I look back over a long period in farming, dairying has been the enterprise to be in for the last 40 years at least. Some young farmers have taken that option. But what's happening, I think, in the west of Ireland currently is we have very few new farmers coming in, very few young farmers. Most of us have family, but do not have somebody who wishes to be a farmer. We are aging and aging fairly rapidly. Suckler cows or sheep are a challenge as you get older. So, I think we have a real issue on the broader scale.

A price lift

But on the other side of it, we're having a very good year for sheep farming, there's no doubt about that and I think they will at least maintain their numbers and maybe expand. I think you will see a small expansion in sucklers in the next year, because some people are of the opinion there could be a base suckler quota next year. I don't believe there will be, in regard to payments going forward. But in the longer term, it is very difficult to see where suckler farming will survive, because the cost of keeping this suckler cow and the ability to produce one calf per cow per year even from a 50-cow herd is too great a challenge. The majority of herds are far lower than that. Certainly, given the amount of work, there is not a living out of it. I see some of my neighbouring farmers who will be selling their very best weanlings at the very best prices and they are now moving over to fattening stock from the dairy herd. All those that have done it are happy they did it. That's an indication of where it's going.

Inferior incomes

If we could rebalance the income side and get a better increment from the enterprises, I could see a number coming back. One thing I have noticed is that Covid-19 has grown the bond between where you were born and the links to it. I've seen people who were very city-oriented, adapting very well to working remotely at home. That's a positive. The difficulty is nobody nowadays is going to work for an inferior income and I just don't see the income coming from suckler farming.

I think sheep will be a different story. They are a lower cost, with a better possibility of making an income. But sucklers, I just don't see the way forward when you look at the way we're opening up world trade and the Brazilians and others being allowed access for their beef to Europe. It's highly unlikely that we can have anything like the Japanese system where they have a huge price premium for their own beef and that is what we would need in order to survive. I don't see a positive future for sucklers. But having said that, there is still a great demand for land, somewhat related to dairy farming, so I don't see that good land will be abandoned or anything. But I think there will be a big challenge for traditional enterprises, especially suckling, going forward.

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A man wearing a blue cap with the 'IRISH GRAIN GROWERS' logo and a dark blue jacket stands in front of a yellow combine harvester in a field. The background shows a large field of golden grain under a cloudy sky.

Confidence high in tillage sector

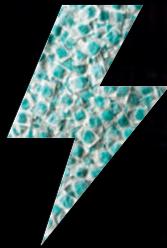
This year's grain harvest has proven to be a generally positive experience. Despite some weather-induced hiccups, crops were, in general, harvested in good conditions with some impressive yields and significantly higher prices than last year. Bobby Millar, chairman of the Grain Growers Group, spoke to **Matt O'Keeffe** from the combine in late August to provide an overview of the sector and prospects for the coming year.

"At this stage, on the 19th of August, I have three of my five crops completely harvested. Winter barley, winter oats and spring barley are all harvested with spring oats and beans still to ripen fully. I understand between sixty and seventy percent of the harvest has been completed with most of the Winter wheat cut and Winter OSR crops also completed. The harvest started in continental conditions and then slowed down with some broken weather right through August. Most of the Winter barley was harvested in glorious conditions."

With a few days of fine weather promised, Bobby was anticipating a lot of the harvest being completed in the following week: "It is critical to get those ripe crops harvested as soon as possible. Otherwise, quality will suffer with sprouting and straw breaking down. The new varieties of Spring barley are very good yielders, but they have to be cut as soon as they are ripe. They are prone to breaking down if they get over-ripe and quality deteriorates, reducing yield as heads fall."



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Competitive Irish grain

There was good news on prices with this year's harvest, as Bobby confirmed: "Prices are up, though I would say that there should be a premium for native grain. We are not self-sufficient and the sector needs to be encouraged. The cost of importing grain has gone up so it makes sense to have more home-grown produce. Irish grain and pulses are very competitive compared to imports. In terms of the environment, the Irish tillage sector is part of the solution, not the problem. The more native grain produced and developed into high value products the better for everyone. This is a chance to add value and keep the benefits at home. It should benefit everyone including farmers feeding grain-based products to their livestock."

Bobby Millar is clear on the future for tillage in Ireland: "The Food Vision Report 2030 includes various methane-reducing strategies. Using native grain is proven to reduce our carbon footprint. Importing grain by-products from across the world increases the carbon footprint by multiples of the native grain. Producing more native protein also makes sense. The CAP reform proposals include a protein payment and that is welcome. If we want to increase protein production we need an increased

budget in the sector, together with consideration of other high value crops such as red clover. That would be positive for dairy and cattle farmers. It would be a very good option to reduce protein imports because red clover is high in protein. It's an example of an integrated approach with everyone working together for the benefit of all our farming sectors."

The value of straw

Like many other farmers, Bobby has adopted the straw incorporation scheme into his operation: "I chopped the winter oaten straw for incorporation and the Spring oat straw will also be chopped and incorporated. Tillage farmers are finding it very beneficial and the scheme should be rolled over into future policy for the tillage sector. Weather and supply will dictate the price of straw in future years so straw incorporation should be part of normal management practice. The scheme is marginally undersubscribed and that's a good outcome for the first year. If it continues to be supported, I can see straw incorporation being an important part of good soil management in the years ahead. Straw quality, demand and price will always determine what it is used for in the future."



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Looking ahead

Land was already being prepared on the Millar farm for the following crops: "We hope to sow oilseed rape before the end of the month if the weather improves. It needs to be sown in good conditions before the end of August to maximise yield potential." While still concentrating on the current harvest, Bobby and his Grain Growers Group are conscious that the next CAP will have serious implications for tillage farmers incomes: "Convergence will have a heavy impact on the tillage sector. Between the eco schemes and front loading, which to my thinking is a form of convergence, and crop rotation rules, there will be big challenges to viability ahead. There is discussion around the compulsory three-crop rule and some relaxation there would be welcomed. Income loss is the biggest challenge ahead for tillage farmers. Tillage farmers will lose up to €4,000 on average with no indication of how we can make up that income loss."

Rising grain prices lift all enterprises

The Kildare-based grain farmer takes a broad and positive view of the increases in grain prices: "History has shown that when grain prices are strong, the other sectors also benefit from rising prices. Across the world, there is a huge reliance on grain as a livestock and poultry feed source. High grain prices reduce output across cattle, pigs and poultry and that drives up meat prices because margins tighten and output tends to fall. In Ireland, where we mainly use grass as a feed source, we benefit from the higher prices for our livestock while not being impacted as much by the higher grain prices adding to production costs. So, a lift in grain prices should actually make our livestock farmers more competitive even though concentrate prices will be higher."



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Banking on the future of farming

Eoin Lowry, Head of Agri at Bank of Ireland, examines the outlook for Irish farming

Operating in the shadow of Brexit and a global pandemic, the endurance of Irish agriculture and farmers in 2021 has demonstrated yet again the sector's resilience. The agri-food sector is Ireland's oldest and most important indigenous industry that has grown significantly over the past decade.

Ireland is now an internationalised global food producer and along with other farmers around the world, will need to reach an impressive level of food production to help feed a growing world population. That is the stark reality the world faces as the two big drivers of food demand – population and income – continue to rise.

Thankfully, advances in farming have managed to keep up, but with the population set to grow a further 25 per cent by 2050, food supply will have to grow a further 60 per cent. While this is achievable through science, the challenge will be to find a new way to grow more food with less: less water and less land coupled with enhancing and protecting the natural environment.

Policy

Government policy is evolving to reflect this challenge with both the EU and Ireland now committed to becoming climate neutral by 2050. The new Common Agricultural Policy sets out a number of measures aimed at encouraging farmers to adopt more environmental farming practices. Food Wise 2025

places sustainability (economic, environment and social) at the core of Irish agriculture's future. By 2030 the sector aims to reduce emissions by 10 per cent, reduce nutrient losses by 50 per cent and prioritise 10 per cent of farmed area for biodiversity.

With agriculture in Ireland being the single largest contributor to overall emissions this will no doubt be a challenge. But these challenges present opportunities for innovation and new ways of farming that will increase efficiency and productivity. Ever since the advance of the plough Irish farmers have always adopted new ways of farming.

At the same time, agriculture and forestry has a unique role to play in being the only sector that can sequester carbon from the atmosphere and contribute to the solution. Food Wise 2025 aims to increase afforestation, increase organic farming and scale-up renewable energy. It is also likely that carbon farming will offer a potential new source of income for farmers over the next decade. Coupled to this is that consumers are now wanting to know more about where their food is coming from, how it is produced and the environmental footprint associated with it. This is the context for how farmers will feed and rear animals and grow crops in the years to come. Simply put, the way we farm in the future will be much different to the way we farm today.



Competitive advantages

Outside of our unique climate affording us the ability to grow large quantities of grass and quality grains, Irish agriculture and particularly the dairy sector has many competitive advantages that allow us to compete with much larger global producers. Scale on a global level is difficult to achieve in Ireland, not helped by the fact that a field only comes on the market every 300 years or so. However it has developed our family farming model, where farms are passed on from one generation to the next, sustaining a committed and caring population of farmers.

Secondly, the low level of borrowing on Irish farms has ensured the sector can withstand global agri commodity price shocks. Less than a third of Irish farms have debt and of those farms with debt, the average debt per farm is less than €65,000. And despite sector expansion, investment and increased appetite to finance the sector, farmers continue to pay down debt at a faster rate than they take it out.

Reputation

Thirdly, Irish agriculture has a global reputation for being a trusted high quality safe protein (dairy and meat) producer helped by the globally recognised Bord Bia Origin Green sustainability programme. This is increasingly valued by today's consumers and can differentiate Irish food allowing it obtain a premium in the marketplace. The success of any business is always built on attracting

and retaining talent. Favourable policies around farm succession and tailored education means the sector now has a generation of younger farmers who are not only highly educated but who are also committed, passionate and ambitious. Furthermore our globally renowned research and innovation agenda driven by Teagasc provides a unique advantage to the sector. Because of our mild, temperate climate, Irish tillage farmers can grow grains that are globally renowned for their distilling and brewing abilities. The Irish tillage sector, while lacking scale of global players, can be a global force in the supply of high quality ingredients to the drinks sector.

Trade

When the trade agreement was signed between the UK and the EU at the end of last year, farmers and the sector breathed a sigh of relief. So far the sector has not felt any negative impact of Brexit. However the threat of the UK completing trade deals with lower cost producers around the world could see the devaluation of the UK food market over time. Given that 50 per cent of Irish beef exports are destined for the UK, this could significantly impact the Irish beef sector in terms of value and volume. However by continuing to differentiate our product in terms of its environmental footprint, quality and food standards, along with developing new markets globally, the sector could mitigate any negative impacts from such a move by the UK. Overall, given our proximity, shared language and culture, the UK should remain a key market for Irish food into the future.

Finally as the world becomes more internationalised and national policies focus on food security, Irish farmers will remain exposed to the vagaries of global agri commodity markets. While this price volatility is likely to get more extreme as supply and demand remains finely balanced, the sector is better placed to support farmers in managing volatility. However the need to have a laser focus on efficiency and productivity is likely to only become greater.

Conclusion

In summary, the growing global demand for food alongside our competitive advantages will continue to provide opportunities for Irish farmers. Given the focus on reducing the climate footprint of our planet it is possible that we will see a sustained rise in the price of agri commodities in the years ahead. However, the technology we have depended on up to now- such as chemical fertiliser and pesticides to feed the growing population is unlikely to be the technology that we will depend on in the future. As the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, once said – the only constant in life is change. Luckily, Irish farmers and the agri sector are used to change and always willing and able to adapt.



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FTMTA'S new gaffer

Matt O'Keeffe talks to Michael Farrelly, the newly appointed executive director of the FTMTA (Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association)

Michael brings a wealth of experience to his appointment, having held diverse roles in the agribusiness sector: "I have spent the past 20 years working in and around the agri-industry, including a period with agricultural consultant Philip Farrelly. That gave me a broad perspective right throughout the industry, from beef farmers to dairy farmers and with the pig and poultry sector when the IPC licensing and new regulations were brought in. We were involved in preparing the licenses. Then I moved into finance working with farmers and with the SME sector for a number of years. Finally, I was operations and sales manager for the John Deere dealership operated by Meath Farm Machinery Machinery."

The Show must go on

Michael is looking forward to the prospect of running the FTMTA Machinery Show in 2022: "We're busy making preparations for February and we hope that the Show will go ahead. We are expecting a decision from government and some guidance in terms of events like the Machinery Show within the next couple of weeks. Fortunately, in

Ireland, there is a high level of vaccine uptake, with over 80% of the adult population vaccinated. So, we are very positive about the prospects of having the Show. It's a very important event for the industry with a lot of people looking forward to it. I think the structure of the show helps. There are big open marquees with plenty of air circulating around them so I think we could run a very safe event."

"There's a huge amount of business done at the FTMTA Show. Our exhibitors say that, of all the events that they attend, the structure of our Show where they get to spend time with customers and talk about the machines is important with a huge amount of business generated."

Machine cost rising

The cost of machinery is rising, as Michael acknowledges: "Cost is always a challenge. The manufacturers would say that the cost is offset by manufacturing more efficient machines and the machines are getting larger. You now have one machine doing an awful lot more than in the past. This year, in particular, is challenging. The price of steel has spiked. I think that's going to be a short-

term problem because there is capacity in the system to manufacture more steel. They slowed down production because of Covid, but that's ramping back up. There are other issues in relation to component shortages and that is a concern. For example, with semiconductors, there was a fire in one factory and that created a shortage. Hopefully, as we close with COVID, and factories get back to full production, we will see prices stabilise."

Surge in tractor sales

"Our members are reporting that tractor sales are up across the board. To the end of July over 1,900 tractors were registered. That's a reflection of farmgate prices with all commodities well up on last year. There was a lot of concern around Brexit but that hasn't impacted on dairy, beef or sheep prices. In tillage, most of the winter crops are harvested at this stage in reasonably good conditions with prices strong. So, all the sectors seem to be doing well."

Machine technology

"I think increasing automation is going to play a large part in agriculture in the years ahead. The EU is proposing that twenty five percent of the food produced in Europe is going to be organic, that's going to take some production out of the system. There will also be EU-driven reductions in inputs resulting in production capacity being further reduced, while at the same time the world population is rising and the demand for food is increasing. To deliver that food efficiently there will be more automation. Ultimately, it is easier to set up a robotic tillage system on the US prairies than in Ireland, so there will be varying levels of automation depending on scale and terrain. There is fantastic technology out there that will meet environmental as well as agricultural demands. For example, fertilizer spreaders are very efficient and accurate. They control inputs using mapping systems that take account of fertility, soil type and crop requirements.

That doesn't deliver full autonomy, but it increases the manpower and machinery efficiencies."

FTMTA members well equipped for the future

"It always amazes me to see the levels of skills our machinery teams have and how well trained they are. The amount of investment, both by our dealers and by manufacturers into ongoing training of the people working in our dealerships is phenomenal. There is an ongoing challenge, not just facing the farm machinery sector, but right across the economy in attracting the necessary new talent to build careers with us. Some people don't see the sector as an attractive career option. There is a bit of work to be done by our association and membership to educate people about the career opportunities available. It's not just spanners and grease. Much of the work involves high spec technology and working with laptops as much as actually servicing machines and replacing parts."

"Much of the scaling up of, and investment in, farm machinery dealerships has been done to provide viable backup services to customers. It doesn't matter whether you're a tillage farmer, contractor, a dairy or beef farmer, if you're doing an operation and your machine breaks down, you need that machine back up and running quickly. What's important is that you have skilled people and parts available to provide an efficient service. There are lots of the machines now with technology that can be profiled and diagnosed remotely. Before the mechanic goes out at all he or she knows what the problem is. They can have the parts that are needed to get the machine back working immediately. In some instances, with the technology, they know there is a problem before the machine stops. Adequate scale allows a wide range of machines to be stocked so a customer can have full sales and service provided in one location. Efficient, well-equipped workshops to get the customer back in the field or yard quickly are an essential element of a good dealership today."





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Farm plastics collection success

Farm plastics collection and recycling continues to be a spectacular success story in Ireland. **Liam Moloney**, general manager of Irish Farm Film Producers Group (IFFPG) recently highlighted the ongoing success story

"In 2020, despite Covid-19, we had another record year in terms of farm plastics recycling. We had an 80 per cent recycling of wrap and sheeting from farms. That's a very impressive figure for any stream of plastic collection and recycling anywhere in the world. Just to put it into perspective, it's the equivalent of plastic collection from 17 million bales. Farmers have really bought into the concept and we also have the companies who put the farm plastic products on the market contributing to the collection and recycling levy alongside farmers. As well as the initial levy on the purchase of farm plastic, farmers pay a small fee on the plastic they deliver to collection centres. For an average cost of around €60 per year, farmers can dispose safely of all their farm plastic waste products in a responsible way with the knowledge that they are doing their bit for the environment."

Recycling

In recent years the options available for efficient and cost-effective recycling of farm plastic have grown as Liam points out: "We are pleased to see that there are new recycling facilities now in operation in Ireland, taking more and more plastic for recycling from farms. Our group supplies to Irish recycling facilities wherever possible. Where capacity is an issue, we do send plastic abroad for recycling. However, there are now two Irish based recycling facilities making good progress in utilising waste plastic from farms. There is a joint venture facility operating in Littleton between AES Bord na Mona and a Chinese company called Sabrina Integrated Services. Another company, based in Carrickmacross county Monaghan, ADN Materials, is also recycling farm plastic.

Those two companies are now taking upwards of one-third of our collected farm plastic and we hope they will be in a position to take considerably more in the years ahead. That is a far better solution than sending plastic waste abroad and in time we hope to be in a position to have all of our used plastic recycled in Ireland. It benefits the local economy, as well as being positive for the circular economy in Ireland."

The science of recycling plastic

The science around plastic recycling is impressive as the IFFPG general manager confirms: "When the old tarp and pit covers go to a recycling plant they are shredded, washed and dried and then melted. The end product is a small plastic pellet, which is the base ingredient or building block for new plastic products. Typically, the pellets are reformulated into construction materials, refuse sacks, blended into other plastic polymers to make piping, with garden furniture as another end product. Everything we collect is recycled into a new product and that is ultimately the aim of the exercise."

The Irish Farm Film Producers group also provides a valuable collection service for a range of other farm plastic waste materials, says Liam Moloney: "We take the full range of farm plastic waste products. In addition to the wrap and sheeting we take plastic twine and netting, we take large fertiliser and feed bags, all segregated. Small fertiliser and feed bag disposal is serviced as are used plastic drums. So, effectively, we take all types of used farm plastic materials and if farmers need more detailed information on how to segregate and present the plastic they can do so through the Farmplastics.ie website."

NOURISHED FROM THE GROUND UP



You've grown up on Irish Dairy. We have too. Each and every Irish Dairy farmer has grown up knowing the importance of the land and the equal importance of caring for our animals.

That care is what keeps alive a farming tradition that we're all the better for. It's what makes for naturally nourishing* dairy produce to help you care for your family.

That's something to appreciate.

Something to be proud of.

National
Dairy
Council



FROM
THE
GROUND
UP

MESSAGES:

- ▶ **What things do you need to know to make autumn plans?**
- ▶ **Adhere to autumn grass targets and do the last rotation plan now.**
- ▶ **Autumn health is cheap.**
- ▶ **Check replacement heifer weights now and act.**
- ▶ **Do a Body Condition Score now – the first of the ‘new year’.**

By Matt Ryan

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW TO MAKE FUTURE PLANS

- ▶ Know the “why” and you will want to change from what you are doing. The decisions will also be better.
- ▶ Target a 50-hour/week work load for everyone on the farm.
 - ▶ To improve on farm labour efficiency
 - » Work on yourself first,
 - » Learn to work with others,
 - » Plan your own, your staffs’ or family’s daily/weekly work time.
 - ▶ Overall labour demand increases as herds get bigger,
 - ▶ Labour efficiency improves significantly above 250 cows (19.5 hr/cow/yr)
 - ▶ Milking uses up 33 per cent (Av) of a farmer’s work year; hence the need for adequate units and an efficient yard system. No one wants, nor should you expect them, to milk more than 10 rows in a parlour.
 - ▶ The most labour efficient farms use a lot of contractors – build reputation so as to avail of them.
- ▶ Grassland:
 - ▶ Every extra ton of grass dry matter (DM) utilised results in increased profit/ha of €180.
 - ▶ Every 10 per cent less grass being fed results in a loss of €97/ha in profit. The target is 90 per cent of the cow’s diet must come from grass and silage grown on the farm.
 - ▶ Every day extra at grass results in increased profit of €1.85/cow/day.
 - ▶ Every extra day at grass results in an increase of 11kgs DM/ha and 1.7kgs MS/ha
 - ▶ For every 1 per cent of milking platform (MP) grazed by 1st March an additional 14kgsDM/ha will grow by 10th April.
 - ▶ For farms where the 1st rotation will end on 7-8th April, at least 30 per cent and 60 per cent of the MP should be grazed by 1st and 17th March respectively.
 - ▶ For farms where the 1st rotation will end on 1st April, at least 40 per cent and 75 per cent of the MP should be grazed by 1st and 17th March respectively.
 - ▶ At least 60 per cent (70 per cent on heavily stocked farms) of the MP should be grazed by 1st November.
 - ▶ Every 1kgDM/ha of grass left on paddocks in early November will result in 1.6 kg DM/ha available in springtime.
 - ▶ Every day autumn closing date is delayed results in spring grass availability being reduced by 8kgsDM/ha.
 - ▶ Every extra grazing rotation result in 1300kgs DM/ha being grown.
 - ▶ Going from a SR/ha of 2.9 to 3.3 resulted in:
 - » Grazing days/ha increasing by 14.2 per cent
 - » Grass utilise/ha increasing by 7.2 per cent
 - » Extra meal of 140kg DM/ha being fed
 - » MS/cow decreasing by 18kgs while MS/ha increase by 113kgs.
- ▶ The following yield increases (tons DM/ha) are got by increasing soil indices for P & K from:
 - » Index 1 to 2 = 1.5 tons
 - » Index 2 to 3 = 1.0 tons/ha
 - » Index 3 to 4 = 0.5tons/ha
- ▶ Clover, based on Clonakilty results, will increase grass yield by 1.5 ton/ha and MS by 58 (34 in Moorepark) kgs/cow.
- ▶ Protected urea should be used instead of CAN or unprotected urea.
- ▶ The following mal-practices decrease silage DMD (% units in brackets);
 - » One week delay in cutting (2.5-3)
 - » Old pastures (5-6)
 - » Lodging (7-9)
 - » Dad butt (6-7)
 - » Bad preservation (2-3)
 - » Heating at feed out (2-3).
- ▶ “The perfect cow” as defined by Moorepark:
 - ▶ An EBI of €200, as each €1 EBI results in a profit of €1.96.
 - ▶ A Jersey Cross will increase this profit by €100-150 per cow per year
 - ▶ She will have a fertility rating of €110 (target = €65 for a Jersey X). Stays in the herd for 4.5 (average) lactations
 - ▶ Aim to have a herd PD of 0.27 per cent F, 0.17 per cent P to achieve 9 per cent solids and +20kgs MS
 - ▶ Produces 450kgs milk solids (MS) from 450kgs meal (1.0kgs per 1 kg MS) from a 500 kg cow. The target is 1:1:1 (MS/cow: Meal/cow: Cow body weight)
 - ▶ Every 1kgMS/cow increase in yield results in increased profit/ha of €3.26.
 - ▶ The “perfect cow” will produce more MS, have longer lactations, survive longer in the herd, and reduce carbon footprints.
- ▶ Breeding targets:
 - ▶ Calving interval 365 days (Every day longer = loss of 0.12c/l)
 - ▶ 90 per cent 6-week calving rate (Every 1 per cent less = a loss of €8.22/cow in herd)
 - ▶ Replacement rate of 18 per cent (Every 1per cent over = a loss of 0.14c/l)
 - ▶ Age of herd; greater than 4.5 lactations (Every 1 less = loss of 1.5c/l)
 - ▶ A PD of €20 Maintenance on the ICBF EBI report indicates the cow is approx. 544 kgs weight, but it is best to weigh all cows and record on ICBF site. From this you will be able to identify the best cows based on kg MS per kg Body Wt. – very, very valuable information but you need to be milk recording. The proposed new stocking rate limits will greatly favour the small/light efficient cow. Identify her in your own herd.
 - ▶ For €20 per cow, farmers should consider genotyping their cows or at least their replacement heifers if selectively selling some. This is where herd genetics is going: identify, by means of concrete data your best cows and mate to best AI bulls.
 - ▶ Use the COW (cow’s own worth) to select out your

best cows, so as not to be overstocked with some poor cows.

- ▶ The Next Generation Herd (chosen on EBI) are €222/cow and €613/ha respectively more profitable than the national average herd. Emphasises the importance of EBI.
- ▶ Body condition (BCS) – why? Cows under 2.5 and over 3.5 will have more uterine infections and will be slower to come on heat after calving.
- ▶ The mean calving date should be between 10 and 25th February, depending on location and stocking rate; and be 50-60 days before Magic Day.
- ▶ Increasing stocking rate from 3.1 to 4.5 cows/ha on MP gave reduced profit at low and medium milk price, while it marginally increased it at high milk price.
- ▶ Building a financial reserve in a good profit year is advised to overcome future unforeseen setbacks.
- ▶ Robotic milking results in higher interest and capital repayments, depreciation, maintenance, running costs and lower profitability than conventional milking system but there is a 36 per cent reduction in labour required.
- ▶ Our grass based, high EBI driven system has made us one of the best for milk carbon footprint in the world.
- ▶ Once a day milking (OAD) reduces yield by 26 per cent and MS by 20 per cent and requires a lead in period of 2-3 years to successfully make the transition.
- ▶ Mastitis:
 - ▶ A case can be made for not dry cow treating cows with SCC's less than 200K but technique must be perfect.
 - ▶ Teat sealed incalf heifers, 4-6 weeks before calving, were 2-4 times more likely not to have bacteria present at 1st milking.
 - ▶ The CMT should be incorporated into every farmer's mastitis control programme.
 - ▶ Each clinical case of lameness costs you €300.
- ▶ As replacement heifers must last 1.63 lactations in the herd to cover their rearing costs, therefore, it is imperative they achieve target weights.
 - ▶ As feed conversion is much

better at young ages it is important to achieve target weights early in life.

- ▶ On the 1st September weanlings and incalf heifers must be 33 per cent and 73 per cent respectively of the cows' mature weight. Meal the light ones.
- ▶ It is vital to check performances with the contract rearer now.
- ▶ Vaccinations pay their way. Salmonella and Neospora are getting worse in the cow herd and salmonella is costing €112/cow at a milk price of 34.5c/l.
- ▶ Liver fluke is costing Irish farmers €90 million per year and, unfortunately, it is predicted to increase due to global warming.

AUTUMN GRASS TARGETS

- ▶ Why manage this, is answered above.
- ▶ To extend the grazing seasons this autumn and have early grass next spring, you must achieve certain levels of grass on your farm this autumn. (Table 1)

Table1: Autumn target covers (kgs DM/ha) for different stocking rates.

Date	Stocking Rate (cows/ha) on Milking Platform	Rotation		
		2.5	3.0	3.5
1 st September	400	330	280	30
15 th September	450	375	320	35
1 st October	400	330	280	40
15 th October	350	300	240	40

- ▶ The rotation length should be 30

days, based on area per day, on 1st September and is calculated as follows:

- ▶ If you have 100 cows grazing 35 ha on milking platform, then to have a 30-day rotation you allow the herd 1.16ha/day (35 divided by 30)
- ▶ If this doesn't provide enough grass, then address the options listed below.
- ▶ Over 45 per cent of farmers stocked at 3 cow+/hectare are well under these targets.
- ▶ If your stocking rate is 3.0 cows per hectare on MP in mid-September, then your your average farm cover (AFC) requirement is 900kg DM/ha (3.0 X 300).
- ▶ You will be aiming for highest farm covers in mid-September.
 - ▶ But pre-grazing covers (PGC) should not be greater than 2,300 Kgs DM (unless it is aftergrass); otherwise, quality will be very poor.
 - ▶ Rotation length will now be 35 days (approx)
- ▶ Use the strip wire to ration grass if covers are greater than 2,000 Kgs DM and/or if cows are remaining in a paddock/field longer than 2½ grazings; and/or if weather is wet. Paddocks must be grazed out tight to 3.5 - 4.0 cms:
 - ▶ This encourages winter tillering,
 - ▶ Makes it easier to graze out the last rotation.
 - ▶ And sets the farm up with less grass on dung-pads for winter.

- ▶ If under grass targets your options are:
 - ▶ Sell off or move surplus stock off the milking platform. As this is by far the most economical option, you must decide what animals to move on:
 - » Obviously, move R1's and R2's to outside land,
 - » Do a milk recording immediately to identify:
 - » High SCC cows,
 - » Low milk yield producers
 - » Do scan all the cows and sell empty cows as well as high SCC and low milk producers.
 - » Consider drying off lame cows and moving to outside land.
 - ▶ Round bales and meals must be introduced, otherwise, grass will run out in late October.
 - ▶ Most highly stocked farmers will have to feed 1 - 3 kg. meal/cow/day (citrus or soya hulls)
- ▶ Unless grass on the strong paddock is excessively heavy, over 2,300 Kgs DM, no cutting or topping should be done in September. It will have a very big detrimental effect on the quantity of grass in the last rotation.

LAST ROTATION PLAN

- ▶ This must be done now as it ensures, with the knowledge that your closing farm cover should be 650 – 900 kgs DM/ha in November, so that you will have adequate grass next spring
- ▶ PastureBase (Teagasc) has a very simple to use one:
 - ▶ Put in the area (ha) in MP; the start of last rotation date; the date (1st Nov) when you wish to have 60 per cent of MP grazed (70% on wet/late land and high stocked farms); and the date you plan to finish grazing.
 - ▶ Many farmers, on wet land and in northern areas will be starting the last rotation between 25th and 30th September. But most will not be doing so until 5 to 10th Oct. This allows you to maximise the number of grazings.
- ▶ You are now on the 2nd last grazing, make sure that the first of the paddocks being grazed will be the first to be grazed next spring.

LAST NITROGEN

- ▶ Know the autumn N facts; every kg N (Cost = €1) grows:
 - ▶ 27kgs grass DM in August, worth €2.97.
 - ▶ 19 kgs grass DM in September, worth €2.09
 - ▶ 10 kgs grass DM in October. Worth €1.10.
 - ▶ Autumn grass is worth 11cents/kg DM
 - ▶ It is obvious from this that earlier you apply N in the autumn the more money you make.

- ▶ All your bag nitrogen must be used, if N budget allows, before 15th September. If you spread after that you are subject to penalty. Protected Urea must be the product of choice.
- ▶ Your last day for spreading slurry is 15th October. It would be a good idea to wait till 1st-15th October to spread any left-over slurry because the nitrogen it will make a contribution to grass growth/protection in November – a kind of anti-freeze effect.
- ▶ What are the recommended rates of Nitrogen in September? Depends on the stocking rate (See Table 2)
- ▶ Soiled water or slurry can be used in early October as a source of Nitrogen.

Table 2: Recommended rates of Nitrogen for different Stocking Rates in September

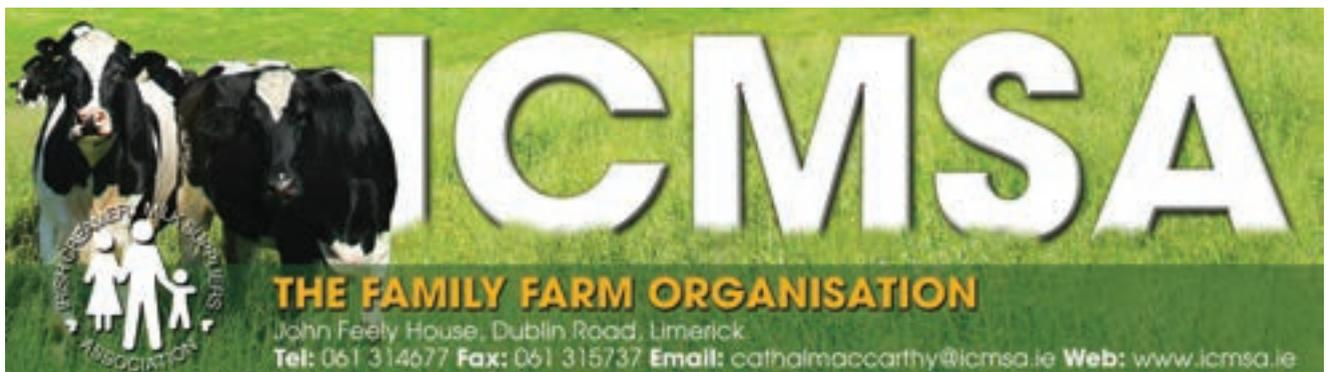
Cows per hectare	Units per Acre September	Total Units/Acre for year
2.24 or less	None	133-175
2.24-2.35	20	202
2.35-2.47	28	223
2.47-2.94	18	196

ASSESS COW CONDITION IN LATE SEPTEMBER

- ▶ Assess BCS of the herd in late September or early October so as to manage thin and fat cows appropriately/cheaply:
 - ▶ Cows must calve down in BCS of 3.25.
 - ▶ Each BCS is 40-50kgs in liveweight.
 - ▶ To gain a kg of BCS requires 4.5kgs of meal. To put on 25kg (0.5BCS) of weight will require 113kgs meal.
 - ▶ While dry, on normal quality silage, a cow will only gain 1/4 BCS (12kgs) in 30 days; and she will gain no BCS in last month of pregnancy.
- ▶ The target cow condition now is 2.7 or greater.
 - ▶ You must identify cows that are thinner than that now and plan some course of action for them.
 - ▶ If you wait, they will calve down thin and not milk well next year or go incalf.
- ▶ Your options for these thin cows are to:
 - ▶ Feed meals now, at 1-2 Kgs per day of a low protein/high energy ration.
 - ▶ Or dry off 12-14 weeks before expected calving date.
 - ▶ Or put on OAD milking from early September.

AUTUMN ANIMAL HEALTH CARE

- ▶ Prevention of animal health problems is essential to staying in business.
- ▶ Salmonella abortions at 7-9 months is the one disease that



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could put you out of business

- ▶ To prevent abortions, vaccinate now, early September, but follow instructions if doing it for the first time.
- ▶ The chances are incalf heifers are being done for the first time and need two injections, 3 weeks apart, the second one before mid-September. This is very important because the animal has no protection for 2 weeks after the 2nd injection. So, she could abort.
- ▶ Weanling replacement heifers (R2's) should be done for Leptospirosis now – essential.
- ▶ Watch out for hoose among weanlings:
 - ▶ Yellow/white doses will kill hoose worms and give 2-3 weeks protection and longer with good grassland management.
 - ▶ Other products will kill hoose and give protection for 5 weeks or longer but they are 4 times more expensive than the white/yellow drenches.
- ▶ If calves have stomach worms (sticky dung around tail head) they must be dosed.
- ▶ Lameness is becoming a very costly issue on farms. The following causes need to be assessed:
 - ▶ Poor roadway maintenance and design, main cause of autumn lameness,
 - ▶ Impatience whilst moving the cows on the roadway or in the yard
 - ▶ Long periods of time spent on concrete, or cows twisting and turning on concrete yards.
 - ▶ Excessive moisture,
 - ▶ Nutritional effects and effect of trace element and minerals.
 - ▶ Infectious agents,
 - ▶ Genetic factors (record all lame cows on ICBF site)
 - ▶ Use FRS to sort out.
- ▶ Fluke may or may not be a problem on your farm. If the milk test is negative, then you don't need to dose. It may be worth getting dung samples analysed (cost €50) to confirm presence of fluke (particularly for dry farms).
- ▶ Mastitis is next to infertility as the reason for culling cows.
 - ▶ Continue teat dipping at 15-20ml/cow/day.
 - ▶ Identify chronic cows and cull NOW, otherwise they will continue to infect other cows in the herd.
 - ▶ With restrictions coming on antibiotic use it is time to bring herd SCC levels below 100,000 and the number of clinical cases per 100 cows below 30.
- ▶ Keep an eye out for redwater, particularly if stock, aged 6-9 months, have been moved onto old pasture.

WEIGH REPLACEMENT HEIFERS AND ACT

- ▶ Weanling and Incalf heifers (R1's & R2's) should be 33 per cent & 73 per cent of mature weight now, respectively. See Table 3.
- ▶ Animals less than these target weights should get preferential treatment, possibly 1-2kgs meal/day.
- ▶ Very heavy animals must be restricted – graze after the main mob of calves to clean out paddocks.
- ▶ Do not overfeed weanling replacements at this stage of their life. If they gain more than 0.8 Kgs per day from 4-6 months of age, they will put on too much fat, resulting in poor mammary gland development and, consequently, they will milk poorly.
- ▶ Don't forget their salmonella and leptosporosis vaccines as

advised above.

- ▶ Hoose and stomach worms can be a problem in 1½ year olds, so be alert.

Table 3: Liveweight targets (*) for Replacements relative to Mature Cow Weight so as to achieve optimum first-calving weight. (Source:NZ)

Mature cow Weight	450	500	550	600	650
R1 (6months) Wt.	135	150	165	180	195
R1's ADG** (Kgs/day)	0.57	0.63	0.68	0.73	0.78
R2 Target Weight (Kgs) 18 months old	315	350	385	420	455

*Because most R2's are calving down at 1 year and 11 months, these targets must be 5% better.

**Average Weight gain from weaning to 6 months.

OTHER BITS AND PIECES

- ▶ It is now too late to reseed – that's for sure!
- ▶ As this is likely to be a big tax year, focus NOW on positive investments to reduce your tax bill:
 - ▶ Get a soil test done now and spread the required P, K and Lime this autumn,
 - ▶ It looks like a good investment to forward buy fertiliser,
 - ▶ Farm roadways should be topped up and made compliant for run-off,
 - ▶ Tidy up farmyards and entrances to make them more attractive places to visit and work in – too many are “higgledy-piggledy like”! Paint, a few flowers and shrubs work wonders!
 - ▶ Maintenance work and painting should be done.
- ▶ Go to your local school and put your name down for a transition year student to do his/her work experience on your farm. What have you to offer? He/she will learn:
 - ▶ The importance of photosynthesis as 90 per cent of your income comes as a result of it
 - ▶ The biology of pregnancy and birth of animals
 - ▶ How farmers preserve the environment
 - ▶ Why Irish farming is one of the best in the world per unit for carbon emissions
 - ▶ Why DNA testing and genetics is the backbone of the Irish dairy herd.
 - ▶ The hormones involved in milk let-down and the cleaning agents required to produce milk with a long shelf life.
 - ▶ I could fill a page...but with these and more you have enough to impress any teacher and student to come to you for work experience.
- ▶ Castrate male weanlings now:
 - ▶ Avoid risk of bulling strong weanling heifers.
 - ▶ You should get the Vet to vasectomise 2-4 males for using to identify bulling cows next year – a great idea! Need one per 50 cows.
 - ▶ To improve bio-security on farms, some farmers are keeping a few of their own bull calves (EBI €200+) to mop up late bulling cows. Not a bad idea.

“Better to seek forgiveness than seek permission”

Brian Wickham

Power up performance

Richard Dudgeon, regional sales manager, Alltech, discusses the importance of efficient feed supplies

Reflecting on the challenges we have faced over the last year, it cannot be emphasised enough how important farmers are in the food supply chain. Covid-19 has highlighted the need for resilient food systems. Feed production capacity correlates directly to the amount of food available for human consumption and, indeed, general food security. Alltech's experience across 128 countries finds that sustainable and efficient feed supply chains are relevant to small-scale livestock production, all the way up to some of the world's largest integrators. A growing challenge for the feed industry is competition with humans for similar feed sources. This challenges us, as an industry, with ways whereby we improve the utilisation of feeds fed on-farm or, ultimately, the often-quoted words, "increase feed efficiency." Increased feed efficiency is regularly mentioned, but I would like to talk about this in the context of how it can have real benefits for farmers. With the increase in feed costs this year, making more use of that same feed has never been more critical. This can have real financial benefits while improving your farm's sustainability. Alltech has pioneered some of the most extensive work in this area over the last 40 years.

Focus on efficiency

Farmers have really developed their knowledge of what affects output on their farms, and many recognise the importance of extracting the most value from their feed inputs. At the same time, everyone is familiar with the signs that their feed or diet is not working as well as it should, which could be for several reasons. One of these is the rumen. The rumen is the most influential site of digestion. The fermentation that takes place within it provides much of the energy needed to maintain performance. If rumen health is compromised, fewer nutrients will be absorbed from the diet, and more of it, in essence, is wasted. With this in mind, the feeding goals should be to maintain a healthy rumen and supply sufficient nutrients to the rumen bacteria. As such, the focus on efficiency and the improvements come from how we feed these bacteria.

Novel nutritional approach

Feeding the bacteria in the rumen starts with what we provide, be that the grass in the field to the grass silage we make each year, or the concentrate feeds we decide to purchase from our feed suppliers. Alltech's focus on fermentation and feeding the rumen has led to the development of Optigen, a non-protein nitrogen (NPN) source. Optigen concentrates the nitrogen fraction of



the diet, creating dry matter space for more fibre and energy. The nitrogen in Optigen is slowly released over time, similar to soybean meal. A key benefit of Optigen is it supplies a key nutrient source for the fibre-digesting bacteria in the rumen. So not only do we satisfy the protein requirements, but we are also releasing more energy from the overall diet and wasting less.

Power up performance

The benefits of Optigen have recently been reinforced with published meta-analysis for beef and dairy of the research and trial data accrued over the last decade. This meta-analysis really strengthens Optigen as a solution to not only feed efficiency on beef and dairy farms but also sustainability and, importantly, profitability. The meta-analysis involved the extraction and comparison of the results obtained from trials in several countries, where Optigen was fed to beef and dairy cattle. The research and trial work covered a 17-year period from 2002–2018. When included in finishing beef diets, Optigen can improve daily liveweight gains by 8 per cent and increase feed efficiency by 8 per cent. In addition to the specific liveweight gain and feed efficiency benefits, the meta-analysis also highlights the improved profitability that Optigen can offer. Similarly, the results of the meta-analysis on dairy confirms that Optigen can improve feed efficiency by 3 per cent, with positive impacts on farm profitability. An important point with the dairy meta-analysis was the 21 per cent reduction in the amount of soybean meal fed and the 4 per cent improvement in nitrogen use efficiency. The benefits of Optigen, as highlighted through the meta-analysis, can be seen in the graphic above.

By utilising this technical advice and incorporating proven technologies, such as Optigen, beef and dairy producers can expect to maximise feed efficiency and herd performance while also maximising farm profitability and sustainability.



Planet of Plenty™



Meet Ronan.

**Fourth-generation farmer.
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In a sustainability programme with Alltech, Ronan reduced his carbon footprint by 30% — the equivalent of taking 167 cars off the road.

“We have a responsibility to the land, to the generations gone by and the generations ahead.”

—Ronan Síochru, farming on the Dingle peninsula for a Planet of Plenty™.

Insuring your future wellbeing



Joe Nolan, Business Development Manager with Zurich Farm Insurance issued a timely warning recently that regular updating of farm insurance policies is necessary and particularly right now because increases in building costs mean that the cost of repair and/or replacement of farm buildings has increased significantly: "Yes, adequate insurance is critical. When I call to farmers the main issues discussed are around the various liability insurances. They are broken up into public liability products, environmental impairment liability, and then you have employer's liability. So just to recap on those, public liability is the one we are most familiar with where, for instance, somebody wanders in on your land and tries to make a claim against the farmer or where your livestock breaks out onto a public road and cause a traffic accident. Similarly with products liability. As an example, if a farmer supplies milk to the co-op and the milk is contaminated with antibiotics, the costs associated with that event are covered by product liability insurance. A particular insurance policy many may not be familiar with is environmental impacts liability, or environmental impairment liability, where, for instance, a farmer may inadvertently release slurry and it leaks into a waterway. That pollution can be traced back to the farmer by the County Council, Fisheries Authority or the EPA. The farmer is liable for the contamination damage caused and

Insurance is often described as a necessary evil that costs a considerable amount of money to have in place every year. It is something everyone needs, even if no one wants to have to use it. Farmers, both in their personal and professional capacities need to ensure that they are adequately insured.

may be subject to legal proceedings. An insurance policy will protect you across a range of costs provided you have not been reckless in your management practices. Naturally, deliberately releasing slurry into a waterway negates the policy. The fourth, and just as important, insurance is employers liability. A farmer may work most of the time as an individual on his or her farm. They don't employ staff on a regular basis. But most farmers who have livestock or who have machinery around the place will have assistance for a few days in a year, or several weeks, depending on the enterprises on the farm. That person, designated a casual or permanent employee, is your employee while he or she is under your care. The farmer has an obligation to insure that person while they are working on the farm."

Trespass

The laws of trespass now generally favour the landowner, as Joe Nolan explains: "The law changed back in the 1980s in regard to the farmers responsibility or onus on the farmers to be mindful of their stock and who is allowed onto the farm and who is not. The reality is that it's hard enough for an injured trespasser to be successful in suing a farmer and gaining compensation through the courts. However, the cost of defending that claim, let it be a nuisance claim or whatever, could run into thousands of euros. An insurance policy will pick that up. The more likely scenario is where you invite a member of the public onto your land and that person then gets injured by livestock or a hazard on the farm. There may be a responsibility there and there may be grounds for a claim where a member of the public who has been invited in by you is left in a dangerous situation and has sustained an injury. You can be liable for that, but trespassers, in the main, will find it very, very difficult now to make a successful claim against the landowner. Regardless of who you insure with, once your business description is accurately defined as a farmer and you have adequate public liability insurance, your insurance company will be obliged to stand beside you and defend any actions that come against the property or the farm."

Rising building costs

The Zurich Farm Insurance representative warns on

rising building costs: "We have seen two significant cost increases this year. Both labour and materials costs have risen significantly. For example, a shed worth €100,000 could cost €140,000 to replace today. My advice to farmers is, take a look at your policy and see if you are under-insured. Get up-to-date valuations for the types of buildings on the farm. Older slate and stone buildings are usually insured on an agreed value basis cover. The average cost clause is not used for those buildings. Modern steel and concrete buildings need to be insured to reflect the cost true of replacement. The best days work an insurer can do is to know that a farmer is satisfied with the recompense he or she receives on foot of a claim. We want to leave a farmer as well off after the storm or fire and that's a good day's work for us. Farmers need to review their policies and valuations because many sheds and buildings are under-insured and that will continue to be the case for the next twelve to eighteen months at least. The same holds true for dwelling houses. Labour, materials, electric and plumbing costs have all increased dramatically and that fact needs to be reflected in the insurance policy."

Theft

Joe Nolan agrees that farm theft has been a serious issue in recent years: "Whether it is small tools such as chainsaws or larger machines such as quads or even tractors, theft is

a continuing problem. Where a farmer is robbed several times we engage to see where security can be improved. That holds true for any pattern of insurance claims. Prevention is always better than the cure of an insurance claim no matter how adequate the reimbursement."

Personal insurance

Joe Nolan reflects on the importance of personal insurance for a farmer: "A farmers employees are covered under employers liability. Once you have the employers liability section activated on your policy and the wages declaration and duration are accurate, that covers your employees. The farmer himself or herself can take out a personal accident policy. The insurer will cover a farmer for his or her loss of weekly earnings. In addition, loss of limb and death can also be covered. Every farmer should have a personal accident policy. Some don't because they think that since they've gotten away with it for so long that they're going to continue to get away with it but that is not a realistic attitude. In fairness, most farmers will listen when they're advised and they will take out some level of personal insurance cover. It is money well spent for peace of mind and, ultimately, in the event of an accident, it is hugely important for the wellbeing of themselves, their families and the farm itself."

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*From January to December 2020, on average we paid out on 99% of motor, home, van, farm and windscreen insurance claims.



Sharpen your cost analysis as well as your flails

Each September hedge-cutting contractors begin their seasonal work with enthusiasm but often lacking important system cost information. The priority of getting the machine ready and the flails sharpened should be balanced by time spent on cost analysis, says **Michael Moroney**, CEO Farm Contractors Ireland.

Many contractors decide on the charge for their hedge-cutting operations based on a combination of the amount of work they have done for their client, last year's rate and what they believe the competition is charging. This is not very business-like, but is the reality because in FCI we hear of quotes that are clearly below cost.

With high-cost machinery and increasing labour costs, there is a necessity to annually examine machinery costs for all contractor operations. Each contracting enterprise needs to generate a profit. Charge rates must be based on all operating costs, not just the cost of the finance payments.

Here, we examine the costs associated with operating a contractor hedge-cutting service using a 150hp tractor and a contractor specification hedge-cutter with 6m reach, joystick control and full support brackets. Operating costs remain the same, irrespective of who the customer is, a farmer, local authority or a utility such as ESB or Eir.

In establishing the overall costs, we need to break down the individual costs under:

- Tractor costs
- Labour costs
- Fuel costs
- Repair costs
- Insurance costs
- Hedge-cutter machine cost



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Tractor costs

Depreciation costs can be difficult to compute so tractor replacement cost provides an understanding of how much it costs to own the tractor. Typical replacement costs are based on hours of use. To buy a new 150hp tractor will cost between €12 and €15/per hour on the clock of your trade-in tractor. It costs in excess of €36,000 to trade-in a tractor with 3,000 hours. Being generous, tractor ownership, which essentially covers the depreciation cost, comes to €12 per hour.

Labour costs

These must include all the cost, including employers PRSI. At FCI we worked with IFAC Farm Accounts during our series of Payroll Meetings to establish the true cost of labour to a farm contracting business. If you pay a hedge-cutter driver €500 into his/her hand then the driver is costing you close to €720 per week. That converts to €18 per hour on a 40-hour week. If you are driving the machine yourself you cannot work for less than €18 per hour, so you need to factor that into the costs.

Fuel costs

The cost of travelling to and from the job must be included. In many cases travel consumes more fuel per hour than hedge-cutting itself. A typical contractor hedge-cutter outfit will consume 7 litres per hour. At €0.70/litre that equates to €4.90 per hour.

Repair costs

These can depend on machine age. Generally, repair costs are calculated at between 3% and 5% of the machine

buying price spread across the season. In the case of a €100,000 tractor, that amounts to €3,000 per season or €3 per hour if we assume 1,000 hours out of which about 11 weeks or 500 hours are allocated to hedge-cutting work.

Insurance costs

Comprehensive insurance cover for a 150hp tractor costs up to €1,500. Assuming the tractor will be doing other duties, giving 1,000 hours of annual use, then we allocate an insurance cost of €1.50 per hour.

Total tractor operating costs. €/week

Tractor Costs (€12 x 40)	€480
Labour Costs (€500 net €18.00/hour)	€720
Fuel Costs (7 litres/hour @ €0.70/l or €4.90/hr)	€196
Repairs & Maintenance (5%)	€120
Insurance (€1,500/annum or €1.50/hr)	€60
Total Tractor Operating Costs for 40-hour week	€1,576 or €39.40/chargeable hour.

Hedge-cutter costs

Now, add in the costs associated with owning the hedge-cutter. We have used a similar costing system to the construction machinery sector, based on a cost of €0.50/€1,000 invested in the machine. For a contractor specification hedge-cutter costing €30,000, the machine cost is €15 per hour.

Total Tractor Costs (incl. Labour)	€39.40/hour
Machine Cost.	€15.00/hour
Total Hedge-Cutting Service Operating Costs.	€54.40/hour.

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McCormick X5, new engines and even better performance

For customers in search of power and comfort, McCormick offers the new X5 range, ideal for open field and round the farm work. There are three models available: the X5.100, X5.110 and X5.120, which respectively deliver maximum power outputs of 95, 102 and 114 HP. The range is offered in two different trim levels: Premium, which is intended to completely satisfy all the customers' needs, and Efficient, which offers entry-level specifications. In addition to those indicated above, there are also two high clearance models available, the X5.100 HC and X5.110 HC, which are particularly suitable for horticultural crops. The new and more captivating design has maintained its compact size, but offers improved operator visibility and comfort.

The Stage 3B/Tier4 Interim engine on the previous range has been replaced with a Stage V model. The new FPT F36 4-cylinder, 16-valve, 3.6-litre, Turbo Intercooler engines with Common Rail electronic injection are equipped with EGR/DOC/DPF/SCR technology. The exhaust gas treatment system is integrated under the bonnet, thus ensuring maximum visibility from the driver's seat.

The diesel tank's capacity has been increased to 135 litres, with an AdBlue® tank of 13 litres, thus ensuring greater daily performance with a 10 per cent reduction in fuel consumption and decreased emissions.

The new hydraulic circuit is designed to increase productivity, offering flow rates of up to 82 L/min for the spool lines and 32 for the steering line, with up to 35 litres of oil available for use. This translates into greater operational convenience for the operator, thanks to faster execution, the possibility of performing multiple operations simultaneously, reduced consumption, lower

engine speeds, and decreased noise and vibrations. The driving comfort for the operator has been improved with a suspended front axle option which, combined with the new mechanically-suspended cab, allows the vehicle to better tackle uneven terrain, while at the same time providing greater safety and comfort under all working conditions. Thanks to its 4-pillar structure, the Total View Slim cab offers a maximised glazed area in order to provide a 360° field of vision, thus facilitating work in tight spaces, even at night thanks to the new LED lights (up to 10). The transparent hatch also provides greater visibility when using the front loader. The cab's interior features a perfect automotive-style appearance, with excellent air conditioning. The features include a reclining and telescopic steering wheel, ergonomic and intuitive controls, and a DAB and Bluetooth radio with a built-in hands-free microphone. Eight possible transmission configurations are available to handle any working conditions. These range from a Four Speed 12 F + 12 R with mechanical reverse shuttle, to a T-Tronic 48 F + 16 R with Hi-Medium-Low, hydraulic reverse shuttle and creeper. The Park Lock option, a transmission locking system on steep slopes, is also available on the McCormick X5. For efficiency purposes, the Common Rail engine ensures the precise delivery of the fuel required, and works in conjunction with the Memo Switch Engine, which stores and recalls the ideal engine speed for the implement being utilised. The Twin Lock system, which simultaneously locks both the front and rear differentials, serves to maximise traction and grip. The system automatically engages and disengages the differential lock and four-wheel drive, making the operator's job easier and more efficient. 4-wheel integral braking is also possible with the



IBS (Integrated Brake System) with oil-bath brakes integrated into the front axle, reducing stopping distances by 50 per cent. The suspended front axle (optional on the PREMIUM version) maximises comfort in every situation. It features up to 6 hydraulic spool valves, of which 3 are mechanically controlled and 1 is electrically controlled and, as an option, 2 can be mid-mounted for front hitch and front loader purposes, which can even be combined together. There are four spool valves: standard, kick-out, floating and hydraulic motor, with versatile and customisable configurations. The optional flow selector allows managing up to 7 hydraulic connectors.

The available hitches are electronic and mechanical, equipped with ELS (Ergonomic Lift System). The ELS system allows end-of-field manoeuvres to be carried out more quickly, thus increasing the tractor's operational productivity, while the electronics allow previously performed operations to be repeated, using the positions that guarantee the best precision and performance. The same electronic hitch is equipped with a function for compensating the implement's pitch during road transport.

The PTO is gradually engaged by the hydraulically operated clutch, thus allowing for controlled engagements and the elimination of abrupt shaft starts. Furthermore,

implement attachment is further facilitated thanks to the remote mudguard controls (optional). With the electronic hitch, the Auto PTO function is also available, which engages and disengages the PTO when the hitch is engaged during end-of-field manoeuvres.

Another new feature is the Joystick, which offers easy management of various loader commands as well as transmission Hi-Lo and HML functions. With regard to the front loader, it should be noted that the frame has been designed not to reduce the ground clearance, thus protecting the crops. What's more, this technical solution doesn't limit the turning radius.

All X5s are available with a McCormick front loader specially designed to fit this tractor. Better steering control and a constant monitoring of the implements are ensured thanks to the satellite guidance and ISObus systems. The satellite guidance is managed by a convenient touch screen display, which guarantees operational precision.



The modern farmer

Sustainability, climate re-thinks and structural changes to CAP, price volatility, labour shortages and the cost of inputs, plus much more besides... and then you

open the gate to go farming, which can be a dangerous environment. Welcome to the world of the modern farmer. As in every occupation there are changes that have to be made and in farming change is now the new norm.

I have seen reports in the media stating that leading scientists from across the globe have highlighted that the system used to calculate and record methane emissions from livestock is distorting how we view climate change. The livestock industry has been held up as one of the leading causes of global warming but over the past few years a number of experts have noted that methane emissions should be treated differently to CO₂ or nitrous oxide emissions. CO₂ is known as a 'stock' gas because it accumulates in the atmosphere and takes about a 1,000 years to degrade, but methane is a 'flow' gas, which breaks down within 10 years. Cutting livestock herds is not the answer.

I am glad to see that we are starting to embrace anaerobic digestion plants in this country under the Renewable Energy Directive. This will help with our carbon footprint and may be a source of extra income for farms. There is a plan to see 80 plants rolled out by 2030. We will watch this development with interest over the next few years.

The good weather has given the harvest that much-needed boost recently; we are heading for a record harvest with reported yields up and now, with 75 per cent of the harvest in, prices are holding strong.

Lamb prices are on the rise again and beef remains steady. Most milk processors have held prices but there are slight gaps starting to appear amongst some processors in prices being paid.

The tractor market remains strong with 1,907 units registered in the first 7 months of this year, that is a 26 per cent increase year-on-year. General machinery enquiries are strong and there is a new boss in the FTMTA: Michael Farrelly took up his new position in early August and I wish him and his team well. There are already planning to hold a machinery show in February 2022.

As I put the finishing touches to this column I am listening to the radio, and the message from the Government as I type is that tomorrow they will be announcing further easing on restrictions. Recently, 40,000+ people attended the hurling All Ireland final in Croke Park, while the National Ploughing Association can only have 500 people at this year's competition: to me this doesn't make sense. Let's see what the next round of restrictions lifted brings...

Until next month, farm wisely and farm safely.

The new dimension: Amazone UX Super trailed sprayer



Amazone has extended its UX trailed sprayer range with the UX 7601 Super and UX 8601 Super high-performance models with an actual volume of 8,000 l and 9,000 l respectively. The systematic development of the compact Amazone machine design means that the new models combine a tank capacity of up to 9,000 l and boom working widths of up to 42 m yet with the excellent manoeuvrability and high stability of a single-axle sprayer. With a completely new chassis design, the new models close the gap between the previously

largest single-axle Amazone sprayer with 6,200 l and the tandem axle sprayer with 11,200 l. Equipped with all the innovative future-proof Amazone crop protection technology, they stand for the highest precision, performance and economy in operation.

The newly developed chassis of the UX 7601 Super and UX 8601 Super directly links the axle to the standard lower hitch drawbar. The forward-sloping chassis design maintains an ideal weight distribution of the sprayer. The permissible drawbar and axle loads are therefore optimally utilised. The centre of gravity is particularly low in the new chassis concept. This ensures high stability, even on hilly terrain and when negotiating bends.

The narrow profile of the spray agent tank, with the fresh water tanks mounted on either side of the chassis, contributes to its safe handling, especially when the tank is partially filled. Another major advantage of the tank shape, which is made of polyethylene, is the extremely

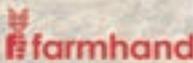
rounded design and the exceptionally smooth inner and outer walls, which make overall cleaning very easy. Designed for high outputs, the Super-L3 boom is in 39, 40 or 42 m working widths is available for the two new UXs. With pivot points at 12, 24 and 33 m and the optionally available reduction joints on the boom outer sections, this Super L3 boom offers maximum flexibility for use at reduced working widths. One-sided independent folding up to the inner boom section for negotiating obstacles is also a major advantage. In addition to the enormous work rates, the two new UX Super models also focus on reducing the driver's workload. The Smart Center settings centre and complete operator station are securely protected under the access cover to the left-hand side of the sprayer. The high-capacity 60 litre induction bowl is also located here. Apart from the completely manually-operated Standard-Pack, the intuitive and simple Comfort-Pack is available with the Twin Terminal 3.0.

AMAZONE

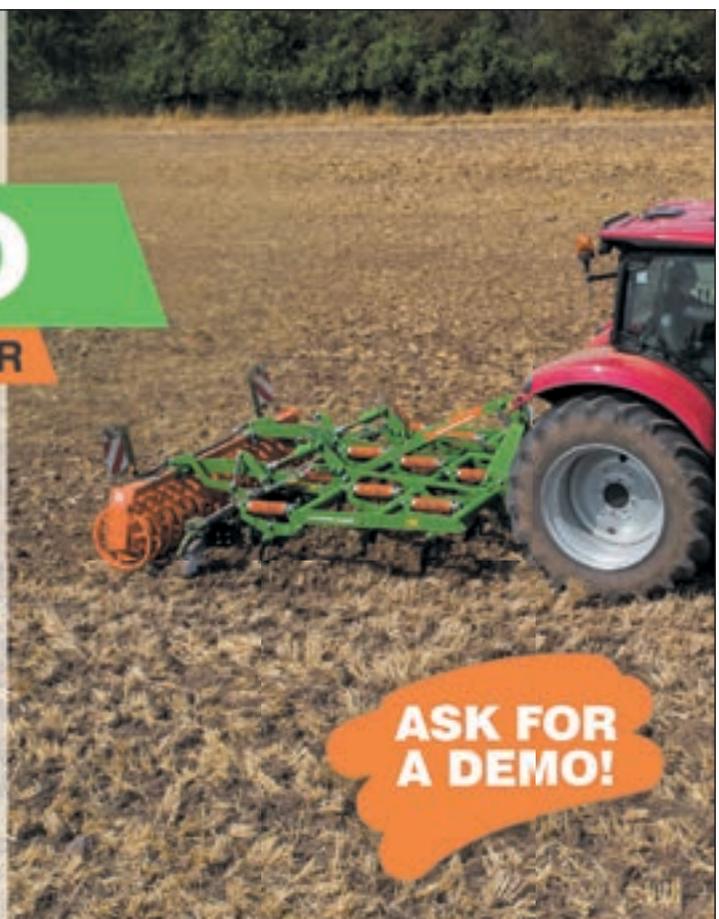
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Fendt Harvesting Technology



The Fendt Tigo forage wagon portfolio consists of 25 models from across the XR/PR, MS/MT and S/ST ranges. The Fendt Tigo boasts many advantages, one being that the compact design of the Tigo incorporates an innovative bulkhead above the loading unit to carry up to six cubic metres more capacity without adding to the overall length of the wagon. "This makes our wagons approximately one metre shorter than others in the market. The high payload capacity, lightweight construction and compact design give farmers and contractors a more manoeuvrable wagon that is more efficient," explains Dan Woodward, Fendt Tigo Sales Engineer.

The multi-functional bulkhead has an intelligent automatic load and unload system that is easily adjustable. "As the Tigo fills, the bulkhead automatically pivots forward to carry an additional six cubic metres without the operator having to continually monitor capacity. This makes reaching full capacity much easier and safer for the

operator because there is no need to continually turn around to monitor the wagon," says Mr Woodward. The Tigo PR and XR range features the automated loading with continuously adjustable pre-compacting pressure making the most of every cubic metre and actively supports the unloading process resulting in a clean, emptied trailer and top quality feed. With its TIM ready function (Tractor Implement Management), the Fendt Tigo XR Controls the Fendt Vario – they are the perfect team.

The Fendt Tigo MS stands out from the crowd, especially when it comes to everyday tasks. The exceptionally gentle swing arm unit is especially suited to use in hay. Bringing in forage or loading silage each day is no problem for this all-rounder with a load capacity of up to 39 m³. Across the Fendt Tigo ST and S range, there are 3 different loading capacities, as well as a lowered centre of gravity and an extra wide track. These features increase stability on slopes.

The Tigo XR/PR range has also been designed for dual use without the need for a manual conversion or cable adjustment. "With no intervention these wagons can be used as a loader wagon or a transport wagon. This is because the pick-up is 80 centimetres off the ground which enables easy transition between fields. It's a huge time saver and also makes the Tigo more versatile, especially for a contractor," says Mr Woodward. Fendt will launch the VR range of Tigo Loader wagons in 2022, which can have all the features of the XR but is 500kgs lighter.

The Fendt Tigo forage wagon boasts the smallest cutting gap of any forage wagon on the market today. "The very low gap of just 3.5mm combined with the rotor tines of up to 1150mm makes the Tigo the most precise machine on the market and ensures that forage is handled carefully and efficiently to protect the crop and maximise the cut," concludes Mr Woodward.

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The Department of Agriculture's announcement regarding the implications of CAP on Irish farmers means there has never been a more important time for Agricultural Contractors to review their businesses and communicate with their farmer clients. The Department is attempting to address the carbon efficiency program by proposing a limit on suckler herd numbers; this course of action will have the knock-on effect of considerably reducing grass requirements. Therefore, communication between Contractors

and their dairy farmer clients is vitally important. I have no doubt that farmers will be compensated for any losses incurred and I wholeheartedly agree that they should be. However, agricultural contractors must be very clear that they will receive no compensation for loss of income. In recent times, there is only one precedent where Agricultural Contractors got compensation for losses incurred as a result of policy's imposed by Brussels; that was when the sugar beet industry was shut down. Compensation was only achieved when PAC Ireland fought a High Court action, spending over a week in the Four Courts, to ensure the right of Agricultural Contractors to compensation. As a result, PAC achieved a €5 million compensation package for losses incurred by contractors involved in sugar beet farming.

Vision 2030

Policies being researched and proposed by Brussels and agreed by our Government will slowly throttle the life out the contracting sector, leaving farmers vulnerable and without the

services of professional agricultural contractors. The CAP is clearly aimed at environmental protection issues which, to all intents and purposes puts restrictions on profitable food production. Despite much talking and many reports no underwritten guarantee of a gate price for farming produce has been delivered. In simple terms, the Government buzz word or sound bite is to have a plan, calling it a "Vision", which sets targets on output. We now have "Vision 2030": this nice glossy brochure outlines plans to increase agri-food exports by €7 billion to €21 billion by 2030. All this to be achieved despite a plethora of reductions required including methane, nitrous oxide, nutrient losses, ammonia, targets for organic farming, biodiversity quotas and a considerable reduction in pesticide use. Whilst laudable, all these restrictions will have an effect on the output and profitability of farming enterprises and Agricultural Contractors businesses will suffer a knock-effect.

My advice to farmers is to ensure you have a competent, reliable contractor to work alongside them in the future.

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Where farming starts

Business climate appears to have reached its peak

According to the latest CEMA Business Climate Index, the general Business Climate Index for the Agricultural Machinery Industry in Europe seems to have reached its peak with the past two months. After peaking in May and June at its highest level since 2008, the index declined by 4 points in July to 68 (on a scale of -100 to +100).

The current business continues very positive (was even evaluated slightly better than in the past two months), but less companies expect further turnover growth for the coming six months. With regard to expectations for the coming order intake (an indicator which does not feed into the general Business Climate Index), the shift was even more pronounced: the share of survey respondents expecting an increase in orders dropped to less than a third, the lowest level this year.

Another uncertainty concerns the extent to which the incoming orders can be realized against the backdrop of extreme price increases and shortages on the supplier side. More than 90 per cent of the companies participating in the survey complain about supply bottlenecks. 36 per cent of the respondents from the tractor factories expect a production stop due to a lack of certain parts in the coming month.

Despite all uncertainties, the European industry representatives remain confident of closing the year with strong results. With regard to the full year 2021, the survey participants forecast for their company a turnover increase of +12 per cent (arithmetic mean) or +10 per cent (median).



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JCB'S most compact mid-range loadall gets dualtech VT drive



JCB has launched a new telescopic handler that combines the size and agility to work efficiently in and around farm buildings with the ultimate in transmissions technology for top performance and productivity. The Loadall 532-60 Agri Super features JCB's award-winning DualTech VT transmission, which exploits the best characteristics of hydrostatic and powershift drives, and a new 130hp (97kW) JCB DieselMax engine with fuel-saving auto shut-down feature. The newcomer also has a 140-litre/min, 240 bar load-sensing hydraulics package as standard, which together with fast lowering regenerative hydraulics for the telescopic boom, delivers the quickest loading and handling cycle times of any model in the Loadall range.

John Smith, JCB Agriculture Managing Director, said: "Early in 2020 we introduced the 532-60 to Agri specification

with a four-speed powershift transmission to give small- to medium-size livestock farms a more sophisticated and capable 3.2 tonne, 6m telehandler option with all the attractions of our new high visibility Command Plus cab. With the 532-60 Agri Super featuring the unique DualTech VT, we now have a machine that outperforms hydrostatic-only telehandlers and provides all the productivity, ease of control and economy characteristics of the best transmission you can have in any telescopic handler."

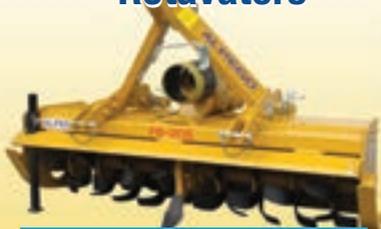
Like the 532-60 Agri, the new Agri Super model has selectable four-wheel steering giving a tight turning circle and a compact footprint with short front and rear overhangs for confident operation within and around livestock buildings. An extra 400kg takes the weight of the machine to 7740kg, which helps keep it planted with good traction on rough ground and smooth, slippery surfaces alike. Lift capacity is 3200kg to a full-height lift of 6.22m and the boom supports a 1400kg load at a horizontal forward reach of 3.33m from the front tyres. As standard, 460/70 R24 tyres are fitted but 380/75 R20 tyres can be chosen to trim 70mm from the overall height and bring it down from 2.49m to 2.42m while also slicing a few millimetres off the 2.28m overall width. Despite these reduced dimensions relative to other Loadall telehandlers, operators of the new 532-60 Agri Super still enjoy the full-size Command Plus cab with its generous space, elbow room and storage options, as well as class-leading low noise levels.



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- Shatter Below Plough Pan
- Cultivate Your Stubbles

A new edition of the Azurit



Lemken, the specialist for professional arable farming, continues to improve details of its proven precision seed drill. The latest update, the Azurit 10, will be available from September and features a number of benefits compared to the previous model. Apart from the proven four-, six- and eight-row variants with row spacings of 70 to 80 cm, the new Azurit also comes with six or twelve rows with a 50-cm row spacing. A furrow former has been added to the seeding coulters to improve the quality of seed placement. The drill pipe has been updated and now comes with an inlet that can be replaced once worn. From the coming season, the range of applications of the Azurit 10 comprises not only all previous crops, but also soy beans and sunflowers. Another new feature is automatic seed singling for maize with a system that monitors and adjusts the quality of seed singling. This system can be retrofitted

to older machines. A new fertiliser monitoring system in the Azurit 10 automatically alerts the operator if individual fertiliser coulters become blocked.

Lemken also offers yet another advantage for the Azurit 10 with the MicroHub 5, a spreader unit which allows microgranule to be applied in the direct vicinity of seeds. Microgranules contain water-soluble nutrients, which are rapidly available to plants and therefore generally produce excellent juvenile crop development. This is particularly important in cold, dry spring seasons. The initial nutrient requirements of crops can be easily covered by relatively small amounts of microgranules.

Lemken deliberately shines a spotlight on fertiliser efficiency with the MicroHub 5, as this topic is gaining increased relevance in public discussions. "We offer this option for our Azurit with up to 8 rows," says Bernd Valtwies, LEMKEN's Head of Design for precision seed drill technology. "This unit is not only available for new machines. Depending on the year of manufacture of previous Azurit 9 machines, matching retrofit kits will be available. The system is controlled via the Azurit on-board terminal. The MicroHub holds 200 litres of fertiliser, which can currently be applied at rates ranging from 1 to 40 kilos per hectare. The metering unit is operated electrically and granules are pneumatically delivered to the seed furrow. This is the ultimate in precision," said Bernd Valtwies, Lemken's head of design for precision and seed technology.

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Straw Chopper / Bedder – McHale C4 Range



The McHale C4 range of silage feeders and straw blowers extends to four machines. The C430 is a linkage model while the C460, C470 and C490 are all trailed models. A twin speed gearbox provides the power for distributing hay and straw at 280rpm while silage and haylage is distributed at 540rpm. All models in the C4 range are fitted with a large 1.57m diameter flywheel which distributes the crop through a 300° three stage chute.

This three-stage chute design minimises resistance and allows for maximum blow distances to be achieved, especially when blowing straw in confined spaces. It provides a number of advantages, namely: straw can be blown 18m on the right-hand side; and, for difficult to access bedding areas, the 300° chute can blow straw up to 13m to the left-hand side of the machine.

The chute is joystick controlled, allowing the operator to adjust the chute height and the shoot direction easily from the control console in the tractor cab. The chute can be rotated 300°, which allows material to be spread on the left, right and behind the machine. The chute may also be lowered to blow material on to the feeding slide for better control when distributing feed along a barrier.

The McHale C4 range of silage feeders and straw blowers come equipped with a Rotor with Hydraulic Activation which is fitted with 56 knives across 7 discs as standard. This rotor is driven using a high torque belt drive which can be hydraulically engaged or disengaged. This type of system ensures that the flywheel can be worked independently of the rotor and reduces the amount of power required to start and run the machine. The floor conveyor on the McHale C4 Silage Feeder & Straw Blower Range, consists of a hydraulically driven chain and slat conveyor. Speed can be adjusted and the conveyor can be reversed from the tractor cab. There are galvanised slats mounted on 11mm high tensile chains using "U" bolts for easy maintenance. Heavy duty wear resistant rollers and nylon strips reduce wear to a minimum. The conveyor formation on all machines has been designed to ensure consistent and even feed to the rotor. The McHale C4 Silage Feeding and Straw Blowing Range is controlled via an electronic control console fitted with a remote-control joystick which allows the operator to control machine operation from the tractor cab.

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New Holland's T7 Heavy Duty (HD) tractor



New Holland Agriculture presented the new flagship T7 Heavy Duty (HD) tractor to the European trade press in a virtual launch event. The event highlighted the brand's vision of agriculture 4.0 and its commitment to making the advantages of intelligent farming technologies widely available to farmers. The new T7 HD maintains the powerful performance, exceptional agility and outstanding versatility that are the hallmark of this tractor and delivers a superior working experience with the brand-new Horizon Ultra cab and next-generation PLM Intelligence features. It is ideal for contractors who need to multi-task in a variety of field and transport applications, and look for a boost to their comfort, efficiency and productivity.

"We asked our customers what they expected from their future

tractor and developed the new generation T7 HD based on their demands, and it delivers everything they dreamed of," says Sean Lennon, New Holland Agriculture Vice President Europe. "We designed the brand-new Horizon Ultra cab to give them the best working experience with all the space, comfort, quality finish they asked for, and the quietest cab on the market. On top of this, the next-generation PLM Intelligence will make it easier for them to access our intelligent farming solutions which deliver substantial added value in terms of better decision making and accurate execution, boosting their efficiency and profitability."

The Horizon Ultra cab has been redesigned from the ground up to meet the customers' most demanding expectations: "The T7 HD might seem the same from outside, with the same compact, stylish appearance," explains Oscar Baroncelli, New Holland Agriculture Tractors Product Management Leader Global, "but it's totally new inside: just 2 per cent of parts are carry-overs from the previous model! It is more connected than ever and sets a new record as the quietest in the industry with just 66 dBA. We believe it is going to transform our customers' experience when they work in the field." The cab has been lengthened to provide additional room for the passenger and more floor space. The redesign has further improved visibility to the front and down to the rear hitch and implement, while cameras keep a safe watch on the area around the tractor.

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CERBERUS TANKERS



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Aerosem: New part width section control

According to Pöttinger, the coulters system of the Pöttinger Aerosem seed drill guarantees maximum operational reliability and thus the optimum requirement for success. Yield is positively influenced by precise placement of the seed. Whether light, heavy, dry or moist soil, the optimum seed placement of the Aerosem has a major influence on the harvest result. Section Control with its part width shut off control means further more efficiency and flexibility. Working with a virtual headland/boundary line the system switches off one meter sections in sequence upon command. For example; a three meter machine (24 rows) would comprise of three sections, the initial command will close the first 8 rows as the drill passes over the virtual line, followed by the subsequent 8 rows and so on until the drill has crossed the boundary. This functionality is made possible thanks to the unique IDS (Intelligent Distribution System) distributor head. Additionally, the seed rate is adjusted according to the remaining active working width. The system brings significant advantages by reducing issues in odd shaped fields and headlands, along with reducing overlapping significantly. For the arable farmer, Section Control with its part width control means even, homogeneous crop development and consistent plant populations. According to the company, the result during harvesting is uniform plant distribution, even grain maturity, moisture content and of course a reduction in overlapping/double drillings which leads



to sizeable seed savings. The machine is available with Single disc or Double disc (DUAL DISC) coulters. A coulters pressure of up to 55 lbs/25 kg can be applied to Single disc coulters. The coulters systems can be equipped with optional pressure or depth control rollers to additionally press seed onto a moist seedbed. The large DUAL DISC coulters cut through surface trash with ease to procedure a uniform, tidy furrow and can exert a coulters pressure of up to 110 lbs/50 kg. Depending on the type of seed, the interchangeable metering wheels can be easily and quickly changed.



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Agri Finance – processes and options



In conversation with...Pat O'Neill, Area Sales Manager with First Citizen Agri Finance

What type of assets can be financed through First Citizen Agri Finance?

"Although we specialise in asset finance for farmers, we do offer much more and across a wide range of sectors. At First Citizen we understand the challenges of modern day business. So, whether you want to finance a tractor or trailer, bus or forklift or any other type of equipment, we can tailor-make a finance solution for you. First Citizen provide finance for assets / equipment across various sectors. Depending on the type and age of the asset, credit criteria and terms and conditions may vary."

How does the finance process work?

"Finance is available over any term between 2 and 7 years depending on

the type and age of the asset being financed. First Citizen will provide up to 90% LTV (Loan To Value) of the asset, subject to existing credit criteria. Other terms and conditions may apply. I think the key and significant point when choosing to finance with us is the fact we walk the customer all the way through the process, keeping it simple. Our customers really like this."

What are the benefits of Hire Purchase?

"If you want to purchase equipment outright, our Non Consumer Hire Purchase Agreement is the flexible and cost effective alternative to overdrafts or term loans. The asset becomes your property when you have paid the final instalment and the completion fee due under the Agreement. Some features

and benefits of Hire Purchase are: Fixed Payments over a Fixed Term; Payments which you can time to suit the income pattern of your farm enterprise or agri business; The VAT on the purchase price can be reclaimed immediately after the transaction, provided you are VAT registered; Interest charges can be offset against taxable profits; Flexible deposit payable (minimum 10 per cent); and Claim back your capital allowance costs on the cost of Asset."

What are the benefits of leasing equipment?

"Leasing is an efficient way of paying for the use of equipment over a set period of time. The asset is leased to you at a fixed rental for a fixed term at a fixed rate".

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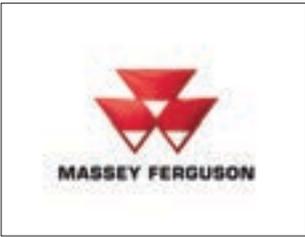
CASE IH Optum 300 CVXDrive AFS Connect



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Protecting family farms

The family farms that underpin Ireland's agri-food sector are a special case and policy must reflect that, says ICMSA President, Pat McCormack.

Irish farming and agri-food's transition to a lower emissions basis is going to be fraught and difficult and there's no point in pretending otherwise. In every direction we look, we see really complex and difficult questions that will have to be addressed and solved. We are capable of meeting this historic challenge and will do so. But a challenge of this magnitude requires an apparatus, a framework, within which farming and food production can frame a response. In Ireland's case that is CAP.

We have pointed out that CAP was never designed as a vehicle for incorporating environmental policy; it was designed as policy for supporting and subsidising superb quality food to be delivered to European consumers at affordable prices. And in that role, it has been incredibly successful. Perhaps even too successful. With the self-interested help of the retail corporations, EU consumers have got very used to massively underpaying for their food. The average Irish family today spends roughly half of what their parents did on food as a percentage of net disposable income. On your behalf and to the irritation of some, ICMSA has been very vocal in pointing out that this 'cheap food' system will be ending quite sharply as the realities of the transition begin to feed through. There still seems to be a silence on the part of many to acknowledge that for fear of spooking the public. But we're not doing the public any favours by not telling them the stark truth. If the public is as worried by climate change as they keep telling pollsters they are, then they should have no problem in paying for their part in trying to fix the problem.

This irrefutable fact was nowhere mentioned in CAP and that is a fundamental error, but one that will not affect the underlying realities. The new CAP is complex and, to a degree, the omission is understandable: this is a complicated policy with numberless moving parts and competing voices and interests that Minister McConalogue has to try – insofar as it's possible – to incorporate into our national strategies. Nevertheless, it seems to ICMSA that certain principles are too important to be left unsaid and one of them is the lack of focus on economic sustainability by comparison to the concentration on environmental sustainability. In my opinion, our civil servants almost casual acceptance that many farmers will suffer cuts to their payments



Pat McCormack
President, ICMSA

contrasts vividly with the reaction we could expect if they (civil servants) were presented with similar income reductions. This bears repetition: Many farmers dependent on farming for their income are facing substantial cuts and trying to address this serious issue should be central to the CAP Strategic Plan.

The current CAP consultation lacks the required detail on payment - or reduced payment - rates;

what a farmer will have to do to get those payments and what investments are eligible under TAMS. The Department says that they can't give this detail in the consultation. But contrast that with the Nitrates Consultation published recently where there were no issues around providing detail. We got 'Chapter and Verse' on a whole new raft of regulations on farmers all of which will incrementally further undermining farmer economic sustainability. ICMSA understands that certain decisions still have to be finalised, but there's a world of difference between that understandable level of vagueness and embarking on a consultation process that doesn't consult and hasn't given us any details about which we could consult.

It's just self-evident that certain questions demand straight answers and demand them straight away. The question of capital investment grants for dairy farms is an obvious example of one of these but there are many more. Our dairy farmers are the basis for our most valuable food exporting sector, our dairy farmers are the biggest multiplier of farm revenue into local rural economies and the greatest number of full-time farmers work in the dairy sector. The National Farm Survey estimates that of the €1 billion invested on-farm in 2020, some 50 per cent of that sum was invested by dairy farmers who comprise 10 per cent of the total number of farmers. In the six years to 2020, dairy farmers have invested €3.5 billion on-farm – a massive amount that has positive implications for the national economy and, specifically, for the rural communities in which these farmers live.

What the hard figures show definitively is that it is in Ireland's national interests to support that family dairy farm sector. In light of this fact – and it is a fact – why do we need the kind of confusion we're seeing about capital investment grants for dairy farmers? What's the agenda being pursued here? Why is dairy equipment being specifically excluded in the consultation and – let's be abundantly clear - dairy equipment must be included in future investment schemes. The Minister should set the record straight on this immediately. Ireland should state, straight out, that the family farms that underpin our multi-billion Euro dairy export sectors are a special case and the policy around Ireland's transition to lower emissions must reflect that.

David Markey takes us along on a recent trip to West Cork, a destination he hasn't visited in over 25 years.

Go west

It's hard to imagine that it's over 25 years since my wife and I last visited West Cork. We were regular visitors to the Kinsale Food Forum, which was started by the late Minister for Agriculture, Joe Walsh TD in 1989 and, in 1995, over 200 international buyers assembled in Kinsale with a combined purchasing power of £500 million.

However, while Kinsale is the gateway to West Cork, we never travelled further along the coast. Last month, we were invited to spend three nights in Goleen, which is a small rural village on the South Western Tip of Ireland. It's in the district of Schull.

Heading of early to maximise the day, the roads have improved immensely, and Cork is now only a couple of hours from Dublin. It is motorway nearly all the way. We broke the journey by stopping at the Horse & Jockey – a favourite of mine to stop and eat over the years.

Taking the tunnel, you follow the road to Bandon, which needs to be resurfaced. You then drive through Enniskean, Dunmanway and Drimoleague, just before arriving in Bantry. You take the turn for Sheep's Head/Crookhaven and its roughly 30 mins to Goleen. The village has four pubs, a number of shops and a filling station. Denny Pub owns the filling station and, next door to it, is a fish and chip shop. The owner Dinnie sadly passed away two years ago. The village also has a church, which was built shortly after the famine in 1852. Rock View Cottage where we were staying is just 10 minutes out of the

village. We found our bearings and headed out for a walk. The area's main source of income is agriculture and tourism and, considering the challenges, the area is striving. However, the B&Bs, restaurants and bars have only four months to make their money, from May to September.

Many of the local farmers are in dairying, and you can hear the sound of the cows been milked from about 7am. Many contractors operate between Dunmanway and Schull. New Holland tractors are in abundance around the area. Walking into the village of Goleen you are struck by how rural the West coast of Ireland is. Wild flowers are evident everywhere and, while houses and cottages are scattered around the peninsula, they are not intrusive to the eye. You are always conscious of the weather in Ireland, but we were blessed with fine weather for our three nights.

That first evening, we headed to Crookhaven, with a population of 60. The village was very busy, my friends tell me it swells in the summer season to about 400, when the occupants of the seasonal homes arrive. The village has a couple of pubs, and O'Sullivan's faces the harbour. We were eating in Nottage's or the Welcome Inn, which is only open in the summer. The pub was once owned by a Mr Nottage, who came to the village from England to work at the Marconi signal station. The O'Sullivan's own it now. The food is amazing, fresh fish and specials every day... ideal for families.

We headed from Crookhaven to Barley Cove



beach for a walk. Families were heading back to mobile homes or rented accommodation. The air was fresh and yet the sea was calm. There are some great beaches with coves, very safe for children. The following day, we paid our respect to Sophie Toscan du Plantier on route to Schull. We stopped briefly just outside Drinane by the bridge near Toormoor. Driving along the coast to Schull, you can't but be amazed at how beautiful the coastline is. Arriving into the village, the harbour is filled with high-end boats. Schull is considered the Ballsbridge of Cork with some houses selling for over €1 million, overlooking the Atlantic. Schull offers the tourist plenty to do, with scenic walking tours, interesting landmarks, sailing and water sports.

Looking out to sea, you can see the famous Fastnet Lighthouse. It is also known as Ireland's Teardrop, because it was the last of Ireland that 19th century Irish emigrants saw as they sailed to North America. The village of Schull has a population of around 700. The tourists visiting Schull are mostly from Cork or Dublin, however visiting the markets, restaurants or shops, you can hear accents from across Europe. We went on a walking tour along the coast, with working farms in abundance. On the cliff side, you can see cattle grazing and silage being baled.

Leaving Schull, we headed back to Goleen and spent a couple of hours eating and drinking in Denny O'Meara's bar – naturally, fish and chips were the order of the day.

While holiday-makers enjoyed the food, we were still conscious of Covid-19, so entering restaurants or pubs, you still need to have your Covid passport, and masks are still required. With the restrictions on overseas travel due to the pandemic, the one good thing about Covid-19 is that it has opened people's minds to staycations in Ireland.

On our final day in beautiful West Cork, we chilled out in the morning in our cottage overlooking the Atlantic. In the afternoon, we drove in amazing sunshine to Mizen Head, Ireland's most southwesterly point on the Wild Atlantic way. We headed off for some shopping after lunch to OSKA and stopped along the way to take some pictures of the coastline. We headed home, lit the fire, and ate in our cottage.

The following morning, we headed off early and called into Bantry to visit the market – Bantry is renowned all over the world for its mussels – and then we headed home to Dublin. Our West Cork experience was enriched by the people we met and the welcome we received in Goleen and Crookhaven. Please put West Cork on your bucket list, it's a wonderful place to visit!!

Don't Risk It – Prevent Falls from Heights

Work at heights is extremely dangerous if it is not managed safely. Work at height can be defined as work in any place, including a place at, above or below ground level, where a person could be injured if they fell from that place. **Ciaran Roche**, FBD Risk Manager outlines the main risks.



Falls from heights are the main cause of fatalities and serious injury when maintenance and repair work is being carried out. Of particular concern is the risk of falling through fragile roofs and from ladders. Therefore it is essential that every precaution is taken to ensure the safety of all persons working at height. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 (Part 4, Work at Height) are based on a risk assessment approach and requires that the process for selecting the most appropriate work equipment for the job takes into account the following hierarchy of controls:

- Firstly to avoid work at height where possible;

THEN

- To prevent falls from height;

FAILING THAT

- To reduce the consequences of a fall.

When carrying out work Height it must be ensured that:

- A risk assessment is carried out for all work conducted at height. The risk assessment should include a careful examination of what harm could be caused from working at height with a view to taking the effective steps to reduce the likelihood of this harm occurring. This could either be through avoiding the activity or, where this is not reasonably practicable, by carrying it out in a safe manner using work equipment that is appropriate to the task and the level of risk.
- All work at height is properly planned, organised, supervised and carried out safely.
- The place where work at height is to be carried out is safe.
- All work at height takes account of weather conditions.
- Those involved in work at height are competent, instructed and trained.
- Equipment for work at height is carefully selected and appropriately inspected. Give collective protection measures (e.g. guard rails) priority over personal protection measures (e.g. safety harnesses);

- The risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled.
- Injury from falling objects is prevented.

Planning Work at Height

Any work at height needs to be planned in advance of the work activity. Careful consideration should be given to the selection and use of the work equipment so that a safe system of work is adopted. Work at heights must never be carried out in icy, rainy or windy conditions. People working at heights need the appropriate knowledge, skill and experience to carry out the work safely. They need to be able to recognise the risk and understand the appropriate system of work.

Ladder Safety

- Much small-scale and short-duration maintenance work involves the use of ladders. Always secure a ladder, even for work that will last only a few minutes.
 - The base of the ladder must always be placed on firm, level and secure ground. Ideally, the top of the ladder should be tied to a secure part of the building to stop it from slipping.
 - The ladder needs to be 'footed' or tied off while it is being used.
 - Ladders must be in good condition. Makeshift, home-made or damaged ladders are dangerous and should never be used.
 - A ladder must be placed against the side of a building at a safe angle - about 75 degrees to the horizontal (one metre out for every four metres in height).
 - Never reach out sideways from a ladder as this will destabilise the ladder and possibly turn it over.
 - Never carry heavy objects while climbing a ladder.
- For more extensive work at height the use of scaffold or a cherry picker (MEWP) may be more appropriate.

Make safety a priority on your farm, stop taking risks.

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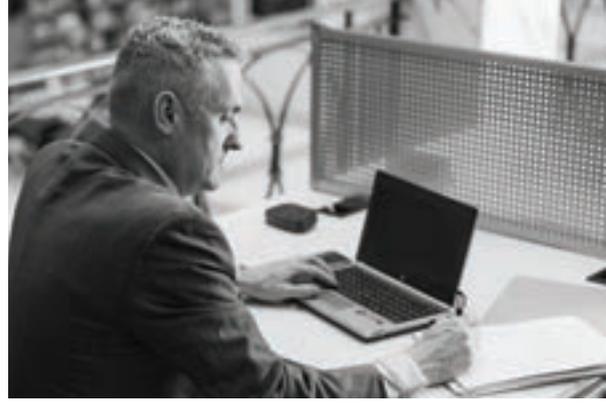
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The perfect storm

With electricity demand surging and a significant threat to electricity supply looming, all it could take, weather-wise, this winter for the lights to go out would be calm, cold and cloudy days for a prolonged period. Add on an interruption in energy supply from one or more of our fossil-fuelled generation stations and suddenly we have power outages. Everyone agrees there is a necessity to wean ourselves off fossil fuel generated electricity. The problem is that we have chosen to go down this route without having adequate 'companion' generation capacity in place. If the wind were to blow gently and consistently every day and night of the year we would have few difficulties. It will be many years before solar power makes any significant contribution to our electricity generation needs. Wind is an inconsistent energy resource with irregular surpluses and deficits. Take last summer as an example. A becalmed July saw wind energy supplying less than twelve percent of our electrical energy needs. There were days when the wind contribution was absolutely negligible. A becalmed sailing ship has two alternatives. Either it waits it out until the wind blows or it falls back on motorised propulsion, if available, and uses that to make progress. Our electricity grid management does not have the same options. It cannot tell energy users to wait until the wind blows. Fossil-fuelled electricity generation must always be in place, ticking over for when the wind does not blow. There are interconnectors from Britain to provide some energy solace but, given Britain's own energy difficulties and increasing reliance on wind energy, it is hardly a totally dependable option for our electricity needs in times of scarcity. We took a pre-emptive step in closing peat burning stations, our major indigenous sources of fossil-based power generation, apart from so-called natural gas. Two perfectly utilisable

peat stations at Shannonbridge and Lanesborough, the last of six such stations, have now been prematurely shut down. This was regarded as a major success in our efforts to transition from fossil fuels as energy sources. The reality is somewhat different, mainly because of the outboard motor analogy. The loss of the last peat burning stations means that fuel sources for the always on, always ticking over back-up options, have been further reduced. We have gas, some indigenous and some imported. Our indigenous source, the Corrib gas field, is a finite resource and we are actively discouraging further exploration. We continue to import oil and coal as major energy sources on which we will remain critically dependent for many years. We could import electrical energy from the Continent. However, it will take at least five years to build the proposed Celtic Connector to France. We could build a nuclear station – unlikely and certainly not a short-term solution. Lest we forget, some wise government enacted a law banning the production of electricity by nuclear fission under the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999. It does not prohibit consumption, so we can, rather hypocritically, import French, nuclear-generated, electricity via a connector – when we have one. Imported biomass is another hypocritical solution to our drive towards a carbon-free economy – it doesn't count, apparently, if it is produced elsewhere. Where is the global carbon footprint gain? Rather than flooding bogs to potentially create vast open-air aerobic or anaerobic digesters we really need to fast-track the building of a network of sealed anaerobic digesters to deliver a reliable and consistent flow of bio-gas to fuel the necessary, always-on, back-up power plants. Otherwise, the lights really will go out.





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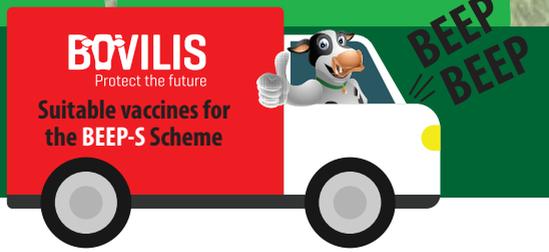


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1. Anon 2020. AFBI/DAFM All-Island Animal Disease Surveillance Report 2019.

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