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IRISH

SEPTEMBER 2024

FARMERS

MONTHLY

FOCUS: PLOUGHING 2024

INTERVIEW: TOM KELLY, PLOUGHING SITE MANAGER;

THE PLOUGH FACTOR: WHAT, WHEN, AND WHERE;

IFM 50: PLOUGHING THROUGH MEMORIES; AND MUCH MORE



INTERVIEW

HAZELL MULLINS, PRESIDENT, VETERINARY IRELAND

INTERVIEW

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SEPTEMBER 2024

EDITORIAL



Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

A GIVEAWAY BUDGET EXPECTED

August turned out to be an interesting month. Politicians were busy getting their messages out before the anticipated general election. Protestations that the Government will run to 2026 are probably unrealistic. Election fever takes on a life of its own and the momentum cannot be sustained indefinitely. Agriculture minister, Charlie McConalogue announced the establishment of a Generational Renewal Commission. We must hope it will deliver practical proposals to rejuvenate our farmer age profile. Elsewhere, the taoiseach, Simon Harris, turned up at every agricultural event going and already appears to be in full election mode. His ability to engage with and listen to farmers at agricultural shows up and down the country suggests a genuine interest in understanding the issues facing the agricultural community. Time will tell. Last month also saw a whole-of-Government commitment to protect our reduced Nitrates Derogation. Again, time will tell as to how deep that commitment goes and how successful the industry will be in maintaining the current derogation level, which will ultimately depend on water quality improvements coming through before the next review. In Upfront this month, we point out the inadequacy of kicking the can down the road in relation to the introduction of a Residential Zoned Land Tax. While a postponement is better than implementing an unfair burden on affected practising farmers, a permanent solution would have been a better outcome. Farmers, in general, have more than enough uncertainty to deal with. Next month will see the presentation of the last budget of the current Government. At a time when the country is running a significant financial surplus, allied to full employment and buoyant exports, the presumption might have been that there would be a focus on

reducing the national debt, accumulating financial reserves ahead of the next recession (there is always a recession somewhere in the future) and generally implementing a cautious, countercyclical strategy for managing the country's finances. While there is commitment to a rainy-day fund, in practice, this budget promises, or threatens, to be a spendthrift exercise ahead of the general election. We know more money needs to be spent here, there, and everywhere. Every lobby group in Ireland, including agricultural organisations, is seeking some of the expected financial largesse on offer. Meanwhile, the perennial over-spenders will have to be accommodated. Chief among them is our health service. There are many good things that can be said about it, but its ability to function within a generous budget allocation is not one of them. If money could solve the problems of our unwieldy public health service, it would have been solved long ago. We spend more, per capita, on health than most countries and our outcomes are not better than any international average. Housing is another key spending area for the government. It has thrown billions at the shortfall in housing requirements, and some would say it is not enough. More houses are being built and more people employed building them than at any time since the financial crash. We need a balance between enough houses and a surplus leading to a price collapse. Farm organisations are not behind the door in lobbying for increased financial supports. As long as the market does not deliver a viable return for food produced on Irish farms, subventions will be required to protect our rural farm economy. Likewise, as more is asked of farmers to implement climate change mitigation measures and enhanced environmental standards for the common good, support from the public purse is a reasonable request.

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What, when, and where



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DOUBLE-THINK ON CARBON

Food producers have been the target of unwarranted criticism in recent years relating to the inevitable necessity of expanding carbon to produce food.

But no sector is off limits and CRH is the latest organisation to face similar criticism. Trinity College Dublin (TCD) recently appointed environmental scientist Professor Karen Wiltshire as the inaugural CRH chair of climate science, described as a 'pioneering position'. CRH has committed to financing the role for the next decade, at an estimated cost of €1.5m. TCD has confirmed that CRH will have no say in the research activities to be undertaken by Professor Wiltshire. But that didn't stop a slew of criticism from some media outlets, as well as Trinity College Dublin Students' Union. One newspaper headline, quoted in RTÉ's 'Today in the Papers', described CRH as one of the country's biggest carbon polluters. Trinity's students' union took huge umbrage at the involvement of CRH into climate science research, on the basis that the building materials manufacturer, as confirmed in its 2022 annual report, expends annual CO₂



Professor Karen Wiltshire is the inaugural CRH chair of climate science at Trinity.

emissions of 46.5 million tonnes. This is the same students' union that has protested regularly at the lack of student accommodation, a particularly pertinent issue at this time of year. Media outlets regularly call for more houses to be built. How do they all think houses or student apartments are created without the expenditure of carbon? It is, of course, fair to describe CRH as a large user of carbon, but surely it crosses a logical line to describe that use, in the fabrication of houses and other critical infrastructure, as pollution? This is

either double-think or no-think. We can't have it both ways. It might be reasonably assumed that the CRH-funded chair of climate science will come up with novel means of reducing the use of carbon in concrete manufacture. Trinity describes the CRH-funded position as part of its continued investment in research and innovation, to accelerate the transition to a more sustainably built environment. That might be a more realistic description of the TCD/CRH initiative, rather than simplistic criticism that fails any test of logic.

RZLT THREAT POSTPONED

The Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) lobbying against the inclusion of actively farmed land on Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) maps seems to have achieved some degree of success. The latest reports suggest that the Government will kick the contentious RZLT can down the road with a deferral of the tax for a year. While this will be welcomed by affected landowners, it does not bring closure to the threat that, ultimately, farmers who have zoned land, with no interest in or intention of developing that land, may suffer a 3 per cent tax on the market value of the land. The hope is that the next Government may define 'actively farmed' land and exclude it from the RZLT. What makes the tax so onerous is that the market value of the land involved, given that it is zoned, is based on its development potential, a figure that is multiples of its agricultural value, even given the current surge in agricultural land values. No crop or enterprise could accommodate a 3 per cent tax under those circumstances. The IFA-led campaign has been ongoing for the past 12 months. Surely the Government could have devised a solution in that time scale to retain the aim of forcing hoarded land into housing development while excluding land that should never have been placed in a development zone in the first place? All taxes are subjected to avoidance strategies that must be counteracted in legislation. Postponing the RZLT is a lazy and populist alternative to devising a fair and balanced tax definition that achieves its objectives while facilitating the exclusion of actively farmed land.

PROTECTED UREA UNDER SPOTLIGHT

Rightly or wrongly, many farmers are partly blaming protected urea use for the lower grass growth rates experienced across the country this year. Teagasc insists that the product is as effective as conventional urea fertiliser or its CAN equivalent. That hasn't stopped farmer suspicion that protected urea use contributed to poorer-than-average grass production this year. Anecdotal evidence from farmers indicates some cause for concern. Farmers who used the protected product on some fields and conventional urea on other fields at the same time and application rates insist they got different outcomes, with protected urea underperforming conventional urea. These assertions cannot be entirely discounted on the basis that soils and sward quality differ across a farm, giving different grass-production outcomes. We place much confidence and faith in Teagasc research and advice. Presumably the organisation has ongoing trials comparing fertiliser application outcomes. Farmers need to be reassured that these trials confirm the Teagasc affirmation around the effectiveness of protected urea under sub-optimal grass growth conditions as experienced this year. Blame for low grass growth rates has also been placed on the incessant rainfall over the past 18 months, with losses of trace nutrients and residual soil nitrogen. Without doubt, lower than-average-soil and air temperatures also contributed to low grass growth rates. Lower fertiliser application rates, in general across most farms, must also be pointed out as a probable factor in the lower-than-average grass production figures achieved this past season. Lower nitrates allowances, cow banding, fertiliser registers, high fertiliser prices and ongoing criticism of our nitrogen-driven grass production model have all contributed to our 2024 grass production outcomes. Whatever about the blame game, time is now running out on ensuring adequate fodder reserves are in place for next winter.

TO PLOUGH OR NOT TO PLOUGH?

The National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) have long been a vital part of the September agricultural calendar. Continuous infrastructural development and the regular addition of new attractions have maintained the popularity of a visit to the Ploughing for hundreds of thousands of spectators over the years. The Innovation Arena is an example of how to marry an interesting exhibition with making a real contribution to agricultural development. Many of the Innovation Award winners have gone on to commercial success. The commercial success of the event itself is remarkable. To build a temporary town in the middle of the countryside that moves to a new site every few years is a logistical miracle. The challenge is to sustain the popularity of the Ploughing in the coming years. So, is the decision of some high-profile exhibitors not to attend a cause for concern for organisers? Their inclusion is not critical to the success of the event, but does it suggest a possible waning in support from the agri-industry, generally? And if so, why? Footfall cannot be a reason not to exhibit – there is no shortage of people attending the event, which is still the largest outdoors event in Europe – so there must be a more fundamental reason. The overall cost of putting on a high-quality exhibit with the personnel to match must be a factor. The logistics of exhibiting, apart from the exhibition plot cost, are considerable. The growth of alternative, specialist venues and events may also be a contributing factor as they provide choice and variety for companies seeking to capture a more targeted audience perhaps? In any case, the Ploughing continues to be a must-go-to event for farmers and non-farmers alike.



Eamonn Treacy and Jer Coakley celebrating their World Ploughing Championships successes in Estonia last month.

HOMECOMING KINGS

The National Ploughing Association is celebrating the successes last month of Eamonn Treacy and Jer Coakley at the World Ploughing Championships in Estonia where both ploughmen retained the conventional and reversible world champion titles, respectively, for the third consecutive year. Carlow man Eamonn overturned an 18-point deficit going into the final day of ploughing to win the overall World Championship Conventional Ploughing title by 13 points from his nearest rival, a remarkable comeback achievement. Congratulations to them both from *Irish Farmers Monthly*.



Time to plan for Winter

Maeve Regan,
Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

Another winter is approaching, and now is the time for planning, in order to make informed decisions around nutritional management.

Following a difficult growing season, there may be a large variation in quality between cuts so testing what silage is available is crucial to planning accordingly.

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

For youngstock, offering a silage-only diet, a weight gain of just 0.3kg/day can be expected from the same silage as offered to dry cows (68-70%DMD); 1.5 to 2 kg of concentrate would be required to achieve target growth rates.

Silage reserves are depleted in many yards: therefore, conducting a quick fodder budget to highlight sufficient reserves – or identifying a deficit – is crucial.

Youngstock

It's also a good time to check that heifers are still on track to achieve their target weight for age (% of mature weight). Weighing now compared to weighing at the point of housing allows the opportunity to identify behind-target heifers and group accordingly.

The threshold figure for 2024 spring-born weanling heifers is approximately 200 kg in mid-September (~33% of an assumed mature weight of 600kg).

Heifers lighter than this need to be given priority access to high quality grass and reintroduce or increase supplementary concentrates; feeding rates will depend on where they are in relation to their respective targets.

Higher weight gains can be achieved from grass rather than from winter/silage diets and a good response to autumn supplementation can be achieved.

Research shows that in autumn where 1 kg of concentrate plus good grass is offered, average daily gains of 1kg/hd/day can be achieved.

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OPINION

WHY THE DEPOSIT RETURN SCHEME IS A POSITIVE FOR IRELAND

In response to last month's Upfront article regarding the Deposit Return Scheme, Ciaran Foley, CEO of Re-turn, the operator of the scheme, puts forward the reasons why it is positive for Ireland.

Since the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) was introduced in February, it has been extremely positive to see the growing level of engagement with it from the Irish people. As the CEO of Re-turn, the operator of Ireland's DRS, I'm proud to say that over 400 million containers have been returned to be recycled through the scheme. We're now seeing more than three million containers returned every day, after receiving just two million in the entire month following the launch.

The scheme has come a long way in a short time, but some people may still, understandably, be asking the question: why are we doing this? As part of the EU, we have a target to separate and collect 90 per cent of plastic beverage bottles by 2029. Prior to the introduction of the scheme, we recycled approximately 55 per cent of drinks containers. Beyond our responsibility as EU members, as members of planet Earth, we have a responsibility to bridge this gap and move further away from single-use plastics. Deposit return is the only practical option to achieve this, and based on the results we've seen so far, we're well on our way. But Ireland is not serving as the test subject for this. The DRS is a proven method of increasing recycling rates and is operating successfully in over 40 countries including 14 in Europe. Returning all containers to one place through the scheme, rather than through the mixed dry-recycling system we're used to, has many advantages.

The scheme enables the collection of a higher quality of recyclate material from our containers, allowing for the continuous recycling of aluminium and for plastic bottles to be recycled up to seven times. By collecting a sufficient quantity and quality of recyclate material through the scheme, it will become economically viable to build Ireland's first bottle-to-bottle recycling facility on the island, removing the need to export the recycled plastic. Ireland has consistently shown its commitment to the environment and has been a willing global citizen when it comes to participating in circular economy initiatives. Repak

reported that, up to July 2023, Ireland achieved every recycling target set for it by the EU for the previous 25 years. However, it's essential to note that the industry body also reported that Ireland will miss its upcoming target to recycle half of all the plastic waste we produce by 2025. The DRS is the next step we need to take to elevate our efforts in this area as a country and continue to meet and exceed future recycling targets.

While this may answer the question of why the scheme was introduced, it has also provided benefits for Irish communities that people may not be aware of. We've seen fantastic engagement with the scheme from charity and community groups across Ireland. This includes schools, GAA clubs, and Tidy Towns groups that have been collecting containers as part of their fundraising efforts. Over 140 community and non-profit organisations across Ireland are working with Re-turn to see how they can best engage with the scheme.

The scheme has also immediately impacted litter reduction. A recent Irish Business Against Litter survey – an independent, nationwide study – found that almost 30 per cent fewer cans and 20 per cent fewer plastic bottles are littering Irish streets and attributed this to the DRS.

In June we launched 'Return for Children', a partnership with six leading children's charities: Barnardos Ireland; Barretstown; Childline by ISPCC; Jack & Jill; LauraLynn Children's Hospice; and Make-A-Wish Ireland. The goal of this initiative is to reduce mixed litter at large events and provide attendees with the option of donating their container deposits at designated Re-turn bins, with the proceeds going to the six charities.

We recently saw first-hand at Electric Picnic the positive effect this had in helping to reduce litter and increase recycling – all in the name of a great cause.

While the introduction of the scheme was not without teething problems, the Irish people's willingness to adjust their habits in the name of a greener future has ensured that we are helping to make Ireland a more sustainable, cleaner place to live.

Ciaran Foley,
CEO of Re-turn.



FRANK HAYES: A GENEROUS SOUL

I was saddened to learn of the recent death of our friend Frank Hayes; a generous soul and a true gentleman. I first met Frank in London in 1987. We were launching *Irishfood* magazine, and Frank was the agricultural and food attaché in the Irish Embassy at the time. He moved back to Ireland and joined the Kerry Group in 1991, where he was group director of corporate affairs, until 2018.

While he grew up in Galway, his contribution to the county of Kerry was incredible. He loved sport, and while the Kerry Group sponsored the Kerry senior football team, Frank was also a great supporter of junior GAA and soccer in the county. He attended several international soccer tournaments including the World Cup in 1994.

Frank was generous with his time, and a good listener. I recollect when the Guild of Agricultural Journalists was seeking a sponsor for the Michael Dillon Memorial Lecture, Damien O'Reilly and myself met Frank to discuss potential support from Kerry Group. Frank understood the contribution that Michael had made to agricultural journalism, and secured Kerry's long-term sponsorship and active support of the biennial event. In recent years, Frank was appointed to the board of Coillte by Minister Pippa Hackett. He will be missed by all, and our sincere sympathies go to his wife, Gráinne, and all their family. May he rest in peace.
DM.

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InTouch



SHORTER DAYS

CATHAL BOHANE
HEAD OF INTOUCH NUTRITION

A noticeable shortening of the days accompanied by a chill factor has signalled the arrival of autumn. The last of the fertiliser will soon be applied to get a final ounce of growth. Fortunately, the last few weeks have given farms an opportunity to replenish feed stocks with third-cut silage, and the straw season has been good.

Growth rates are still not adequate due to very variable weather conditions across the country in August. Even though we are in a small country, we have extremes ranging from excess rainfall to drought-like conditions in different parts of the country, affecting grass supply. It is important to manage this as best we can over the next few weeks. In a normal year, supplements would be introduced now to extend the rotation and build covers into the backend of the year. Maintaining milk production is crucial now as we try to make up for the 5-10 per cent shortfall this year. More importantly, if production falls now, cows will not recover it. On grass full-time, we should be targeting 0.11kg of concentrate per kilogramme of milk as a guide to supplementation. If we need to go significantly beyond this, then forage needs to be introduced. If we are already feeding a significant amount of conserved forage (>10/15kg), then our concentrate supplement levels should be 0.22kg/kg of milk as we are effectively housing the cows at night. Supplementation will also help improve body condition, which is a valuable commodity heading into the autumn/winter season.

While grass quality is dropping and farms may try to avoid feeding silage, as it is an additional task and could be scarce, it is still a lower quality replacement for grazed grass. However, it will bring consistency and dry matter to animals struggling to maintain production on grass that is 10 per cent dry matter one day and 18 per cent the next. If we can ensure adequate intake over the next month or two, then everything else will take care of itself.

Keeping an eye on heifer weight gain is also important to ensure they meet their targets, as they are also struggling with grass quality, supply, and the changeable weather. Supplementation might be required here to promote weight gain and maintain grass supply longevity.

As per last month's article, it is important to complete a feed budget and secure the silage, straw, and feed needed for the winter period. Many farms are still borderline at best for feed. Take a sample of silage and test for nutrients and minerals, which will help prepare a plan for the winter season ahead.



Pictured at the announcement in Abbey Quarter, Kilkenny: Tirlán's chief financial and secretariat officer, Michael Horan; chief executive, Seán Molloy; chair, John Murphy; and chief strategy and investments officer, Frank Tobin. Photo: Dylan Vaughan.

TIRLÁN TO HOLD SGM TO APPROVE RULE CHANGE

Tirlán Co-op will hold a Special General Meeting (SGM) of its members to approve a proposed rule change that would allow the board of the co-op greater flexibility in managing its investment in Glanbia plc. If approved by members, the rule change will facilitate the release of €239m of value to members through a spin-out of 15 million Glanbia plc shares. This would be worth approximately €7,013 for every 1,000 shares that a farmer currently holds in Tirlán Co-op, or €24,604 to an average active Tirlán Co-op member (based on the Glanbia plc closing share price of €15.90 on 28 August 2024).

Tirlán Co-op today is valued at more than €1.7bn, with a significant proportion of its value concentrated in its 28.9 per cent shareholding in Glanbia plc. Commenting, John Murphy, chair of Tirlán Co-op said: "Currently, the board of Tirlán cannot reduce the Co-op's shareholding in Glanbia plc below 17 per cent. At a forthcoming SGM, we will be seeking member approval to amend this Co-op Rule. As a Board, we firmly believe that now is the right time to provide our Co-op with greater flexibility to better manage our financial investments. Our objective, over time, is to diversify and to target increased farmer returns over the long-term to meet the needs of our members. Our focus is on maximising farm returns through payments for milk and grain, as well as targeting the payment of a strong Co-op dividend, allowing us to reward Members now and into the future. We have built a strong Co-op and now is the time to help future-proof it for this generation and generations to come." Tirlán Co-op proposes to transfer, via share spin-out, 15 million Glanbia plc shares to all members of the Society in proportion to the shares they currently hold in the Co-op. Based on Glanbia plc's closing share price of €15.90 on August 28, 2024, this would be worth approximately €239m to members. If the proposed rule change is approved at the forthcoming SGM, it is envisaged that the spin-out to members would occur in the second quarter of 2025.

The proposal has the unanimous support of the Board of Tirlán Co-op who recommend it to members for approval at the forthcoming SGM. Commenting, Seán Molloy, CEO of Tirlán Co-op said: "In the coming weeks, we will be engaging with our representative structure on this important proposal and would encourage as many as possible of our members to attend our series of information sessions. Our Co-op Board and management team look forward to answering our members' questions and hearing their feedback on this proposal. Our farmer-facing team and Co-op office staff are also available to provide information to members. We will write to all eligible members in the coming days with details on how to register and vote at the forthcoming SGM."



Damien O'Reilly
EU Affairs and Communications Manager, ICOS

LETTER FROM BRUSSELS

Later this month, officials from the European Commission will visit Ireland to check up on progress being made to stabilise and improve water quality. Farmers across the country are anxiously looking to the end of next year when the Commission will decide whether to extend Ireland's Nitrates Derogation of 220kg/N/ha beyond January 1, 2026.

Last year's mid-term review resulted in a cutting of the derogation from 250kg/N/ha, which came as a shock and a blow to dairy farmers. The finger was pointed at the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue, for not doing enough to plead Ireland's case. But the EU Commissioner for the Environment was adamant that the cut was simply because of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports presented to him, which showed that water quality was not sufficiently good to extend the derogation.

That bitter pill swallowed, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), farm organisations, Teagasc, and co-ops have been working night and day over the past 12 months to put in place measures aimed specifically at improving water quality. At the end of August, Minister McConalogue published the DAFM's plan to progress his stated objective of retaining Ireland's Nitrates Derogation, post 2025.

It is a very detailed plan of action to support farmers with advice and grant aid with the stated aim of securing a continuation of the derogation. Earlier this year, Teagasc published 'Better farming for water – 8 actions for change', a water quality advisory campaign. Meanwhile, all the big dairy co-operatives have incentivised campaigns in place to support suppliers' efforts to protect water quality. And, thousands of farmers have taken part in farm walks this summer, organised by co-operatives, to show farmers methods that will not impact water quality.

Now this latest 'all-of-agriculture' drive spearheaded by the Government galvanises that work. Over the past three or four years, the rapid increase in low emissions slurry spreading and a dramatic reduction in chemical fertiliser use are among the practical approaches that farmers have taken that are sure to help with protecting water quality.

There is a frustration among farmers and co-operatives that this work is not being reflected in the most recent EPA water quality reports, which act as the bible as far as the EU Commission here in Brussels is concerned when deciding on a derogation extension. But there is the glimmer of hope that if all the big initiatives now in play aimed specifically at arresting a decline in water quality are to be implemented to the maximum, it is inevitable that future EPA reports will reflect that.

At the Energy and Farm Diversification Show in Gurteen agricultural college in July, there was an acknowledgement from the EPA representative that the agricultural sector is serious about protecting water quality. The hope is that the EU Commission and the new environment commissioner (to be appointed later in the year) will also acknowledge that power of work in making what is a huge decision for the future not only of dairy farmers but all farmers in Ireland in December 2025.



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AGRI-FOOD TRADE MISSION TO CHINA AND REPUBLIC OF KOREA

At time of print, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue and Minister of State with Responsibility for New Market Development, Martin Heydon are leading a trade mission to both China and the Republic of Korea. The

stated focus is on expanding Government cooperation, broadening market access in both countries and promoting high quality Irish agri-food produce. The trade missions encompass high level ministerial meetings with Chinese and Korean officials as well as market development work at high profile trade events in Beijing, Shanghai and Seoul. Ministers also engaged with Enterprise Ireland during the trade mission on matters relating to agricultural science and biotechnology.

Speaking ahead of the trade mission, Minister McConalogue said: "This is my second time to visit both China and the Republic of Korea in the past 18 months, which signifies the importance we place on both China and Korea as key trading partners for Ireland. I

intend to use this trip to further develop these relationships to capitalise on the increasing consumer demand for high quality food products in these markets and the significant opportunity for the Irish agri-food sector that this presents."

Refencing the anti-subsidy investigation, Minister McConalogue said: "I am, of course, aware of the recent announcement by China of its intention to initiate an anti-subsidy investigation into European Dairy exports. I am satisfied that European and Irish dairy exports are fully compliant with World Trade Organisation Rules. While discussions on trade matters are led by the European Commission, this mission will provide an opportunity to raise the matter with my counterpart in China."

Bord Bia CEO Jim O'Toole said the focus of the trade mission to China is about deepening existing key trade relationships with customers and creating new business opportunities. "China has a growing middle class with high disposable incomes, creating

a new consumer base who have both access to sophisticated digital platforms and an increased interest in premium food products. Irish exporters are ideally placed to meet these consumer demands." Jim O'Toole added that ever since the trade mission to the Republic of Korea in 2019, Bord Bia has been working to leverage opportunities for Irish exporters and producers to build their market share. "Bord Bia's 2024 Korean Consumer Research study has identified the Republic of Korea as a priority market for Irish beef given that Korea is the world's fourth biggest beef importer, purchasing 500,000 tonnes per year. This represents opportunities for Irish beef suppliers, particularly for cuts such as short rib and the outside and inside skirt which are popular in Korean BBQ." Earlier this summer, Bord Bia hosted eight beef buyers from the Republic of Korea on a tour of Ireland, visiting beef farms and meat processors. Bord Bia is also currently running an EU co-funded campaign to promote Irish beef and lamb in the Republic of Korea, Japan, China and the US. The campaign is valued at €4.8 million over the three years 2022, 2023 and 2024.



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Pictured at the launch of the 'Farm Traineeship - Intro to Ag' were Helena Silke, training co-ordinator, FRS Farm Services; Colin Donnery, Group CEO, FRS Co-Op; and Gráinne McGrath, contract training officer (agriculture), Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board.

FARM TRAINEESHIP TARGETING 'NOVICES'

Farming 'novices', or people with little to no farming experience based in Laois or Offaly, are to be offered the opportunity to develop agri skills and undertake a career in the industry, thanks to a new collaboration between FRS Farm Services and Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB).

The 'Farm Traineeship - Intro to Ag' was established as a means of providing a pathway into careers in farming for those who don't necessarily come from an agricultural background. It's thought the programme could be of particular interest to those who are considering a career change, or who have recently completed their schooling and are keen to explore the employment possibilities offered by farming.

Participants will be helped to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to work on a modern commercial farm. Those who successfully complete the programme will also be offered employment from FRS Farm

Services. While this particular programme is specifically aimed at people living in Laois and Offaly, FRS Farm Services and LOETB hopes it will serve as a model for launching similar initiatives around the country, with a view to increasing the number of skilled people available to work on farms.

The course is full time and will run from Monday to Friday for a period of six months beginning in October 2024. The primary location is LOETB Portlaoise, with various other elements and practical training taking place within close proximity. Jobseekers who partake in the traineeship will retain their payment benefits for the duration of the programme. A total of 15 places will be available in this initial intake and the deadline to apply for participation is before the end of September 2024. The programme is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union.

Colin Donnery, Group CEO of FRS Co-Op, said: "It is clear that we need to offer more

pathways for people to pursue a career in farming. Everyone in the agri sector knows there is plenty of work available, the challenge is finding people with the skills to do it. At FRS, over the last number of years we have been able to attract people to work in farming that wouldn't traditionally have been from a farming background. We also have more women working with us on farms. We believe this approach is helping to bring new life to the sector, adding new ideas and more diversity. Our aim with this programme is to sow the seeds that will attract even more new people to farming. Hopefully, once it is complete, there will be a bumper crop of new talent with farming skills. Should this model prove successful we would like to see it extended to other parts of the country. The need for more people with farming capabilities extends far beyond Laois and Offaly, so we are keen to explore the possibilities of where else this programme might run in the near future."

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TOP TIPS FOR A SAFE AND ACCIDENT-FREE FARM

CIARAN ROCHE, FBD RISK MANAGER, OFFERS SOME TOP TIPS TO ENSURE THAT YOU ARE CREATING A SAFER FARMING ENVIRONMENT

Farms can be dangerous working environments, especially when safety is not properly managed. Unfortunately, every year many preventable accidents result in serious or fatal injuries. It is crucial for farmers to prioritise safety on their farms, and here are some top tips to help you along the way.

1. PROACTIVELY MANAGE FARM SAFETY

Safety should never be left to chance. It's essential to actively manage health and safety on the farm by planning all work activities carefully. This starts with a thorough risk assessment, which involves identifying potential hazards, assessing the associated risks, and implementing appropriate control measures. Creating safe systems of work is key to preventing accidents, whether you're operating tractors and machinery, handling livestock, or working at heights. These safety procedures must be followed at all times. Regular maintenance of farm machinery, equipment, and facilities should be scheduled. For example, before spreading slurry, ensure the PTO shaft on the slurry spreader is safely covered.

2. PRIORITISE VEHICLE AND MACHINERY SAFETY

While tractors and machinery can save time and boost productivity, they are also major contributors to farm accidents. These accidents often result from inexperienced operators, poor mechanical conditions, excessive speed, lack of concentration, and environmental factors like steep terrain. Many machinery accidents are caused by human error, such as forgetting safety steps, taking shortcuts, or failing to maintain equipment properly. To prevent these accidents, it's vital to ensure that all tractors, vehicles, and machinery are well-maintained, adequately guarded, and operated safely by competent individuals. Maintaining your

agricultural vehicles in safe working condition is critical. Mechanical issues are a leading cause of accidents involving farm vehicles. Key components to check regularly include:

- ▶ Brakes;
- ▶ Tyres;
- ▶ Windows, mirrors and wipers;
- ▶ Steering and hydraulics; and
- ▶ Lights and indicators.



WHILE FARMS CAN BE WONDERFUL PLACES FOR CHILDREN TO EXPLORE AND LEARN, THEY ARE NOT PLAYGROUNDS

3. ENSURE LIVESTOCK SAFETY

To stay safe around livestock, it's important that handlers are experienced, competent, and physically capable of working with the animals. Having well-designed cattle-handling facilities can make a huge difference in safety and efficiency. Essential features include securely fenced fields, holding pens, cattle crushes, sculling gates, and calving facilities.

4. WORK SAFELY AT HEIGHTS

Falls from heights are the leading cause of serious and fatal injuries during the maintenance and repair of farm buildings. To protect yourself and your workers, ensure that all work at height is:

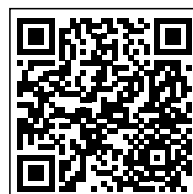
- ▶ Properly planned, organised, and supervised;
- ▶ Carried out with consideration for weather conditions; and
- ▶ Supported by appropriate equipment that has been carefully inspected.

Whenever possible, prioritise collective protection measures like guard rails over personal protection measures such as safety harnesses. Additionally, be aware of the risks associated with fragile surfaces, like Perspex or asbestos sheeting, and take steps to mitigate these risks. For more extensive work at height, consider using scaffolding or a mobile elevated work platform (MEWP) instead of a ladder. Complex tasks are best left to professional contractors who specialise in this type of work.

5. PROTECT CHILDREN

To keep children safe on the farm, they should be kept away from working vehicles and machinery, dangerous livestock, and hazardous areas such as slurry pits, chemical stores, and bale stacks. Adequate supervision is crucial at all times. While farms can be wonderful places for children to explore and learn, they are not playgrounds. Establish a designated, supervised play area where children can enjoy themselves safely, away from the dangers of farm work. Farm safety is an ongoing process that requires vigilance, planning, and adherence to safety protocols. By prioritising safety in all aspects of farm life – whether it's managing safety around vehicles, machinery, livestock, work at height, or protecting vulnerable family members – you can help prevent accidents and create a safer environment for everyone involved.

Always remember: safety first on the farm!



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'CHANGE IS HAPPENING, NO MATTER WHAT'

HAZELL MULLINS IS NEARING THE END OF HER TENURE AS PRESIDENT OF VETERINARY IRELAND (VI) AND SHE HAS HAD A BUSY TIME OF IT SO FAR, AS SOME ISSUES THAT HAVE BEEN SIMMERING FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS ARE BUBBLING TO A HEAD. **BERNIE COMMINS** CHATS TO HAZELL ABOUT DEALING WITH THESE ISSUES WHILE AT THE HELM OF VI, AND BALANCING LIFE AS BOTH VET AND FARMER

The delay – an extended delay, at that – to the introduction of veterinary prescriptions for anti-parasitics is coming to an end, as Ireland must soon implement new veterinary medicines regulations (EU Regulation 2019/6) that came into effect back in 2022. To summarise, these anti-parasitics, currently available over the counter (as licensed merchant products [LM]), will soon be prescription-only medicines (POM) because the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) found that they no longer met the conditions to be exempt from prescription. In other words, the HPRA found an increase in resistance to such products by parasites.

The anti-parasitics issue is one of several that are causing concern – as well as consternation – for vets, pharmacists, licensed retailers, co-ops, and, importantly, farmers. The consternation stretches to whether some vaccines – classed as 'prescription-only medicine - exempt', or POM(E) – which were previously available from a farmer's own vet or a pharmacist, would now be made available over the counter in retail outlets.

The Veterinary Medicinal Products, Medicated Feed and Fertiliser Regulation Act was introduced in July 2024. This relates to matters, which EU Regulation 2019/6 on veterinary medicinal products left to national law, including the retail of veterinary medicinal products.

WHAT VACCINES ARE INVOLVED?

Hazell explains that there are three types of vaccines on the market. Licensed merchant, or LM, which are over-the-counter retail products such as clostridia and leptospirosis vaccines.

The POM(E) vaccines, which can be sold by a veterinary practitioner, pharmacist, or for certain specific products, by a responsible

person from a LM. These include a lot of respiratory vaccines such as IBR, PI3 and RSV, as well as the salmonella vaccine.

And the prescription-only medicines, or POM, vaccines would include scour vaccines, the live BVD vaccine, Bovilis, Rotavec and Footvax. These require a prescription and currently LMs and co-ops can supply these on foot of said prescription. But they cannot stock POM(E) vaccines, Hazell explains, unless they have a pharmacist on site.

A Statutory Instrument (SI), to be signed by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine could determine if POM(E) products could be dispensed by LMs. This SI, still in draft format, has been the subject of much debate by all sides and was the focus of a recent meeting between the minister and Veterinary Ireland.

It is highly likely that any decision pertaining to the implementation of EU Regulation 2019/6 will be long-fingered again until after a general election.

MEETING

Hazell explains: "We highlighted to the minister the need to preserve the integrity of prudent prescribing of these medications," she said. "Vaccines have now become part of this SI, particularly POM(E) vaccines, and that they would become available over the counter for sale in retail outlets." Herein lies a big problem, as she, and Veterinary Ireland, see it.

"These are vaccines that are [currently] dispensed by a vet to a client, or by a pharmacy on foot of advice straight to the farmer. They are medicinal products that should not be used inappropriately on a farm, and professional advice is paramount," she says.

"The other side of it is the proper-assessment protocol that is being proposed, which would mean that a vet could prescribe without having a client-practice-patient relationship,"

she says. This, according to Hazell, would lead to a two-tier prescribing system: one delivered by vets in general practice who are required to provide out-of-hours and weekend services, 24/7; and one that would just offer an out-of-hours clinical service for the product prescribed. This, she says, will threaten the viability of general veterinary practice.

"It would also go against the 12 principles of certification as stated in our Veterinary Code of Conduct, set out by the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI), which is our regulatory body. The vet, as proposed in the current SI, would not have a relationship with the farmer and that contradicts what the VCI sets out in the code. That code is there for a reason.

"In relation to the anti-parasitics, our main focus is that they are prescribed prudently by a vet who knows the farmer and knows farming system. Then, that prescription can be taken to wherever the farmer wants to fill that prescription."

'SCAREMONGERED'

On the back of that meeting, a joint statement was released from the Irish Co-operative Organisation Society (ICOS), Independent Licensed Merchants Association (ILMA) and Acorn Independent Merchants who were highly critical of the handling of this issue. They maintain that, if the SI favours the demands of the veterinary profession, it will 'effectively legislate all licensed merchants out of business.' The statement read: "After one fractious meeting with the veterinary profession – who have scaremongered inaccurately about the potential impact on private veterinary practitioners – the statutory instrument has drastically changed." Farmers and farming organisations, too, have been voicing their concerns and expressing annoyance at their lack of involvement in the debate. The Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) said the SI had the potential to severely limit competition in the supply of veterinary



In her happy place:
President of Veterinary
Ireland, Hazell Mullins.

medicines for farmers if not framed correctly in a practical, reasonable and fair manner. Chair of the IFA's Animal Health Committee, TJ Maher said: "Access to competitively priced vaccines is a key component of reducing the necessity to use antibiotics on farms and, where possible, easier access to these important tools for farmers must be provided." Addressing some of the comments, Hazell says vets have no issue with these medicines being available to buy in all the places they are currently available. But VI wants farmers' own vets to be the first port of call when a prescription is required for such products. "It is not the sale, it is the prescribing of these medicines that is the issue," she said. "We are trying to prudently prescribe and protect the medicines that we have. This is why we are campaigning for the SI to be changed. That, and for the future of vets in practice because this SI is moving away from vets that are practising and we are trying to protect that service," she said. Does she think farmers will be negatively impacted by the demands of VI? "Antiparasitics are going POM, so they are going to involve a vet's advice anyway. So, do we [farmers] want advice that is tailored specifically to our farm, or not? In the long term, it is going to be more beneficial to have your own vet involved, the vet who has knowledge of the farm. The farmer can get the prescription from that vet, but can fill it wherever the farmer wants. It means the right product will be given at the right time in the right dose."

I question Hazell on whether the veterinary profession is using the out-of-hours and weekend service as leverage to steer the minister in their favour? She responds: "There

is a real risk that if this SI is signed [as it is], it will impact our ability to provide an out-of-hours service the way we do now, and there may be job losses. Out-of-hours isn't a money-making service so it is already hard to provide that service as it is," Hazell says. This debate was still very much live at the time of print and, while it is looking like a new minister will be in the hot seat when a decision is made on this SI, there may well be a new VI president in the hot seat too.

A BUSY YEAR

Just a few months after her appointment as president of VI in November 2023, Hazell made a significant career move, leaving her job as a large-animal vet in Kildare, and returning home to Cork for two main reasons: to go into partnership with her father on their dairy and dairy-to-beef enterprise; and to set up her own locuming business.

"I just decided to that it was time to come home go into partnership with dad and get more actively involved in the farm. The farm has always been such a big part of my life that I just felt like if I didn't do it now, then I would regret it. So, I felt like we just needed to take a leap of faith.

"I also realised that I really missed being a vet, being out and about meeting farmers. I was probably in more of a management role in Kildare before I left, and I knew I wanted to keep my skills up. So, I looked into setting up a locuming company, and that is what I did. I contacted a few local practises and luckily I have been doing a lot of locuming for some practises in north Cork and Mitchelstown," she says. There were personal reasons, too, for the move; having gotten married in 2023, she and her husband decided to put down

roots and build a house closer to home this year.

BALANCING ACT

Life is very busy, but in a good way, Hazell explains: "I love it. I just love the fact that I can balance farming and veterinary. I don't really work as a vet in spring. I might do the odd Saturday if I'm needed for cover but generally, I'm on the farm full-time in spring and then, come the end of April, I'm back out TB testing, on call, and I have a factory shift every now and again, too."

She is also a weekly contributor to the *Irish Examiner*, which keep the creative side of her brain ticking over. "It makes me think about the cases I'm seeing; it makes me do the research and helps to get the right information out there to the public and to farmers.

With a lot of strings to her bow, is it challenging to carve out time for everything, and have some left over for herself too?

"Having spring off definitely helps because at least I don't have any commitments to be anywhere else. It works quite well on the off season then because my dad and my uncle are on the farm so generally, I'm around in the morning to milk the cows and generally I'm back in the evening.

"It works well that that middle block of the day is where I do a lot of my locuming, and writing my article. It is a team effort on the farm, though. I was able to go on a lovely holiday for a week to Greece and the place was still standing when I got back."

But she has to remind her father to do the same. "Normally I book the holiday for them," she says.

FARMER OR VET FIRST?

The question of whether she is a vet or a farmer first, provides some food for thought: "If you were to meet me on the street, I would probably say I am a vet and a dairy farmer. But that may change in the next 10 years. I've been a large-animal vet for 11 years, it's just what I know, and I love it. But I'm very much a 'green' farmer and I'm learning a lot from my dad," she says.

"The animal-health side of the farm is pretty covered because I can look after that, but I have a lot to learn about grassland management and fertiliser, even down to what silage fields to close off - these are all



Vet and farmer, Hazell Mullins.

the things that come naturally to farmers because they have been doing it for so long. I'm really trying to figure out all these things, whereas my dad just knows," she says.

She is very interested in the breeding side of the farm, she says: "Our fields are a little bit more colourful than they were two years ago. We have Speckle Parks there now and other breeds. I love the breeding side of it and this year now is the first time that I was put in charge of the breeding - what cows got what straws, the EBI - that really excites me." As a vet, Hazell sees the progress that is being made by farmers embracing technology: "I am really impressed by how farmers have grasped the breeding technologies, how they are making the breeding season more effective and efficient, and using the vet much more now in the breeding season, because a good breeding

season sets you up for the whole year, whether you are beef or dairy."

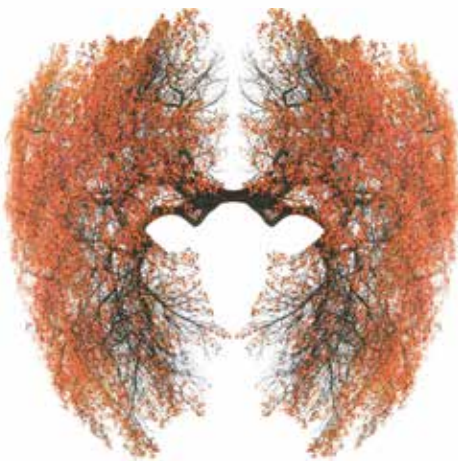
She says she is finding that farmers are far more concerned and up to date with preventative healthcare, and technology is really playing a role here, for the vet, too. Collars and robots and technology have been really helpful for vets: "There is more information there now for the vet to look at. Sometimes I might get called out to cows that don't look sick, but the collar will have picked up that high temperature before the clinical signs have kicked in and that is super, to get on the farm before it becomes a bigger issue for the animal and animals."

Using the example of a left displaced abdomen (LDA) diagnosis, she says, the farmer can send live information to her from the animal's wearable technology that allows her to monitor the progress. "I had a case before where after an LDA diagnosis, I could see [through the wearable technology] that she went up for a day and then dramatically dropped, and I went out to her to find that she had a bleeding ulcer. The tech picked it up so quickly and it was that live information to the farmer and onto us that made the difference." There is a strong chain of information there, so it is important that it gets used properly, she says.

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Safety and efficacy of these products together have not been evaluated. A decision to use either of these vaccines before or after any other veterinary medicinal product therefore needs to be made on a case-by-case basis.

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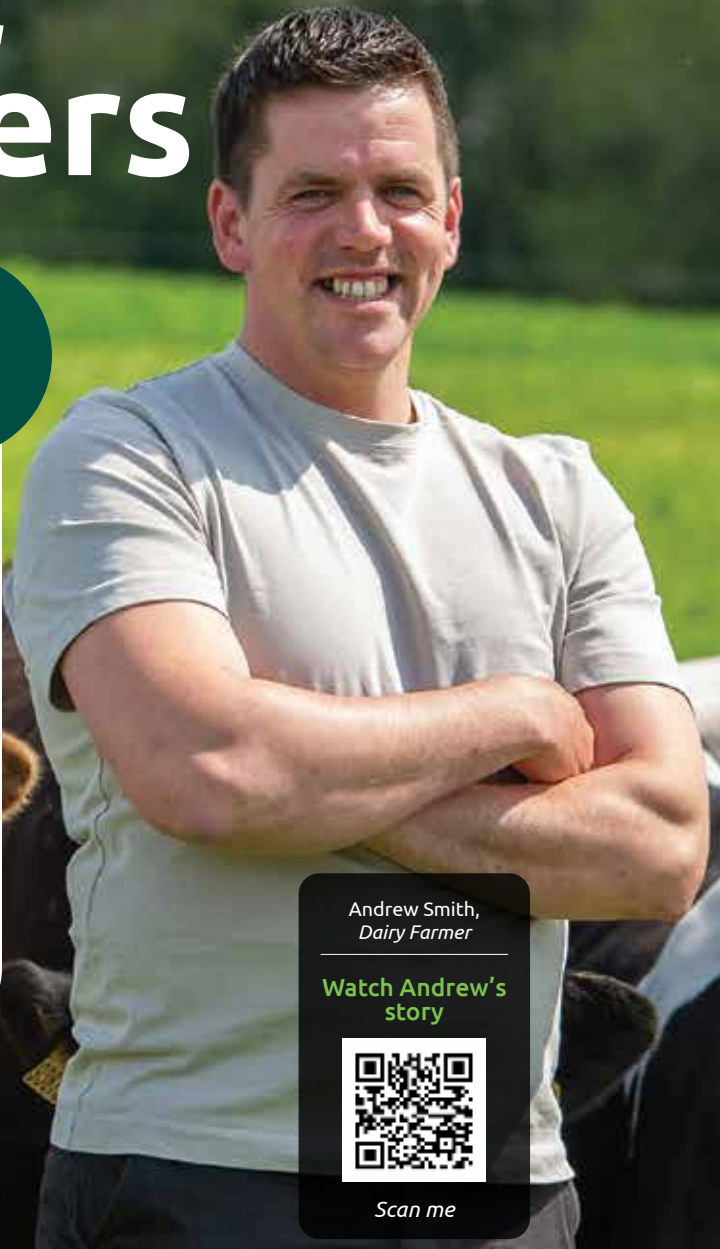


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BIOECONOMY POLICY

CHANGES REQUIRED TO DEVELOP THE SECTOR



Dr Jon Paul Faulkner.

A RESEARCH PROJECT BEING UNDERTAKEN BY UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN (UCD) IN COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY, AND FUNDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND THE MARINE (DAFM), AIMS TO PRODUCE A REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE BIOECONOMY WITH FARMERS, AGRI-FOOD REPRESENTATIVES, POLICY MAKERS AND LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES. DR JON PAUL FAULKNER, THE PROJECT COLLABORATOR TELLS US MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

The project is called CoBioEcon (www.cobioecon.com) and the first task for those involved is to understand what needs to change in bioeconomy policy in order to develop the sector.

Findings suggest that the European and Irish bioeconomy is research-led and this has resulted in less focus on rural development, little public consultation, and the absence of key stakeholders, such as farmers, in bioeconomy decision-making. More generally, it was found that international collaboration needs to be improved, while government needs to address the conflicts which will inevitably emerge as the bioeconomy develops, particularly around land use and what land should be used to do what. Finally, we need to develop what we mean by economic, environmental and social sustainability and how this is related to the bioeconomy. This policy development is important to ensure we develop strategies on poverty, inequality, public health and climate impacts. In other words, it is important that we think about, and establish safeguards for, the negative consequences of transitioning to the bioeconomy.

FARMERS SHOULD LEAD

In Ireland, and Europe more generally, the bioeconomy is led by academics but this is not sustainable. Since the production of

What is the bioeconomy?

The bioeconomy means using renewable biological resources from land and sea, like crops, forests, fish, animals and micro-organisms to produce food, materials and energy. Source: EU bioeconomy strategy.

food, fisheries and forestry are the chief contributors to the bioeconomy, it is essential that primary producers, such as farmers, are not only included, but are among the leaders of the bioeconomy. Otherwise, the bioeconomy isn't going to work! The bioeconomy should move beyond research and become more market-orientated, and we need primary producers for this happen. How can this be achieved? Intermediary actors should be employed to help excluded groups access the bioeconomy network and should be incentivised to do so. Speaking of incentives, bio-based products should receive tax breaks and be prioritised for public procurement. We need to get the bioeconomy up and running.

COLLABORATION

Moving towards the bioeconomy is a huge challenge. We're moving from a fossil-fuelled economy to a renewable-based economy, and

we can't do this without everyone on board. This goes for all industries, all government departments, and all interest groups, whether it's the farmer, the climate change activist, or members of the community. Particularly regarding policy, industry and value chains, we must align policy with financial incentives and funding schemes. And we can't do this on our own, we need our European partners. EU countries should work together on creating a specific and mandated internationally coordinated system for the bioeconomy. International regional networks can drive international cooperation more effectively than centralised approaches.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

It's important to emphasise how markets alone will not be able to transition to the bioeconomy in a sustainable manner. Strong government organisation and participation is needed to help reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. A major challenge is the limited supply and inefficient use of biomass and arable land, which could raise concerns about sustainability and increase costs. Growing demand for bio-based products may lead to conflicts over land use and sustainability goals, such as food and energy security. Addressing these conflicts is crucial. The shift to biomass production can displace traditional land uses, and there



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will be conflicts between food and non-food biomass production. Using marginal land and assessing resource efficiency can help address these challenges, but it is important to avoid soil degradation and deforestation. Defining and economically classifying marginal land for biomass production is essential but currently is omitted in Irish and EU policy. Tools to evaluate the economic viability of land for biomass are needed. For example, using landfill sites for biomass energy has potential, but requires proper evaluation. Overall, EU and national policies need to improve understanding and awareness of the bioeconomy, ensure policy coherence, and continually assess regulations. Ireland supports bioeconomy development but relies too much on self-regulation and private standards. This approach needs to change urgently to achieve positive outcomes.

SAFEGUARDING SUSTAINABILITY

Despite how the bioeconomy is presented in European and Irish policy, bioeconomy

development is not automatically sustainable. Society needs to make it sustainable. While there is some focus on environmental sustainability in bioeconomy policy, economic and social sustainability are less clearly addressed. This is because policy mainly focuses on industry, emphasising competition, innovation and economic growth but neglecting sustainable resource management and operational strategies for a sustainable bioeconomy. Most sustainability assessments in these policies are about things like measuring greenhouse gas emissions and following ecological conservation laws. However, they miss important social aspects, such as land rights or the social impact of biomass production. In Irish policy, less attention is given to the potential risks associated with bioeconomy and how we should deal with these risks – risks such as increases in poverty and inequality, adverse public health impacts and the exacerbation of climate change. Overall, while sustainability is often mentioned in EU and Irish bioeconomy

policies, it is vaguely defined. This vagueness shows an underdeveloped policy approach. Policymakers need to better describe how the bioeconomy supports sustainability. Linking the bioeconomy to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could help clarify this.

The next task in the CoBioEcon project will be investigating the various barriers, but also the opportunities, that agri-food practitioners see in relation to developing the bioeconomy in Ireland. Findings are based on in-depth interviews. As previously mentioned, all these findings will go towards co-developing a regional strategy for the bioeconomy.

Get in touch

If you want to be part of developing this strategy, you can contact the researchers for more information here: www.cobioecon.com.

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IFA deputy president, Alice Doyle with IFA president Francie Gorman, and IFA director of policy, Tadhg Buckley.

A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY

IN A WIDE-RANGING INTERVIEW, MATT O'KEEFFE DISCUSSES SOME OF THE MOST PERTINENT ISSUES FACING FARMERS WITH DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE IRISH FARMERS' ASSOCIATION (IFA), ALICE DOYLE

Alice Doyle has been farming for more than 30 years with her husband, Tom, on their beef and tillage farm in Wexford. She is a stalwart of Irish farming. Before her historic election to the vice-presidency of the IFA in December 2023 – the first woman to hold this office – she served as national chair of the IFA's Farm Family and Social Affairs Committee for two years. She has organised information evenings and farm safety demos, has made submissions to Oireachtas committees, has liaised and engaged with members on topics such as Fair Deal, pension issues, rural housing, health and wellbeing, and has held leadership roles in Macra. Professionally, she was a school principal, having been appointed at just 22.

Safe to say, Alice was the right person to take on the role of IFA vice president and as she enters her ninth month in the job, she sums up the mood among farmers:

"I speak to farmers from all different sectors every day. The mood is better than might be expected under the circumstances, knowing how things are in farming. Some sectors are doing reasonably okay considering the bad year we've had, and others are under severe pressure. I would divide IFA's work into the overarching issues we pursue and then the individual problems people face, where we can be of assistance on a one-to-one basis. Both are equally important," she says. But there are some major concerns, she says, and chief among them are lack of income and uncertainty. "In the past, when we had difficulties, we always knew that if you worked hard, you'd work your way through it. That's not necessarily the way at the minute. Farmers are working day and night complying with all the regulation, and yet, with the uncertainty out there, they, and we, don't know what's ahead. I think it's affecting younger people entering into farming, and

the older people too, who want to transfer their farms."

GENERATIONAL TRANSFER

It is expected that the European Commission will publish its proposals for the next Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in mid-2025. With this in mind, Minister McConalogue recently announced his intention to establish a Commission on Generational Renewal in Farming. Launching it, he said the time had come to have an 'honest and absolutely objective look at this, including the supports in place, to consider whether those measures are having the desired effect, how supports might best be configured to encourage generational renewal, for example through land transfers and succession planning'. Alice welcomes the establishment of a commission because there is a need for a spotlight on generational renewal, but she hopes this will not be a talking shop: "We all know what the problems are; it is solutions we need now. Actively engaging with farmers will be important to figure out how we're going to deal with this. It's not going to be simple because of those big challenges of income and uncertainty."

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENT

The climate crisis is another significant challenge that farmers have been dealing with and they have shown 'huge commitment to environmental protection' says Alice. "We've made huge changes and adaptations, even though we've never been given proper credit for it, only condemnation from some quarters. But the funding to support that was taken out of the CAP. Therefore, it's going to go up to Europe and our own government to make sure that through co-funding, the money will be there to support food production as well as environmental ambitions. We want to get a fair share of the €3bn climate fund that is being put in place and let the CAP provide for the production of food."

ACRES CONTROVERSY

Commenting on the controversy surrounding the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES), referred to by the IFA recently as a 'farce', Alice says: "When ACRES came out first, a lot of farmers bought into it, with up to 55,000 applications. Farmers compared it to the old GLAS and REPS schemes. But ACRES has thrown up a huge number of problems. Many people in it are extremely unhappy due to delayed payments. Money has been paid out by the farmer to do the work, but they haven't been refunded for that yet. It has left a lot of farmers with a cashflow shortfall.

"Back in February and March, the IFA decided that farm cashflow was so serious that we argued very strongly to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) that a flat payment had to be made to give farmers money upfront until it sorted out all the issues around ACRES. And we were very proud of the fact that we got money for that. There was €4,000 given to those who were in level one and €5,000 to those in the co-operation section.

That got a lot of people out of a financial hole. It was made clear from the beginning that if you were

ALICE SHARES HER THOUGHTS ON BELOW-COST PRODUCTION

"Income is going to be very much based on supports. I would love to think we could produce food, be paid for it and make an income from the market. But we know that's not possible because of a cheap food policy. The consumer wants cheap food and the government will insist that we produce food at prices that don't reflect input and regulatory costs. In the past CAP would have made up the difference. It was brought in to assist the farmer in producing food cheaply and abundantly for the consumer. Under the last CAP, particularly, those supports were taken away and have moved to the environment. Farmers have to provide food at below the cost of production. Convergence has further damaged the viable production model for many farmers."

overpaid on that flat payment, money would have to be returned. The problem now is that people are getting demand notices to pay back some of that money, while they're still owed money by the department. So, farmers have to pay back on time, but the department doesn't have to pay us on time. I'm hoping that's all going to change dramatically with the signing of the new Farmers Charter. Under the charter, the DAFM must make payments on time and farmers must comply with their agreements."

BUDGET

Outlining the big-ticket budget issues for the IFA, Alice says that the Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) has become a major issue. "Some farmers had been asked to pay a tax on zoned land that they're farming, with no possibility of it being used for building purposes," Alice explains. At the time of print, a deferral of the RZLT for farmers had been proposed to allow time to develop a definition of 'actively farmed' land, and ensure that farmers are not being disadvantaged.

"The biggest issue we'll be dealing with from a sectoral viewpoint is around the whole area of tillage.

A tillage survival package is what we're looking for, because we know that last year and this year have been two horrendous years for

tillage farmers, where they were late getting in crops, lost a huge number of crops last year, were late getting crops in again this year, and yields will be well down. The tillage sector is on its knees. We've spoken to the minister on numerous occasions about this. He has agreed €100 per hectare, but we want that brought up to €250 and guaranteed for five years. A once-off payment doesn't work because of the commitments that producers have to make for an extended period." Alice explained that the IFA's budget submission recognises the need for extended supports for cattle and sheep enterprises. "We have also prioritised taxation in relation to inheritance and transfer of farms. Agricultural relief is available for farmers but we're lobbying for the tax threshold for asset transfers to be raised to a minimum of €500,000 from parents to children. That would return the threshold to where it was 15 years ago, before price inflation lifted all property values. The need to retain the concessions for agricultural and stock relief is also important. The cost of farm employment is huge and we are advocating for reductions in PRSI payments where farms have employees. The animal health issues around TB will require additional departmental funding if we are to reverse the increase in the disease."

DEROGATION RETENTION

"It's going to be difficult to retain derogation. There's no point in pretending otherwise. There's a different approach this time than there was a couple of years ago when the figure was reduced to 220kg/N/ha. We have huge engagement between all the farm organisations, Meat Industry Ireland, Dairy Industry Ireland, Teagasc and the co-ops. They're all doing everything possible to make our case as favourable as possible for the continuation of the derogation. The taoiseach and Minister McConalogue and Government are committed to supporting the retention case. A big uncertainty is that we have a general election coming up and we don't know who is going to be in Government in 2026.

"We will probably have a new agriculture minister. We could have a new taoiseach. We're going to be dealing with a new Government of whatever construction. Then we have a Commission being formed and we don't know who we're dealing with there yet. We don't know if it will be sympathetic towards agriculture and food security or entirely focused on the green agenda. There is a lot of uncertainty ahead."



Alice Doyle
pictured with the
IFA president,
Francie Gorman.

CAN ALTERNATIVE PROTEINS MAXIMISE FORAGE UTILISATION?



Sarah Maher, regional sales manager, Alltech.

SARAH MAHER, REGIONAL SALES MANAGER AT ALLTECH, WRITES ABOUT THE IMPACT THAT THE WEATHER HAS HAD ON FORAGE RESERVES THIS YEAR, AND WHETHER ALTERNATIVE PROTEINS CAN HELP TO MAXIMISE FORAGE UTILISATION

This year has been a very challenging one on Irish farms, with the weather affecting growing conditions. Silage reserves for the coming winter are behind target on some farms. Now, more than ever, it is extremely important to carry out a fodder budget on your farm if you have not done one already. Whatever forage reserve you have, it's important that the animals can use it as efficiently as possible. The table below gives a guide as to the silage requirement of animals, per month, when they are fully housed.

Table 1: Forage requirement per month.

Dry cows	1.5t
Milkers	1.5t
Weanlings	0.6t
Finishers	0.45t
Stores	0.9t

When reformulating diets for the winter, we need to know what we are feeding, and not just 'guesstimating' — it is very important to quantify the feed value of the silage to formulate diets accurately and to balance energy and protein accordingly. Analysing silage for quality will allow farmers to supplement animals with the appropriate rate of concentrate to meet the animals' dietary requirements and subsequent performance targets.

MAXIMISING RUMEN HEALTH

Good rumen health is fundamental to supporting feed efficiency, which, in turn, supports immunity. The nutrients provided to the rumen bacteria must be adequate and

well balanced in terms of fermentable energy and protein supply. Sufficient nitrogen and rumen-degradable protein must be supplied to maximise bacterial fermentation, energy digestibility and feed intake. If the diet is energy-deficient, dietary protein will be used inefficiently as another source of energy instead of being converted into body protein. Dairy and beef cattle require protein for two main reasons: for the animal itself and for the microorganisms in the rumen, which are responsible for breaking down hard-to-digest plant parts. Fibre-degrading organisms are the most sensitive in their requirements and need a continual source of non-protein nitrogen (NPN). Traditional sources of NPN are rapidly degraded and disappear from the rumen environment, making them unavailable to these microbes. Using an alternative nitrogen-rich feed ingredient (such as Optigen) ensures a constant release of NPN and a steady rumen ammonia concentration. This provides ideal growing conditions for fibre degraders, promoting fibre digestion and maximising forage utilisation.

REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS

In recent years, there have been growing concerns around the environmental impact of conventional protein sources such as soyabean meal. This issue is complicated by the increasing demand for animal protein by a growing global population. The nitrogen in Optigen is released in the rumen in a similar way to soya protein; therefore, Optigen can be used to replace part of the soya – or some other protein concentrates, like rapeseed meal – in the diets of dairy, beef and

youngstock cattle to ensure that the animals meet their protein requirements. The most extensive research into Optigen took place over 17 years (2002-2018). A recent meta-analysis of 17 published beef studies revealed significant production benefits of Optigen inclusion.

Optigen was proven to:

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

“
WHEN REFORMULATING DIETS FOR THE WINTER, WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT WE ARE FEEDING, AND NOT JUST 'GUESSTIMATING'”

Studies have also shown the positive impacts of Optigen on dairy production. A similar increase in feed conversion efficiency has been demonstrated, translating into an increased milk yield of 1.3-1.4L per cow, therefore reducing the milk's carbon footprint. Optigen is accredited by the Carbon Trust, which means a respected third party has confirmed that the replacement of high-carbon ingredients such as soya

Table 2: Guideline daily feeding rates based on silage quality (DMD) for beef. Source: Teagasc.

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



Figure 1: This shows a manure analysis carried out before the inclusion of Optigen in the diet. There is a lot of undigested fibre in the top/white sieve, indicating a significant amount of wasted feed, in this case, forage. After two weeks of implementing Optigen into the diet, a second digestion analysis was conducted.



Figure 2: This shows that the white sieve now contains much less undigested fibre, meaning the rumen is working more efficiently with improved forage utilisation.

with Optigen significantly reduces carbon emissions intensity without lowering animal performance. In fact, studies have shown that the product often boosts performance instead.

ENHANCING FIBRE SUPPLY

The concentrated nature of Optigen allows 'space' to be created in the diet that can be filled with other ingredients, such as home-grown forage, alternate fibre sources or energy-supplying feeds, depending on the goals of the producer and what other feeds are available. For example, additional maize silage can be used to 'fill the gap,' enhancing forage supply and fibre digestion as well as supplying a source of energy. If forage supply is limited, you could substitute with beet pulp and soya hulls to boost the fibre supply of

Table 3: Guideline daily feeding rates based on silage quality (DMD), for dairy. Source: Teagasc.

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

Source: Teagasc

the ration. In some situations, cereals such as wheat can be added or increased to provide additional energy for increased milk yield or growth in beef cattle rations.

With the continuing issue of feed costs and the threat of limited availability of traditional protein feed materials, feed suppliers need to look outside the box for beneficial solutions. Making maximal use of the animal's own protein supply, as well as providing diets that stimulate rumen function and microbial protein production, are the way forward and will help maximise forage utilisation on the farm.

The benefits are not only in production but also in health and fertility. Using a concentrated NPN source such as Optigen offers multiple options for feed suppliers and producers alike, including the flexibility to tailor nutrition for the cow or beef animal. Filling gaps in forage quality or quantity with a balanced supplementation plan is vital to a successful nutrition programme for the winter and will aid in the long-term profitability of your herd. It is important that Optigen is formulated into beef or dairy diets by a qualified animal nutritionist. Speak with your nutritionist or feed mill rep to plan accordingly for the winter ahead.

Within days of using Optigen, dairy farmer Pat Brennan of Co. Kilkenny noticed an improvement in dung consistency, leading to less undigested feed. Carrying out a simple digestion analysis, also called manure sieving, can provide information on how well the animals' feed is being utilised while helping to identify the amount of undigested feed passing through the animal. The goal is to have less than 10 per



cent undigested material in the top/white sieve, more than 70 per cent in the bottom sieve, and the remainder in the middle sieve.

Richard and Pat Brennan on their Kilkenny farm.



SPENDING BY THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR ON RAW MATERIALS, WAGES, SALARIES AND SERVICES AMOUNTED TO JUST UNDER €20BN IN 2022 OUT OF A TOTAL OF €73BN BY IRISH-BASED INDUSTRY



Ciaran Fitzgerald
Agri-food economist

UNDERAPPRECIATED AND UNDERVALUED

Ciaran Fitzgerald, agri-food economist, highlights the real economic impact and value in employment, revenues and exports of Ireland's agri-food sector, concluding that the sector is underappreciated and undervalued in many statistical analyses

Anybody attending the plethora of agricultural shows across the country this summer and, indeed, preparing for the upcoming National Ploughing Championships has a clear sense not only of the scale of Ireland's agri-business but the depth of its impact on the rural and regional Irish economy through machinery suppliers, animal health and veterinary services, agri-business services, contracting, transport and distribution services.

Export-driven

The numbers of jobs supported directly and indirectly and the scale of exports to global markets across a range of products are well illustrated by CSO figures for 2022, which show an agricultural labour force of 270,000 people, and exports of a record €18.98bn, with approximately 90 per cent of Irish beef, sheepmeat and dairy produce exported each year. The list includes more than €1bn in value from each of fresh or chilled Irish beef, natural butter, cheese and Irish whiskey. While the financial export figures, which have almost doubled in value over the last decade, are impressive, the volume of physical exports, amounting to over 7.5m tonnes of food, drink and forestry products, best shows

the 'weight and depth' of Irish agri-sector transactions. This starts with on-farm production, which is then transported off farm to manufacturing across more than 2,000 businesses in Ireland and, finally, is then exported and distributed to more than 180 destinations, globally. All of this demonstrates that the true essence of the economic impact of Irish food and agri-business comes from its driving of activity inside the Irish economy.

Analyses from the CSO and numerous industry studies have demonstrated the economic weight of these production and export transactions in terms of Irish economy multipliers of 2.5 for beef and 2.3 for dairy and the consumer foods sector. These figures compare impressively well with an average output multiplier of 1.4 for the rest of the economy and 1.2 for foreign-owned firms.

The economic multiplier effect

The financial validation of this Irish economy impact is further highlighted in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) Annual Survey of Economic Impact which estimates spending by the agri-food sector on raw materials, wages, salaries and services amounted to just under €20bn in 2022 out of a total of €73bn by Irish-based industry.

The Irish agri-food economic multiplier impact is even more specifically demonstrated by the fact that the Irish economy was the source of 80 per cent of expenditure for Irish food and drink companies, with only 10 per cent of total expenditure by multinational companies linked back into the local Irish economy.

Agri-food Exports by Category, 2022

	€Million	Tonnes
Dairy Produce	6,892	1,588,752
Beef	3,053	491,576
Beverages	2,059	975,479
Pigmeat	956	285,699
Forestry & Wood products	784	1,545,544
Animal Feed	698	1,079,378
Fish	642	203,329
Cereal & cereal preparation	620	283,727
Live Animals	611	100,712
Coffee, Tea, Cocoa & Spices	488	76,894
Sheepmeat	455	66,477
Miscellaneous Edible Products	424	115,828
Poultry	314	100,688
Fruit & Vegetables Based Products	198	110,629
Fruit & Vegetables	179	96,396
Crude Animal & Vegetable Material	155	201,528
Oils, Fats & Oleaginous Fruits	156	119,741
Sugar, Sugar Preparation & Honey	130	29,475
Other	161	104,222
Grand Total	18,976	7,576,074

Source: The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Contradictory agri-economic profile

Yet, a quick Google search of the economic profile of the Irish economy gives a GDP contribution of 44 per cent for manufacturing and 52 per cent for services, with primary agriculture listed as contributing only 1.2 per cent. Think of that 1.2 per cent of GDP, in terms of the 7.5m tonnes of agriculture-related business exports annually from Ireland, and one realises that this is what can best be described as car-bumper-sticker economics. It is, quite frankly, nonsensical.

As a summary of the value and profile of Ireland's economic output and activity, this GDP figure is clearly a work of fiction, reflecting how, as modern globalised/offshored economies and metrics of economic activities have evolved, it has become more and more difficult to attribute global company revenues and financial flows to specific local and national economic activity.

Notwithstanding this statistical conundrum, I would suggest that a better understanding of what's real, and what is passing through our Irish economy (or 'just resting in our accounts' as Father Ted put it), is surely of crucial importance if we are to sustain and develop all the key drivers of Irish economic activity.

The best mix of economic drivers

In fairness, even excluding the €200bn of flow-through money that has a zero Irish economic footprint, the impact of multinational companies is substantial, yielding almost €25bn in corporation tax in recent years and supporting 150,000 jobs

across the economy. These tax and employment figures alone confirm the benefits of a vibrant foreign-direct-investment (FDI) sector to the Irish economy. Ireland, as was demonstrated most recently in the Great Recession of 2008, needs a number of high-performing economic sectors to sustain our economy and society, and there is no conflict between supporting and sustaining the Irish agri-food sector and, at the same time, supporting and sustaining the multinational sector. In this diverse economic approach, we need to fully acknowledge the almost €20bn of Irish economic expenditure, combined with the huge regional and rural employment, that is being underpinned by Ireland's agri-food sector. With an economic multiplier effect of 2.0, our agri-food industry shows how a fully integrated sector of the Irish economy supports almost 300,000 jobs across the country. Its critical importance must be fully understood and appreciated when the true profile and performance of the Irish economy is being assessed and its sustainable future is being planned. In conclusion, we can say categorically that emissions challenges affecting FDI investment will be very carefully managed, acknowledging its key role in our economy. Curtailing another key part of the Irish economy, through effective 'quota-isation' of Irish dairy and beef numbers to manage sectoral emissions targets, rather than supporting MACC curve implementation of agricultural emissions reductions, is not only bad science, but also bad economics.

A NEW EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTRE IS TO BE DEVELOPED AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN'S (UCD) LYONS FARM. **MATT O'KEEFFE** SPOKE TO DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS, PROFESSOR KARINA PIERCE, AND CHAIR OF THE LYONS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, PROFESSOR ALEX EVANS, TO FIND OUT MORE



Director of external relations, Professor Karina Pierce.



Chair of the Lyons Management Committee, Professor Alex Evans.

€14m REVAMP AT LYONS FARM

Construction is due to commence in 2025 on new agricultural research and education facilities at the UCD farm. It is a partnership project between FBD Holdings plc and FBD Trust CLG, both of which have pledged a philanthropic contribution of €6m in support of the facility, with UCD providing €8m. The 'UCD FBD Agricultural Science Centre' will enhance the college's ability to deliver both teaching and research to the highest international standards, and will provide a centre where researchers, students, innovators and industry experts can collaborate on projects aimed at addressing the most pressing challenges facing modern farming and agriculture.

Karina outlines what is involved: "We've been working to a master plan for the last decade, and some of that has involved upgrading the animal facilities on the farm. We invested, along with industry partners, in a new dairy in 2016, as milk quotas were abolished. Since then, we have developed a new calf facility, and there is also a new multi-species grazing platform. Over the past two years, we have established the AgTechUCD Innovation Centre

at Lyons Farm. And this latest development, the UCD FBD Agricultural Science Centre, will upgrade personnel accommodation on the farm in terms of decommissioning older buildings where students, researchers, academics and farm staff are based and move us to one site that will be co-located with the AgTechUCD Centre."

CO-LOCATION BENEFITS

That co-location of activities is important, Alex explains: "The concept of bringing all those people together in one location, on a farm, that's the game changer. It encourages cross fertilisation between the innovators, the entrepreneurs, the students and the researchers."

Karina agrees: "If you think of who we have here in Lyons and who we serve, the strategy makes good sense. UCD has the largest agricultural science programme and the only veterinary medicine programme in the country. From an undergraduate perspective, the students will have fantastic classroom and changing facilities and places to eat. We'll be able to have the students

here for longer periods. Keeping production agriculture as a core part of our programme is really important and research is another very significant part of what we do here. With the AgTechUCD Centre co-location, we're going to have entrepreneurs based at Lyons Farm mixing with undergraduate and postgraduate students and that should lead to better education, better research, and better innovation."

FBD ROLE

Alex commends FBD's support for the Lyons Farm project: "In this case, FBD stands for supporting agricultural science and assisting the industry and all those elements of teaching, research, innovation and outreach that they have been involved in over the years. Their contributions to UCD are really valued. The challenge of capital development is enormous. When it comes to a big project like this, the contribution of FBD is the difference between doing it and not doing it"

A COMMERCIAL FARM

Karina emphasises the importance of Lyons as

a working farm: "Unlike many university-based agricultural education faculties internationally, our model emphasises the promotion of production agriculture as an integral and important aspect of our agricultural degree courses. It is hugely important to us that production agriculture stays at the core of all our agriculture programmes. Undergraduate and postgraduate students see the workings of the farm. They'll get to spend time here, but very importantly, the research and production strategies on Lyons Farm are brought back into the classroom in Belfield. It keeps us, as academics and researchers, grounded in real-life activities, and it allows the students to learn in, what we would describe as, a research-led teaching approach."

CHANGES IN AGRICULTURAL TRAINING

Karina reflects on the changes she has seen as an agriculture educator and researcher: "I have seen huge developments since I graduated over 20 years ago, not only at UCD but in Irish agriculture, generally. In UCD, we've seen huge increases in student numbers. Lots of new agriculture programmes have been developed around the country over that time as well. The landscape of agriculture and agricultural education over that period has changed a lot. In farming terms, the abolition of milk quotas brought renewed vigour to that sector and now sustainability challenges are impacting all aspects of land use. "There has also been a refocusing of research, advice and education with an emphasis on the environment. Sustainability is a core part of all our training modules now. I'm teaching dairy production, and sustainable dairy production is what we focus on. Obviously, in an Irish context, that's efficient, grass-based milk production. The impact in terms of greenhouse gas emissions across beef, sheep, dairy has meant that we continue to evolve, using new as well as existing information. The students need that ongoing knowledge flow, because when they go out to work, companies expect from us that the students are up to speed." "The development of the Herd Health Hub at



At the announcement, Tomás Ó Midheach, FBD CEO; Professor Orla Feely, president of UCD; Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue; Michael Berkery, chair of FBD Trust CLG; and Liam Herlihy, FBD Group chair.

Lyons Farm is very exciting from a veterinary perspective as well, as we look to have students spend more time on the farm as part of their clinical training."

RESEARCH ENDEAVOURS

Karina expands on the research side of UCD's agricultural remit: "It is very relevant and cutting edge in many instances. It includes dairy research we've been doing in terms of very high genetics in a grass-based system. We have done work on how farmers with fragmented land banks can build their dairy business. In the dairy calf-to-beef research, we are using our grazing platform to make comparisons of three different sward types, perennial ryegrass, perennial ryegrass white clover, and a six species multi-species sward that my colleagues, Tommy Boland and Helen Sheridan, have been leading. Lyons is a unique facility globally, in terms of being able to measure everything that goes into the milking platform and everything that comes out of it. Parts of the Lyons Farm are hydrologically isolated and, given the importance of water quality, we can carry out novel research in that regard. There are very few sites around the world that can do that."

BALANCED SUSTAINABILITY

The UCD agricultural philosophy includes a

belief in balanced sustainability: "Nothing is sustainable unless we have the three legs of the equation," says Karina. "If you over-focus on one area, perhaps taking an eye off economic sustainability, for example, farmers can't earn a living and we're going to see the negative consequences of that. On the other hand, we won't have that license to operate unless we can prove our environmental credentials. There is huge activity across farms in terms of improving the environmental sustainability of farming enterprises. We're now waiting to see the figures to back that up in terms of water quality improvement and greenhouse gas emissions reductions and so on." Alex sums up a central aspect of the latest development at Lyons Farm: "Our current lab facilities are old and struggle to cater for a modern research programme. This initiative will rectify that and allow us to improve our current work and engage in new activities. Because we have a teaching and a research farm, we are the envy of many of our colleagues around the world. We have some of the leading scientists in the world around crop science, animal nutrition, animal reproduction and grassland management and greenhouse gas emissions from ruminant livestock. Much of that is on the back of the work that's been done at Lyons. We're always looking to the future."



RAISING THE BAR AT BALLYKILCAVAN

WHEN DAVID WALSH-KEMMIS'S PARENTS DECIDED TO RETIRE IN 2004, THE OPPORTUNITY AROSE FOR HIM OR HIS SISTER TO TAKE OVER THE 440-HECTARE FARM – BALLYKILCAVAN FARM, IN HIS FAMILY SINCE 1639 – AND HOLD THE BATON FOR ANOTHER WHILE. WITH 12 GENERATIONS BEFORE THEM, DAVID FELT THE DRAW TO RETURN HOME, LEAVING AN IT CAREER BEHIND AND RE-IMMERSING HIMSELF INTO RURAL AND FARMING LIFE. SINCE THEN, HE HAS BEEN BUSY ESTABLISHING A LEGACY OF HIS OWN ON THE LAOIS-BASED FARM, WHICH IS NOW ALSO HOME TO BALLYKILCAVAN BREWERY

Maintaining and retaining a family farm for 13 generations in Ireland is no easy feat and Ballykilcavan Farm's evolution over several hundreds of years would have, no doubt, been the result of some ambitious and brave decisions. For David, that took the form of diversification.

"When I took over the farm, in 2004, I farmed it pretty conventionally," he says. "It was a mixed farm mainly; about half was in forestry and the rest of it was a combination of tillage and sucklers. Sucklers, as far as I could see, made absolutely no money whatsoever and were a lot of work, particularly over the winter, so they went pretty much as soon as I came in.

"So then we were back to just forestry and

tillage. After about 12 years I started looking at the finances and worked out that, if you took the Single Farm Payment out of it, the actual farm had made something like €300 profit in total in that time!"

While brave, diversification was also 'absolutely necessary' to help keep the farm alive, says David. The nature of the farming enterprise – they had the barley, and they had their own well, divined in the 18th century – pointed David in a certain direction. Then, there were all the impressive stone out-houses. While very beautiful, they were built for ponies and carts rather than tractors and trailers. So, another challenge was to find a use for them. A distillery and a brewery made the shortlist of options and a few 'quick sums'

confirmed the winner. "I came up with a figure of €5m in terms of how much cash we would need to get a distillery up and running. We had nothing near that, so we would have been looking at outside investment. But me and my wife, Lisa, wanted to run this place as a family business, as the only directors." And so, Ballykilcavan Farm and Brewery was born.

SOIL AND BEER

They say ignorance is bliss and David would attest to this when embarking on the brewing journey about eight years ago: "If I knew then what I know now..." he says, laughing. "It was definitely a combination of naivete and enthusiasm that encouraged me," he said. Like all farmers, he wanted to leave



Founder of Ballykilcavan Brewery, David Walsh-Kemmis.

of the brewing company buying it back, rather than me as the farmer," explains David. While it is more expensive to buy back this specific barley rather than generic malting barley – the Ballykilcavan product must be stored separately, malted separately, and bagged separately – David says he likes the fact that the barley is grown 200 metres away from the brewery. "There is a professional pride in being able to use my own barley to make the beer," he says. While the hops are grown elsewhere, Ballykilcavan does have a small hop crop, he explains, and that is used to produce one specialty beer every year. That beer is uniquely Ballykilcavan, made from barley, hops and water from the farm. "Ireland is not necessarily the best place in the world to grow hops, the climate is just not suitable. I would say if you had a climate that suits malting barley then you don't have a climate that suits hops. They need dry heat and sunshine. The difficulty we get into with them is with the humidity; it causes all sorts of mildews and moulds and things like that."

CROP MANAGEMENT

David says he makes certain choices in terms of aiding crop and soil health: "We don't spray aphicides; we made that policy at least 10 years ago. We probably suffered a little for that this year because the barley was so late

sown that it is vulnerable to barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV), which is carried by the aphids.

"But my argument is that with a contact aphicide, when you spray it, you kill whatever aphids are in the field. But an hour later, if an aphid hops into the field from the verge, it can just work away. The aphicide also kills absolutely any insect that it comes into contact with so it kills pollinators and it kills the insects that eat the aphids. I would rather try to let nature take its course and build up a population of things that eat the aphids. "Sprays are expensive also, so the less spray I use the better. We will probably go with a third-rate of herbicide, and definitely no more than a half rate of fungicide. With fertiliser use, we have been doing things for a while that are becoming mainstream now. So, we have been chopping our straw for a few years, we have been using cover crops for about five years, which are brilliant. Spring barley, even in a good year is only in the ground for five months. So, you've got seven months of the year where the field is just doing nothing. We are low on soil organic matter here so the more I can do to build up that soil organic matter, the better," David explains.

FARMING KNOWLEDGE

David admits he was more of a computer

Ballykilcavan in better position than he received it should any of his three children want to get involved when they are older. Doing things a bit unconventionally was the only way he saw fit to make that happen. Adding the brewery to the farming enterprise has been challenging but being the primary producer of the brewery's barley has its advantages and David's farming and tillage knowledge is invaluable. He may now be a 'beer farmer', but he is a soil farmer first and foremost.

BARLEY BATCHES

Two batches of barley are grown at Ballykilcavan farm: one is for Waterford Distillery, which it uses to make whiskey; and the other batch is for brewing Ballykilcavan's beer. "I grow 110 tonnes of barley and I sell that to Minch Malt in Athy. They convert it to malt and then the brewing company (Ballykilcavan) buys back what we think we will use for the year. That is me as the director



The tasting room and visitor centre in the old mill house.



Where all the magic happens - inside the brewery at Ballykilcavan.

STRAW OF THE LAND

Straw, as an organic matter to put back into the soil is hugely important for Ballykilcavan Farm. David explains: "It is full of potassium, phosphorous and carbon. Already after around five years I can see a difference in our soils so the difference that can make over the next 40 years will be huge.

"The potassium and phosphorous usage rates have been cut by about 10 per cent, so environmentally we are doing a good job and financially we are doing a good job." The Straw Incorporation Measure is important for the tillage sector and farmers do need to have the choice to chop or to bale, he says. And he will be chopping it again this year, as planned. "I know dairy farmers who would say that they are grass farmers who convert that to milk. Well, we are soil farmers and we are trying to keep the soil in the best shape possible because if you don't have good soil, you can't grow anything."

than a farming nerd when younger. Studying computer science and working in IT were obvious choices; the transition from IT to farming took some getting used to. "I am very logical and I like things to happen as I like them to happen. That is tough in farming. I went from writing a computer programme, which will do exactly what you tell it to do, to farming, where you can do absolutely everything right and you can still just get

hammered by the weather, hammered by global grain prices, or hammered by policy." That uncertainty can impact the brewery side of the enterprise but, David says, he always tries to have a buffer for when the weather hits the fan. "We would always aim to be two years ahead of ourselves with barley. When we have a good year, we buy two years of barley. It is bagged in 25kg bags, malted at 2-3 per cent moisture, so it keeps perfectly well for two years. If we get a bad year, and you can be pretty certain that this year is going to be a bad year, then we still have enough to keep us going until the following year's harvest. If we get two bad years in a row, we are snookered, and we have to use Irish malt but it won't be our own.

"We were very lucky last year. We managed to get both our distilling and brewing barley in over a couple of days in early March and then it rained for six weeks. And if you didn't get it in then you were done. Certainly, anything sown from April onwards, here, is not going to make spec."

PR THAT MONEY CAN'T BUY

Ballykilcavan Brewery was founded in 2016 and brewing started in 2017 in Lock 13, Sallins. David recalls. "We were brewing the beer, but we were hiring their equipment. Then, in 2018 the brewery here opened, and we have been brewing on site for nearly six years." That brewery is housed in a 240-year-old stone building, with a visitor centre/tasting room alongside it in what was the old mill house (where our interview takes place) – a vastly different structure today to the one depicted

in an old photo mounted on the wall. Yet the building drips with character. The shiny and new humbly merging with the old. Modern tables and chairs, a bar area, and all the Ballykilcavan beers on display make it the perfect area for visitors to gather after a tour of the brewery where they can learn more about the rich history of the family and farm.

"Our first head brewer was ex-Diageo, Nigel Oakes. While I am a certified brewer, I am a home brewer, and realistically, I am not the man to set up the brewery. Nigel assembled the entire brewery for us and remained on as our head brewer for a few years until he retired. Now Joe O'Driscoll is our head brewer and I try not to be in the brewery as much as possible." This is because David's real value, as the 13th-generation farmer there, is as the face of Ballykilcavan Farm and Brewery.

"This place, as a visitor attraction, would be much less without all these buildings here that the previous generations were able to build, and I am very grateful to them for that. The North Americans, for example, might come here for an hour, and for half of that time, they are outside talking about the history of the family, the various family members, the buildings, the farm. There were 80 people working here full-time in the 1880s so there were a few characters among them over the course of the years."

PRESSURE AND A PRIVILEGE

I am curious to know about the pressure of 12 generations before him on David's shoulders, or if the privilege of carrying the baton outweighs that? "I think it is absolutely

a privilege, but it is a responsibility also," he says. "I try not to think too much about it but it is a massive privilege to take it over and keep it running," he adds, acknowledging the photo of his great grandfather and his great great grandfather hanging on the wall! Does he ponder the pressures that the previous generations might have had?

"I think for previous generations, life was simpler, but I don't think life was any easier. They didn't have all the tech and social media to deal with, they were just farming but farming has never been easy no matter what generation. It has always been hard work and unpredictable.

"My dad told me that my great great grandfather did not have a great interest in this place, he did a grand tour of Europe, and had other adventures and it took two generations to get it back on track. So you can imagine that pressure for them. I am lucky that I had three good generations before me."

EXPANDING DIVERSIFICATION

Diversification doesn't stop with just the brewery and Ballykilcavan is exploring another avenue of diversification. As a venue, it has a special offering. This summer, it hosted a boutique glamping site for attendees of Electric Picnic, with sauna, food trucks, coffee, and an underground tunnel from the glamping site to the courtyard where buses then ferried revellers across to Stradbally. And just weeks before that, it provided the perfect setting for Nourish & Flow menopause festival, another glamping retreat for those navigating the stages of perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause.

WILDLY ANTI-COMPETITIVE

This association with Electric Picnic is a very positive development, and David is hopeful that it will be an annual occurrence, along with the Nourish & Flow festival. But he would like, and has been lobbying for, more involvement in the Picnic, as well as many other large-scale events, as a vendor of his beers.

"The deal is that Heineken with its €36bn turnover per year provides sponsorship and, in return, gets exclusivity to sell beer there [Electric Picnic]. We are looking for that practice to be disallowed, of big brands buying exclusive rights. It is clearly legal but is also wildly anti-competitive. It is either a central government or local government job

to look at this.

"We made submissions to Laois County Council this year, because the event needs planning permission and as part of that permission, we wanted them to decide how many brewers they would let in and that exclusivity should not be allowed but they did not agree. For me, that anti-competitiveness should be taken out of it."

The role of local, artisanal, small producers and businesses in Irish tourism is as important as the obvious attractions like the



Rock of Cashel or the Cliffs of Moher. Hotels have identified the value of a having a 'local' offering when international visitors are staying. "The hotels have always been very good to us because visitors from all over the world are coming here and are asking about local jams or cheeses, breads or beers. So the hotels copped on very quickly to that, and they stock us.

"If you travel to anywhere in France, they will sell you their local product, they won't sell you a multinational product. And the Germans are very good at that too, especially in terms of beer. The Italians will support their local breweries but they are also just very interested in supporting artisan products. We sell 30 per cent of all our beer into Italy. They are interested in the story, the provenance, the production. And, of course, we like to think that the beers are pretty good too. So, it all ties together. But it is much easier for us to sell our beer in Milan than it would be in

Kilkenny."

AWARD-WINNING BEERS

And saving the best to last, perhaps, we talk about Ballykilcavan's award-winning beers. "The aim is to produce as wide a range as possible. We do make some modern craft beers with lots of hops, but we have the traditional beers, too. These are going into bottles while the modern beers are in cans," says David.

"We have a traditional lager, red ale, stout, we have a newish beer – Endurance Dark Mild – and then we have the pale ales and IPAs also. We also produce a limited-edition beer once a year. The next one we are producing is called a 'saison', it is a farmhouse beer, that has a different yeast, and that will have a bit of spiciness and pepperiness; a good summer-autumn beer. We match the beer to the season, so we don't produce a lot of stout in the summer and we don't produce a lot of lager in the winter."

Last year, at the Blas na hÉireann awards, Ballykilcavan Brewing Company won the Best in Laois Award along with a Gold Medal for their Blackwell Stout in the Beers, Porters & Stouts category. "It is, officially, the best stout in Ireland, is my line on that but we can't sell it here because there is a very large British-owned stout that is brewed in Dublin that dominates that market, so 90-95 per cent of our stout goes to Italy."

BALLYKIL WHO?

Contrary to some beliefs, Ballykilcavan is not a made-up name, says David. Its translation, as gaeilge, is 'the town of the church of St Kevin.' "That was what this place was always called. We could have come up with some hip, trendy name but I am not hip, I am a farmer from Co. Laois so I am not going to pretend to be trendy," he laughs. So the name and the branding/logo is based on the traditional side of things. The Walsh family crest is a griffin and that is the star of the branding.

"The griffin is the head of an eagle on the body of a lion, so it is pretty cool," says David.

"It is nice, it stands out, and because of Harry Potter, everyone knows what a griffin is."

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The impressive BIG X 980 from Krone, which will be on display at the Farmhand exhibition area at Ploughing 2024.

NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024



EUROPEAN VINTAGE PLOUGHING CHAMPS COMES TO RATHENISKA

The European Vintage Ploughing Championships will take place in Ratheniska, Co. Laois at the 93rd National Ploughing Championships.

Twenty-six competitors from across Europe will spend a week in Laois preparing for the event, which comprises five different classes over day one and day two. Plough-people from Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Wales, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland will travel to compete in the event.

FRAUD AND FINANCE OPTIONS AMONG TOPICS AT BOI STAND

Bank of Ireland (BoI) returns to the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) with a series of talks organised over the course of the three-day event. The theme of BoI's stand this year is 'Sustainable Finance and Opportunities - Ensuring Your Farm's Future' and the talks will cover:

- Getting your farm winter ready and ensuring cashflow needs are met;
- Discussing Enviroflex low-cost sustainable finance loan options;
- Increasing fraud awareness among the wider agri-community; and
- Reviewing changes across the agri-industry and how best to deal with them.

The bank's team of agri and relationship managers will also be on

hand throughout the event to discuss its range of supports and how it can help facilitate the sector's ongoing development, with a particular focus on the transition towards implementing more sustainable farming practices.

Within the past year, BoI has launched a number of Enviroflex partnerships with co-ops across the country, with the sustainability-linked loans now available to thousands of farmers nationwide who are actively engaged in implementing a range of initiatives designed to reduce their farms' environmental footprint. Information on this will also be available at the stand.

CERTIFIED IRISH ANGUS COMP CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

Certified Irish Angus returns to the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing), marking the tenth year of this popular initiative run by Certified Irish Angus and its processor partners, ABP and Kepak.

Once again, the five new secondary schools selected as finalists in this prestigious schools' competition will be announced at the Ploughing. Over 100 entries were received, and these were whittled down to the chosen five after several stages of the competition, including an exhibition at Croke Park and interviews. The students will exhibit their projects over the three days of the Ploughing where they will be presented with five Irish Angus-cross calves to raise for the next 18 months.

To celebrate 10 years of the popular initiative, the calf presentation event which takes place on Wednesday September 18 at 10:30am will feature a panel discussion with past participants who have pursued careers in the agri industry. The event will be hosted by agri-food journalist, Suzanne Campbell. The Certified Irish Angus competition, aims to encourage second-level students to understand the considerable care and attention required to produce and market the highest-quality beef for consumers. In addition to rearing the calves, the students will complete research projects focusing on different aspects of farming, the food chain, and sustainability. Each of the finalists will receive the financial benefit involved in the selling of the animals to the processors on completion of the project. The winning students also receive an additional grant of €2,000 for their further education.



Dunshaughlin Community College students impressed judges last time with their carbon footprint reductions and lower than national average CO₂ emissions.

Elite Breed Improvement Programme

In addition to the schools' competition, Certified Irish Angus will also be educating visitors about its innovative breed-improvement programme which is the first of its kind for any breed in Ireland. The programme aims to enhance the genetics of Angus-cross cattle in order to reduce carbon emissions and provide a cross-sectoral solution that will benefit pedigree breeders, dairy farmers, and beef producers. The Certified Irish Angus Elite Breed Improvement Programme rewards breeders through subsidised sexed male semen and a €200 premium on every participating bull. The aim of the programme is to achieve a 9 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per kilo of beef while also highlighting the substantial financial and environmental improvements that can be made through genetics. The exhibition will feature experts who can offer information about the programme and Angus calves that have been produced through the breed improvement programme.

SOMETHING FOR ALL FROM FERTILISER TO FASHION

The Local Enterprise Village returns to the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) this year where it will showcase more than 30 small businesses from across the country to thousands of visitors over the three days, according to organisers.

The Local Enterprise Village, an initiative of the Local Enterprise Offices, will feature small businesses selling everything from Mexican salsa and chemical-free fertilisers to sensory-friendly clothing.

Kieran Comerford, Local Enterprise Offices, and head of the Local Enterprise Village said the village is 'an opportunity like no other for small businesses in Ireland'.

"The opportunity to bring their ideas and products to almost 300,000 potential customers is a showcase like no other. There is a huge variety of businesses highlighting the depth of sectors that the Local Enterprise Offices support from manufacturing to food and beverage, to software solutions."

Kildare National Ploughing Association (NPA) director, John Dunne said: "It is wonderful to see so many diverse and impressive businesses partaking in this year's village. This is an ideal and unique opportunity for these companies to showcase their products and wares to visitors."

The Local Enterprise Village is just one of a number of initiatives that the Local Enterprise Offices run, to foster entrepreneurship across the country. Others include Local Enterprise Week, the National Enterprise Awards, the Student Enterprise Programme, National



Business owners, Jennifer Rothwell, Anok O'Connell and Wynne Liu who will be exhibiting at the Local Enterprise Village. Photo: Julian Behal Photography.

Women's Enterprise Day and Local Enterprise Showcase. The Local Enterprise Offices in local authorities are funded by the Government through Enterprise Ireland. Here is a selection of companies that you can check out this year:

NATURAL VET COMPANY

Veterinary designed herbal and marine based veterinary supplement line for cats and dogs.

EQUINE PRODUCTS IRELAND

Supply innovative best-in-class equine supplements.

BIDDY'S GOOD LUCK HORSE SHOES

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TECWEST

Produce chemical-free fertilisers made from chicken manure as the main ingredient.

LEITRIM HILL CREAMERY

Leitrim Hill Creamery creates artisanal dairy products.

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INNOVATION ARENA — WHO WILL TAKE IT ALL THIS YEAR?

Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Arena, hosted in partnership with the National Ploughing Association (NPA), returns to the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) this year. With 'Innovations for Future Generations' as its theme, the arena will showcase some of our finest cutting-edge agri-tech companies and innovators.

Fifty-five companies will share their solutions to help improve efficiencies in animal science and technology, agri-engineering, digital technologies, animal health and nutrition, sustainability and climate action, and farm health and safety.

There will be three award categories this year, including a new competition whereby three finalists will be asked to pitch their innovation to a panel of judges in front of a live audience. The winner will be named Start-Up Innovator of the Year and will receive a €10,000 prize.

The Innovation Arena Champion 2024 prize will be for established companies with a focus on scaling and innovation, while the new Green Impact Award 2024 will honour a company whose innovation is focused on sustaining the development of food and farming for future generations to come.

At this year's Innovation Arena, there will also be an opportunity for previous participants to apply for a space in the popular Agritech

Hub. This exhibition space gives Irish-owned agri-tech companies the opportunity to return to the Ploughing and display their progress to a varied audience, which also includes domestic and international visitors and buyers.

Leo Clancy, CEO, Enterprise Ireland, said: "Irish agri-tech innovators are shaping the future, and new ideas and cutting-edge products have never been in greater demand to deliver solutions to global challenges, with a particular focus on sustainability as we strive to work together to protect our planet and futureproof this sector.

"Working with the NPA, Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Arena provides an important platform for Irish companies in this sector, bringing together some of the brightest minds."

James Maloney, senior development advisor, Enterprise Ireland, said: "In a sector where the landscape is constantly changing, initiatives like the Innovation Arena have never been more important.

"Reflecting the ever-evolving demands placed on the sector, in this year's competition there will be a focus on 'Innovations for Future Generations.' We are particularly interested in learning more about pioneering innovations and solutions which address issues across animal science and technology, agri-engineering, digital technologies, animal health and nutrition, sustainability and climate action, and farm health and safety."

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Jer Coakley and Eamonn Tracey – centre – who were successful recently at the 69th World Ploughing Contest in Estonia.

CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD

The Republic of Ireland ploughing team recently celebrated success following their victory at the 69th World Ploughing Contest in Estonia. For the third consecutive occasion, Eamonn Tracey from Carlow was crowned Supreme World Ploughing Champion in the Conventional Class, while west Cork's, Jer Coakley stormed to victory as Reversible World Ploughing Champion.

Managing director of the National Ploughing Association, Anna May McHugh said: "This is a fantastic win for both men, Irish ploughing, and Ireland, as a whole. Since winning the nationals last year, the competitors have been working hard on preparing for the Worlds in

Estonia and all their efforts have paid off. They have done their country extremely proud. Congratulations and a very well done to both." General secretary of the World Ploughing Organisation, Anna Marie McHugh said: "Ireland has always been highly respected internationally in terms of producing ploughmen to compete on the world stage. Another great result for the country and securing Ireland's global reputation as true ploughing masters in their field." The Republic of Ireland was coached this year by Wexford man, Michael Roche. Also travelling with the contingent to the world contest was Larry Bergin from South Tipperary, as judge. Sponsors of the Irish team and delegation were Kverneland.



FBD CEO, Tomás Ó Midheach with NPA managing director, Anna May McHugh and local children, Rachel and Sarah Kelly at the launch of FBD's 'Keeping You Safe' wristband initiative. Photo: Alf Harvey.



€6,000 SECURITY SYSTEM UP FOR GRABS AT FBD STAND

FBD Insurance is, once again, sponsoring child safety wristbands at the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing), which will be distributed at the main entrance gates or can be collected from the FBD stand.

"Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of younger visitors is a top priority, and these wristbands have proven to be incredibly effective in helping to reunite children with their parents or loved ones, while providing peace of minds to families as they enjoy their day at the Ploughing," said Tomás Ó Midheach, FBD CEO.

"Our hope is that all children will wear the FBD wristbands and have a fun and safe day when they visit Ploughing 2024."

FBD will also have an interactive farm safety challenge, which promises to be both entertaining and educational. "It's a brilliant way to stress the critical importance of farm safety, with participants trying their hands at beating the buzzer while learning vital safety tips," said Tomás.

If you need a break from the hustle and bustle of the day, FBD will also host a complimentary tea and coffee station. The interactive kids' area offers a space where little ones can put their creativity into action, and for those young (and young at heart), its Batak Board challenge will put your reaction times to the test – a bit of fun for all ages.

Visitors to the FBD Insurance stand this year will also have the chance to enter an exciting competition to win a state-of-the-art security system, complete with installation, valued at €6,000.

And on top of all that, FBD's team of experts will be on hand throughout the three days of the event to answer any queries you may have about insurance. Find them at stand number 287, block 2, row 15.



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MERLO MAKES STANDALONE DEBUT AT THE PLOUGHING

MERLO IS STEPPING INTO THE SPOTLIGHT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS OWN RIGHT AT THIS YEAR'S NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIP (THE PLOUGHING) WITH THE RECENT ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEDICATED DEALER NETWORK FOR THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND. HERE, THE COMPANY SHARES DETAILS OF WHAT TO EXPECT

Dealers FJS Plant Ltd of Naas, Co. Kilkenny, and Jim Power Agri Sales Ltd of Tallow, Co. Waterford, have been appointed to represent Merlo, which will showcase a diverse array of agricultural and construction machinery at the event. Highlights include machines from the cutting-edge hydrostatic telehandler range, a class-leading 360-degree rotating ROTO model with a remarkable 30m lift height, and two versatile compact tracked dumper models. Each Merlo machine is designed with unique features that prioritise comfort, safety, and sustainability, according to the company.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE AGRICULTURAL RANGE

From the agricultural range, Merlo will showcase the recently launched TF30.7. Measuring just 2m wide and 2m high, this compact machine delivers impressive performance and manoeuvrability, even in confined spaces. With a lift capacity of three tonnes and a boom height of up to seven meters. Despite its size, the TF30.7 boasts the widest cab in its class as well as optional cab suspension. The TF30.7 features efficiency enhancing load-sensing and flow-sharing hydraulics. It is also capable of transport speeds of up to 40km/h. Merlo's medium-capacity agricultural telehandlers offer greater power and capacity than their compact siblings. On display at the Ploughing, and designed for larger farms, is the TF35.7CS equipped with a 140hp Stage V engine to deliver class-leading performance. With a 3.5-tonne lift capacity and a seven-meter boom height, it features cab suspension and a responsive load-sensing, flow-sharing hydraulic pump with a 139L/min capacity. This makes it ideal for demanding tasks such as silage clamping and general farm duties.

TELEHANDLER LINE-UP

In addition to the compact and medium-capacity models on display at the Ploughing, Merlo's construction range extends to include a wide variety of models suited for different applications.

For instance, the high-capacity TF65.9 with a lifting capacity of 6.5 tonnes is ideal for loading high volumes of grain or feed and the TF38.10, with a lift height of 10m is ideal for stacking bales. For those focused on sustainability, Merlo's two-wheel-drive and four-wheel-drive, 100 per cent electric eWorkers models offer zero emissions, and an eight-hour run time on a single charge. These machines are designed to reduce noise levels and polluting emissions, offer excellent manoeuvrability in confined spaces and significantly lower operating costs. With a 2.5m lift capacity and a lift height of up to 5m, these next generation telehandlers meet the needs of the many sectors – including horticulture, poultry and greenhouse industries.

CINGO TRACKED CARRIERS

Completing Merlo's line-up at this year's event are the innovative Cingo tracked carriers. Powered by a hydrostatic track motor driving durable rubber tracks, these carriers offer enhanced mobility and stability. The hydrostatic system, combined with fingertip, hydraulic servo-assisted controls, enables the operator to steer with precision and safety. Two dumper models will be on display: the compact M500DM – powered by a 5.5hp Honda petrol engine, with a 500kg load capacity and a hydraulic tipping dumper body – measures just 690mm wide is perfect for passing through doorways. The slightly more powerful High-Tip M700TD dumper has been designed for excellent stability when tipping into skips and trailers. It measures 750mm wide, has a 700kg capacity and is powered by a 12hp Honda petrol engine. The Hi-Tip model also comes standard with a vibration-proof footplate, allowing the operator to ride rather than walk while operating the machine.

TREEMME X SERIES

Merlo's TreEmme X Series tool carrier tractor, though less well known, is designed for operators who

need a multi-purpose, high-performance machine that can tackle demanding work with ease. It features a 6-cylinder Stage V engine, delivering 245hp and hydrostatic transmission, with up to 285 l/min hydraulic output to power to the front attachment, such as a fixed tooth mulcher or soil stabiliser. An infinite range of travel speeds up to 40km/h thanks to the Merlo manufactured hydrostatic transmission. Shod on high specification 600/55-26.5 Nokian T440 tyres and equipped with three steering modes and a low centre of gravity, these specialist units can reach areas often inaccessible to conventional tractors. Built for robustness, the MM250X is reinforced with robust hardened steel plating in the most exposed areas and the cab is compliant with FOPS, ROPS, and OPS standards. It also features anti-shatter, ballistic-proof composite windows, making it clear why this permanent 4-wheel drive tool carrier tractor is primarily used in forestry and land clearance applications. However, many other three-point linkage attachments are available, offering countless rugged applications in the toughest environments.

COMMITMENT TO THE IRISH MARKET

Your local Merlo dealer – currently either FJS Plant Ltd or Jim Power Agri Sales Ltd – will provide more information on any of the Merlo range. Visit them on the Merlo stand (Block 3, Row 19, Stand 427) at the show or explore more at the Merlo website. Merlo is also set to further bolster its dealer network in the Republic with an announcement of an additional new dealer in the southwest of Ireland in the coming weeks.

With a strong commitment to innovation, safety, and versatility, Merlo's presence at the National Ploughing Championships underscores its dedication to supporting its new dealer network in Ireland.

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PLOUGHING
CHAMPIONSHIPS**



**17th - 19th
September**



**Block 3
Row 19
Stand 427**

Merlo is making its debut in its own right at this year's National Ploughing Championship 2024. Following the recent announcement of a new dealer network in the Republic of Ireland, Merlo is eager to showcase a diverse array of machines from both its agricultural and construction ranges. Be sure to visit Merlo, located at Block 3, Row 19, Stand 427 to explore our impressive machines.



MERLO
IRELAND

UCD ALUMNI INVITED TO VISIT MARQUEE

The UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science will be present at the National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) this year and the theme of its stand/marquee is 'Sustainable Agri-food Systems'. Visitors can hear about the latest developments taking place across the school through a range of live experiments and panel discussions, and staff members and students will be available over the three days to discuss the wide range of options available at the school.

With so many career opportunities available to graduates, the school is inviting alumni to visit the stand and contribute video testimonials that will provide an insight to prospective students on the wide range of career paths open to them, a UCD spokesperson said.

AgriAware will, once again, be located in the UCD marquee with members of the team contributing to an exciting range of panel discussions with UCD students, alumni and staff.

"As the only university in Ireland with a school devoted to agriculture and food science, a visit



UCD students will be available to discuss the wide range of options available at the school.

to this stand is a must for anyone considering a career or further education in agriculture, forestry, horticulture, food science or human nutrition," said the spokesperson. A detailed activity schedule will be available before the event. Visit the UCD website or follow its social media for updates. The UCD stand number 266 is in block 3, row 14.



Questions and answers: A farm audit helpdesk will be at the Bord Bia stand to answer and queries...that farmers might have.

AGNAV DEMO AND FARM-AUDIT HELPDESK AT BORD BIA STAND

The theme of this year's Bord Bia marquee is 'Securing a sustainable future for Irish farmers' and will reflect the role of Bord Bia in protecting and enhancing Ireland's reputation as a global food and drink supplier. The stand will have a dedicated farm audit helpdesk to answer queries from farmers with a recent or upcoming audit.

Bord Bia will also report on some of the positive actions that farmer members are taking, using 2023 audit data, such as the increasing use of low emission slurry spreading and protected urea. Elsewhere, farmers can experience an interactive demo of AgNav, the new farm sustainability platform developed by Bord Bia, Teagasc, and the Irish Cattle Breeders' Federation (ICBF). Bord Bia staff will be available throughout the three days to talk to farmers about market issues and Bord Bia activity.



ICMSA president, Denis Drennan, on his farm in Kilkenny.

ICMSA TO STRESS THE NEED FOR A FARM SUMMIT

The Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA) will have a full rota of staff at this year's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) to give advice and deal with any problems raised by members. This year is Denis Drennan's first time attending the Ploughing as ICMSA president. He will be present for the full three days, according to the association, and he is looking forward to meeting and greeting members and the general public.

"There's no shortage of issues and the low morale and prices that have afflicted farming and the wider agri-sector for the last two years are bound to find expression in some blunt talking to the swarms of politicians expected to attend in advance of the likely November general election," the ICMSA said in a statement.

According to the ICMSA: "Denis has already gone on the record in calling for a full and comprehensive Farm Summit to be held by an incoming government and hosted by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and to be held as soon as possible in January of next year. He has also called for a full sector-by-sector examination with every possibility of integration and co-ordination to be incorporated into a new plan that places social and economic sustainability alongside environmental sustainability in terms of ambitions and policy." The ICMSA said that the president will avail of the three-day Ploughing event to explore these issues further with members. You can find the ICMSA stand 285 on row 15.

FARMYARD DESIGNS AND VIRTUAL TOURS AT THE TEAGASC STAND

Teagasc will have a wide range of interactive exhibits at its National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) stand this year, which is themed 'Better Farming, Better Environment, Better Living'. These exhibits include: 3D virtual tours of milking parlours, virtual reality visits to forest landscapes, a hands-on welding simulator, a food digestion exhibit and several scale dioramas exhibiting farm landscapes and yards. A new science engagement desk will focus on second level students. In its outdoor exhibit area, there will be live cattle and sheep demonstrations, and a major exhibit on protecting water courses on both tillage and livestock farms. The outdoor dairy exhibit will use a professional quality scale model to demonstrate how farmyard design is key to protecting the environment. Crops of clover and mixed-species swards will demonstrate how mineral nitrogen levels can be reduced. Biodiversity, greenhouse gas reduction and forestry are also key themes on the outdoor Teagasc exhibit.

As always, Teagasc specialists and advisors will be present to answer questions on production of everything from pigs to potatoes, farm management, diversification, organic farming, health and safety, and succession. Teagasc's full education offering will also be highlighted including full-time courses, part-time courses, distance education courses and the new apprenticeships. Visit stand 201 at block 2, row 12.



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GLOBAL REACH, LOCAL ROOTS

With headquarters in Co. Galway, Ireland, and additional offices in Germany, the UK, and the US, EASYFIX exports its products to over 60 countries, worldwide. Despite its global presence, the company remains committed to serving its local communities and staying true to its roots.

EMPOWERING FARMERS WITH PEACE OF MIND

EASYFIX's mission is to design and develop sustainable livestock housing solutions that enhance animal welfare, reduce emissions, and provide farmers with peace of mind. Every product in their extensive range is designed in-house and manufactured using the highest quality materials. The company is relentless in its pursuit of research, innovation, and continuous improvement, ensuring that its offerings make a significant impact on livestock comfort and animal housing globally.

Firm believers in the philosophy that if you look after your animals, they will look after you, EASYFIX understands that healthy, comfortable animals are essential to the success of any farming enterprise.

From product designers to installers, the entire EASYFIX team is dedicated to improving livestock welfare by providing the most comfortable and environmentally sustainable solutions available.

AWARD-WINNING INNOVATIONS

The very first product launched by EASYFIX was the award-winning EASYFIX SR Slat Rubber, which remains one of their top-selling items today. This product is trusted by beef, dairy, and veal farmers in over 60 countries. Through continuous innovation and a commitment to excellence, EASYFIX has earned numerous accolades, including LAMMA and Royal Highland Innovation Awards and DLG Certifications. As farmers worldwide face increasing challenges and stricter regulations around environmental practices and sustainability, EASYFIX is committed to supporting them with products that help overcome these obstacles efficiently. The company has developed partnerships with leading research institutions and universities such as Wageningen in the Netherlands, UCD, and Teagasc in Ireland to ensure their products are the best-performing on the market. EASYFIX is actively engaged in research initiatives to validate the environmental benefits of their offerings.

COMPREHENSIVE DAIRY HOUSING SOLUTIONS

EASYFIX offers a wide range of dairy housing solutions, including cow mattresses, cubicles, and walkway matting. They also provide a complimentary design service for custom-made dairy cubicle housing systems. Their experienced team can arrange an on-farm visit to discuss your dairy housing plans and provide on-site technical design and

advisory services. For more information, contact EASYFIX via email at info@easyfix.ie or call 090 9643344.

INNOVATION IN ACTION: THE EPULSE SLURRY TREATMENT SYSTEM

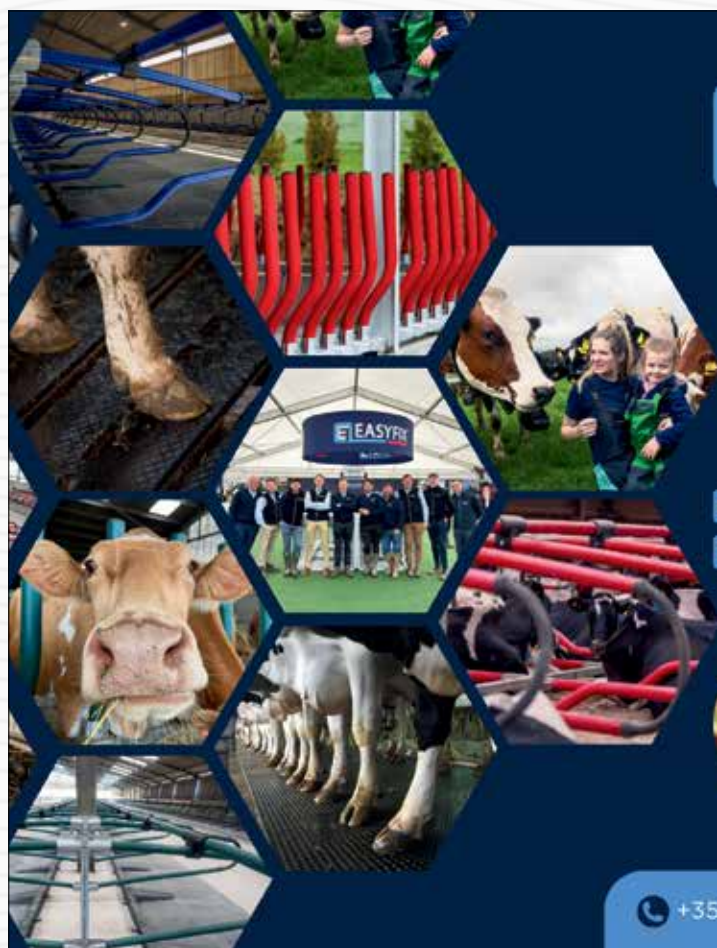
EASYFIX has been shortlisted for the prestigious Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena Awards at this year's National Ploughing Championships. The Innovation Arena offers a premier platform for showcasing groundbreaking agricultural products. This year, EASYFIX is entering its latest breakthrough, the ePulse Slurry Treatment System. This fully automated system revolutionises slurry management by optimising slurry utilisation on farms while reducing emissions. Using electro-photomagnetic treatment, the system stimulates microbial activity in manure without chemicals or additives, representing a transformative leap in slurry management. Currently undergoing field trials across Ireland, the UK, USA, and Europe, the ePulse system has already yielded promising results, and EASYFIX is eager to gather feedback from the farming community at the Innovation Arena. You will find EASYFIX at stand 27 in the Innovation Arena.

JOIN EASYFIX AT THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS

EASYFIX will be showcasing its full product range at this year's National Ploughing Championships. They invite both new and existing customers to visit their stand at Block 1, Row 4, Stand 59, to meet the team and explore their innovative solutions. Don't miss the chance to see their latest innovations and discuss how EASYFIX can support your farming needs.



EASYFIX will be showcasing its full product range at this year's Ploughing.



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How to inspect and maintain your chainsaw



Andy Walsh

Husqvarna Service Manager

When in use it is essential that a chainsaw is inspected and maintained daily to keep it at optimum performance and provide maximum safety.

Firstly, a chainsaw is only as good as the edge that is on the chain. You can have the biggest, most powerful engine in the world driving the chain at the fastest speed achievable but without the chain being sharp it will not cut properly. All that will happen is that you will lean on the saw to make it cut which will cause severe damage to your bar, your chain and your drive sprocket necessitating their replacement at quite a financial cost to you.

The golden rule to operating any chainsaw is that when you find yourself leaning on a dull chain forcing it to cut it is time to stop and sharpen it. If you do this each time this happens it will only take a few minutes to do, as about 3 wipes of the file on each cutter will get the chain performing again.

Selecting the correct filing equipment is vital to doing the job right. If sharpening with a file, the most important thing to get right is the size of the file as this sets the top plate angle. You will need a filing guide to set the side plate angle and a depth gauge to check and set the raker setting which is done with a flat file. A quick chat with your local Husqvarna chainsaw dealer will get you sorted.

At the end of each day's work it is highly advisable to inspect and perform some basic maintenance to keep your saw in good working order and to have it ready to go the next time you need it. Start by taking off the clutch cover and cleaning it thoroughly as this cover houses your chain brake mechanism which, in the case of a kick back, can save your life.

If there are any defects or broken parts in this mechanism do not use the saw and bring it to your local Husqvarna service dealer, for repair. Clean out around the clutch drum and clutch as dirt in this area can affect the cooling of the saw. Take off the guide bar and inspect it for damage. If there are any burrs on the edge of the bar these must be removed or they will eventually crack and break rendering the bar un-useable. A tip here is to wear gloves and use a handheld tool called a bar rail dresser to avoid serious damage to your hand.

Clean out the groove in the bar with a bar groove scraper to ensure good flow of oil to the chain. Make sure that you turn the guide bar to get the full life from it. Put the chain on and tension properly. If you have a sprocket nosed guide bar adjust the chain so that it sits well into the bar but is still easy to pull round by hand. Then sharpen the chain. Next remove the top cover and the starter cover and clean around both areas as this is where the air to cool the engine is taken in and circulated. Check the spark plug lead and the cap for any damage and if you find any replace the offending parts do not repair as you may get tracking through the repair and especially when it's wet you can get a very nasty shock from the 25000 volts that are generated by the ignition coil.

Next check all the safety devices on the saw to see that they are in place or that they are in working order. They are the chain catcher, the trigger lock and the on/off switch. If any of these are not in working order or are missing **DO NOT OPERATE THE SAW BEFORE THEY ARE REPLACED**. Your local Husqvarna Service dealer will be only too happy to help with advice and service back up to your saw. If you invest a few minutes, each day you use your saw, to inspect and maintain it the saw will reward you with good performance for years to come.

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See husqvarna.com/ie/dealer-locator

Site manager at the Ploughing, Tom Kelly and exhibition supervisor at the Ploughing, Sean Byrne.



"FOLLOW THE GUARDS NOT THE SAT-NAVS"

FROM 'WELL-DRESSED LADIES IN STILETTOS TO YOUNG LADS ROLLING AROUND IN THE MUCK', THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS (THE PLOUGHING) ATTRACTS A MIXED CROWD FROM ACROSS RURAL AND URBAN IRELAND AND TOM KELLY, THE SITE MANAGER, SEES IT ALL. **BERNIE COMMINS** CHATS TO TOM ABOUT THE IMMENSE TASK THAT IS ORGANISING EUROPE'S LARGEST ANNUAL OUTDOOR EVENT

"What is your favourite part of the Ploughing?" I ask. "The session on the Thursday night when it's over," says Tom. We both laugh. But I get it. Tom Kelly has been site manager for the Ploughing for the last 12 years and, in that time, has overseen the event taking place in five locations. He and his colleague, Sean Byrne, who is the exhibition supervisor, have the pleasure of 'dealing with all the problems,' he says, laughing. But, I sense that he is not joking one bit.

The two of them oversee the commencement of each event set up, and they steer their own and external teams, as required – hundreds of people, thousands of hours, many months – in advance of the three-day championships. This year, they are joined by the event medic and health and safety officer, Tony Kelly. "The three stooges," Tom jokes. This year also marks the third consecutive year that the 600-acre Ratheniska site is hosting the Ploughing – and six years in total that the event has been staged there in the Ploughing's history. The familiarity of such a site has its advantages, but 2024 marks three strikes, and they are out for 2025. Three years is as much as you can ask of a site and its land, and of a location, Tom says. "It is a huge advantage from the point of view of traffic management and parking. You get to know the land – we got to know it very well last year – and where the problem areas are. So, in those ways it is an advantage but in other ways it isn't."

WEATHER WOES

The scale of an event like the Ploughing takes its toll on the land but add to that a disastrously wet year, and it really compounds matters. "We spent the whole winter, ploughing the place up, reseeding it, trying to get it ready again for this year. You are going back into a site that has taken a battering for a year or two beforehand. And then, this was

a difficult winter, weatherwise, so it was a worry. We got about two thirds of it [the Ratheniska site] sown back in the autumn, despite the weather and we got the last 30 acres done in April. We have an excellent contractor, Pat Ramsbottom, and he prioritises us [at short notice]. We have great people we can call on."

Last year's show was subjected to some of the worst weather conditions in years, Tom recalls. Day one saw up to 70,000 people arrive to and survive a mud-fest. The sun eventually got there on day two, and things had dried up a lot by the third day, but the damage had been done by the miserable opening-day weather. Getting the ground ready for the following year's event is a major priority. It is the foundation upon which the Ploughing is built. "The third year is hard on us anyway, regardless of the weather. After the first year, you will have a few repair jobs, after the second it tends to get badly battered in certain areas. You use the winter to do the bigger structural jobs and drainage, for example. This year, we have changed the layout of the event by turning the entire site around by 90 degrees. But after three years, you have to give the land a rest," says Tom.

FORGET ABOUT THE SAT-NAVS

The coordination and organisation of an event like the the Ploughing takes considerable time. The 2025 event is moving to a new destination, and is already in the early stages of planning, Tom says, although his lips were tightly sealed as to where it will take place. "You may ask Anna May for the answer to that question," he says with a laugh.

"But, generally, planning [for the next one] starts, more or less, during or straight after the last event," says Tom. "Then, you would have meetings with all the providers of services, the gardai, you are planning traffic, site

layout, car park layout, they are all planned well in advance." Traffic and weather are probably the two biggest worries for Tom. There is no controlling one of those things, as we have discussed. And the other? "Well, you can to a point. A lot of work goes into the traffic-management plan," he says. And great effort has gone into devising six colour-coded routes that will siphon traffic from various parts of the country into the most convenient and relevant car parks. Traffic personnel have been assigned to marshal specific locations so Tom and his team really need the public to work with them on this. "The one thing I want to do is to plead with people to please turn off the sat-navs and instead follow the directions of the gardaí. Sat-navs will see that there is a build-up of traffic in an area and it will direct people around back roads, which we don't want, and then you end up with traffic coming at you from a direction that you have not planned for. So, follow the guards and turn off the sat-navs. We also have around 350 buses arriving per day and the logistics of that is a bit intense."



THE OLYMPICS WOULD BE A CINCH AT THIS STAGE!

LIKE BUILDING A TOWN

When, jokingly, I suggest that Tom is the man to call when the Olympic games come knocking, he replies, with a laugh: "The Olympics would be a cinch at this stage!" After all, putting on an event like the Ploughing is akin to building an actual town in the middle of a field, such is its scale. Tom adds: "It was the former chief superintendent in Laois-Offaly who likened it to building a city the size of Cork, and then taking it down again." Putting some of that into perspective, Tom says: "Thirty-five kilometres of road goes down, there are around 100 kilometres of cables for power and broadband. The infrastructure must be there to deliver those to the exhibitors. Not all will require them but the infrastructure is needed, and for water too. You need over 1,000 toilets and then you must get rid of all that sewage and waste every day. You would use about 80,000 gallons of water on the site every day. We need streetlights, we have a hospital on site, 500-600 security personnel. We have around 13 generators, and we have enough power to run a small city. It is flabbergasting, the scale of the facilities that are there," he says.

SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

As well as the closing-day session, is there anything else that Tom can get some enjoyment from? "We all get a kick out of putting it together, seeing everything happening over the course of the days, seeing all the people rolling in. If the weather doesn't cause a major obstacle, it is a pleasure to see all the cogs working and all the plans that we have made come together." But contingencies are crucial when plans are challenged. "Last year, we had to go to plan Z," says Tom. "But we have a great relationship with the gardaí, we work closely together, we make each other aware of any changes that are taking place and once you have that, it works well [despite adverse weather/traffic conditions]."

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Without hesitation, Tom answers 'no' when asked if he can enjoy some downtime over the three days. "Most years, I wouldn't even get a chance to get out around the stands. Over the three days, you'd be monitoring

Plotting away: National Ploughing Championships site manager, Tom Kelly.



car parks, liaising with the gardaí, problem solving because when you have 100,000 people in the one place you will invariably have problems that arise." Mostly, these are traffic and parking related but sometimes health problems arise too: "You will have the odd heart attack, stroke, or person suffering from exhaustion [if it is too hot]. We have a hospital on site though, so we have all that covered." And no matter how hard they try to prevent it, people always get lost or forget where they parked the car. "Last year, we had people on around 20 gaiters going around finding these people or helping them find their cars," says Tom.

BIG CHANGES

This year marks 93 years of the Ploughing. Ploughing competitions, farming and rural Ireland will always be at its heart but its evolution to an event of mass appeal cannot be denied. "You can buy anything from a car to a combine to an oven. There is some change in the size and scale and variation of stands," says Tom. "One thing that I found fascinating from last year was that we probably had our smallest crowd in a while, with the weather, but we think there was more business done last year than other years."

This is all anecdotal, of course, but Tom and Sean spend a lot of time talking to exhibitors and getting feedback and if anyone can take the temperature of the event, it is they. "Last year, we know that some exhibitors sold €1m and €2m over the course of the three days. A lot of people were there just to do business," he says.

I ask him about the decision of some high-profile companies and organisations not to exhibit at the Ploughing this year and if this is a concern. "Since I have started, I have heard people saying that there aren't as many tractors and combines and big machinery, and there is some truth to that because a lot of the machinery manufacturers are choosing to have their own private open days on farms where they

can invite a very targeted audience. That is just something that we cannot compete with." But there is plenty of machinery and tractors in attendance, and the machinery side is holding its own, says Tom.

LAYOUT

The layout and location of the stands takes a lot of consideration, explains Tom, and the entire exhibition area is set out to optimise footfall for all exhibitors. "You have to be careful to ensure that the crowd can get access to all areas but that not too many people get access to an area all at once. So Sean and the exhibition team have to make sure that every aisle gets a crowd and that people are guided to every aisle and every stand. We must ensure we put some of our bigger stands in an area that will help pull people in a particular direction. We don't get it 100 per cent right all the time but we do our best, and one of the benefits of having the event in the same spot is that you learn how to do it better, you learn where the congestion spots are, for example, and you can address those."

MAYHEM

Our interview takes place just a few weeks out from the 2024 event, and at that stage, Tom explains what is happening: "All the trackways and electrical work is done - that has to be in place early. The marquees are being built. Shortly, we will be moving on to the car parks, fencing off neighbours' houses. And what happens after, when it is all over, I ask? "Well, that is pure and utter mayhem," he says. The deconstruction can take anything up to six weeks. What goes up must come down but that is another day's problem for Tom and the team.



I WANT TO PLEAD WITH PEOPLE TO TURN OFF THE SAT-NAVS AND FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS OF THE GARDAÍ

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STRONG LINE-UP PROMISED AT MCHALE PLANT SALES' STAND

The latest machines from a number of frontline manufacturers will feature at McHale Plant Sales' exhibition stand at this year's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing). The construction-to-forestry-to-agri equipment distributor will have a wide variety on show including Komatsu WA wheel loaders, Komatsu excavators, Komatsu utility vehicles and forestry machines, and more.

KOMATSU WA WHEEL LOADERS

Komatsu units from the popular WA wheel loader series will include a WA320-8 alongside a smaller unit from its compact range. A favourite among agricultural contractors, the heavy-duty WA320 is specified for agricultural use and comes complete with hydraulic quick-release hitch, folding fork attachment for silage harvesting and heavy-duty bucket for grain storage and bulk materials handling. Other features include EU stage V engine, Komatsu SmartLoader logic, hydrostatic drive line and auto idle shutdown. Operator comfort is provided via a low noise design cab with air suspended seat and multifunction monitor.

KOMATSU EXCAVATORS

Contractors seeking to extend their own reach into construction, drainage, pipe laying, hedge thinning, fence building and other farm applications will be able to check out the Komatsu PC138USLC-11 short tail swing excavator.

KOMATSU UTILITY

Also to the fore will be a full line-up of Komatsu mini diggers, midi diggers and utility equipment including a PC16MR-3, PC26MR-5, PC55MR-5 and PC80MR-5. Each comes with a range of useful attachments including Komatsu rock breakers, Gripen log grabs, and Prinoth mulchers. Also exhibiting will be two units from the Komatsu skid steer range – an SK715 and its larger brother, the SK820. Komatsu forest

A machine likely to appeal to forestry contractors will be a unit brand new to the Irish market in the shape of the largest harvester in the range – the 25 tonne, eight-wheel 951XC.

PRINOTH

Other must-see exhibits include the Prinoth tracked dumper and mulcher units whose uses are as diverse as forest floor renewal and landscape preservation, groundworks and reclamation of forest sites, vegetation management, biomass harvesting, hydro-excavation and coastal erosion, among others. Also on exhibit is the largest in the 360-degree rotating dumper range, the T14R, alongside the remote-controlled Raptor 100 mulcher, complete with heavy-duty mulching head.

"Equipped with the appropriate job-specific attachment, Prinoth vehicles are at home also in wind and electric power transmission projects, oil and gas pipe laying, construction, environmental protection, firefighting and rescue, mining and drilling, forestry and crew transportation," said a spokesperson for McHale Plant Sales.

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SHOWSTOPPERS, SILOKING AND MCCONNELL - ALL IN A DAY AT THE PLOUGHING FOR KVERNELAND

At this year's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) Kverneland promises to showcase, and debut, a comprehensive range of cutting-edge arable, grass, and crop-care equipment.

These will sit alongside Siloking feeders and McConnell machinery as Kverneland is official importer and distributor in Ireland for these companies.

PLOUGH BODY NO. 40

Leading the charge at this year's event is the Kverneland Plough Body No. 40, a new addition to Kverneland's ploughing line-up. Specifically designed for large tractor tyres, the Plough Body No. 40 offers lower pulling forces, meaning reduced fuel consumption and less strain on your tractor, which are key factors in extending machinery life and cutting costs. Building on the success of previous models, the Plough Body No. 40 is engineered to improve soil turnover and aeration, which are crucial for enhancing soil health and boosting crop yields. Even in challenging conditions, this plough body ensures optimal performance, setting the stage for a successful harvest.

KVERNELAND ROTAGO F POWER HARROW

Also making its debut is the Kverneland Rotago F Power Harrow, a next-generation machine designed to transform seedbed preparation. Available in both basic and Isobus versions, the Rotago F allows for on-the-go adjustments of the levelling bar and working depth, providing unmatched flexibility and efficiency.

With its advanced features, including a pushed gear case and parallelogram linkage, the Rotago F offers seamless adjustments without the need to re-align the three-point linkage or rear roller. This not only makes operations easier but also supports sustainable farming by minimising energy use.

Pairing perfectly with the Rotago F is the F-Drill CB F, a precision seeding solution that's all about adaptability. Designed to work seamlessly with the Rotago F power harrow, the F-Drill CB F allows for customisable working widths and the ability to sow different crops at varying depths in a single pass, maximising efficiency and yield potential.

ADVANCED GRASSLAND MACHINERY

This year, Kverneland is also showcasing a suite of advanced grassland machinery aimed at boosting productivity and efficiency in forage production. The Kverneland 85156 C tedder, debuting at the Ploughing, offers a working width of 15.6 meters, significantly enhancing productivity and operator comfort. Its 14 small-diameter rotors ensure excellent crop turning in various conditions, while the TerraFlow ground-following system allows each rotor to flex and adapt independently, guaranteeing precise work across the entire width.

Kverneland will showcase its flagship butterfly mower, the 53100MT BX, a masterpiece of mowing technology. With a working width of up to 10.2 meters and the QuattroLink 'race car' suspension system, this mower delivers unmatched ground tracking and cutting performance, ensuring exceptional forage quality and efficiency.

In addition to all of this, Kverneland's FastBale will be on display – the world's only non-stop round baler that eliminates the need to stop and start between bales. The FastBale's unique pre-chamber system ensures consistent bale density and high-quality forage, making it a must-have for any farmer looking to streamline hay and silage operations. This machine is sure to draw a crowd as always.

MCCONNELL AND SILOKING

As the official distributor for McConnell and Siloking in Ireland, Kverneland will present a range of these machines at the Ploughing. McConnell machinery, including the 5455, 6572T, and 7775T models, along with Siloking feeders, including both twin and single tub models. Designed for precision feeding, these feeders offer efficiency and flexibility in managing livestock nutrition.

By integrating innovative technology with tried-and-true methods, Kverneland continues to play a key role in advancing Irish agriculture, according to Conor Vaughan of Kverneland Group Ireland. Commenting, he said: "Whether you're looking to upgrade your tillage, grassland, or feeding equipment, be sure to call into our stand at the Ploughing. Our team will be there to offer advice and demonstrations, showing you firsthand how Kverneland's machinery can bring real benefits to your operations. We're excited to meet everyone and discuss how we can help drive your farm's success in the coming years." You can find out all the news at stand number 355, block 3, row 17.

NEW MCCONNEL POWER ARM RANGES AVAILABLE

McConnel has introduced two new power arm ranges: the 72-Series and the heavier-duty 77-Series. Designed for farmers, contractors, and local authorities, both ranges feature a 70hp hydraulic system with reach options from 5.5m to 7m, including telescopic and variable forward reach (VFR) options. The 77-Series offers added durability and power with larger diameter pivot pins and an optional 85hp hydraulics system.

Both series include an optional integrated debris blower located within the rear guard, which clears roadside debris and enhances cooling by drawing in cool air over the pumps and tank. Additional new features include LED road lighting, a redesigned hydraulic tank, a two-piece rear guard for easy service access, and a sculpted polypropylene top cover to prevent debris and moisture ingress.

All models are built on a heavy-duty mainframe and can be specified with three-point linkage, four-point hitch, or five-point axle-mounting options. They can be fitted to tractors over 80hp and 4,000kg dependent on specification and reach.

Manufactured in the UK at McConnel's Ludlow facility, the 72-Series and 77-Series are compatible with a comprehensive range of attachments, including 1.2m, 1.5m, and 1.6m flailheads, sawheads, rotary heads, and cutterbars. Both series are immediately available to order through Kverneland Ireland, the official distributor for McConnel products in Ireland.

Kverneland Group Ireland is offering exclusive financing options making it easier to facilitate investment in these high-performance machines. These offers are available until October 15, 2024 at official Kverneland dealers in the Republic of Ireland.






VISIT US AT THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS

BLOCK 3 ROW 17 STAND 355




**PROUD SPONSORS OF THE
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FARMHAND GOES 'BIG' FOR PLOUGHING 2024

AT THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS (THE PLOUGHING) FARMHAND WILL BE EXHIBITING MACHINERY FROM KRONE, AMAZONE, QUICKE, ZUIDBERG AND FLEXXAIRE, WHILE FASTPARTS WILL HAVE A FULL RANGE FROM APSV, RAKEMAN, QUICKE IMPLEMENTS, AND DROMONE

For the first time ever, Ploughing 2024 will see Farmhand present its flagship machines side by side. Both the Krone BiG X and the BiG M will be represented by the 2024 demonstration machines, sporting a unique galaxy wrap. "We're really excited about the machines we have to display this year," said Stephen Scrivener, sales and marketing director for Farmhand. "The Ploughing is a great opportunity to catch up with customers, and meet new people, and it's always enjoyable when there is something new to show."

According to the company, the BiG X range of self-propelled harvesters not only impresses with their high efficiency and chop quality, but also high operator comfort and easy handling with a height adjustable comfort cab and enormous agility thanks to independent wheel suspension. The only harvester in the world with six pre-compression rollers, making them the ideal choice for Irish contractors handling heavy crops of wet, lumpy grass.

The BiG M 450 needs no introduction. It is the go-to for contractors looking for maximum output and efficiency. Offering a huge 10m work width, superior manoeuvrability, optimum weight distribution and tapping into enormous 450hp power reserves, the BiG M 450 is the perfect mower for maximising efficiency when mowing high acreage, according to Farmhand. Ben Buckley, southern area sales manager for Farmhand, who spends as much time as he can in the cab of a BiG M. said: "The machine is like nothing else out there. I don't think I could ever return to the conventional way of mowing. The ease of operation and additional visibility really sets the BiG M above the rest."

The Amazone Pantera self-propelled sprayer will also be available for customers to have a closer look at. First seen in Ireland at the start of 2024 this self-propelled sprayer has a tank capacity of 4,500L and can be equipped with booms up to 48m.

A Profihopper 1500 and the Groundkeeper GHS-drive 1800 will also be on the Farmhand stand this year. "We have been demonstrating the Profihopper 1500 and everyone is impressed with its versatility. It can cut and collect the heaviest material but also excels in more sensitive areas like fairways and approaches. This combined with the work it is doing for councils in wildflower meadows, really proves its versatility," said Adrian Leech, groundcare specialist for Farmhand.

Other machinery on display will include the Amazone ZA-V mounted GPS section control spreader, Krone rear-mounted mowers, Krone Swadro TC 640 steer rake and Kroen Vendro tedder along with front linkages and PTOs from Zuidberg, Q-Series front loaders from Quicke, and the reversible fan system from Flexxaire.

Alongside its largest machinery display yet, Farmhand merchandise will also be on sale. A range of favourites and new designs will be offered in workwear, hoodies and half-zips, jerseys, kids' clothes and much more. Models will be the highlight of the merchandise on sale, with a wide range of Amazone implements and limited-edition harvesters, including replicas of both the BiG X 1180 and BiG M 450 in the same galaxy design as the 2024 demonstration machines. The Farmhand stand number 522 can be found on block 2, row 21.

FASTPARTS

Fastparts will also be attending the Ploughing with a wide display of

implements and attachments including APV grassland management equipment and a display of the Rakeman tine harrows. Available in 1.5m and 3m, the Rakeman is perfect for rejuvenating grass growth, levelling ground and reseeded. The full range of Dromone Ball & Spoon hitches, APV grassland equipment and Broomex Brush Brooms will also be on display.



Farmhand machinery display highlights for 2024. From the top: the BiG X 980 self-propelled harvester; the BiG M 450 self-propelled mower conditioner; the Amazone Pantera 4504; and the Amazone Profihopper 1500.

EASYFIX SHOWCASES AT THE INNOVATION ARENA

Easyfix has been shortlisted for the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena Awards at this year's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing). This year, Easyfix is entering its latest breakthrough, the ePulse Slurry Treatment System. According to the company, this fully automated system 'revolutionises slurry management by optimising slurry utilisation on farms while reducing emissions'. A company spokesperson said: "Using electro-photomagnetic treatment, the system stimulates microbial activity in manure without chemicals or additives, representing a transformative leap in slurry management."

Currently undergoing field trials across Ireland, the UK, the US, and Europe, the ePulse system has already yielded promising results, according to the company, and Easyfix is eager to gather feedback from the farming community at the Innovation Arena.

Founded in 1996, Easyfix is a family-owned company that has achieved remarkable growth over the past 25 years in the agricultural and equine sectors. With headquarters in Co. Galway – as well as offices in Germany, the UK, and the US – Easyfix exports its products to over 60 countries worldwide.

The company's stated mission is to 'design and develop sustainable livestock housing solutions that enhance animal welfare, reduce emissions, and provide farmers with peace of mind'. Every product is designed in-house and manufactured using the highest-quality materials. The company notes that it is relentless in its pursuit of

research, innovation, and continuous improvement, ensuring that its offerings make a significant impact on livestock comfort and animal housing globally.

"We are firm believers in the philosophy that 'if you look after your animals, they will look after you'. We understand that healthy, comfortable animals are essential to the success of any farming enterprise. From product designers to installers, the entire Easyfix team is dedicated to improving livestock welfare by providing the most comfortable and environmentally sustainable solutions available."

The very first product launched by the company was the award-winning SR Slat Rubber, which remains one of its top-selling items today. The company has earned numerous accolades, including LAMMA and Royal Highland Innovation Awards and DLG Certifications. The company has also developed partnerships with leading research institutions and universities – such as Wageningen in the Netherlands, UCD, and Teagasc in Ireland – to ensure products perform well and to validate the environmental benefits of their offerings.

Easyfix offers a wide range of dairy housing solutions, including cow mattresses, cubicles and walkway matting. They also provide a complimentary design service for custom-made dairy cubicle housing systems. You can find the company at block 1, row 4, stand 59; and also at stand 27 in the Innovation Arena.

Visit us at the Ploughing ROW 22 STAND 551



Agricultural Machinery



Stratmann



Hardi



Rabe & FarmDroid



Bomford Turner



IAM: +353 (0) 56 7765826
 Martin Owens: +353 (0) 87 9061920
 Pat Kenny: +44 (0) 749 33 44 833

www.iam.ie

McHALE TO UNVEIL NEW TEDDER RANGE AT THE PLOUGHING

McHale will present its new ProPel range of tedders at this year's National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing). The ProPel tedders are the ideal machines to lift and aerate even the heaviest crops, according to the company, which results in the best quality fodder in the shortest time. Commenting, Martin Mchale, Mchale marketing and sales director said: "The new ProPel tedder range is a welcome addition to our grassline range. The design team have enhanced these machines by adding some nice features which aid the operator such as rotor height adjustment, rotor angle adjustment, and the headland management system."

The Mchale ProPel M6-770 is an easily manoeuvrable mounted machine which features superb ground contouring and stability on the most uneven terrain to provide effective tedding throughout the crop.

The Mchale ProPel T8 and T10 Tedders are trailed machines that are fitted with a long carriage frame that connects the tedder to the tractor when in operation and serves as a carrier when in transit. According to Mchale, all machines in the ProPel tedder range come equipped with the following features.

- **Headstock**

A central pivoting point on the ProPel M6-770 connects the headstock to the chassis which ensures an effective re-centering on slopes and reduces the machine overhang. The trailed tedders in the range are coupled to the tractor by a two-point linkage headstock. By pivoting the machine behind the headstock, it can follow very closely behind the tractor which is beneficial in navigating difficult to access areas.

- **Chassis**

A v-shaped central chassis on all Mchale mounted tedders provide a strong, stable machine when in operation and transport. The Mchale ProPel T8 and T10 trailed machines are equipped with a trailed chassis which acts as a carrier frame when in transport.

- **Driveline**

Power is transferred to the rotors using a heavy-duty driveline with greaseable universal joints that ensure direct and even power transfer in all operating conditions. An overload clutch protects the driveline while all pivoting points are incorporated in the cast housing for long-lasting operation. The driveline is equipped with flexible joints which can be easily accessed for greasing and maintenance.

- **Rotors**

All Mchale tedders are fitted with 1.54m (61") diameter rotors that are equipped with seven tine arms that all support a double hooked tine for the clean, even lift and distribution of crop. These large circumference rotors operate at relatively low revolutions which offers more time for the crop to be lifted and released by the hook tines. Operators can adjust the angle and height of the rotors if required. Rotor angle adjustment is made by altering the position of the rotor ground wheels into one of five positions to set the angle from 10° to 17°. The height at which the rotors operate can be easily adjusted on the ProPel M6-770 by simply reducing or extending the top link. On trailed tedders, the rotor height is adjusted by turning the simple wind handle. In order to stop the crop from becoming entangled in the rotor wheels, crop deflection plates divert the crop to the rear of the machine.

THE McHALE PROPEL RANGE CONSISTS OF THREE MODELS:

- **McHale ProPel M6-770:** Six rotors with a working width of 7.7m;
- **McHale ProPel T8-1020:** Eight rotors with a working width of 10.2m; and
- **McHale ProPel T10-1260:** 10 rotors with a working width of 12.6m.

- **Tines**

All tedders in the Mchale ProPel Tedder range are equipped with a double hook tine to ensure all crop is cleanly lifted to provide a large and even spread. Thanks to the heavy-duty hook tine, the crop is distributed high, evenly and far behind the machine to leave the ground clean and provide a consistent spread of crop for drying.

- **Transport**

The Mchale ProPel M6-770 folds vertically to a height of 3.8m, for a compact road transport position. The Mchale ProPel T8-1020 and T10-1260 can be quickly and neatly folded onto the chassis at a transport width of 2.9m. The low centre of gravity and high speed, six-stud axle, offer a comfortable, fast and stable transportation speed of up to 40km/h.

- **Steering**

The range is designed to provide exceptional trailing, avoid overrun on slopes and give an even, consistent tedding pattern in all directions. To achieve this, the Mchale ProPel M6-770 mounted tedders are fitted with oscillating dampers and a robust steering system in order to follow the tractor around curves and ensure a stable and reliable operation during the tedding process. On the trailed machines, the two-point lower linkage headstock performs a similar function during road transport and field operation with the tedder behind following smoothly around tight turns

- **Headland management system**

When tedding the headlands or around obstacles, the optional headland management system can be hydraulically folded into position by the operator in the cab. This allows the tedder to operate at full working width at all times as the crop is deflected away from the edge of the field to allow for easy raking. When operating in hay, it can also indicate which areas have already been tedded.

RUMOUR HAS IT

Commenting on the new range, James Heanue, Mchale Irish sales manager said: "The machines we have out working are working very well and customers are very satisfied with their features and performance. I will be happy to take customers and dealers through the new T10-1260 or the other machines in the range at the Ploughing." Rumour has it that Mchale will launch a new F5 baler at the Ploughing also so you can find out more about this, the new tedder range, and all the Mayo company's offering at stand number 324, at block 2, row 16.



Flailhead options include 1.2m and 1.5m cutting widths, with a choice of flails to suit individual needs.



The new VFR armset enables operators to adjust the position of the cutting head alongside the tractor for greater visibility.

IMPROVED ARM GEOMETRY AND GREATER REACH

Twose's flagship 5-Series hedgecutter has received a major update with a new armset design featuring an additional longer reach option and new electric proportional controls. The enhanced geometry improves the arm's movement range, allowing for better close-in cutting and greater over-fence clearance, according to the company.

The 5-Series is now offered in five different reach options: 5.7m and 6m standard arms, 6m variable forward reach (VFR), 6.7m telescopic, and a new range-topping 7.7m telescopic option designed for five-point axle mounting. The new arm design includes a higher pivot point for the dipper arm, providing improved over-fence clearance, and a redesigned parallel linkage geometry for better 'topping out' of hedges, even close to the tractor.

The new VFR armset enables operators to adjust the position of the cutting head alongside the tractor for greater visibility. This enhances comfort and safety as the operator can concentrate on the direction

ahead. VFR also aids manoeuvrability when cutting around obstacles and working in confined environments such as narrow lanes.

The new flagship proportional electric control system features an ergonomic mini joystick that allows fingertip control of multiple arm movements simultaneously, enabling operators to perform complex arm manoeuvres with ease. The control pod also includes fingertip control of rotor engagement, arm flotation, and arm breakback reset.

The heavy-duty 5-Series comes with a fully independent 65hp hydraulic system with cast iron pumps and motors, a high-capacity oil cooler, and can be specified with LED road lighting. All models are available with low-pressure hydraulic joystick control or proportional electric controls. Flailhead options include 1.2m and 1.5m variants, with various flail choices to meet individual requirements.



€5 OFF

- 🌿 New Designs
- 🌿 Limited Edition Models
- 🌿 Kids Clothing
- 🌿 Workwear

AT THE NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMP 2024

**CUT OUT THIS VOUCHER AND BRING TO:
STAND - 522 ROW - 21 - Block 2**



*Only one voucher permitted per person per transaction. Can not be used in conjunction with any other offer. Valid at the NFA Championships 2024 17th-19th September to be redeemed at the event only.

IFM 50 – PLOUGHING MEMORIES

WELCOME TO OUR NEXT TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE, AS WE CELEBRATE A MILESTONE 50TH YEAR FOR *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY*. 'THE MONTHLY', AS IS IT COMMONLY AND FONDLY KNOWN, HAS BEEN A FAMILIAR AND DEPENDABLE SOURCE OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL-LIFE NEWS FOR FIVE DECADES. THIS MONTH, WE LOOK BACK AT SOME OF OUR SEPTEMBER PLOUGHING AND MACHINERY-RELATED COVERAGE OVER THE YEARS



- ▲ Our September 1997 cover story focused on the lack of ships to transport live animals from Ireland to other EU countries. This was on the back of a decision by Pandoro (ferry company) to ban all live exports from August 1 that same year.



- ▲ In September 1996, John Meagher interviewed champion ploughman, Martin Kehoe, about his attempts to retain his national and world titles. John writes: "Martin's name has become synonymous with ploughing and his reputation goes before him. He has won 10 National Ploughing Championships and two consecutive World Championships. He has won every National Championship in his class [...]."



In this article from September 1996, then machinery editor, John Neill-Watson chatted to Gerry Dagg who was president of the Farm Tractor & Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) the last time that Ireland had held the World Ploughing Contest in 1981. The sector was a very different place at that time. The farm-machinery trade was suffering from a massive lack of confidence that year, wrote John, and about 40 firms left the FTMTA, many of them closing down during Gerry's term of office, he recalled. Back then, the side-mounted precision-chop forage harvester and the rear-beater manure spreaders were in big demand. In the intervening period, several factors changed the sector; some of the main ones were the increased horsepower and four-wheel drive in tractors, a swing away from grass to silage as fodder, and the balewrapper revolutionising storage of silage.

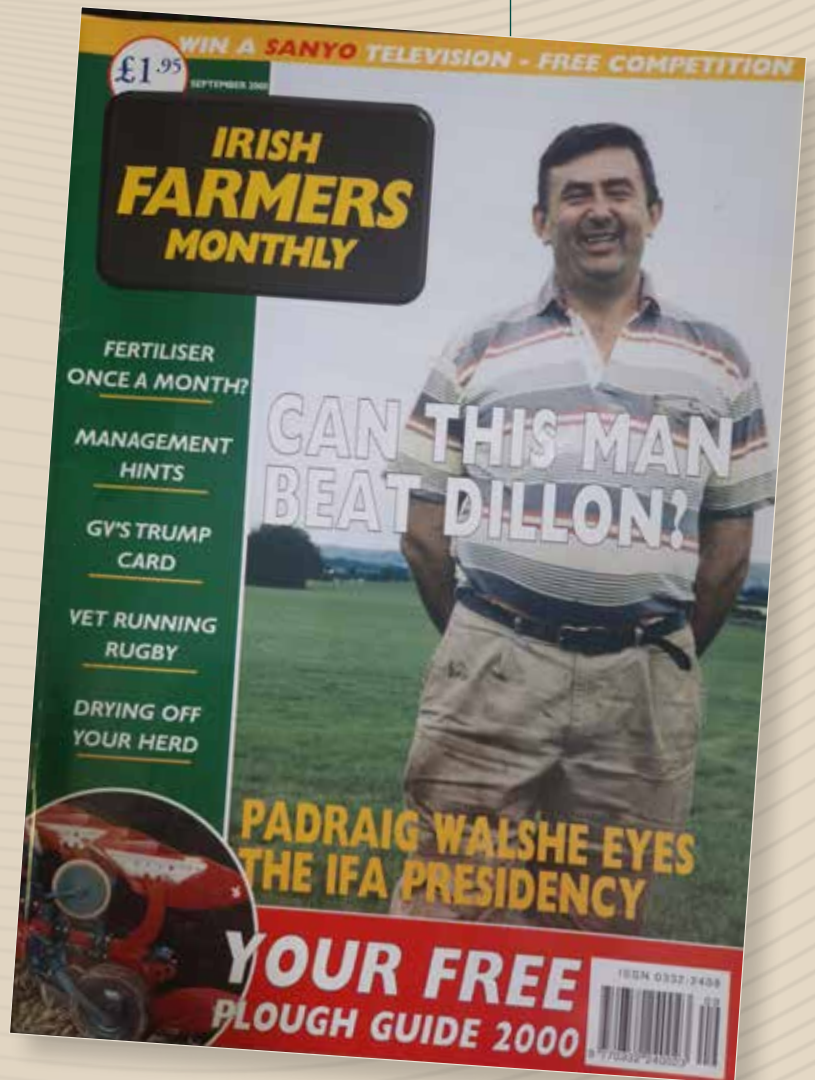


▼ The late Pádraig Walshe was our cover star in September 2000. Then editor, Paul O'Grady, interviewed Pádraig about his intentions to run for presidency of the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), as well as quota issues, costs, and much more. Paul wrote: 'He would argue for the retention of quotas when the review of the system comes around. "I think it is very important - beneficial for farmers - to control the supply of milk into the market place".'

▼ A ploughing themed machinery advert from a mid-90s issue.



◀ In October 1997, the National Ploughing Champions took place in Co. Offaly, hosted by Grace and Pádraig Grennan on their 400-acre beef and tillage farm, called Parkmore. In our September 1997 issue, John Meaghar featured an interview with the Grennans.



THE PLOUGH FACTOR

The 2024 National Ploughing Championships (the Ploughing) takes place in Ratheniska, Co. Laois from September 17-19, inclusive. To whet your appetites, we present a taster of what is to come at Europe's largest outdoor event



275,000+

The number of visitors that attended the Ploughing in 2023; similar numbers are expected this year.



DID YOU KNOW?

The first National Brown Bread Baking Competition took place at the Ploughing in 1954. It was reintroduced in 2014 and has been very popular among budding bakers ever since!



ON REPEAT

This is the third consecutive year that the Ploughing takes place in Ratheniska.

93

The number of National Ploughing Championships that have taken place so far.

1,700+

The number of exhibitors, featuring: machinery; livestock; agri-business; lifestyle and tourism; and many more.



Tickets must be pre-purchased ONLINE to guarantee entry.

PHYSICAL OR PHONE

Organisers advise you to print your ticket and bring it with you, or screenshot it for scanning at the gate.



DAY TRIPPER?

Day tickets will only be sold at the gate if not previously sold out online.

TIMETABLE	
Trade exhibition arena	9am-6pm
Ploughing competitions	10.30am-2.30pm
Entertainment programme	10am-6pm
Daily fashion shows	11.30am/1.30pm/3.30pm
Ploughing results will be available at 6pm daily	



FREE RASCALS

Children under 12 can enter free-of-charge when accompanied by an adult.



STAY SAFE

FBD's 'Keeping You Safe' wristbands will be available once again this year for all the kiddos!



NO CHARGE

There will be no electric-car-charging facilities in the car parks!

HYBRID BRASSICAS FILLING THE GAP THIS WINTER

This year has been one of the most difficult growing seasons on record for Irish farmers. A late start to the grazing season followed by generally poor grazing conditions and below-average growth rates mean that the cost of production has been high on farms across the country.

Poor grass growth and low silage yields mean many farmers are facing a winter-fodder deficit. In order to boost winter feed stocks, some farmers chose to sow fast-growing forage species like forage rye and Westerwold Rygrass in the backend. These crops can be sown relatively late in the season and their rapid establishment and strong winter growth should provide a good supply of forage early next year. Many farmers have opted to sow hybrid brassicas, also known as forage rape, like Interval, Rampart and Mainstar. Forage rape is ideal for extending the grazing season into autumn and winter. It is a winter-hardy brassica with excellent yield and quality that:

- Is a fast-growing winter crop;
- Has high protein content;
- Is suitable for dairy, beef and sheep systems; and
- Has flexible sowing dates.

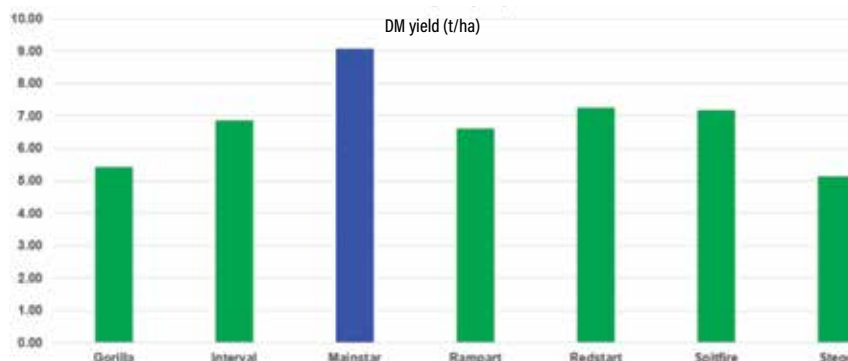
NEW HYBRID BRASSICA SHOWS REAL PROMISE IN DLF GRAZING TRIALS

In 2023 DLF established a number of forage rape grazing trials on farms across the country to assess the yield, quality and utilisation of Mainstar compared to the leading varieties on the market. The graph below shows some impressive initial results for Mainstar. The dry matter (DM) yield of Mainstar particularly stands out, producing 1.8t/ha more than the next best variety.

Mainstar promises high yields of leafy forage with excellent utilisation and, judging by the data collected so far, it won't disappoint.

HOW MUCH FORAGE RAPE SHOULD I BE FEEDING?

For accurate feed planning, it is essential to



EXAMPLE CALCULATION:

Forage rape from 1m² = 5kg fresh weight x 10,000 = 50,000kg fresh weight/ha.
 Typical rape dry matter = 13%, so the formula is 50,000 x 0.13 = 6,500kg (6.5t) DM/ha.
 A number of samples should be taken from each field, picking representative sampling points for an accurate result.
 Once you have estimated the yield of the crop you can calculate the allocation required using the tables below.

HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR FORAGE RAPE REQUIREMENT

Row	Description	Example based on a 270kg weanling requiring 8kg DM/day	Livestock and forage requirement
1	Livestock total intake (estimate total daily intake on the basis of a DM requirement of 3% of liveweight. See table below for other stock)	8kg DM/day	
2	Amount of brassica in the diet (how much of the diet will be grazed brassicas?)	70%	
3	Brassica daily requirement (row 1 multiplied by row 2, divided by 100)	5.6 kg DM	
4	Number of livestock	25	
5	Daily requirement from brassica (row 3 multiplied by row 4)	140 kg DM	
6	Estimated crop DM yield/m ²	0.56kg DM/m ²	
7	Total daily grazing area required (row 5 divided by row 6)	250m ² of brassica	
8	Length of feed face	125m	
9	Fence to be moved (row 7 divided by row 8)	2m/day	

TYPICAL ALLOCATION LEVEL FOR DIFFERENT CLASSES OF STOCK

Class of stock	Allocation (% of bodyweight)
Dry cows/ewes	1.5
Mid-pregnancy cows/ewes	
Mature bulls/rams	
Late pregnancy cows/ewes	2
Late lactation cows	
Finishing cattle	2.5
Early to mid-lactation cows	
Mid to late-lactation ewes	
Replacement stock	
Growing cattle	3
Early lactation ewes*	
Flushing cows/ewes	
Finishing lambs	

*Allocation may exceed 3% in early lactation.

measure the DM yield of the crop. The following information outlines how this can be easily done.

To measure your crop you will need:

- 1m² frame;
- Seed bag;

- Pair of garden shears; and
- Scales

1. Place frame in the forage crop.
2. Use shears to cut each plant inside the frame (about 10cm from the ground). Put the harvested crop in the bag.
3. Hook bag onto scales and record the crop weight per square metre (kg/m²).
4. To calculate DM yield/ha multiply the fresh weight per m² by 10,000, then multiply by the expected crop DM percentage.

If you would like to learn more about forage rape or discuss your reseeding options for next year, the DLF team will be at this year's National Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska, Co. Laois. Call into Stand 413 in Block 2 Row 19 for a chat!

HARDCORE



Don't forget your wellies! There is no hardcore parking at the event; all car parks are either stubble or grass fields.



Plough-people from all around the country will compete across 24 classes.

A GOOD VINTAGE

The final of the European Vintage Ploughing Championships will take place in Ratheniska this year.



13

The number of countries that will compete in the European Vintage Ploughing Championships at this year's Ploughing in Ratheniska.



ROUND-UP

Ploughing competitions results are officially announced each day of the event on the bandstand at 6pm.



100+

The number of acres set aside for the trade exhibition.



COLOUR CODE

Car parks and signage are colour coded. Look out for the car park blimps that can be seen from the trade arena to direct you back to your car park.



€70,000+

The total prize fund - including business mentoring, advertising, and cash - at the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena awards.

55

The number of businesses exhibiting at the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena.



TURNING THE SOD

There will be tractor, horse and vintage ploughing on display, as well as loy digging.

WHAT IS LOY DIGGING?

When land was tilled by hand, a 'loy' was used. This was a narrow spade with a footrest that allowed the user to use their foot to apply pressure to the spade to help it penetrate the surface and slice down into the soil. According to the Loy Association of Ireland, this type of spade was used to turn sods before the introduction of the factory spade in 1750!



DID YOU KNOW?

The Ploughing has an economic impact of more than €60m, according to organisers.



SERIE 7

POWERFUL STYLE.



LANDINI SERIE 7 - ROBO SIX. POWER FORGED BY STYLE.

The technological innovation of the Landini Serie 7 couldn't look any better. The sleek lines of the bonnet complement the tractor's power with style. New Stage V engines from 190 to 225 hp with the highest levels of efficiency and performance and minimum consumption and emissions. A wide range of on-board electronics to easily control all functions, optimising efficiency and simplifying use in the field and during transport. A spacious cab that ensures automotive-level comfort, equipped with a newly-designed roof with 12 LED work lights for 360° night visibility.

SERIE 7

landini.it/ie

Landini®

Passion for Innovation.



A DREAM MACHINE

IF MONEY WAS NO OBJECT, AND SIZE REALLY DIDN'T MATTER, NOEL DUNNE'S DREAM MACHINE WOULD BE THE BEAST THAT IS THE QUADTRAC 715 AFS CONNECT FROM CASE IH. ONE OF THE HIGHEST HORSEPOWER TRACTORS IN THE WORLD IS HIGH UP ON HIS LIST OF WANTS AND, HERE, WE FIND OUT WHY

Doing more with less is the basis upon which the Quadtrac 715 was created. As Case IH puts it: "The economic, efficiency and environmental benefits of enabling one operator to do more with one machine have driven the development of a new tractor at the top of the Case IH range." The 715 is now Case IH's most powerful production tractor. It blends many of the established Quadtrac principles proven over almost three decades with 'significant advances and key differences' to other models in the recently released line of revised 525-645 Quadtrac AFS Connect and 475-525 Steiger AFS Connect tractors. But the 715 is about more than just power, according to Franz Josef Silber, Case IH product marketing manager for high-horsepower and four-wheel tractors. "Our aim was to create a machine that matches the requirements of our region's largest farms, to operate implements at their ideal speed, producing higher work rates and allowing operations to be performed at the ideal time, even in tough working conditions,

to make the most of short weather windows. We also wanted to ensure soil protection via a bigger footprint and fewer passes, which also means greater efficiency and minimal trafficked land."

FULL POWER THROUGH FOUR TRACKS

Available only in tracked Quadtrac format, the new 715 model is powered by the new FPT Cursor 16L TST. Its displacement is 23 per cent greater than the Quadtrac 645's Cursor 13L TST, delivering 778 peak horsepower at 1,900rpm and 3,255Nm peak torque at a low 1,400rpm. High torque availability is ensured with a twin-stage intercooled turbo-charging system guaranteeing a fast load response in tough conditions. Refuelling stops are reduced via the integration of wider saddle tanks on the rear frame, holding a total of 1,968L of diesel, 11 per cent up on the Quadtrac 645.

The engine powers the latest Case IH 16-speed PowerDrive powershift transmission with Automatic Productivity Management (APM). Introduced on the recently launched

Quadtrac AFS Connect line, it features updated core components.

TRACK UNITS UPGRADED

The new heavy-duty track units are significantly different to those on other Quadtrac models. Tracks are 305mm longer for more ground contact, enhanced power transfer, greater traction and reduced compaction. Drive wheel diameter is 1,008mm, up from 910mm, with five track lugs engaged with the drive wheel rather than four, to handle the higher torque and maximise track life.

A NEW LEVEL OF OUTPUT

Externally, the new Quadtrac 715 is set apart from its stablemates through a distinctive new bonnet design. The bonnet, which can be raised 31 per cent higher for enhanced service access, is opened and closed via an electric actuator, operated via a switch in a lockable box near the cab steps. It also features a new lighting design, with new LED road lights as well as work lights that produce an output of



Rated power	715hp
Transmission	PowerDrive
Capacity	15,900 cm³
Maximum pump flow rate	428L/m

25,420 lumens, for 11 per cent more illumination power. These are complemented by new cab-mounted worklights available in three packages, with the top-level package delivering an additional 45,600 lumens output with 360 degrees coverage.

HANDLES THE BIGGEST IMPLEMENTS

A Category 5 drawbar fully matches the new tractor's implement-handling capacity, while the optional Category 4 three-point hitch, as recently introduced on other new Quadtrac models, lifts 10,092kg, and was designed from the outset to match the capabilities of the Quadtrac 715. Up to eight remote valves are supplied from either a 216L/min or optional 428L/min twin-flow SmartTorque hydraulic pump.

CAB ENHANCEMENTS

Externally, safe and easy cab access is provided via staircase-style rotating steps, while a comfortable ride is assured by four-point cab suspension. The restyled lighting provides a new look as well as more output, while other practical new features include grab rails around the roof to aid safe window cleaning and a new front wiper that increases total swept area. Internally, there are new storage areas, while a new headliner incorporates new LED lighting and enhances sound system speaker output from the updated sound system options. An integrated rail system in the right-hand headliner and A-post ensure easy monitor attachment. It can carry a second AFS Pro 1200 terminal where required, for AFS AccuGuide steering and AccuTurn Pro headland management, ISOBUS implement management, guidance and more. AFS Connect technology allows vehicle and agronomic data recording, including two-way transfer between the tractor and myCaseIH online portal, while also allowing remote machine monitoring/support by owners and, with permission, dealers.



NOEL DUNNE
Machinery editor

Well readers, here we go again. The Tullamore Show is over and in the bag for another year; the Ploughing is just around the corner; and early November will see the FTMTA Farm Machinery Show roll into Punchestown in Co. Kildare. We are so lucky in this country to be blessed with an excellent selection of both national and local agricultural shows, which are the heartbeat of country life. I love what these shows offer – a chance to meet old friends and new; and to catch up on 'all things agriculture'!

Now, down to business. As the harvest finds itself stopping and starting, while we are experiencing heavier rain fall than normal, I see the combine market is back 52 per cent year-on-year. Claas dominates the market, followed by John Deere and then New Holland. With so many factors in the mix – from lesser yields, input costs climbing higher, the lack of availability of affordable land and, of course, the unpredictable weather conditions – I don't think there is any surprise with these figures.

In industry news, Merlo Group has recently announced the appointment of two new dealers in Ireland: FJS Plant Limited in Co. Kildare and well-known Waterford dealer, Jim Power Agri Sales Ltd, based in Tallow. I understand there will also be another appointment due next year at some stage. Meanwhile, UK drill manufacturer Claydon Drills has just launched a front tank and rear toolbar combination unit – further details can be found at Furlong Equipment in Co. Laois.

As we said before about the combine market, AGCO and CNH have seen a decline in sales globally; manufacturing lead times have dropped back dramatically; and manufacturers in the agri-industry across Europe are experiencing declines in farm machinery orders.

On the agri side here in Ireland, the cattle market is reported to be buoyant with further growth expected prior to the Christmas market. Lamb prices remain stable. Dairy is holding its own, while the grain markets and prices are low at present (by the time we get around to finalising the deal with the merchants there will be a little more meat in the deal, hopefully).

As any tillage farmer will tell you this is the year the straw will leave you your margin but – apart from inputs and machinery costs, etc – the 'elephant in the room' is still the price of leasing land and its availability. This will determine in time to come the health of the Irish tillage industry, in my opinion.

So, until next month, enjoy the National Ploughing Championships, pray for less rain, and stay positive.



A DYNAMIC DUO

Lemken has launched a new mounted Solitaire drill and Zirkon power harrow combination with a working width of 3-4m. The Solitaire MR features a 1,500L tank, which is suitable for fertiliser even in its basic configuration, according to the company. The tank is optionally available with a 2,000L capacity, which can be split 60:40, on request, for simultaneous application of several components. Add the 200L MultiHub to the tank and the Solitaire takes efficacy and flexibility to new heights.

MULTIHUB

Mixed-crop systems can be cultivated in a single pass. Seeds from the MultiHub are placed via the existing seed lines or via a baffle plate in front of or behind the harrows. The MultiHub offers the same number of width sections as the seed drill. The controls are also very user-friendly. The MultiHub control is fully integrated into the user interface of the Isobus terminal as an additional seed line.

COULTER BAR

The Solitaire MR is equipped with the maintenance-free OptiDisc coulters bar with row spacings of 12.5cm or 15cm and features parallelogram-guided double-disc coulters and trailing depth control rollers for absolutely uniform field emergence. To achieve this, the coulters system is available in a hydraulic version (up to 70kg coulters pressure) and a mechanical version (up to 45kg coulters pressure). Both coulters



The combination of the Lemken Solitaire MR top-mounted seed drill and the Zirkon MR rotary harrow can be used for both conventional and conservation tillage.

pressure and seed depth can be adjusted independently of each other and do not affect each other. This is particularly useful in the increasingly popular cultivation of mixed crops, according to Lemken. The correct placement depth for the different crops can be set by applying a separate drilling depth setting to each second row. Seeds are always placed at the same depth, even at high-forward speeds and in changing soils. The depth control roller then presses the seeds down to ensure rapid and even emergence. The distributor heads, which are positioned directly above the coulters bar and do not require a seed return function, ensure excellent transverse distribution.

METERING SYSTEMS

The new Solitaire is equipped with two metering systems. Each of these supplies one distributor with seeds, so that even the basic configuration offers width section or half-width control. A hydraulic tramline mechanism can be added as an option. The Lemken iQblue Drill software supports the work in the field, for example by checking if tramline control is possible. For customers opting for the single or double shot version, the Lemken Solitaire MR comes with four metering units for two width sections each, i.e. each tank is connected to two metering units. This means that each of the two distributors can be supplied with both components (single shot) or each of the four distributors can be supplied with one component each (double shot).

A POWERFUL PARTNER

Successful and high-yielding drilling depends on careful seedbed preparation, which must be adapted to the individual conditions on the farm. Here, a combination with a rotary harrow is often the best solution, says Lemken. When the top-mounted seed drill is mounted on the roller of the new generation of Lemken Zirkon MR rotary harrows, the result is a powerful duo, Lemken says. After analysing numerous field trials and measurements, the new Zirkon MR is now approved for tractors up to 240hp, depending on the working width, and can be used in even more versatile applications. The new mounting system ensures that the working depth of the rotary harrow and the sowing depth of the seed drill are not influenced by each other. This makes it easier for customers to set up the machine to suit their needs. The Zirkon offers even greater convenience with hydraulic adjustment of the levelling bar and working depth. Both the Solitaire and the Zirkon rotary harrow are available now in limited quantities and will be available in series production from 2025.

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A NEW MODEL FOR MERGING SWATHS WITHOUT A CONDITIONER

Pöttinger's Cross Flow mowing technology is now available for the Novacat V 9200. This mower combination features impressively low weight and a low power requirement, according to the company. Feedback from the field was the basis for this development, following demand for a cost-effective and straightforward system for merging swaths. Cross Flow works without a conditioner and is characterised by its low weight compared to conventional swath-merging systems. This technology ensures optimum conservation of the forage and soil, as well as the running costs, thanks to the fuel savings.

And, without a conditioner, the forage is handled extremely gently. Thanks to the closed trough shape, the forage is transported directly from the sward to the swath. This prevents forage losses, minimises dirt ingress and avoids disintegration losses. The Novacat V 9200 CF with Cross Flow auger can be used very effectively on grassland as well as with whole plant silage.



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TWO-MILLION MILESTONE FOR NEW HOLLAND AT BASILDON



In the same year that it celebrates 60 years of tractor production, the New Holland plant at Basildon in England, recently marked the manufacture of its two millionth tractor, the 225hp T7.225.

This is one of the most popular T7 models produced at the Basildon plant. It has received a striking celebration livery comprising 'candy blue' body panels, New Holland silver and black graphics featuring the Union Jack flag of the United Kingdom, and a '2,000,000 Basildon Tractors' logo, plus a New Holland leaf bonnet top. The tractor also features black wheel rims with candy blue rim edges. Carlo Lambro, New Holland brand president said it was a 'major milestone' for the Basildon plant. He added that it was a mark of the dedication of the company's skilled employees there and the loyalty of customers worldwide, to whom, he said, they are extremely grateful. "From the tractors of 1964 to those of today, we have come a long way in capability, capacity and technology, allowing our customers to farm more efficiently. What is unchanged, though, is our commitment at

Basildon and across the whole of our business to continue developing the technology our customers need to sustainably power their farms into the future," he added.

The two millionth tractor will make special appearances during forthcoming events in the UK, and will then be displayed in the customer centre at Basildon, according to New Holland.

SIXTY YEARS IN THE MAKING

The Basildon factory opening in 1964 coincided with the introduction of the new 37-65hp Ford 6X tractor series which was to be made there, meaning the first of the two million tractors were 2000 Dexta, 3000 Super Dexta, 4000 Major and 5000 Super Major models. Within two years, the plant had produced 100,000 of these tractors, and these models later became known generally as the 'Pre-Force' series, following the 1968 launch of the 'Ford Force' 2/3/4/5000 tractors, which saw the long-serving names retired. Just a year later, the factory produced its 250,000th tractor.

In 1984, the 500,000th tractor was made, from the Q-cabbed Series 10 range launched three years previously, which ultimately spanned 44hp 2610 to 116hp 8210 models, introducing developments such as the SynchroShift synchromesh transmission.

Five years later, coinciding with the 1989 launch of the Generation III evolution of the Series 10 range, Basildon produced its one millionth tractor. The year also marked 25 years of manufacturing at the plant, celebrated with the release of special edition Silver Jubilee 7810 tractors.

In 1995, the factory produced its 1,500,000th tractor, a Series 40 model, four years after it came under new ownership following the purchase of the Ford New Holland agricultural equipment business by Fiat, creating today's New Holland brand.

In July 2024 the two millionth tractor rolls out of the production line, marking a memorable milestone for the plant in Basildon and for the New Holland brand, globally.

Today, the plant's production continues to be exported across the world and has grown to include the latest models powered by alternative fuels - such as methane and compressed natural gas. These are products of a recent development at the facility, the Alternative Fuels Centre of Excellence, a specialised R&D department focused on alternative propulsion.



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NEW VICE PRESIDENT A 'HUGE ADDITION TO THE FTMTA TEAM'

Earlier this summer, Maurice Kelly was appointed vice president of the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA).

Having served on the FTMTA's Executive Council for almost 20 years, the managing director of Kelly's Agricultural Machinery (KAM) – more commonly referred to as Kelly's of Borris and Kelly's of Laois – brings a wealth of expertise to his new role according to FTMTA executive director, Michael Farrelly.

"FTMTA is delighted to have an industry professional of Maurice's calibre elected as vice president," he said. "Kelly's of Borris is one of the best-known farm machinery dealerships in Ireland and is the largest Claas dealer in the country, in addition to its JCB, Horsch, Redrock, Smith and DALBO franchises. Maurice will bring a huge level of knowledge and enthusiasm to the role and we're delighted to have him on board."

FTMTA president, Karol Duigenan said: "Maurice is a huge addition to our FTMTA team. Maurice has been running their family's dealership since 1978 and in the interim they have created one of the most successful farm machinery operations in Ireland. So to have someone



Recently appointed vice-president of the FTMTA, Maurice Kelly.

with such a skillset on board is a tremendous development."

Regarding his election, Maurice said: "I am delighted to have been appointed vice-president and am looking forward to working with my FTMTA colleagues in promoting our association at all levels."

Maurice has succeeded Rob Hill, harvester territory manager with John Deere, who is leaving the industry to return to full-time tillage and drystock farming in his native Wicklow, alongside his father.

Paying tribute to Rob, Karol said: "Rob has made a huge contribution to the FTMTA, having served on the

management committee for several years prior to becoming vice-president. He was heavily involved in FTMTA's rebranding and was a driving force when it came to the last two FTMTA Farm Machinery Shows. Everyone at FTMTA would like to thank Rob for his constant support and guidance and extend every good wish to him as he returns to farming."

This year's FTMTA Farm Machinery Show will be held at the PuncHESTOWN Event Centre from Tuesday, November 12th to Thursday, November 14th. To find out more, visit <https://show.ftma.ie/>



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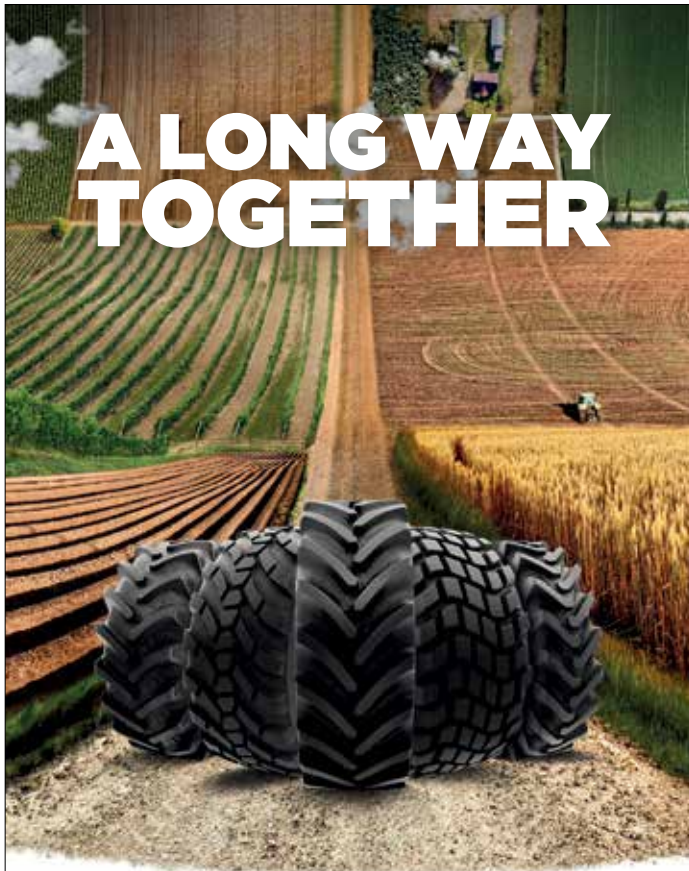
NEW DEDICATED DEALER NETWORK FOR MERLO

A network of dealers for both Merlo agricultural and construction product ranges has been established in the Republic of Ireland.

Effective immediately, Merlo Ireland will be represented by FJS Plant Ltd, in Co. Kildare and Co. Kilkenny; and Jim Power Agri Sales Ltd, Tallow, Co. Waterford.

Additionally, the company is in discussion with another soon-to-be-announced dealer in the southwest of Ireland. This network follows a model that Merlo has already successfully implemented in several European countries and is designed to advance Merlo's market share objectives in key territories, the company said.

Commenting on the development, Paolo Merlo, CEO and president of Merlo Group said: "The Irish telescopic handler market continues to grow year on year, which is very encouraging. As a family-owned and progressive business, we are committed to increasing our presence globally and Ireland is a key part of our future plans". He said the formation of this dealer network ensures that Merlo customers in Ireland will receive the highest level of local support for all sales, parts, and service requirements. General manager, Merlo UK and Ireland, Shaun Groom, said: "Our goal is to provide Merlo customers with exceptional support and service. By partnering with FJS Plant Ltd, Jim Power Agri Sales Ltd, and our third dealer, we are confident that Merlo owners will experience enhanced accessibility to parts, service, and the latest product offerings."



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A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

Agriculture has been the centre of attention over the last month. In the news have been European Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski; Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue; president of the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), Francie Gorman; Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association (ICSA) president Sean McNamara; and Teagasc.

Minister McConalogue announced at the Tullamore show his intention to form a new Commission on Generational Renewal in Farming. Fancy words but put simply, the time has come for an 'honest and absolutely objective look' at farm supports to determine whether they are appropriate to address the present challenges, is how he put it. He said that encouraging young people into agriculture is a global challenge, even with the income supports already in place for young farmers, such as higher rates of grants for capital investment, increased access to finance, and significant agricultural taxation reliefs. Commissioner Wojciechowski is calling for yet more changes to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 2025 including a redistributive payment for sustainable mixed farms; this on top of a raft of EU subsidies and incentive payments.

The IFA president advised that only seven per cent of farmers are under 35, a figure that has more than halved over the last 20 years. Similarly, only 28 per cent of all farms are classed as viable, meaning a staggering 72 per cent of farms are not. All of the above provides little or no incentive for the current and upcoming generations to take over.

The Teagasc Farm Survey declares that the average farm income has dropped by 57 per cent with dairy incomes down 69 per cent. This brings real concerns that farmers may struggle with repayments.

The ICSA president believes the CAP budget must be significantly increased to ensure the sustainability of food production let alone food security. He doesn't know why any young person would want to dedicate themselves to farming when they can see the harsh reality of what they will receive in return.

CHEAP LABOUR

All of the above clearly indicate that we have a major problem in farming now and in future generations. The stark reality is that support structures for agriculture are broken and are not fit for purpose and may not be for some time. The stream of financial incentives are there to keep the food chain supplied; it is a shame that's on the backs of farm families, who are, it seems, a source of cheap labour. Constantly changing incentives do nothing to address the fundamental problem that farmers are not paid a sustainable price for their produce. If they were, why are we paying billions in subsidies? Furthermore, who benefits most from these subsidies; mostly only the very largest of farming enterprises and those who follow farmers in the food production chain.

URGENT REVIEW

An urgent review is needed of how farmers can be paid a fair price for their endeavours –based on the size of their enterprise and taking into account all inputs. The system that allows food processors, supermarket chains, and milk cooperatives to dictate prices is no longer acceptable.

We have a serious problem with the current system of subsidies, and I believe that CAP is not working in the best interest of the farming community. If the EU and national Governments want to reward the present generation of farmers fairly and, in so doing, bring on the next generation, they need to come down from their ivory towers. A solution is required urgently. I could be more blunt, but I don't think it would get past the editor! If my contractor friends think I have forgotten them in this article have another read. If the problem of farmers getting a fair deal is sorted, it will make it easier for you to get a fair price too.

The **Rubin 10** ensures thorough mixing of soil and vegetation, even when cultivating stored grain, maize straw or tall cover crop stands. Thanks to the symmetrical disc spacing, it provides intensive soil even under difficult conditions - even at shallower working depths.

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MESSAGES:

- Are you in charge of where you are going in life? Take control!
- What has restricted grass growth in 2024?
- What things do you need to know to make autumn plans?
- Seek out a Transition Year student for work experience on your farm.
- Achieve autumn grass targets and do the last rotation plan now.
- Address autumn health prevention care.
- Check replacement heifer weights now and act.
- Do a body condition score now – the first of the 'new year'.



By Matt Ryan

ARE YOU IN CHARGE OF WHERE YOU ARE GOING IN LIFE?

» To address this question, I have modified a DairyNZ memo with 15 questions for you to answer and to score yourself out of 15:

1. Do you have a picture of what your life will look like in five years?
2. Do you know how much money you will require for retirement?
3. Do you have a plan to develop your skills for the future (people, technical and financial skills, leisure activities, off-farm options, etc.).
4. Have you a written business plan or list of goals you are aiming to achieve?
5. Do you have a written action plan for the week and month ahead?
6. Do you have a good work-life balance between time spent with family, friends, personal development, leisure, work and business?
7. Do you meet with key people regularly to review and plan your future (partner, other investors, banker, accountant, consultant, valued friend/mentor, etc.).
8. Do you read a lot and meet with motivated people regularly?
9. Do you monitor five to six key farm drivers to maximise farm profitability (grass grown and utilised, six-week calving rate, MS/Kg cow body weight cost and profit per kg MS)?
10. Do you really enjoy what you are doing?
11. Do you regularly evaluate your options?
12. Do you have an appropriate business structure (company, sole trader, succession plan and will)?
13. Do you analyse your business annually and benchmark against top performers (profit monitor for costs and profit/litre, net worth change, debt/cow)?
14. Do you know if you generate enough 'profit' to meet drawings, principal repayments, tax and necessary farm investments?
15. Do you have an annual budget and a monthly cashflow budget which is monitored against actual expenditures and receipts?

INTERPRETATION OF YOUR SCORE. COUNT THE NUMBER OF 'YES' ANSWERS.

- 14-15: Indicates you have absolute clarity about what you want from your business.
 - 12+: Indicates you are pretty well in charge of your business.
 - 11, or fewer: Indicates you would benefit from improving one to two questions raised.
- » In this fast-changing environment, you need to know and plan where you are going:
- It is suggested that 90% of the future is predictable, so don't be 'put off' about not knowing the future.

WHAT HAS RESTRICTED GRASS GROWTH IN 2024?

» To date, grass growth is down on 2023 figures by over 0.5 tonnes (t) DM/ha – some farmers are down by 1.5t.

- The consequences are that more meal has been fed and less winter feed is available.
- » Teagasc has suggested the following as reasons for restricted growth:
- Lower temperatures, particularly, at night.
 - Drying and harsh winds.
 - Lower levels of sunshine.
 - 2023 was one of the wettest years on record, resulting in a 'carry-over' effect.
 - High monthly rainfall to July 2024 (up to 80-100mm per month recorded).
 - Higher levels of spring poaching due to wet and poor grazing conditions resulted in sward damage.
- » Many farmers are blaming protected urea for restricted growth. This is not the case, according to Teagasc, based on their long-running trial comparing different N sources, spread at the same rate, at the same time and under similar conditions.

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 for yourself and statutory time for employed staff on the farm.
- To improve on farm labour efficiency.
 - Work on yourself first.
 - Learn to work with others.
 - Plan your own, your staff, 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 to 33% of a farmer's work year; hence the need to have adequate labour 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 to avail of them.
- » Grassland:
- Every extra tonne of grass DM utilised results in increased profit/ha of €180.
 - Every 10% less grass being fed results in a loss of €97/ha in profit.
 - The target is that 90% of the cow's diet must come from grass and silage grown on the farm.
 - Every extra day at grass results in increased profit of €1.85/cow/day.
 - Every extra day at grass results in an increase of 11kg DM/ha and

- 1.7kg MS/ha.
- For every 1% of milking platform (MP) grazed by March 1, an additional 14kg DM/ha will grow by April 10.
 - For farms where the first rotation will end on April 7-8, at least 30% and 60% of the MP should be grazed by March 1 and 17, respectively.
 - For farms where the 1st rotation will end on April 1, at least 40% and 75% of the MP should be grazed by March 1-17, respectively.
 - At least 60% (70% on heavily stocked farms) of the MP should be grazed by November 1.
 - Every 1kg DM/ha of grass left on paddocks in early November will result in 1.6 kg DM/ha more available in springtime.
 - Every day that the autumn closing date is delayed results in spring grass availability being reduced by 8kg DM/ha.
 - Every extra grazing rotation results in 1,300kg DM/ha being grown.
 - Going from a SR/ha of 2.9 to 3.3 resulted in:
 - Grazing days/ha increasing by 14.2%.
 - Grass utilised/ha increasing by 72%.
 - Extra meal of 140kg DM/ha being fed
 - MS/cow decreasing by 18kgs while MS/ha increase by 113kg.
 - The following yield increases (tons DM/ha) are got by increasing soil indices for P and K from:
 - Index 1 to 2 = 1.5t.
 - Index 2 to 3 = 1t/ha.
 - Index 3 to 4 = 0.5t/ha.
 - Clover, based on Clonakilty results, will increase grass yield by 1.5t/ha and MS by 58 (34 in Moorepark) kg/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).
 - Dead butt (6-7).
 - Bad preservation (2-3).
 - Heating at feed out (2-3).
- » **“The perfect cow” as defined by Moorepark:**
- Has an EBI of €270, 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-cross).
 - Stays in the herd for 4.5 (average) lactations.
 - Aim to have a herd PD of 0.28% F, 0.18% P to achieve 9% solids and + 30kg MS.
 - Produces 450kg milk solids (MS) from 450kg meal (1.0kg per 1kg MS) from a 500kg cow.
 - The target is 1:1:1 (MS/cow: meal/kg MS: cow body weight).
 - Every 1kg MS/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%, six-week calving rate (every 1% less = a loss of €8.22/cow in herd).
- Replacement rate of 18% (every 1% 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. 541kg 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 weight – very, very valuable information for breeding and culling 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 and their replacement heifers. The advantages are:
 - You will know your best cows for mating to the best AI bulls.
 - You will know your worst cows for culling.
 - The real value of your cows in a case of TB.
 - You will be able to identify the high SCC cows in your herd from a bulk milk tank sample – mind blowing technology.
- » **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 February 10-25, 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% 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% and MS by 20% and requires a lead-in period of two to three years to successfully make the transition.**
- » **Mastitis:**
- A case can be made for not dry-cow treating cows with SCCs less than 200k but technique must be perfect.
 - Teat sealed in-calf heifers, four to six weeks before calving, were two to four times more likely not to have bacteria present at milking first.
 - 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 September 1, weanlings and in-calf heifers must be 33% and 73%, 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 farmer €90m per year and, unfortunately, it is predicted to increase due to global warming.

SEEK HELP

- » Having enough help on most farms is an issue and farmers must be proactive in seeking it out.
- » Transition year students can provide a valuable back up and are worth considering if you need help.
- » Perhaps you could contact your local school and offer work experience for a transition-year student. What have you to offer? He/she will learn:
 - A farm is such a wonderful, rewarding and educational working environment – miles better than most situations students will be exposed to.
 - The importance of photosynthesis, as 90% of your income comes as a result of it!
 - The biology of pregnancy and birth of animals; sexed semen, etc.
 - 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 comprise 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.
 - He/she will learn how to milk cows. This will provide the student with earning €50+ per milking by providing 'milking relief' during holidays.
 - I could fill a page but with these and more but you have enough to impress any teacher and student to come to you for work experience.
- » List out in one page the learning experiences you can/will provide for a potential student and give it to the transition year teacher.
 - Make sure you outline your training skills and SOPs, having done so with new staff when they come to you.
- » An app called Plant Snap can help you teach the student the name of weeds and grasses.

ACHIEVE AUTUMN GRASS TARGETS

- » Why manage this? Answered above.
- » To extend the grazing season and have early grass next spring, you must achieve certain levels of grass on your farm this autumn.

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

Date	Stocking rate (cows/ha) on milking platform			Rotation days
	2.5	3.0	3.5	
September 1	300	330	300	30
September 15	450	375	320	35
October 1	400	330	280	40
October 15	350	300	240	40

The rotation length should be 30 days, based on area per day, on September 1 and is calculated as follows:

If you have 100 cows grazing 35ha 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% of farmers stocked at three cow+/ha are well under these targets.
- » If your stocking rate is 3.0 cows per hectare on MP in mid-September, then your average farm cover (AFC) requirement is 990kg DM/ha (3.0 x 330).
- » You will be aiming for highest farm covers in mid-September.
 - But pre-grazing covers (PGC) should not be greater than 2,300kg DM (unless it is after grass); otherwise, quality will be very poor.
 - Rotation length will now be 30 days, increasing by two to three per week,
- » Use the strip wire to ration grass if covers are greater than 2,000kg DM and/or if cows are remaining in a paddock/field longer than 2.5grazings; and/or if weather is wet.
- » Paddocks must be grazed out tight to 3.5-4cm:
 - 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 which animals to move on:
 - Obviously, move R1s and R2s to outside land.
 - Do a milk recording immediately to identify:
 1. High SCC cows.
 2. 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 2-3kg. meal/cow/day (citrus or soya hulls).
- » Unless grass on the strong paddock is excessively heavy, over 2,300kg DM, no cutting or topping should be done in September.
 - It will have a 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 650-900kg 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 (November 1) when you wish to have 60% 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 September 20-30. But most will not be doing so until October 5-10. This allows you maximise the number of grazings.
- » You are now on the second-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:
 - 27kg grass DM in August, worth €2.97.
 - 19kg grass DM in September, worth €2.09.
 - 10kg grass DM in October. Worth €1.10.
 - Autumn grass is worth 11c/kg DM.
 - It is obvious from this that the 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.
 - Protected urea must be the product of choice.
 - You will be applying 0-20 units/N per acre depending on SR.
- » Your last day for spreading slurry is October 15.
- » It would be a good idea to wait between October 1-15 to spread any left-over slurry because the N will make a contribution to grass growth/protection in November.
- » Soiled water or slurry can be used in early October as a source of N.

AUTUMN ANIMAL HEALTH CARE!

- » Prevention of animal health problems is essential to staying in business.
- » Salmonella vaccinations must be done in September. R2s must get second injection before September 15.
- » Weanling replacement heifers (R2s) should be done for leptospirosis now – essential.
- » Take your vet's advice when dosing for stomach and hoose worms as well as fluke.
- » Lameness is becoming a very costly issue on farms. The following causes need to be assessed:
 - Get rid of the causes.
 - Get the FRS in to do a full herd check and treatment.
- » Mastitis is next to infertility as the reason for culling cows.
 - Don't be sympathetic with any cow that has high SCC/mastitis.

ADDRESS REPLACEMENT HEIFER WEIGHTS:

- » Weanling and in-calf heifers (R1s & R2s) should be 33% and 73% of mature weight now, respectively. See Table 3.
 - Animals less than these target weights should get preferential treatment, possibly 1-2kg 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 0.8kg per day from four to six 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 leptospirosis vaccines as advised above.
- » Hoose and stomach worms can be a problem in 1.5-year-olds, so be alert.

Table 3: Liveweight targets* for replacements relative to mature cow weight for optimum first-calving weight. Source: NZ.

Mature cow weight	500	550	600	650
R1 (six months)	150	165	180	195
R1s ADG** (kg/day)	0.63	0.68	0.73	0.78
R2 target weight (kg) 18 months old	350	385	420	455

* Because most R2s are calving down at one year and 11 months, these targets must be 5% better.

** Average weight gain from weaning to six months.

OTHER BITS AND PIECES:

- » It is now too late to reseed – maybe with a push, the first week of September!
- » Tests to be done:
 - Get a soil test done now and spread the required P, K and lime this autumn.
 - Get silage (all pits and batches if bales) tested for feeding value and minerals.
 - Get the vet to take dung samples to decide on dosing programme.
 - Get a milk test so that the vet has information on how to deal with dry-cow treatment (buy the tubes now).
- » Maintenance work and painting should be done.
- » Castrate male weanlings now.

Quote for the month

"Control your own destiny, or someone else will."

Jack Welch



ICMSA

THE FAMILY FARM ORGANISATION

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Denis Drennan
President ICMSA

ICMSA

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

It is almost the cliché of clichés and was most famously articulated by Roy Keane over 20 years ago in Saipan – ‘fail to prepare, prepare to fail’.

It speaks to the certainty that the absence of a plan almost guarantees failure in whatever endeavour in which we are engaged. The idea that we can do things successfully ‘on the fly’ or ‘off the cuff’ is a myth and the lingering belief that it is possible is actually more destructive than real incompetence.

Well, I believe we’ve been making up our current agri and farm policy ‘as we go along’ and it’s been an unmitigated disaster. I am not accusing Charlie McConalogue of being incompetent; he’s not and we believe he always acts in good faith. Minister McConalogue’s problem is not his commitment or his intentions; his problem is precisely that lack of a plan to which we refer. Where are we now; and where are we going? No-one has answered that. Actually, in ICMSA’s opinion, no-one has even asked the question!

It’s now eight months since I had the honour of being elected President of the Association. At that stage, I thought I understood the sense of ‘drift’ and aimlessness that was crippling our one flagship sector. I regret to tell you that it is only now that I have come to appreciate the full degree of confusion and lack of destination that permeates our sector at every level.

I repeat: where are we now and where are we going? Does anyone in the Department know? If they do, can they

share it with the rest of us? And, if there is a plan, who contributed to it? Who assembled it? What was the context? What was the mission the plan was set to address? Were the Co-ops asked their opinion? Were the meats plants? We would be very curious to know. The only absolute certainty is that the farmers were never asked.

Every aspect of Irish farming and primary food production now appears to be in deep trouble. We lurch from crisis to crisis: inputs, fodder, high interest rates and low prices, inflationary land prices, threats to Derogation, cynical manipulation of cattle prices, unfit-for-purpose schemes, animal disease and the half-hearted responses, and jaw-dropping generational and farm succession problems. The number of Leaving Cert students selecting Agriculture as the first preference for Level 8 Courses is down by 16 per cent, while the CAO is reporting that Round One offers for agricultural courses is down by 11 per cent. The next generation is taking one look and saying: “thanks, but no thanks.”

And all this to a relentless barrage of negative publicity and barracking from a bewildering chorus of environmental quangos and ‘activists’ all tucked-up nicely on public funding and Government grants. That, my friends, is more-or-less where we are now and it doesn’t really help to pretend otherwise.

ICMSA is not scared of any of these challenges. We’re not nervous; we’ve seen off much more formidable opponents than the ones we hear on

the radio or read on social media who’ve never milked a cow but somehow know everything there is to know about our lives and practices. We’ll take care of our end of the debate and you members need never worry that your opinions and interests won’t be represented. ICMSA will be there and representing you with the same vigour and

commitment that we’ve demonstrated for almost 75 years. Our efforts and commitment won’t lessen – and they weren’t the problem anyway. The problem here is the lack of a plan; the lack of any understandable and agreed-upon idea that ‘we are here, and we need to get over there by (A) 2030 and we need to be there by (B) 2035’.

That’s why we have called for a full Irish Farm & Agri Summit to be held early next year after the General Election, which appears ‘nailed on’ for this winter. ICMSA is convinced that we need all parties and responsible farm organisations sitting down for a prolonged period (this won’t be done in a week) and only emerging when we have a plan that details where we are going, by when, and in what stages. Such a roadmap is desperately required, and we will push whoever is in Government at the year’s end to set up such a summit. No more ‘making it up as we go along’. No more ‘playing by ear’. Everyone has to know where we are going; and everyone has to know what they have to do to get there. There’s been a cost to not having a plan and the costs has been paid, almost exclusively, by the farmers.



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MATT O'KEEFE
EDITOR

A CASE OF CULINARY MISAPPROPRIATION?

An intriguing menu caught my eye during a visit to the Dublin Horse Show last month at the RDS. The Bandlawn Grill featured pulled Tandoori 'vegan lamb' on its menu, which caused some discussion around the nature of the lamb, its provenance, and diet before being served up on tzatziki-coated flat bread with mango relish. Appetising as the description of the lamb-referenced offering was, we opted instead for the chuck rib and beef burger with all its attendant adornments, including chorizo, pico de gallo, mayonnaise and provolone cheese. It proved to be a very tasty choice and just about worth the €10.50 price tag, even if a well-dressed burger is usually somewhat cheaper at less salubrious locations. But then, location is everything and there seems to be a general expectation that big ticket events involve higher-than-normal expenditure on food and drink. The provolone cheese, incidentally, is Italian.

OVER-DESCRIPTIVE MENU CREATION?

Anyway, back to the vegan lamb. Could I be assured that the lamb was actually meat and not some alternative vegetable-based composition masquerading as the real thing? In the absence of such reassurance and making an assumption that the lamb in question once bounded across the Connemara hills or some other suitable lamb-rearing terrain, the question arises as to what makes a lamb vegan. Is it just a case of over descriptive menu creation? Sheep, generally, are herbivores, so any reference to confirm that the lamb had not enjoyed a carnivorous diet prior to its demise, seems a

little unnecessary. On the other hand, if the contents of the menu offering are, in fact, not meat-based at all, then the description is equally disingenuous.



A menu at the recent RDS Dublin Horse Show featuring 'vegan lamb'.

We hear a lot about cultural misappropriation in relation to dress, hairstyle or other adoptions. Is culinary misappropriation a valid accusation? When is a burger not a burger? And, could a burger with a non-meat-based filling be a valid case of culinary misappropriation. There are any number of purveyors of non-meat offerings that seem to believe their products need a meat-related reference to attract consumers. I often wonder why this is the case. Since consumers who purchase these non-meat-containing alternative foods

presumably have an aversion or at least a mild dislike for meat products, or just want an alternative to a meat offering, it seems a little peculiar, even weird that they should be attracted to a product that has the appearance and nomenclature of being a meat-rich product, while containing no meat whatsoever.

Although I have heard it explained that these familiar terms like burger and make it easier for consumers to understand how to incorporate such foods into a meal. A burger is well understood but a plant-based disc, maybe not so much.

Perhaps the situation can be compared to an alcohol-free drink. The pint looks like the original, it tastes, almost, like the original, but it differs in one material aspect. It contains no alcohol. Is an alcohol-free gin still a gin since, by definition, gin is an alcohol-based drink? Ditto lager, stout and other alcohol-associated beverages. Apart from their increasing popularity and profitability, the advertising of alcohol-free beverages under well-known brand names has proven useful in avoiding Government-imposed advertising bans on alcoholic products in various media. The brands, long associated with alcoholic drinks, can be displayed on billboards and sports pitches, while the companies remain within the letter, if not the principle, of the ban on alcohol advertising. Despite my efforts to get clarity, it is still not clear whether the vegan lamb product was sourced from a lamb reared on a vegetation-based diet or was, itself, entirely composed of vegetative matter. I wonder, does it really matter?



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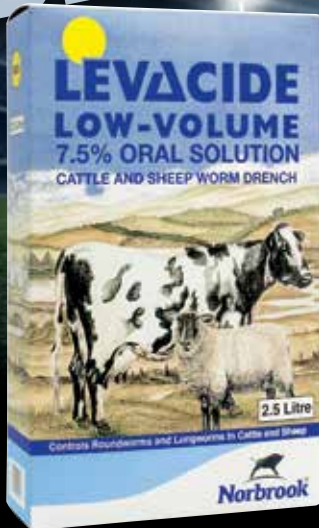
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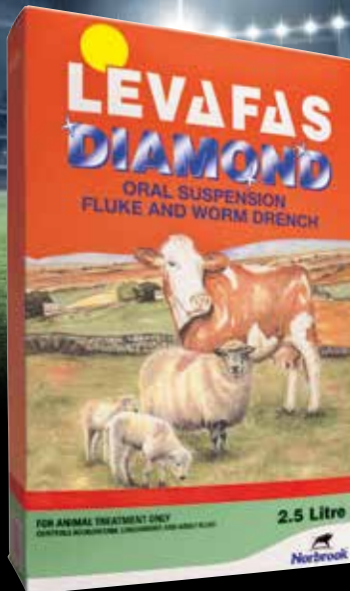
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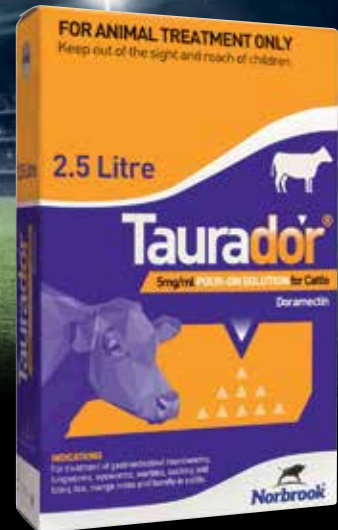
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