



Irish Grassland Association



Happy Christmas

Newsletter Issue No. 18 December 2012

“to advance the knowledge of good grassland management in Irish Farming”



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Irish Grassland Association President's Address



Deirdre Hennessy
President of the Irish
Grassland Association
2012/13

Dear Member,

This year has been another busy year for the Irish Grassland Association with a large number of members attending a range of events. The final national event, the Student Conference and Farm Walk, was held in October. Bridget Lynch provides a comprehensive review of the event on page 14. This was the third year that this event was held. This year's event had three excellent papers in the morning which stimulated a lot of discussion with the student delegates and gave them food for thought for their college courses and indeed their future careers. In the afternoon, the students had the choice of visiting Kevin and Richard Murphy's dairy farm or Cathal Creen's beef farm. The lively discussion continued on the farms. Many thanks to the speakers and the host farmers for giving their time to those who will play an important role in the future of farming and agricultural in Ireland.

As 2012 draws to a close we have an opportunity to reflect on the last 12 months. This year has been challenging year in terms of weather and grass growth and utilisation and is one that I am sure many would rather forget. However, the difficulties of the past year will continue in to the winter in terms of feed supply for livestock and indeed cash flow on the farm and in homes, causing stress and worry for many people. On page 20, there is a very useful article with some helpful advice for anyone under pressure. It is important that we all help each other and watch out for each other in any way we can. In planning for next year, cash flow budgeting should be a key consideration. Have you previously made a New Years Resolution to operate a cash flow budget only to abandon it after a few weeks, or indeed never start it? On page 8, Peter Young outlines 12 simple steps to cash flow budgeting, and he has even included a simple cash flow budget sheet. Maybe this year the New Years Resolution can be kept!

Regional Development Officers have played a key role in the Irish Grassland Association over the last few years. If you are interested in joining the team have a look at the article on page 5 for more information.

Our first event of 2013 is just weeks away. On the 8th of January the 2013 Dairy Conference will take place at the Clonmel Park Hotel. The theme of this years conference is '**Back to Basics**' and we have a very exciting line up of speakers. Michael Bateman's article on page 16 has more information.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a happy and peaceful Christmas, and a prosperous 2013. I look forward to meeting you at some of our events in 2013.



Deirdre Hennessy

President of the Irish Grassland Association 2012/13

Regional Development Officers



Deirdre Hennessy
President of the Irish
Grassland Association
2012/13

The Regional Development Officer Role was conceived following the 2007 review of the Irish Grassland Association. In 2009 the decision was made to recruit a Regional Development Officer (RDO) to help grow the Association's membership. The objective in creating this role is that through having more local contact with members the Irish Grassland Association will become increasingly relevant to all farmers who have an interest in improved grassland management. Initially Donal Callery was recruited to work as a RDO in the North East of the country. Donal ran a number of free entry local events and through these events and the promotion of the Irish Grassland Association at discussion groups and other events membership numbers grew quite significantly in that area. Subsequently Anne Marie Flanagan and Gerard McBrien were recruited in the South East and Midlands, respectively. Both Anne Marie and Gerard ran a number of events in their areas and attended discussion groups and national events, and consequently through their hard work and dedication membership numbers in both their regions have also grown.

The RDOs play a very important role in growing membership in areas where the Irish Grassland Association previously had a limited presence. As the membership of the Association grows this role is evolving. The recently launched Irish Grassland Association Five Year Plan outlines the importance of continuing with the policy of recruiting RDOs to work in different areas around the country to strategically recruit new members and to provide local activities and events for existing members.

What is the Role of a Regional Development Officer?

The RDOs main focus is in development rather than as service providers. That means that while the RDOs grow membership in their areas, it is also very important that the Association has local low cost events for the members in the region. It is not possible to host a national event in each region of the country in anyone year. However, local events, often free of charge or for a small fee, boost the activity of the Association in an area. Events that have been held by RDOs over the last three years have included reseeding, low cost grass production, grass measuring work shops, succession planning workshop and financial management workshops; all of which have proved very successful.

Are you interested in working with the Irish Grassland Association as a Regional Development Officer?

To build on the success of the RDOs in the North East, Midlands and South East, the Irish Grassland Association is now actively seeking to recruit a RDO for both the South West region and the West region of the country. The role would involve raising the profile of the Association in the regions through events such as those previously mentioned, recruiting new members and working with the members in the region. The RDOs will receive support from the Irish Grassland Association Council and each year one council member is appointed to mentor and work with each of the RDOs. The RDO position is part time.

If you are interested in applying for the RDO position in either the South West or the West we would love to hear from you! You can apply for the position by emailing a CV and cover letter to Maura at secretary@irishgrassland.com. If you would like more information on the role please contact Deirdre Hennessy at deirdre.hennessy@teagasc.ie.



IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2012

Eddie O'Donnell, Irish Grassland Association Vice President and Deirdre Hennessy, Irish Grassland Association President



Padraig French
Past President of
the Irish Grassland
Association 2011/12
and Teagasc Moorepark

The 2012 AGM of the Irish Grassland Association took place at the Maldron Hotel, Portlaoise on the 18th September. This is a central event in the Irish Grassland Association calendar in which all members get an opportunity to see and become involved in the operation of the Association. All members are entitled to put their name forward for election onto the council of the Association at the AGM. The Council is made up of 21 elected members. These council members work on a voluntary basis to organise all of the events and activities of the Association and are elected to the council for a three year term. This year's AGM saw six members put their name forward for election. It is a great reflection on the Association that people are willing to give up of their time to voluntarily work on the Council for the benefit of all members. A number of members retired from the council having served the Association greatly for many years including two past presidents, John Donworth and William Kingston. The Association owes these a great deal for the work they have done, particularly their vision for restructuring of the Association and the development of the previous five year plan.

At the AGM this year we also installed Eddie O'Donnell, a dairy farmer from south Tipperary, as vice president of the Association. Eddie was formerly Macra 'Young Farmer of the Year'. Bridget Lynch has been re-installed as editor of the Irish Grassland Association journal, and IFAC have been re-installed as auditors of the association.

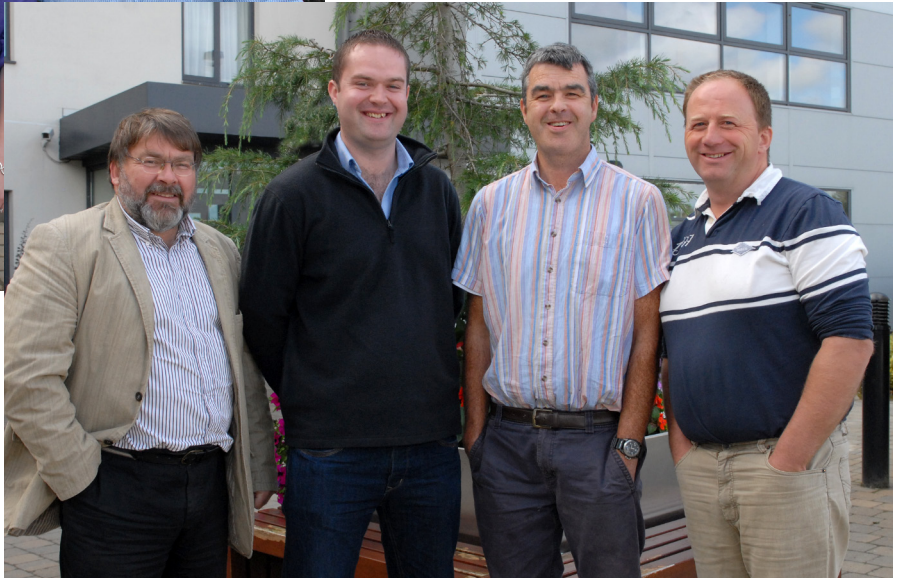
The AGM was also my last day as president of the Association and I would like to thank all of those who helped to make the year a success. During the year we held eight major events at which over 1700 delegates attended and grew membership of the Association by 9%. The Association has now a strong foundation and we have just completed a new five year plan to guide the direction of the Association. I would finally like to wish Deirdre Hennessy every success as President of the Association.



L to R: William Kingston (Retired Council Member), Deirdre Hennessy (Irish Grassland Association President) and John Donworth, (Retired Council Member)

Some of the newly elected members to the Irish Grassland Association Council 2012-13

L to R: Dermot Grogan, Philip Creighton, John Noonan, Michael Bateman



NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR THE IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION LIFETIME MERIT AWARD 2013



Paddy O'Keeffe
Award Winner 2009



Dr. Sean Flanagan
Award Winner 2010



Dr. Pádraig O'Kiely
Award Winner 2011



Norman Bateman
Award Winner 2012

The Irish Grassland Association Lifetime Merit Award was established in 2009 to acknowledge the unique life contribution of an individual to the understanding and application of grassland husbandry and technology. This prestigious award is a public endorsement on behalf of our Association and its members, to the great and important contribution made by this individual to our industry and lives.

If you would like to nominate a person for this award please email your nomination and a justification to secretary@irishgrassland.com before 31st January 2013.



OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW



Peter Young
Irish Farmers Journal

How's your current account? Is it more that it should be or less? After the year we have had many people are finding that they have much less cash in the current account this December. The weather has had a massive impact this year. Lower output has reduced the money flowing in and higher costs have increased the money flowing out of your account. The arrival of the balance of the Single Farm Payment was quickly used to pay existing bills. Many farmers make a New Year's resolution to manage their cash better. While you can't plan for a year like last year having a cash flow to compare against allows you to react quicker and make better managing decisions.

If you are serious about making your New Year resolution stick you have to do two things:

1. Go over last year and input it into the template. It will allow you see how cash flowed into and out of your farm account and identify how much you will have left at the end of the year. It will also make the second thing easier.
2. Follow the twelve steps to fill out a predicted cash flow for 2013

Twelve simple steps to fill out a farm cash flow

A cash flow budget is just a month by month breakdown of when money comes in and when it goes out of the farm. Armed with one you can quickly see when money will be tight and when bills can be paid.

STEP 1

Know why you are doing it? Filling out a cash flow budget is to allow you to see when money will flow in and when it will flow out of your current account. It's not to compare you against any other farmer. It is a way of avoiding nasty surprises and it will most certainly allow you to plan better in the months ahead.

STEP 2

Set it up. You can do it on a piece of paper simply by putting the months along the top and using a different line for each heading down the side. Use the template on the next page. If you can use a computer the cash flow in the form of an Excel sheet can be downloaded for free from the IFJ website www.farmersjournal.ie and join up for 'operation cashflow' where there are templates for cash flow, net worth and a lot more. It is very simple and it does all the additions and subtractions for you. Of course there are plenty of more advanced ones available like the Teagasc cost control planner if you want to get into more detail. Sometimes simplicity is the key to getting it done.

STEP 3

Start with what you know. At the start of the year these are the payments which will definitely come in. They will be your Single Farm Payment, any REPS payment and disadvantaged area payments. There could be some variation as to when they come in but in most cases it is best to put down when they were put into your account last year.



STEP 4

Work out your incomings. Dairy farmers should estimate the volume of milk they will sell and the price. Cattle farmers you should draw up a selling plan for the year. Most suckler farmers sell in September through November. You know the numbers so you have to make a call on what month you will sell and how much you are going to get. You can go on the prices you got last year or change them if you think they will be different.

Tip A word of encouragement – just make your best guess-estimate. It will not really matter if you get the month you sell or the sales price slightly wrong. If anything it is better to be conservative when setting prices.

STEP 5

Tackle your expenses – There are two ways to do this. If your system is the same you can go by your expenses last year (I said step one makes it easier), although they should be less as hopefully we will not get a year like last year again. They can be tweaked if you think fertilizer prices will be up or down. The biggest issue is identifying the difference between when you buy and when you actually pay. It is only when you pay for inputs that it has an impact on your current account. So put in the amount for the contractor in the month you expect to pay him. I know mine tends to wait until October/November to be paid but others will want payment sooner. The same can be said for merchants, although letting these bills build up is costly due to the high interest they charge. Try to work through each heading and identify what the cost you are expecting.

Tip Use last year's invoices/chequebook to guide you but consciously work out if it will be lower or higher this year.

STEP 6

Look through your old bank statements. This will pick up any direct debits you have going straight out of your accounts. This could be ESB, accountancy payments and can be filled in for this year.

STEP 7

Identify farm loan repayments and any new loans you will be taking out for the farm this year. Your old bank statements will identify existing loan repayments. Check interest rates to see if they will be the same this year.

STEP 8

Include drawings – Estimate how much you will need to live and put this in as a monthly expense.

Tip Some farmers have a separate bank account from which they pay a sum into for drawings in each month.

STEP 9

Step back. Once you have done it look at how the money flows in and out on a monthly basis. The easiest way to visualise this is to set up a graph that lays it out. I have done this on the excel spread sheet (www.farmersjournal.ie – operation cashflow). For many suckler and tillage farmers the first half of the year is the hardest as there is little money coming in.

STEP 10

Act on the picture – With a full picture you now have to act on what it spells out. The first question you need to ask is if you are going to breach your farm overdraft even for a short time? Banks have become unforgiving on this so you need to meet them to either extend an overdraft or arrange a credit line. A credit line will be a cheaper option than trying to rely on merchant credit.

STEP 11

Make it a habit – Once you have set up your cash flow budget you should look at it at the end of each month. Your predictions can be replaced by the actually payment you got in for that month and the cheques you paid out. It can also tell you the payment you will be making next month. For example if you had the contractor down to be paid in July and he was not you know that he will be looking to be paid in August. You just move that payment into August and see the difference it makes.

STEP 12

Ideally a cash flow budget should be done at the start of each year and as well as a net worth statement. It will not be precise but it will definitely give you a clearer picture for the year ahead and in what direction your business is going.

Annual and Monthly Budget (€)	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Beef sales				
Cull cow sales				
Sheep/lamb sales				
Other Income (hay,standing crops,tillage)				
REPS/Organic				
Disadvantaged Area Scheme				
Single farm payment				
Total Income	0	0	0	0
Fertilizer				
Seed and sprays				
Purchased feed				
Vet med AI				
Wages and casual labour				
Levies, insurance, transport				
Machineary leasing				
Conacre/Land leasing				
Fuel				
Machinery repairs				
Contrcator				
Repairs and Maintenance				
Light, power, telephone, car				
Interest				
Professional fees (Group, consultancy)				
Miscellaneous				
Stock Purchases				
Loan repayments				
Income Tax payments				
Pension Fund				
Living Expenses				
Total Expenses	0	0	0	0
Monthly surplus/deficit	0	0	0	0
Current account	0	0	0	0

IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION - NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2012

Irish Grassland Association Council & Staff



Deirdre Hennessy
President
Grassland Research Officer Teagasc



Eddie O'Donnell
Vice President
Dairy Farmer



Maura Callery
Office Manager



Andrew Cromie
IGA Council Member
Geneticist ICBF



Bridget Lynch
IGA Council Member
Lecturer
Grass & Forage UCD



Philip Donoghue
IGA Council Member
Dairy farmer



Padraig French
Past President 2011/2012
IGA Council Member
Head of Livestock systems
Department & Dairy Enterprise Leader



Adam Woods
IGA Council Member



Darren Carthy
IGA Council Member
Irish Farmers Journal



Pearse Kelly
IGA Council Member
Beef specialist
Teagasc



Tim Keady
IGA Council Member
Research Scientist Teagasc
Athenry



Michael Bateman
IGA Council Member
Dairy farmer, Cork



Dermot Grogan
IGA Council Member
Crop Evaluation and
Certification,
Dept. of Agriculture



Robert Prendiville
IGA Council Member
Research Officer, Livestock
Systems Department, Teagasc



Karen Dukelow
IGA Council Member
Teagasc Beef Specialist



Pat Weeks
IGA Council Member
Dairy farmer



Bernard Ging
IGA Council Member
Suckler to beef farmer
Member of the BETTER farm
programme



Paul Crosson
IGA Council Member
Research Officer
Teagasc Grange



Michael Macken
IGA Council Member
Dairy Farmer



Philip Creighton
IGA Council Member
Grassland Research Officer
Teagasc



Padraig Mulligan
IGA Council Member
Dairy farmer



John Noonan
IGA Council Member
Teagasc, Mayo



Heinz Eggert
IGA Council Member
Suckler to beef farmer
Member of the BETTER
farm programme



John Fagan
IGA Council Member
Sheep Farmer



Anne-Marie Flanagan
IGA Regional
Development Officer
Dairy Farmer



Donal Callery
IGA Regional
Development Officer
Farm Manager/Consultant



New members to the council

Dermot Grogan

Dermot is responsible for operations of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's national herbage variety trials. With headquarters at Crop Variety Evaluation and Certification, Backweston Farm, Co. Kildare, the herbage team evaluate new candidates, and existing commercial varieties, of grass and white clover at five locations (Fermoy, Piltown, Athenry, Raphoe, Backweston), and publish an annual Grass and Clover Recommended List for Ireland. <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/publications>

Prior to joining DAFM in 2007, Dermot worked as a sugar beet breeder and seed technologist with Irish Sugar Ltd, and previously had experience with seed potatoes, field beans, herbs, agricultural construction, start-up businesses, and as a liaison officer with the IFA.



Philip Creighton

Philip is a grassland researcher based in Teagasc Athenry. His role focuses on investigating grass production and utilisation within sheep systems through the use of optimal technical efficiency in relation to grassland and other management practices. He is the researcher in charge of the new Sheep Research Demonstration farm in Athenry. Philip graduated from UCD with an Animal and Crop production degree and completed a PhD at Teagasc Moorepark investigating the impact of varying levels of perennial ryegrass content on sward production potential and also completed work looking at the effect of alternative reseeding methods. Philip comes from an active sheep farming background in Wicklow.



Robert Prendiville

Robert is a Research Officer in the Livestock Systems Department, at the Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc, Grange, Dunsany, Co. Meath. His research includes dairy calf to beef production systems and suckler systems. The focus of his research is to establish blueprints of production that are profitable to beef producers and to validate the maternal index for suckler cows. A further objective of these research programmes is to disseminate the results generated from the studies onto beef farms.



Adam Woods

Adam Woods comes from a farming background in Co. Cavan. Having been brought up on the family farm he pursued his studies in Agriculture completing a Degree in Agriculture in UCD in 2004. He then completed a Masters Degree in Animal Physiology specialising in Early Embryo Development in Cattle under Professor Pat Lonergan at Lyons Research Farm. Upon completing this he then took up employment with Teagasc in Monaghan in 2006 where he worked for three years as an advisor prior to his appointment in January 2009 to the Teagasc/Irish Farmers Journal BETTER farm beef programme. Over the past four years he has worked closely with the BETTER demo farmers to help them drive profitability on their beef business. The programme has been a resounding success with all of the farmers involved making huge progress in the past four years. Adam is also a council member on the Irish Charolais Cattle Society where he takes a keen interest in breed development.



Michael Macken

Michael Macken was co-opted on to the Council of the Irish Grassland Association in 2012. Michael is a dairy farmer near Slane in Co. Meath.

Retiring Council Members



Donal Coleman
IGA Council Member
Head of Division and Senior
Inspector DAFF



John Donworth
IGA Council Member
Dairy Specialist
Teagasc



William Kingston
IGA Council Member
Dairy farmer



John Kelly
IGA Council Member
Sheep Farmer



Frank O'Mara
IGA Council Member
Director of Agriculture
Research Teagasc



Ger Murphy
IGA Council Member
Suckler to weanling farmer
Member of the BETTER
farm programme



IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION STUDENT CONFERENCE REVIEW

L-R Ciaran Lynch, Speaker (Teagasc), Brian Costello, Speaker (Farmer), John Kelly, IGA Student Conference Chairman and Andrew Cromie, Speaker (ICBF) and IGA Council Member

On Monday 1st October the Irish Grassland Association held its third consecutive national Student Conference in Gorey, Co. Wexford sponsored by FBD. This is the only national conference for students studying agriculture in Ireland and the idea was conceived by the Irish Grassland Association three years ago as the association felt there was a need to provide a conference and farm walk for students only to give them an opportunity to learn and interact with the agricultural industry's top farmers, advisers and industry leaders. Most importantly it provides the agricultural student community with an opportunity to air their questions, views and opinions on current affairs in the dairy, beef and sheep sectors.

The morning conference chaired by Co. Wicklow sheep farmer and former Irish Grassland Association Council Member John Kelly had an excellent line up of speakers from each of the sectors:

Expansion in dairy – proceed with caution

Brian Costello, Dairy farmer and consultant, Boyle, Co. Roscommon

New Euro-Star indexes for Irish beef farmers

Dr. Andrew Cromie, ICBF

Adopting technology: experience from the BETTER Farm Sheep Programme

Ciaran Lynch, Teagasc BETTER Sheep Farm Programme



Bridget Lynch
Irish Grassland
Association Council
Member and UCD

Brian Costello's talk was well described by his title and through his experiences of expansion on his own farm from 2002 to now and as a dairy consultant in Ireland and the UK he warned the young audience that quotas are not going, they are just being redefined, output will be limited post 2015 by how many cow walking hectares each farm has on its milking platform and more specifically how many tonnes of grass DM can be grown and utilised on each of those hectares. Brian also questioned the reasoning for current expansion on many farms and advised that efficiency should be sought first and then expansion considered once personal and farming goals have been seriously thought through. Brian encouraged the students to embrace and implement new research and technology on farms as change is inevitable and those who adopt first will prosper faster.

Andrew Cromie gave an update of the new maternal and terminal beef indexes that have been launched by ICBF. The new indexes are the culmination of over six months work, involving extensive research by ICBF, Teagasc and Abacus Bio New Zealand, industry consultation meetings (some six meetings in total) and test evaluations including industry feedback. The work was overseen by a stakeholder group of 14 people from ICBF, Teagasc, industry and farmers and was chaired by Michael Doran, beef farmer and vice-chairman of ICBF. There are three major changes as a result of the new indexes. Firstly the Suckler Beef Value will be removed and replaced with three new economic indexes. These are; (i) a new maternal index (for suckler farmers wishing to identify bulls/cows for breeding replacements), (ii) a terminal index (for suckler farmers wishing to identify bulls/cows for breeding cattle for sale/slaughter) and (iii) a dairy beef index (for dairy farmers wishing to identify bulls for breeding cattle for sale/slaughter). Each of these indexes will be presented in Euro-Star format. In addition, the various economic sub-indexes (e.g., calving, weanling export, slaughter, maternal milk and female fertility) will also be removed and instead replaced with seven key profit traits. These are; (i) calving difficulty, (ii) docility, (iii)

carcass weight, (iv) carcass conformation, (v) daughter calving difficulty, (vi) daughter milk, and (vii) daughter calving interval. Each of these traits will be presented in their units of measurement. A third significant change is the use of a new economic model, the Teagasc farm systems model, to derive the economic values (and weightings) for the various traits within the relevant economic indexes (maternal, terminal and dairy beef).

Knowledge transfer and the variability in adoption of new technology is a major concern across all sectors. Ciaran Lynch's talk centred around the experiences of the BETTER Farm Sheep Programmes experience of technology adoption on sheep farms. Key points from Ciaran's talk were that the sheep industry needs to adopt technology to meet the targets outlined in Food Harvest 2020, however, research has shown that technology will be adopted at different stages by producers within an industry. Greater use of the BETTER Farms is needed to facilitate technology adoption by the wider sheep industry and through this programme key areas have been identified (Flock size and stocking rate, breeding policy, breeding management, ewe management, grassland management, lamb performance, anthelmintic control and farm layout) where improvements could be made and how the use of certain technologies could facilitate this being achieved. Promisingly Ciaran showed that real gains in productivity and profitability have been made in the BETTER Farm Sheep Programme.

Questions and discussion during the morning conference included: Where is the support for expanding dairy farmers to improve milking parlours and infrastructure going to come from, processors, industry or farmers? What is the likely timescale of progression of a commercial suckler herd from 2* to 5* through Durostar? What are the most important technologies that can be adapted at farm level to increase profitability of sheep farms?

The momentum of discussion and lively debate was carried through to the afternoon on the farms of Cathal Crean, Beef BETTER farmer, Gorey and Kevin and Richard Murphy's, Teagasc monitor dairy farmer, Corriganeagh, Gorey. It was an ideal time for the student group to visit Cathal Crean's farm as he has recently completed phase 1 of the beef BETTER farm programme and is continuing with phase 2. Cathal owns 74 ha of grassland and 23 ha of tillage and rents 4 ha of grassland and 10 ha of tillage. Cathal has increased the suckler herd from 65 cows in 2008 to 100 cows at present. All progeny are finished on the farm with bulls finished at 18-20 months and heifers at 20-22 months. The tillage enterprise provides feed and straw for the beef enterprise and fits into a continuing reseeding and drainage programme of grassland. Breeding goals, fertility targets, heifer and bull production systems and performance targets, grassland management, bull beef finishing strategies and diets were covered throughout the afternoon. The take home messages were clear and simple:

- A three year plan gives focus and purpose and streamlines the system
- Breeding towards a functional cow, i.e. calving ability, produce a quality calf every 365 days, high milk production and good temperament.
- Improved grassland management is achievable through reseeding, drainage, a paddock system layout and monitoring pre and post grazing targets to increase utilisation of grass on the farm.

Brothers Kevin and Richard Murphy farm 250 cows and are currently moving away from a liquid milk contract to an all spring calving herd on two separate milking platforms within six miles of each other. One hundred and one cows are milked and all replacement heifers are reared by Richard in Ballycanew. The farm walk focussed on Kevin's herd of 151 cows in Corriganeagh and included financial and cow performance, breeding performance, grassland management and future goals. Stocking rate on the milking platform is at 2.65 LU/ha. In 2011 11.25 t DM/ha was grown with the grazing season stretching from partial turnout in February to housing on the 15th November. Zero grazing is operated when necessary and 27 units of N are applied after each grazing. The main breeding goal on the farm is to produce the ideal cow, i.e. easy to manage, efficient and one third Jersey and to maintain current milk yield of 5700 litres and 8% milk solids. Kevin is also working towards improving herd fertility, reducing the calving interval and increasing herd EBI which currently stands at €114 of which €41 is milk and €65 is fertility. There are five major working goals on the brother's farm:

- 100% spring milk production
- Increase to 300 cows which is an expansion of 20%
- Improve breeding policy to address fertility and milk solids via EBI
- Continue to increase the proportion of grazed grass in the diet
- Continue current reseeding programme of 15% of the farm every year

The event was attended by 250 including students from UCD, Waterford IT/ Kildalton, Clonakilty and Ballyhaise Agricultural Colleges and Dundalk IT associated lecturers, speakers and Irish Grassland Association members. The event was kindly sponsored by FBD, who have just announced a three year sponsorship deal with the Irish Grassland Association for the annual Student Conference.

**THANK
YOU
TO OUR
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IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION 2013 DAIRY CONFERENCE – ‘BACK TO BASICS’



Michael Bateman,
Irish Grassland
Association Council
Member and Dairy
Farmer

The Irish Grassland Association's 2013 Dairy Conference will take place on the 8th January at the Clonmel Park Hotel, Co. Tipperary. This year's event has a very exciting line up of speakers covering a range of topics. The conference will focus on many of the 'basics' of Irish dairy farming – grass, soil fertility and cow fertility. These topics are timely and will give food for thought for those preparing for the post milk quota era. The conference will have four sessions with two or three papers in each session, with plenty of time for questions and discussion.

The first session is '**Ensuring maximum production from cultivars sown on farm**'. Growing and utilising large quantities of grass on farm are key components of profitable milk production systems. Sowing the most productive and persistent grass cultivars is hugely important in ensuring high quality, productive and persistent swards. In the first session of the conference Dermot Grogan from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will discuss how cultivars are evaluated for use in Ireland and Dr. Mary McEvoy, Teagasc Moorepark will outline how the Grass Selection Index will be used to assist in the decision making required around cultivar selection in the coming years.

Key to growing grass on farm is soil fertility. Volatile input and product prices mean that soil fertility is sometimes not top of the priority list. However, as the dairy industry focuses more on low cost grass based production systems, managing soil fertility to achieve optimum soil pH and nutrient availability is crucial. The session '**The benefits of getting soil fertility right**' will include the approaches required to ensure optimum soil fertility, as well as the importance of devising a fertiliser plan to manage and improve soil fertility at farm level. Stan Lalor, Teagasc Johnstown Castle, will outline the investment required to achieve optimum soil fertility and the return that can be expected from this investment. Aidan Brennan, Teagasc Moorepark, will share his thoughts on managing soil fertility to grow 18 t DM/ha while Connor Creedon will discuss how he is addressing declining soil fertility on his farm.

Dairy cow fertility continues to play a key role in the sustainability of dairy production systems. The first of the afternoon sessions, '**The benefits of getting cow fertility right**', will focus on achieving good milk production while maintaining high fertility on farm. George Ramsbottom will put facts and figures behind

the statement that 'optimising fertility will increase production and therefore profit'. Also in this session Lawrence Sexton will outline how and why he is aiming for high fertility within his own herd.

Later in the afternoon the conference focus changes slightly to look 'In to the future'. In this session the role of the Irish Grassland Association in supporting Irish research through a new EU funded project examining the role of automatic milking systems in Ireland will be outlined and Dr. Bernadette O'Brien, Teagasc Moorepark, will present an update on the automatic milking system at Moorepark. Rhys Williams, a dairy farmer and Nuffield Scholar from Cefnamwlch Tudweiliog in North Wales, will present a paper on expansion through multiple units which could be an option for Irish dairy farms to grow the dairy farm business should the opportunity arise. Rhys has come from a 10 acre farm in north Wales to be a 50:50 partner on a 1400 cow operation on rented land, and will share his experiences and provide food for thought for farmers thinking of expanding!!

The Irish Grassland Association are delighted to have Pfizer Animal Health as sponsor for this event. This is the fifth year that Pfizer Animal Health have sponsored the Irish Grassland Association Dairy Conference.

The number of places for this event is limited, therefore early booking is strongly encouraged and admission will be by registration only. By registering before Thursday, 20th December, you can avail of our 20% pre-paid discount registration fee of €40 for Irish Grassland Association members and €80 for non-Irish Grassland Association members. This includes refreshments on arrival, two course dinner, and conference proceedings. Non-members will also receive one year's free membership to the Irish Grassland Association if they wish to become a new direct debit member. Further information is available at www.irishgrassland.com or by calling Maura on 087 9626483.

So, if you are thinking of attending, then book today and don't miss out on these excellent offers!

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END OF YEAR REVIEW – GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT OF THE UCD LYONS ESTATE RESEARCH FARM DAIRY

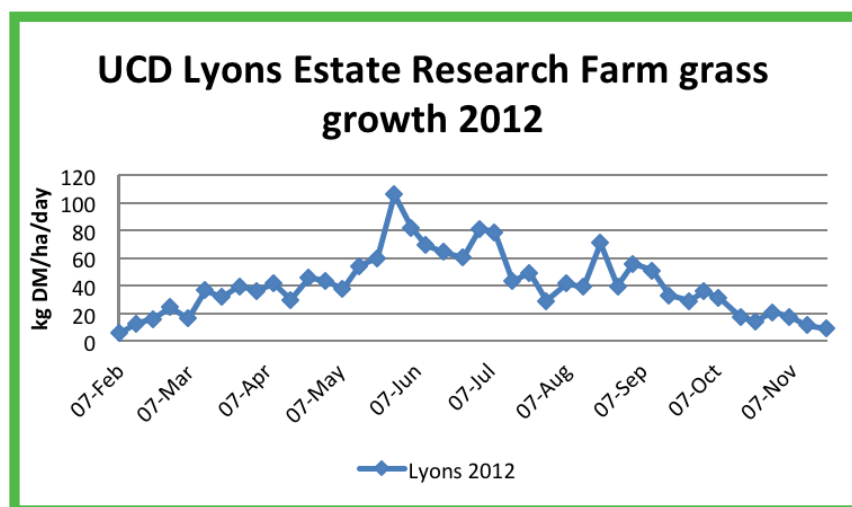
Bridget Lynch and Michael Clarke

UCD Lyons Estate Research Farm

The UCD dairy herd consists of approximately 100 Holstein-Friesian dairy cows producing on average 7,500 litres on 1.25 t of concentrate, 1.0 t of silage (grass and maize silage) and grazed grass. The dairy herd supplies milk for the liquid milk trade, approximately 22% of the herd calves in the autumn period (September/ October so that the freshly calved cows can remain at grass for a few weeks before housing) with the remainder calving in the spring period. Though the UCD herd is operating at a relatively high level of input and milk production there has been a big effort in recent years to maximise the grass that is available on the farm through improved infrastructure, soil testing, reseeding, grass measuring every week and matching grass supply to the demand from the herd. The grazing platform is 33 ha and therefore currently operating on a stocking rate of approximately 2.9 cows/ha. The herd is used firstly for teaching purposes to support the degree programmes in the UCD College of Agriculture, Food Science and Veterinary Medicine and secondly as a research facility for the university.

Grass on the dairy platform is measured every Tuesday morning by dairy manager Michael Clarke via a manual rising platometer and the covers are entered into the Agrinet programme to generate a wedge and for the first and last rotation of the year a spring rotation planner and an autumn 60:40 planner, respectively. Graph 1 shows the grass growth curve for 2012 on the milking platform. Like most farms around the country grass growth and utilisation conditions were excellent for early turnout, however, that was the end of the good fortune and the rest of the year from early summer has been extremely challenging. There were periods of mid-summer where we had relatively high levels of grass growth, however soil and weather conditions were not conducive to using that grass. Surpluses were an issue with paddocks not trafficable

at times to take out for baled silage. Maize silage was introduced when required as a buffer feed from July 30th to help maintain condition and build autumn farm cover. Maize silage is grown on the farm under plastic film. The 2011 crop was harvested on 6th October and had a good feeding value, 34% DM, 12.4 MJ/kg DM and 37% starch. However, the 2012 crop was not harvested until the 23rd October due to difficult harvesting conditions and the feeding value is expected to be back on last year, samples are currently being analysed.



Graph 1 Grass growth curve in UCD Lyons Estate Research Farm 2012 on the milking platform.

The following is a summary of our grazing statistics for 2012:

Average grass grown: 11.5 t DM/ha
N input: 170 kg /ha
Best paddock: 15 t DM/ha
Worst paddock: 9 t DM/ha
Housing date: 21st November
Closing farm cover: 574 kg DM/ha or 207kg DM/cow
Range in closing paddock covers: 1250 – 233 kg DM/ha

There had been little to no reseeding on the dairy ground up to 2008 since then 5-10% of the grazing block has been reseeded on an annual basis. Paddocks for reseeding are chosen based on growth performance, quality and requirements to address poaching/uneven ground. We have used various reseeding methods from full plough-till-sow to min-till methods (discing/ gutler/ direct drill/ stitching in). As the farm carries a substantial tillage enterprise we are fortunate to be able to pick and choose a reseeding method depending on the year (weather conditions) and existing sward. This year 4.34 ha were reseeded after the August bank holiday by spraying off, grazing with sheep, rolling, sowing seed with the Fiona seed barrow and rolling again with the Vaderstad Rexus roller with Cambridge rings and "breaker" rings interspersed. As it was a wet year we were not fearful of poor germination and establishment, as can be associated with min-till and dry conditions in August, and the paddocks have taken very well and have been grazed by the cows to encourage winter tillering. Usually the seed mixture consists of three perennial ryegrasses and a white clover blend chosen from the DAFM National Recommended List with characteristics for good spring and autumn growth, digestibility and sugar content, however due to the infestation of docks two years post reseeding in other paddocks we have excluded clover from the mix at reseeding and will over sow with clover once the docks have been eradicated post establishment. This year two paddocks were sown with a blend of Tyrella 4 kg, Kintyre 4 kg, Aberchoice 4 kg and these varieties were also sown as monocultures for demonstration purposes for students and as part of the on farm evaluation for the Teagasc grass economic index.

Table 1 shows the chemical composition of the grass silage made on the farm in 2012. It is important to note that this is not just made from the dairy grazing ground but also from grass leys in the tillage rotation. A mixture of hybrid ryegrasses and red clover were sown in 4.45 ha of grass ley in 2011 and this has contributed bulk and quality to the silage that is made on the farm. These swards are not grazed by the dairy cows and are grazed by the sheep and beef stores animals in early spring and late summer/ autumn.

First cut silage was made in the only good spell of weather in summer 2012 on the 27th May and together with a lot of the silage ground being relatively new it resulted in good quality silage compared to the national average this year. The general policy on the farm is to plan to cut last week in May in order to make silage of good quality though sacrificing a bit on quantity. This ultimately was a very wise decision as the second cut analysis in table 1 reflects the poor weather and harvesting conditions that continued through summer 2012.

The plan for grazing season 2013 is to get cows out to grass by day in February once there is sufficient farm cover, continue measuring and budgeting and fine tuning the balance between daily allocation and grazing residual with this type of herd and continue the reseeding programme!

Table 1: Chemical composition of first and second cut silage UCD Lyons Estate Research Farm 2012

	First cut	Second cut
Cut date	27th May	14th July
DM	34.6	20.7
pH	4.1	4.0
Ammonia (% total N)	10.0	15.0
Protein (%DM)	13.8	12.6
ME (MJ/kg DM)	11.2	10.2
DMD (%DM)	74	66



YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR WEALTH

There is no doubt that 2012 has and continues to be one of the most testing years on record for Irish farmers. Weather conditions during the summer months led to difficult grazing conditions, reduced animal performance and in many cases problems in harvesting fodder. There was little reprieve with poor grass growth and unfavourable weather bringing the winter in much quicker.

While farm gate prices have held relatively stable, rising costs quickly eroded the gains in market values. The net effect of all these factors is higher costs and most likely reduced farm incomes. There are few farmers that have not been affected. This has greatly increased the pressure on the farming community and while you may not be directly affected, there may be farmers close by that are feeling the strain of a difficult year.

It is important to remember that while problems may seem overwhelming there are many places where help can be obtained. Problems that appear at first to be unmanageable can often be rectified quite easily. Acting quickly is the best starting point. Talk to a friend, neighbour or someone you can trust.

We are never afraid to enquire about physical health but we are all guilty of being slow to broach the subject of how a person is coping mentally. A physical ailment may be easy to spot, however mental health issues are not so much. While you may be lucky enough to be on a steady course, others around you may not be so fortunate. Be mindful about your neighbours and especially farmers or the elderly who live on their own. Don't be afraid to make the first move; all that may be required is a listening ear.

There are also numerous organisations on hand to deal with a range of problems from worries such as fodder shortages to financial difficulties. For example, Teagasc are currently running fodder shortage clinics while all offices have advisers that can help to put plans in place to overcome these shortages. IFA has produced a leaflet Let's Talk – dealing with stress that provides useful tips for coping with stress. Below is a list of useful contacts where advice can be obtained.

Your health and wellbeing As farmers we frequently put our own health at lower priority than our livestock. A health check is rarely considered with doctors seen as the last port of call. Remember, you are a vital cog in the wheel that keeps your business and your family functioning. Consider a yearly health check at a minimum and also take into consideration health and safety aspects on your farm.

Useful contacts

The IFA National Farm Family & Social Affairs Committee stress leaflet can be found on the website at www.IFA.ie or by contacting Head Office on 01-4500266. A full list of county representatives can also be found at www.ifa.ie. **IFA Farm Credit Helpline 1890924853**. This service is helping farmers to assess and deal with their financial difficulties.

Aware 01-6617211 or 1890303302 or e-mail info@aware.ie. This organisation provides support and assistance to those suffering from depression and their families.

Your **Mental Health.ie**. This is a website developed by the HSE that helps raise awareness and understanding of your own or others mental health problems.

