



Irish Grassland Association

Newsletter Issue No. 22 December 2013

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



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CORPORATE MEMBERS 2013



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Contact the Irish Grassland Association office today...**

Cookstown, Kells, Co. Meath, Ireland.

www.irishgrassland.com

General Information: secretary@irishgrassland.com

Tel: (087) 96 26 483 Opening Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9 am - 5 pm

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Irish Grassland Association President's Address



Eddie O'Donnell,
President of the IGA
and Dairy Farmer

Welcome to this edition of the Irish Grassland Association Newsletter. The lifetime merit award has proven to be great addition to the IGA calendar and we are now looking for people to be nominated for the award. The closing date for nominations is the 28th February.

On page 5, the second recipient of the IGA Student Bursary in 2013, Sara Vero, reports on the conference she travelled to and the topic for her PhD.

We have a brief description of the new council members that were elected at this year's IGA AGM, namely David Cummins, Emer Kennedy, Jan Jensma and Rosalyn Drew on page 7. There were also the five members re-elected to council, namely Philip Donohue, Padraig Mulligan, Heinz Eggert, Páidí Kelly and Robert Prendiville. We currently have two co-opted members to the IGA Council. Tommy Moyles who is a beef farmer and features in our farmer focus on page 12 has recently joined council. Ronan Delaney is a sheep and beef farmer and has also joined the Council.

On page 9 we have a short description on the six people who retired from Council at our 2013 AGM. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their contribution and commitment to the IGA during their time on Council.

On page 10, dairy farmer and Nuffield Scholar, Joe Leonard from Co. Meath, has a very interesting article for farmers dealing with managing stress on farms and reminding farmers of their importance to their farm business. This is a very worthwhile read with plenty of advice.

Our next event is the annual IGA Dairy Conference which takes place at the Newpark Hotel in Kilkenny city on Tuesday 7th of January. The conference is titled "Getting things right pre 2015" and is kindly sponsored by Zoetis. The conference is previewed on page 14. This year we have a new addition to the Dairy Conference. On the morning of the 2014 Dairy Conference, there is an opportunity for IGA corporate members and members to meet at a breakfast gathering. Tom Clinton will be the guest speaker at this breakfast gathering and will outline his thoughts on 'Opportunities for corporate entities post 2015'.

On page 16 we have an article featuring the Bothar charity. The article gives a good description of the charity and the workings of it since it was founded in 1991. Bother is an excellent organisation providing relief for many families across poorer countries.

The IGA is currently in the process of redesigning our website and we would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused during this time. We will have the new website ready early in the New Year.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our members and their families a happy and peaceful Christmas and a prosperous 2014. I look forward to meeting you at some of our events in the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

Eddie O'Donnell

Eddie O'Donnell

President of the Irish Grassland Association 2013/14

NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR THE IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION LIFETIME MERIT AWARD 2014

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 the recipient to our industry and lives. Previous winners of this award are Paddy O'Keeffe, Sean Flanagan, Padraig O'Kiely, Norman Bateman and Seamus Hanrahan.

We are now seeking nominations for the 2014 Lifetime Merit Award. If you would more information on this Award please contact Maura on 087 9626483. If you would like to nominate a person for the award please email your nomination and justification to secretary@irishgrassland.com before 28th February 2014.



Paddy O'Keeffe
Award Winner 2009



Dr. Sean Flanagan
Award Winner 2010



Dr. Padraig O'Kiely
Award Winner 2011



Norman Bateman
Award Winner 2012



Dr Seamus Hanrahan
Award Winner 2013

Student Bursary



Sara Vero,
Teagasc,
Johnstown Castle

Report on the ASA/CSSA/SSSA Annual International Meeting, Tampa, Florida

During the 3-6th of November I had the very great pleasure of attending the ASA/CSSA/SSSA Annual Meeting, held in Tampa, Florida, thanks to the generous travel bursary awarded by the Irish Grassland Association. The theme of the meeting was 'Water, Food, Energy and Innovation for a Sustainable World' which encompasses the wide range of disciplines within agricultural science contributing to the on-going challenge of addressing the growing demand for fuel, food and fibre while maintaining environmental health. I am a first year PhD student and so it was a fantastic opportunity to attend and present at such a high profile international conference. My work is on calculating the time-lag occurring between application of nutrients to the soil surface and groundwater contamination on a site-specific basis; an issue which has serious implications for Irish grassland farmers under the Nitrates Directive. I gave a poster presentation and also competed in the graduate

student lighting oral competition in which students are challenged to present their research in just three minutes using no more than two slides. This was a real test of my presentation skills and I would definitely recommend taking part to other postgraduate students. The conference was a very valuable opportunity for me to get feedback on my work from so many prominent researchers, including several whom I had referenced and whose own research had provided the foundation for mine. The advice I was given will help guide my project over the coming months.

In addition to my own presentations, I attended some excellent and informative talks. The soil physics and phosphorus transport sessions were outstanding. There was also a large exhibition which included universities, publishers, lab and field equipment manufacturers and a careers centre. There were opportunities for networking, not just within the poster sessions, but also in the less formal lunches and mixers organised by the various societies. The highlight of the conference, for me, was to attend a talk given by Dr Daniel Hillel, whose pioneering work on drip-irrigation has had far reaching effects on the fertility of arid regions across the world, and whose textbooks have helped to educate so many soil scientists.

Tampa itself was lovely, with temperatures in the mid-twenties which was a welcome change from the chillier weather we've had here. I stayed in Ybor City, which is known as Tampa's historic district and which was originally a prosperous cigar manufacturing area. Cuban food is a local speciality, particularly shrimp and there was no shortage of great restaurants in the area.

I would wholeheartedly recommend that any student of agricultural science attend the meeting if possible. Not only does presenting at an international conference as an early stage researcher look great on a C.V., but it is an unparalleled opportunity to network and get the advice of leading scientists from all over the world.

Without the bursary provided by the IGA it would not have been possible for me to attend this excellent conference, for which I am extremely grateful.



Irish Grassland Association Council & Staff



Eddie O'Donnell
President
Dairy Farmer



Paul Crosson
Vice President
Research Officer, Teagasc Grange



Maura Callery
Office Manager



Deirdre Hennessy
Past President 2012/13
Grassland Research Officer Teagasc



Andrew Cromie
IGA Council Member
Geneticist ICBF



Bridget Lynch
IGA Council Member
Lecturer
Grass & Forage UCD



Philip Donoghue
IGA Council Member
Dairy farmer



Jan Jensma
IGA Council Member
YARA



Adam Woods
IGA Council Member
Teagasc BETTER Beef
Farm Programme



Darren Carthy
IGA Council Member
Irish Farmers Journal



Rosalyn Drew
IGA Council Member
Drummonds



Paidi Kelly
IGA Council Member
Teagasc Moorepark
and Irish Farmers Journal



Michael Bateman
IGA Council Member
Dairy farmer, Cork



David Cummins
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



Tommy Moyle
IGA Council Member
Beef Farmer



Bernard Ging
IGA Council Member
Dairy Farmer, Laois



Emer Kennedy
IGA Council Member
Teagasc Moorepark



Ronan Delaney
IGA Council Member
Sheep 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



Donal Callery
IGA Regional
Development Officer
Farm Manager/Consultant



John Graham
IGA Regional
Development Officer
Beef Farmer



Maire McCarthy
IGA Regional
Development Officer
Dairy Farmer



Noreen Begley
IGA Regional
Development Officer
Dairy Farmer

New council members elected at recent AGM



David Cummins

David graduated with a B.Agr.Sc. degree in Animal & Crop Production from UCD in 2001 and completed an M.Agr.Sc degree in Crop Science in 2003. He joined the Department of Agriculture in 2005 and worked in the Potato Centre, Tops, Raphoe, Co. Donegal for a year and a half before moving to the Official Seed Testing Laboratory in Backweston Campus, Celbridge, Co. Kildare in 2006, where he was deputy head of the laboratory. His duties there included seed health testing, quality assurance/accreditation and general seed testing, dealing primarily with cereal and grass seeds. In 2010 David was a personal member of the International Seed Testing Association and represented Ireland at the 2010 ISTA Congress. In 2013 David moved to Crop Evaluation & Certification Division of the Department and is now based at Ballyderown Farm, Kilworth, Co. Cork in the herbage evaluation section which implements the National Crop Evaluation Programme for grasses and clovers. His main duties include the organisation of National List and Recommended List grass and clover trials at the different trial sites around the country and analysis of trial data.



Emer Kennedy

Emer graduated from UCD in 2003 with a B.Agr.Sc. in Animal and Crop Production. Following this she went to Teagasc, Moorepark to undertake a PhD under the supervision of Dr. Michael O'Donovan. She completed her PhD which was entitled 'Increasing the proportion of grazed grass in the diet of the spring calving dairy cow in early lactation - the effects on milk production performance, grass dry matter intake and subsequent sward characteristics' in 2006. Since then Emer has been working on grazing management studies in Teagasc Moorepark. Her most recent grazing management work area has focussed on the effects of post-grazing sward height on both animal and sward production. In 2008 Emer began work on rearing replacement heifers and now has a large programme of work in progress which focuses on rearing the new born calf right up to the pre-calving stage.



Jan Jensma

Jan, who is from a farming background, was born in Slane, Co Meath but moved to Co Louth after he married in 2007. He has two children, Isabel and Owen. Jan studied Agricultural Engineering in Tralee and completed his studies with a degree in Agricultural Engineering from Silsoe College in England. During his studies he worked for various large scale farmers and after qualifying he worked for a number of years in the machinery industry in both the UK and Ireland. More recently he has worked in the retail and wholesale Agri supplies sector. Jan recently joined Yara's solid and speciality fertiliser sales team in Ireland who are currently developing their market in the Republic of Ireland to complement their already strong market position in Northern Ireland and the mainland UK.



Rosalyn Drew

Rosalyn grew up on a dairy, drystock and tillage farm in Co. Meath. With her background in farming, she went on to study Agricultural Science in UCD and graduated with a degree majoring in Animal and Crop Production in 1996. Upon graduation, Rosalyn was employed by her current employers Drummonds Ltd. as an agronomist specializing in grass seeds and grassland management. She has full responsibility for the marketing, sales and development of this area of Drummonds business. As grass plays such a huge part in the productivity of Irish grassland farms, Rosalyn's objectives are to continually source varieties of grasses that can meet the demands of farms today and in the future. Six years ago, Rosalyn attained an MBA qualification from DKIT and this has greatly enhanced her understanding of running a business.

New co-opted members



Ronan Delaney

Ronan Delaney farms in Co. Meath. The farm is mixed sheep and beef with sheep being the dominant enterprise. Ronan is a member of the Irish Grassland Association and is a regular attendant at the IGA Sheep Conference and Farm Walk. He is young and enthusiastic about sheep farming and is keen to become involved in discussions at walks or at seminars.

He is also a coordinator of the Meath Lamb Producer Group and has a good group of farmers working around him. He is also a committee member of the Belted Galloway Association. This experience and a keen interest in increasing output from grass makes him a good addition to the Council of the Irish Grassland Association.



Tommy Moyles

Tommy Moyles farms in West Cork where he manages the cattle enterprise on the family pig and beef farm. The herd consists of 60 spring calving Simmental cows.

He is currently Chairman of the Clona Beef Discussion Group, a Nuffield Scholar sponsored by Meat Industry Ireland, and former Munster Vice President of Macra na Feirme. These experiences and Tommy's interest in profitable grass based beef production makes a Tommy a good addition to the Council of the Irish Grassland Association.

Retiring Irish Grassland Association Council Members



Dermot Grogan

Dermot works with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Dermot was involved in grass variety evaluation for DAFM for 5 years, and while aware of the Irish Grassland Association's activities and importance in encouraging improvements in grassland productivity, he says that his short period really impressed him with the amount of excellent work that goes into organising and providing relevant and up-to-date information to members. In 2013 Dermot presented details and first results of the recently introduced 'simulated grazing' cutting protocol from DAFM's National List/Recommended List grass evaluation trials at the Dairy Conference in Clonmel. A work transfer closer to home means that Dermot is no longer involved in grass variety evaluation. However, his interest in grassland continues, as he is now involved in DAFM's environmental support schemes. This allows him the opportunity to walk all types of grassland, from recently reseeded pasture, through good quality permanent pasture, rough grazing, 'Traditional Hay Meadows', 'Species Rich Pasture' to bogland! Dermot also will continue as a research partner with a small European project looking at the performance of 'Festulolium' (Ryegrass × Fescue) grass varieties. Dermot served on the Council of the Irish Grassland Association for 2 years.



John Fagan

John is a full time sheep farmer in Westmeath. He farms 1100 ewes and 125 beef cattle on 180 ha. He is an advocate of finishing all stock off grass with limited bought in feeds. John graduated from UCD in 2001 with a degree in Agri-Business and Rural Development, and in 2002 he won a Nuffield Scholarship where he highlighted the lack of traceability in South American Beef production. Having travelled extensively, John believes that efficient grassland management can reap massive benefits for Irish farmers whether in beef, sheep or dairying. John found his time on the IGA council hugely interesting. He hosted an Irish Grassland Association reseeding demonstration on his farm and spoke at the student conference in 2011 and at the sheep conference in 2012. John says he really enjoyed being on the IGA council as it brought him into contact with go ahead, positive people; a place any right thinking person wants to be when there can often be a lot of doom and gloom. John feels strongly that anyone pursuing a career in farming should consider membership of the IGA a must, and he looks forward to lifelong membership of Association. John served on the Council of the Irish Grassland Association for 3 years.



Tim Keady

Tim is a Research Scientist at Teagasc Athenry and has undertaken research on many aspects of sheep production including lamb production from grazed grass, extended grazing, grass silage feed value, maize silage production and utilization, shearing strategies, increasing lamb birth weight, finishing lambs, nutrition of the pregnant ewe, factors affecting ewe lifetime output, breeding ewe lambs, ewe genotype, grazing alternative forages. Previously Tim was Head of Beef Research at Hillsborough and Lecturer at The Queens University of Belfast where he developed and implemented a market-led research programme on topics such as suckler cow genotype, terminal sire breed, bull beef production, lifetime performance, concentrate feeding, beef from the dairy herd, alternative forages, beef production from grazed grass, winter feeding and factors affecting meat quality. Prior to that he spent 13 years undertaking research in dairy production, both at Moorepark and Hillsborough where his research included methods of altering milk composition, transition cow management, systems of dairy production, prediction of food intake, consistent production of high feed value grass silage, prediction of silage feed value prior to ensiling, role of alternative forages for dairy cows and cow genotype. Tim is a firm advocate of Technology Transfer and has addressed scientific, technical and producer conferences on many aspects of dairy, beef and sheep production in Ireland, UK, Europe, USA and South America. Tim served on the Council of the Irish Grassland Association for 6 years.



Pat Weeks

Pat Weeks joined the Council of the Irish Grassland Association in 2010. Pat is married to Olive and they have five children. They live in Kilfinane, Co Limerick. Despite Pat having qualified and worked in engineering, Pat and Olive decided to concentrate on full time farming in 2007. A thorough evaluation of their circumstances by this able duo led to an expansion of the farm which is still very much in progress. Today the Weeks family milk 145 mainly jersey cross cows on the 50 ha milking platform. All replacement stock are reared on outside blocks from where silage is also harvested. Firmly focused on the right cow and the right grass the intention is to milk 180 cows stocked at 3.5 cows/ha producing 400 kg milk solids/cow. Achieving these targets will require high grass utilisation per hectare, achieved through measurement and targeted annual reseeding. The Weeks Family hosted the Irish Grassland Association Dairy Summer Tour in 2010. Pat served on the Council of the Irish Grassland Association for 3 years.



Padraig French

Padraig French is a Past President of the Irish Grassland Association. He was President of the Association in 2011/12. Padraig is Head of the Livestock Systems Department and is Dairy Enterprise Leader at Teagasc, Moorepark. His research has included dairy farm systems, low cost wintering systems, grassland management and animal nutrition. Padraig served on the Council of the Irish Grassland Association for 12 years.



Pearse Kelly

Pearse Kelly is a Past President of the Irish Grassland Association. He was President of the Association in 2008/09. Pearse is Head of the Drystock Knowledge Transfer Department in Teagasc. He previously worked as a Teagasc Cattle Specialist, and before that he lectured in Kildalton Agricultural College. His main priorities in his current role focuses on the importance of beef and sheep discussion groups and increasing the beef and sheep output on drystock farms. Pearse served on the Council of the Irish Grassland Association for 13 years.

Re-elected Council Members



Philip Donohoe

Philip was re-elected to the Irish Grassland Association at the 2013 AGM. Philip is a Past President of The Irish Grassland Association (2010/'11). Philip is married to Michelle and they have two children, Katie and Jack. Philip is dairy farming near Goresbridge on the Carlow/Kilkenny border, where he milks 75 cows and rears dairy replacement heifers for sale on the 48 ha family farm. His farming system is very much a simple one which is grass focused and concentrates on maximizing the amount of quality grass grown and eaten while delivering the best and most suitable genetics to harvest this grass.



Heinz Eggert

Heinz was re-elected to the Irish Grassland Association for a second term at the 2013 AGM. Heinz is from Sherlockstown, Sallins, Co Kildare. He is originally from northern Germany but is living and working as a Farm Manager in Ireland for the last 28 years. He is married to Maeve and they have two children, Mary Anne and Sean. Heinz manages Sheplands Farm, a 70 ha all grassland beef farm where he runs the Sherlockstown Herd which consists of 100 Limousin Cross Suckler Cows. All progeny are kept for replacement, store and beef. The farm also has a small number of pedigree Limousin cows to breed stock bulls for the farm. The aim is to run the farm as efficiently and profitably as possible by using the best genetics available, and through well planned grassland management to achieve high live weight gains of grass.



Pdraig Mulligan

Pdraig was re-elected to the Irish Grassland Association for a second term at the 2013 AGM. Pdraig has been a member of the Irish Grassland Association for the last 30 years. He took over a mixed farm from his father in the early 1970's. At that time he was milking one cow, today he milks over 700 cows. Pdraig feels strongly that it is important to share his experiences with other farmers as he has done over many years and the Irish Grassland Association provides an opportunity to do that.



Paidi Kelly

Paidi was co-opted onto the Council of the Irish Grassland Association in 2012, and elected to the Council for a three year term at the 2013 AGM. Paidi Kelly worked for the Irish Farmers Journal in the role of Dairy Specialist for 18 months before commencing a PhD at Teagasc Moorepark in December 2013 studying potential farm business structures for the Irish dairy industry. His role in the Journal has provided Paidi with a great insight into a variety of issues affecting Irish farmers and also the development of media skills. Paidi is very active in the running of the home farm where his parents are milking 70 cows outside Nenagh in Co. Tipperary. He is co-facilitator of the Green Shoots discussion groups which has fifteen members aged between 22 and 28 years of age. Paidi started working for the Irish Farmers Journal directly after qualifying with a First Class Honours degree in Animal Science from UCD in May 2012. As part of his work experience during his degree he spent four months in New Zealand where he worked with the national research and advisory agency for dairying, DairyNZ, and also on a 1,200 dairy farm during the calving season. Paidi is passionate about grass and he has been a member of the IGA since 2009.



Robert Prendiville

Robert was co-opted onto the Council of the Irish Grassland Association in 2012, and elected to the Council for a three year term at the 2013 AGM. Robert is a beef researcher at Teagasc, Grange. His research includes dairy calf to beef and suckler systems. He is currently project leader on three studies at Grange; dairy bull beef production, early maturing dairy cross heifer and steer production and validation of the new maternal index for suckler cows. Robert studied Agricultural Science in UCD and thereafter completed a PhD at Teagasc, Moorepark where his work focused on Jersey crossbreeding in the dairy herd. Topics pertinent to this research included comparative production performance, reproductive efficiency, feed efficiency and economic analysis of Holstein-Friesian, Jersey and Jersey x Holstein-Friesian cows. After his PhD he began to work in beef research at Johnstown Castle and is now based at Teagasc Grange. His research work is very much focused on optimising animal production from low input pasture based production systems.



Páidí Kelly
IGA Council Member
Teagasc Moorepark
and Irish Farmers Journal

We would like to thank The Irish Farmers Journal for this photo.

There is nothing more important on a farm than the farmer Joe Leonard, Dairy Farmer, Co. Meath

Joe is a dairy farmer in Meath. As a member of the Navan Discussion Group he led the group project they did last year looking at stress levels in farming. He was also this year awarded a Nuffield Scholarship and will study the topic of coping with stress on farms.

'Condition Scoring', is a phrase most farmers are familiar with. It is one way we use for assessing how healthy our cows are and how well they are prepared for the season ahead. It always becomes very topical towards the end of the milking season in spring calving herds like my own – drying the cows off at the correct time to allow them put on enough condition for next season is essential. As well as gaining condition cows get enough time to rest and build up strength in preparation for the 'stresses' of the season ahead. Farming inevitably results in a stress on man and beast but can we make changes to reduce stress levels and improve how we cope?

At this time of year farmers need to look at their own well-being as well as that of their stock. This includes both physical and mental health. As a full time dairy farmer managing 300 cows and a number of fulltime staff I know how important it is for me and the team to have a quiet period on the farm. It is essential to build up our own energy reserves for the busy periods ahead and improve our own 'Condition Score'. The physical challenges of farming can be very tough but they can usually be offset by a period of rest – often a few good nights' sleep is all that is needed.

It is the mental stresses of farming that can be much harder to overcome. These stresses can follow us into the house in the evening, prevent us from sleeping properly, cause us to constantly worry, and in severe cases can lead to very tragic outcomes. Often coping with the stresses and mental worries of farming can be much harder to deal with. Learning how to manage our stress levels and our mental health is not on the agricultural education curriculum, we are taught how to manage grassland, how to manage cows and rear calves, etc. Instead as farmers we teach ourselves to be very resilient and self-reliant, but it is these very qualities that help us with the physical aspects of farming that prevent us from asking for help when we need it most - in dealing with our own personal problems.

Having a quiet period on the farm is, I feel, vitally important – it gives me the time to spend with my family to enjoy ourselves, to relax, to reconnect and to strengthen our relationships. This building of positive emotions and self-esteem is very important in helping me get through the busy periods ahead. When things get very stressful having that 'reserve' of positive emotion and self-esteem really helps carry me through no matter how tough life gets.

Over the last two years the Navan Discussion Group have undertaken our own study to identify what causes the 15 of us stress on our own farms and to what we can do to reduce these stresses. Amongst other things we undertook four, week long surveys on each farm, across the course of the year to identify any seasonal variations in what might be triggering stress. The first thing we found was that the group members were working on average nearly 70 hours a week across the year – at nearly twice the hours of the average unionised working week, is this really 'sustainable farming'?

It's not surprising then that some of the top stress triggers identified in our group study were 'fatigue and lack of sleep', 'lack of personal time', 'time management' and 'paper work and regulations'. The poor weather conditions of 2012 and spring 2013 were also highlighted unsurprisingly as a major trigger for stress. A lot of the stress came from problems relating to the prolonged bad weather and the extra workload and greater time required in dealing with day to day management. There are only so many hours we can sustain in a working week. If we are working at close to our maximum most of the time just to get by, then when something happens to put extra pressure on us severe stress is the inevitable result.

As a group we found that working closer to 60 hours a week seems to be more sustainable and this has been achieved through various means such as:

- Changing working routine/practices
- Using hired labour more, e.g. evening relief milkers
- Doing time management / labour studies on farms

Or even by committing to an activity off farm such as helping out at your local sports club so that you have to be off farm at a certain time.

I believe that as farmers we need to realise our importance to our businesses. We must accept that we are the single most important component in the success of our farms - we vaccinate cows to prevent disease, we service our machinery to prevent it from breaking down, likewise we need to respect our own physical and mental health and be serious about looking after it.

We are all different just as our farms are all different and as such we all have different tolerance levels for things such as work, ambition and stress; what suits our neighbour does not always suit us. During this quiet period we can reflect on our own businesses, are we working at a level that is sustainable for us? Are we following our own ambitions and plans or are we working to someone else's idea of how our farm should be? Are we blindly following expansion targets that we can't keep up with or that could put our business at severe risk? Are we following a work schedule and practices set down by a previous generation? We all need time to think and make sure that we are following a path that is sustainable for us, because if we are farming in an unsustainable manner and not looking after ourselves, then it is our farms, our stock and our families that will all suffer.

*For me Christmas,
when the cows are
dry, is a time to enjoy,
relax and work on my
own 'condition score'.*





Farmer Focus - Tommy Moyles

Irish Grassland Association Council Member and Beef Farmer



I manage the cattle enterprise on my family's pig and beef farm. The majority of the land base (46 ha, 32 ha owned and 14 ha rented) is situated at Ardfield, Clonakilty, with land rented in the vicinity of the pig unit 11 miles away in Ballinascarthy. The herd consists of 60 Simmental cows due to calve in spring 2014. Twenty one replacement heifers have been selected for 2014 with the remaining heifers earmarked for finishing alongside the bulls that are finished under 16 months. Stock bulls consist of a 2008 Kilbride Farm Newry son and a 2011 Omorga Volvo son.

- Average calving interval for 2008-2012 – 367 days
- Average number of calves/cow/year for 2008-2012 - 1.02

In 2013 calving began on the 13th January and 94% of the cows had calved by the 26th March. Any cows calving after this time have been culled. 2013 saw an outbreak of rotavirus amongst the calves and our first encounter with how badly rumen fluke can affect a herd. The combination of these two problems led to our worst farm performance since initial Herd Plus figures were first used in 2006.

- 2013 average calving interval – 373 days
- 2013 average number of calves/cow - 0.86

As a result of calf deaths due to rotavirus any cows not accepting a fostered calf after 2 or 3 days were culled. This included cows whose calves gained 1.6 and 1.85 kg/day in 2012, but we felt as they were not going to bring in any money in 2013 we were better off cashing in. We wouldn't carry any passengers in the

pig unit so why do so in the cattle enterprise; the cattle are there to make money and be productive not to look nice in photographs or win trophies.

Rumen fluke rose its head during calving when we had difficulties with lack of milk production and some difficult calvings amongst the heifers and cows that grazed ground that was flooded last summer. Dung samples revealed a high presence of rumen fluke. These animals were dosed with Zanil. It's an issue we never had before this past spring so regular dung sampling and a dosing regime should keep it under control. Some of the stock were again badly affected by fluke this summer despite the good weather. Two days after dosing the affected first calvers were weighed. On average they were 127 kg lighter than those on the home farm. Weighed two months later they had growth rates ranging from 0.76 kg/day to 2.59 kg/day.

In the past we had difficulty maintaining a good growth rate in the bull weanlings during the transition period from milk to meal feeding at weaning. Again we looked at how we solved that problem in the pig unit and applied the same practice to the bulls. Weaning takes place throughout October with the bulls being weaned first. Prior to weaning the bull calf group, who were in paddocks near the yard were brought in for a few hours in an effort to get them used to eating meal. They were built up gradually from 0.5 kg to 1 kg of meal and by the time they were weaned, were getting 2 kg of meal a day. This meant that the meal made up for the removal of milk from their diet. Every day an animal is on the farm it costs money so we believe in keeping them moving whether it is a bull or a pig. 2014 will see a move to finishing the bulls under 16 months in an effort to increase both output and stocking rate.

Due to the farms proximity to the sea the soil type is very sandy and this aids getting stock out early. Cows are left out to grass 2-3 days after calving for a few hours each day. We have done this for the last few years and is far easier than was initially imagined, calves are a great incentive to get cows back indoors and getting fresh grass into the cows diet plays a big part in getting them back cycling earlier. Young stock are also left out by day once weather permits, this can be anytime from mid-January to mid-February. This has proved useful for a number of reasons; it gets grass into their diet early and I've found that animals become easier to handle when they get used to the routine.

On the 16th September all cows and calves were weighed in an effort to see what percentage of cow body weight her calf was at weaning time. This is part of an effort to identify the poorer performing cows. Cows weighed on average 647 kg, with bull calves 313 kg (ADG 1.3 kg) and heifers 260 kg (ADG 1.03 kg). Weaning weight as a percentage of cow weight was 45%.

Replacement selection takes place from when a heifer calf is born with a final decision made at weaning. Heifers are bred at 14-15 months. It had been planned to bring cow numbers to 70-75 by 2014 but following the spring difficulties and hard culling we are unlikely to reach that figure till 2015, mainly due to the previously mentioned health problems.





Michael Bateman, Irish Grassland Association Council Member and Dairy Farmer

Irish Grassland Association 2014 Dairy Conference – ‘Getting things right pre 2015’

The annual Irish Grassland Association 2014 Dairy Conference will take place on Tuesday 7th January at the Newpark Hotel, Co. Kilkenny. 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 key things that must be put in place in advance of 2015.

Irish dairy farming is on the eve of the post quota era. With just one more complete quota year to go ahead of milk quota abolition it is crucial that farmers now focus on **‘getting things right’** in the dairy farm business to take advantage of the opportunities that will be available.

Maximising grass growth and utilisation on farm are key components of profitable milk production systems. Getting the balance right between pre-grazing herbage mass, grass quality and grass growth impacts on the productivity and utilisation of grazed grass on farm. In the first session of the conference Dr. Eva Lewis, Teagasc Moorepark, will outline research findings in terms of optimum pre-grazing herbage mass and its impact on herbage quality and annual grass production. Abigail Ryan, Teagasc Moorepark will share her experiences of what happens on farms across Ireland in terms of pre-grazing herbage mass, utilisation and effects on milk production. John Curtis, Dairy Farmer, Co. Wexford will tell delegates how he manages his grass to optimise quality to ensure maximum milk production from his farm.

Grass production and utilisation is one key aspect of milk production systems. Many other factors will influence the profitability and the success of dairy farms post 2015. The session ‘Key aspects of efficiency to put in place for 2015’ will focus on key aspects of efficiency that need to be put in place to optimise milk production systems post 2015. Should we be focussing on cent/l or profit per hectare?? Paidi Kelly, Irish Farmers Journal, will focus on drivers of profit and key aspects of efficiency that need to be put in place to optimise milk production systems post 2015, including the key measurements and KPI’s that must be used on farm. Dr. Pat Dillon, Head of the Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc Moorepark will present what he considers the key aspects of efficient dairy farms for the post 2015 era. The paper will provide food for thought for all dairy farmers who want to maximise the opportunities that will become available from 2015 onwards.

What will the Post Quota Cow look like? In the third session of the conference ICBF will outline where the EBI is taking us and what farmers need to focus on to ensure they have the most productive, fertile cows in their herd. Dr. Frank Buckley, Teagasc Moorepark, will give an update on the Next Generation Herd. Two dairy farmers with contrasting dairy cow types will outline why their cow will suit their system post quota. Shane Chambers, Co. Cork, has a predominately Jersey cross herd, while Jim Delahunty, Co. Tipperary, has a Holstein Friesian dominant herd. This session will lead to an informed discussion on cow selection and cow type for the future.

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The final session of the day will provide good perspective for grassland dairy farmers. Chris Knowles, a dairy farmer from Cornwall in England will answer the question, Why focus on grass post quota? This paper should prove very interesting as Chris has come full circle in terms of his dairy production system. Chris was operating a high input, largely indoor dairy system. For many years now he is fully committed to the grass based system. Chris's paper is very appropriate as we move towards 2015 as he has effectively been producing milk in a quota free type environment for the last number of years. The paper will provide good perspective for grassland dairy farmers.

On the morning of the 2014 Dairy Conference, there is an opportunity for Irish Grassland Association corporate members and members to meet at a breakfast gathering. Tom Clinton will be the guest speaker at this breakfast gathering and will outline his thoughts on 'Opportunities for corporate entities post 2015'.

If you would like further information on the breakfast gathering or the conference please contact the Irish Grassland Association on 087 9626483.

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

Date for your Diary

Irish Grassland Association
Dairy Conference
 Tuesday 7th January 2014
 in the

Newpark Hotel
KILKENNY
 With escape Health Club & Spa

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PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

- 8:00 am** Opportunities for corporate entities post 2015
 Corporate breakfast (no charge for those who have pre booked by 20th Dec)
 Guest speaker: Tom Clinton, Dairy farmer in Ireland & New Zealand with worldwide Business experience.
 (This session is only open to IGA corporate Members and IGA Members)
- 9:00 am** Registration and light refreshments
- 9:45 am** Opening Address
 Eddie O'Donnell, President of the Irish Grassland Association
- Session 1** Title: *Getting the balance right between grass quantity and quality*
 Chairperson: Deirdre Hennessy, Irish Grassland Association Council and Teagasc Moorepark
- 10:00 am** What the research says Eva Lewis, Teagasc Moorepark
- 10:15 am** My experiences on the farms I have visited over the last few years
 Abigail Ryan, Teagasc Moorepark
- 10:30 am** My experience on my farm John Curtis, Co. Wexford
- 10:40 am** Discussion
- Session 2** Title: *Key aspects of efficiency to put in place for 2015*
 Chairperson: Philip Donohoe, Irish Grassland Association Council and Dairy Farmer
- 11:30 am** Profit per hectare drivers post quota
 Paidi Kelly, Irish Grassland Association Council and Irish Farmers Journal
- 11:45 am** Key things farmers need to put in place for 2015
 Pat Dillon, Head of Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc Moorepark
- 12:10 pm** Discussion
- 12:45 pm** Lunch
- Session 3** Title: *The post quota cow*
 Chairperson: Jack Kennedy, Irish Farmers Journal
- 2:00 pm** Where the EBI is taking us and what we as an industry need to be thinking - An ICBF Perspective
- 2:20 pm** Update on the Next Generation Herd and what we as an industry need to be thinking - Frank Buckley, Teagasc Moorepark
- 2:30 pm** My cow choice for post 2015 - what top dairy farmers think
 Shane Chambers, Co. Cork
 Jim Delahunty, Co. Tipperary
- 2:50 pm** Discussion
- Session 4** Title: *Why concentrate on grass post quota*
 Chairperson: Michael Bateman, Irish Grassland Association Council and Dairy Farmer
- 3:30 pm** Why concentrate on grass post quota?
 Chris Knowles, Dairy Farmer, Cornwall, England
- 3:55 pm** Discussion
- 4:15 pm** Conference Close
 Eddie O'Donnell, President of the Irish Grassland Association



Bóthar is an Irish Non-Governmental Organisation that provides poverty-stricken families with the means to solve their problems – permanently! We do this by using Livestock in Development Aid. Bóthar is a word in the Irish language that means 'Road'. However, it finds its origins in the Irish word for cow, which is 'Bó' and 'Thar', which means across or over.

Bóthar was established in 1991 by a group of farmers, community leaders, church leaders and businessmen. Under the Chairmanship of T.J. Maher, former M.E.P. and past president of the I.F.A., it was decided to do something very practical and sustainable, to give people in developing countries an opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty. The project involves establishing individual families with a micro-farming unit. Each family gets one animal to work with. They must 'Pass-on-the-gift' of the first female offspring born to their animal to another family and may keep all subsequent offspring. In this way the project expands and grows.

Bóthar currently has projects in 36 countries around the world. About half of the funds plus animals we send go to Sub-Saharan Africa. The rest is equally divided between Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America. Bóthar sent its first allocation of Irish dairy cows to Uganda in 1991. Uganda is still used as a benchmark for other project countries to attain. Since then Bóthar has sent Irish dairy cows, goats, pigs and chickens to Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, the Gambia and Rwanda in Africa. Bóthar has flown and transported overland cows, goats and pigs to Albania, Kosovo and Romania in Eastern Europe. Bóthar currently works with 17 animal species including camels, honey bees, snails, water buffalo, oxen, sheep and fish amongst others. All these types of livestock are sourced in the countries where the projects are active. We use the best quality livestock available to ensure that the families we help improve their situation.

In the last two years Bóthar has sent 382 Irish in-calf dairy heifers to Romania, 63 to Kosovo, 105 to Rwanda. In addition to this we sent 150 Irish dairy goats to Uganda and 148 to Albania. Bóthar also sends out Artificial Insemination straws of good dairy stock to bolster the breeding programmes we run to the countries we send animals to. Our main source is Dovea, in Co. Tipperary. In the last few years we are sending more and more of our livestock via Landlifts. These entail overland trips to Albania, Kosovo and Romania, taking four to five days. Specially adapted haulage trucks are used and the animals are given two 24 hours stops in lairage farms on the continent on their way to their new host countries. Bóthar is also heavily involved in setting up a Dairy Processing Plant in Rusizi, Rwanda. This area has received many of the almost 1,000 Irish dairy heifers we have sent to this East African country since 2006. This follows other dairy plants in Uganda and Malawi, which Bóthar has been instrumental in setting up. In the last year Bóthar has also received funding from the Irish government through Irish Aid for a dairy project in Zambia. The animals will be sourced in Zambia and will be of a good quality dairy breed.

Our livestock airlifts and landlifts would not be possible with the support of the Irish farming community. Many Irish farmers have continually given us numerous Irish Friesian/Holstein animals of high quality. We have network of Irish Farmer Bóthar Support Groups in Wexford, Westmeath, Roscommon, Tipperary amongst other locations which pool their resources together, fundraise to buy animals for us and organise joint transport of the animals to Roscrea Mart. There the animals are checked by the Department of Agriculture, before export. Bóthar's whole project focus is of a rural aspect and for this reason many of our donors share this background.

For further information on Bóthar, please visit our website www.bothar.ie.

Irish Grassland Association, Kells, Co Meath, Ireland.
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Tel: (087) 96 26 483 Opened: Tuesdays and Thursdays



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