



Overcoming and Adapting to Farm Fragmentation

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Personal Introduction:

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- **Married to Jackie and four boys**
 - **2013 Nuffield Farming Scholar**
 - **2014 FBD/ Macra Young Farmer of the year**

Farm Background



2008

- Took over farm
- Milking 40 cows (22 ha MP)
- 34 ha farmed

2017

- 120 cows to calve (34 ha MP)
- 75 ha farmed
- Heifers contract reared

Farm Focus

Cows

+

Grass

=

€£\$!!!



2008

- Six week calving rate: **30%**
- Grass Grown: **8 tonnes**
- Utilised: **6 tonnes**
- Milk solids per ha: **699kg**

2016

- Six week calving rate: **88%**
- Grass Grown: **14 tonnes**
- Utilised: **11.4 tonnes**
- Milk solids per ha: **1,495kg**

Cost of production: 27.5 c/l

“Brilliant at the Basics”-Matt Ryan.

Adapting to fragmentation on my own farm

- Contract rearing
- Contract silage
- Buffer feeding silage

Nuffield Scholarship

Topic: *“Farm Fragmentation in Irish dairying overcoming and adapting to it”.*

Why this topic??



Aims and Objectives



Find alternative solutions to farm fragmentation



Study Findings

Robots

- Robots working in grass based systems
- Impressive setups - hugely capital intensive
- Huge level of marketing surrounding Robotic milking systems

Second Parlour

- Larger blocks usually a second parlour was constructed
- Flexible & economical

Study Findings

Zero grazing

- Zero grazing system generally labour intensive
- Heavily stocked farms – output focused

Once a Day

- Once a day results in a production drop of 20-30% in year 1 – financial issues
- Introduced on difficult farms
- Only two reasons for OAD – lifestyle or business, unusual to see both!

Comparison Study



70 acres

Green field site

Four Farm
Models

Labour

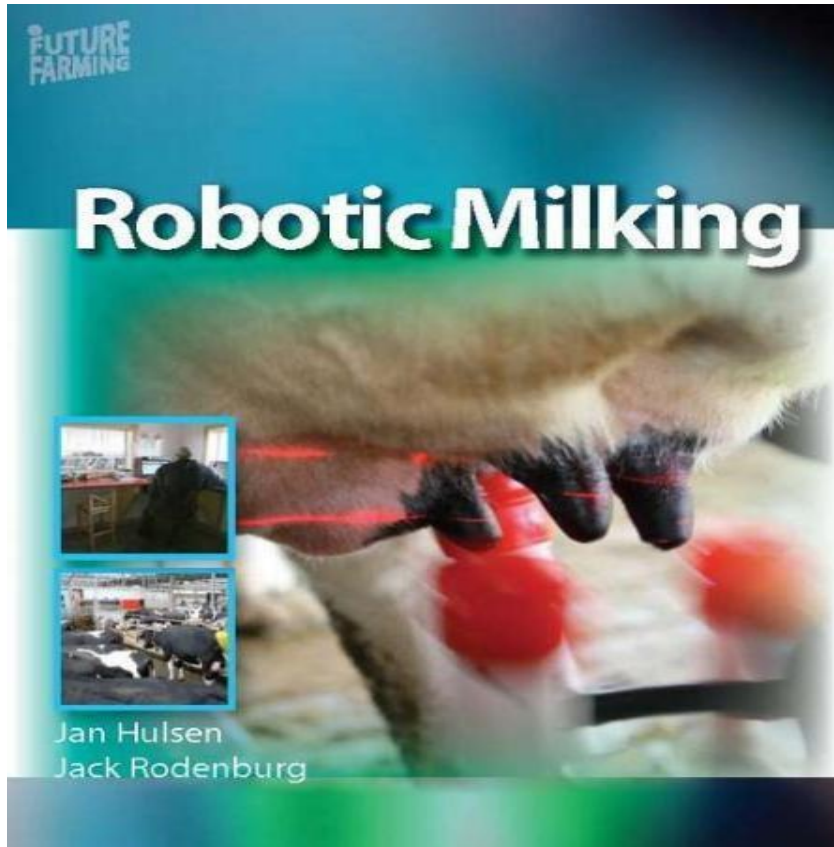
Borrowed Money

Potential Margin of Farm system when integrated with home farm

SYSTEM	ROBOT	ZERO GRAZER	OAD	2 nd PARLOUR TAD
Prod/cow	5,000L	5,000L	4,250L	5,000L
Set-up costs	€305,250	€186,020	€205,612	€205,612
Debt & Running costs	€50,454	€40,725	€33,331	€34,748
Labour	€43,200	€52,800	€40,000	€48,000
Margin	€116,346	€117,185	€123,019	€130,752
Margin	16.6c/l	16.7c/l	20.5c/l	18.6c/l

Conclusions

Robotic milking systems



- Works in a low input system
- Capital intensive
- Research is grass focused
 - no financial detail
- Will play a bigger role in milk harvesting into the future

Second Milking parlour



- Flexibility for future expansion
- Heavily reliant on labour
- Economical to construct

Zero Grazing system



- Hugely Labour intensive with knock on effects on overall system
- Generally higher operating costs
- Long term sustainability is questionable

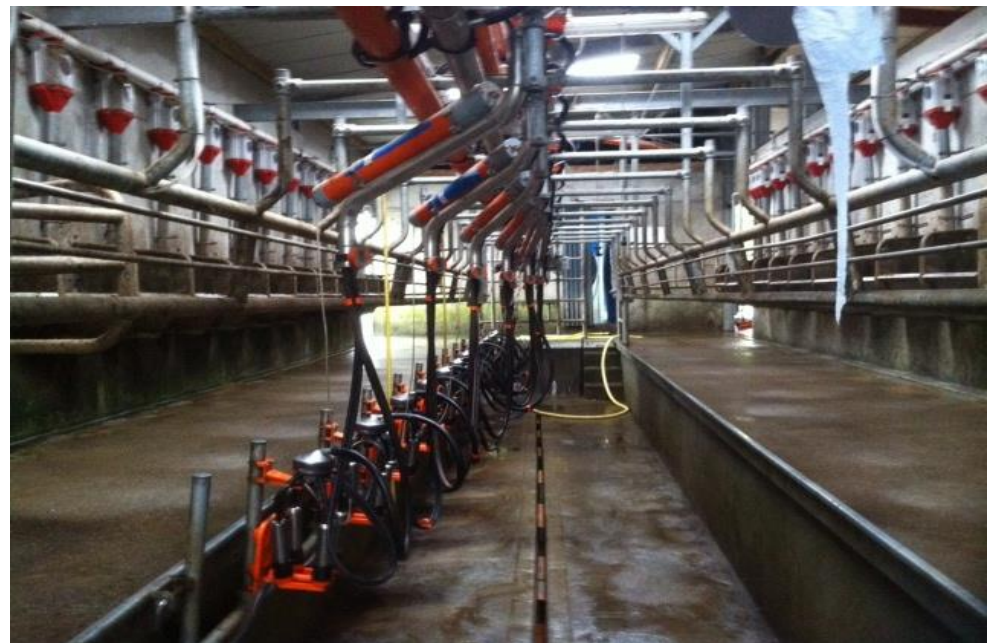
Once a day milking

- High profit potential
“Mindset”
- Labour reduction
- Requires financial discipline
- Great lifestyle or
Great business?



My farm expansion plan for 2018

- 40 ha leased block – 3 miles away
- Accommodation will be built on the home farm
- Parlour will be built on the leased farm
- Labour – options
- 230 cows





“Building for the Future”

Questions??