

# How I maximise the amount of grass I grow on my farm

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2015 IGA Dairy Conference



Google earth



# Background

- 115 Suckler cows to beef farm
- Bulls finished at 16 to 19 months
- Heifers finished at 20 to 23 months
- 50 midseason lambing ewes
  
- Overall SR 2.5 LU /ha
- 45 ha tillage

# Conversion to Dairying

- June 13 Applied to National Reserve
- 28<sup>th</sup> August Confirmation Letter
- Mid July Planning applied for
- Mid Sept Planning received
- Mid Oct Started building 24 unit parlour
- 24<sup>th</sup> Dec Grant approval issued for 16 units
- 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 14 Started milking







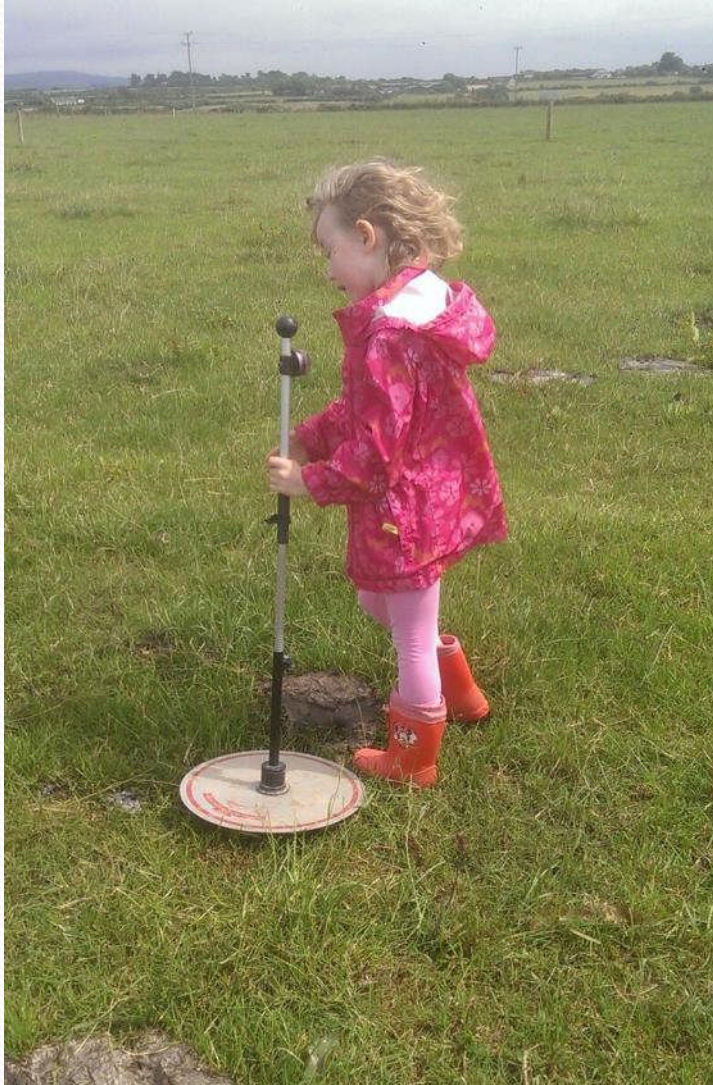
# Farm Stats

- Milking Platform 52 Ha
- Outfarms 37 ha (3 locations, all grass)
- Tillage 40ha (18 miles from home)
- 50 beef animals to finish during 2015

## Farm stats cont.

	2014	2015	2016
	No's	No's	No's
Milking Cows	78	135	180
Incalf Heifers	67	75	60
Calves	90	70	60
Beef Animals	107	50	10/2
Total	342	322	305
Lu/Ha	2.66	2.7	2.75

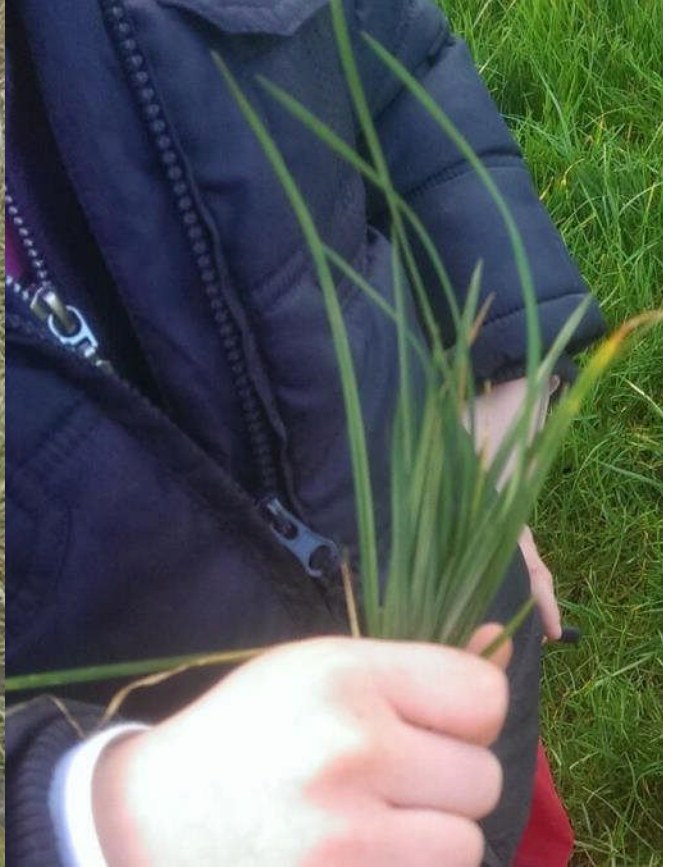




# Why Measure?

- For Discussion Group Meeting
- For Teagasc Advisor
- Pasturebase/Cultivar Trial
- Etc etc etc
  
- For Me to Manage Farm
- Impossible to grow a grass based farm without







# Question

- If I offered you €100,000 to jump out of a plane with no parachute, would you do it?...
- I bet you would say NO!.....
- But what if I told you the plane was on the ground.....
- Moral of the story.....
- Know your facts before you make your decision!



# Tools I use to grass measure

- Platemeter
- Pasturebase Ireland
- Spring Rotation Planner
- Wedge
- Autumn Rotation Planner

# Spring Rotation Plan

- Measure weekly from Mid Feb
- Stick to spring plan till April
  - 30% grazed by 1st March
  - 66% grazed by 17th march
  - Ration remainder until start 2nd round & maintain 180 kg DM/LU until 2nd round



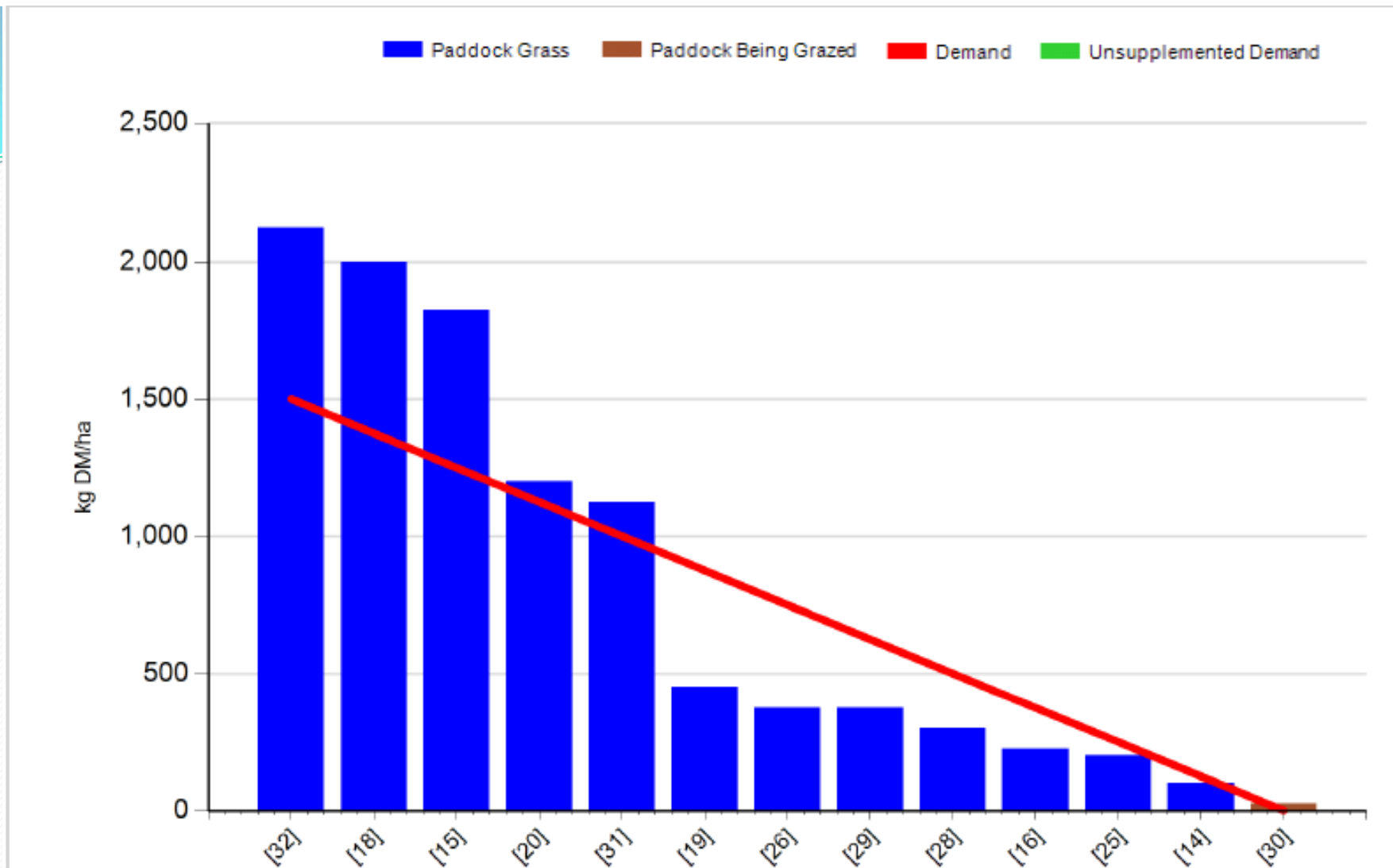




# Mid Season Management

- Most important job for the week
- Target to graze around 1500 kg DM/ha
- Wedge dictates actions needed for week
- Measure 2<sup>nd</sup> time during week if concerned
- Take out surplus paddocks ASAP
- Monitor forecast & feed early if a deficit



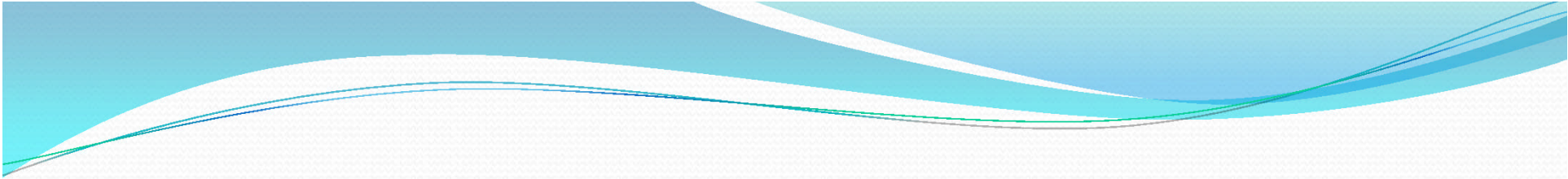


Grass Allocation/LU (kg DM/LU):	15.8	Growth Rate (kg/ha/day):	92
Total Livestock (LU):	95.9	Farm Demand (kg DM/ha/day):	85
Farm Cover (kg DM/ha):	852	Target Pre-grazing yield (kg DM/ha):	1500
Farm Cover (kg DM/LU):	159	Days Ahead:	10
Stocking Rate (LU/ha):	5.37	LW/ha (Liveweight/ha):	935

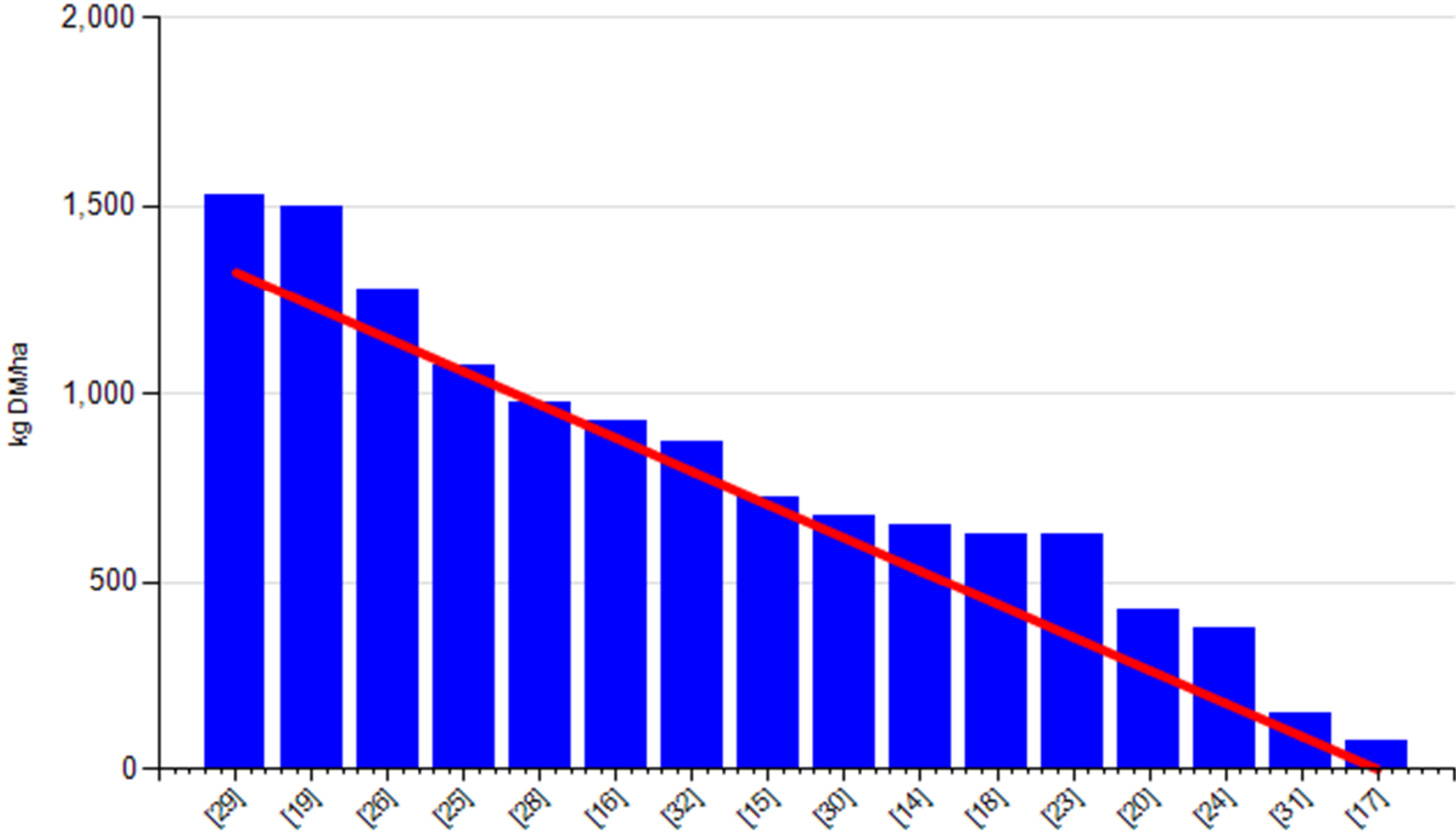
Actions: closed off 3 fields for silage, removed all beef from grazing platform







Paddock Grass Demand





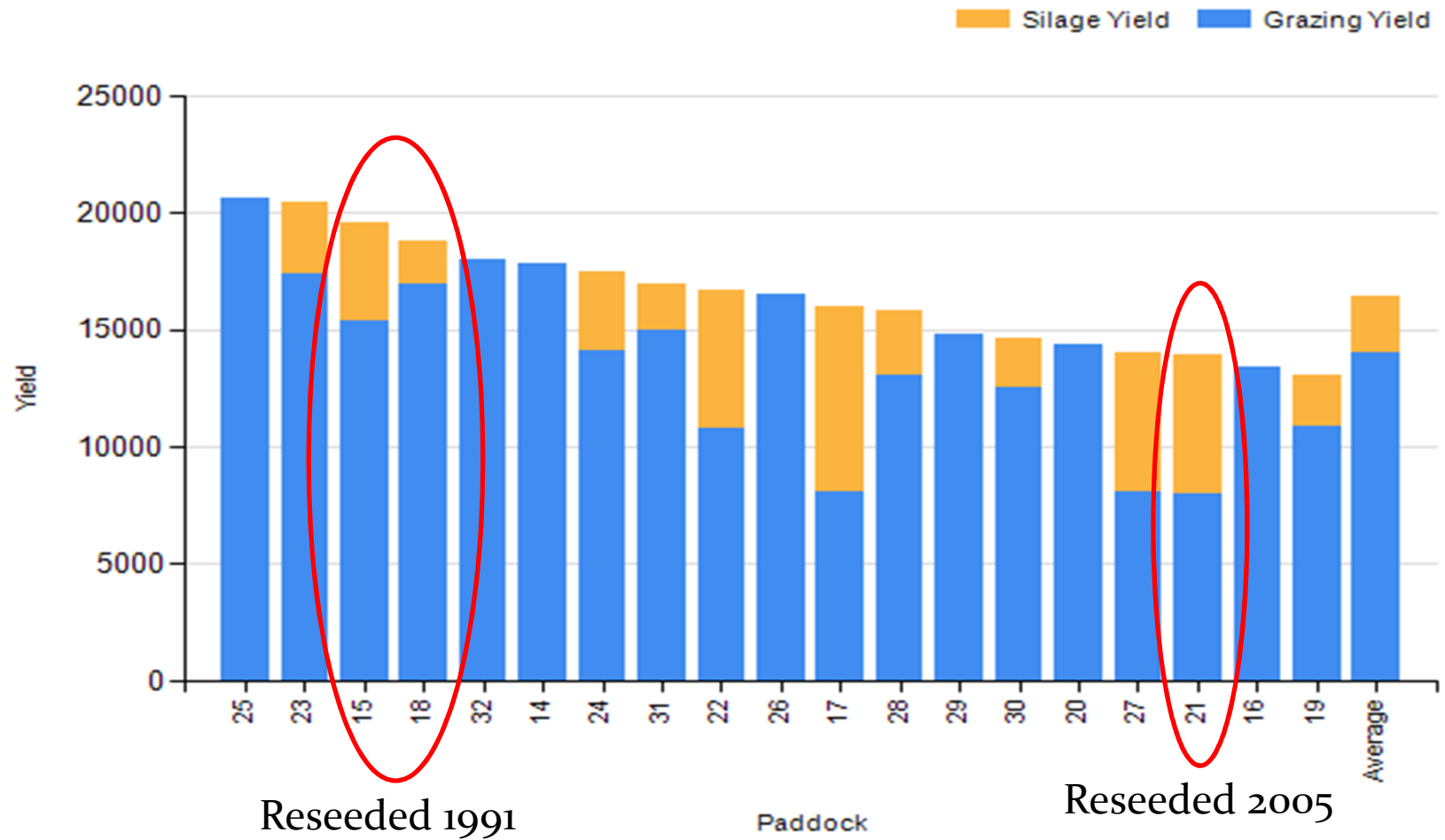


# Autumn Rotation Planner

- Build Covers from Mid August
- Target AFC 1000~1200 kg DM/ha 1<sup>st</sup> Oct
- Ration Grass from 1<sup>st</sup> October
- Start closing on 7<sup>th</sup> October
- 60% closed by 1<sup>st</sup> November
- House at End November **or**
  - 680 kg DM/ha AFC

# Total DM production 16.6 t DM/ha in 2014

Cumulative Paddock Yield to 01/12/2014



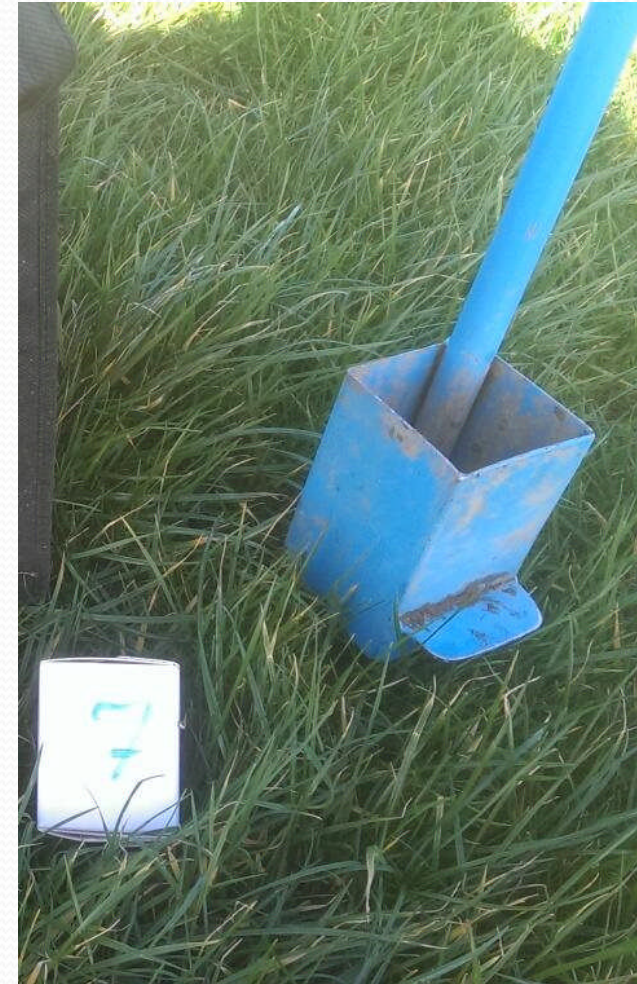






# Historically

- Soil test every 5 years
- P levels dropping index 2-3 now
- K levels index 4
- pH historically 5.7 to 6 (high Mo area)
- No Bag P & K spread in last 5 years (except at reseeding)





# Plans for the future

- 27-2.5-5 spread last 2 rotations 2014
- Bag ASN/ ac in late April
- Urea for first 2 rounds
- 2000 gals slurry before/after 1<sup>st</sup> rotation
- Is more P needed earlier in season?
  - 18-6-12 @ 2<sup>nd</sup> round & mid season
- N after every rotation (15~30 units/ac)
- GILL monitor farm for next 3 years

# Mistakes Re: Grazing

- Loads of mistakes have been made
- Important to learn from them
- Should have fed meal May'14 when grass DM low
- Left surplus paddocks to be cut for pit
- July 14 Quality poor due to high covers (1800kgs)
  - Grass got stemmy & supply tight so couldn't wrap
- Every day every year throws a different challenge



# Reseeding

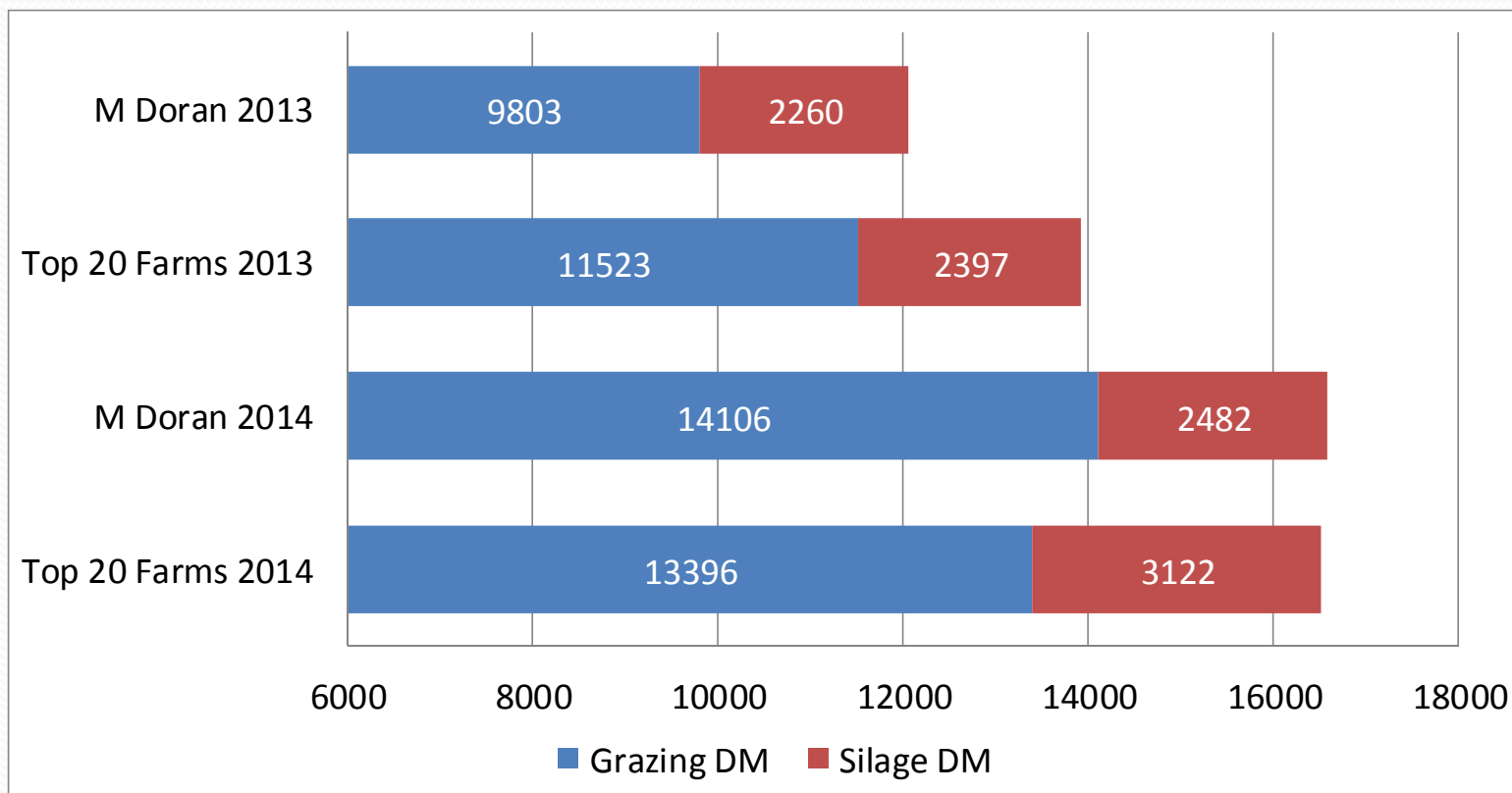
- 10% reseeded annually
- Decision made on paddock performance
- 1200m extra roadways 2014
- Farm part of the Moorepark Cultivar trials
- Drainage required on part of farm before reseeding (spring 2016)
- Oldest sward best performer in 2013







# PastureBaseIreland Farms DM Production



• Source Michael O'Donovan Teagasc Moorepark



# Conclusions

- Measuring grass most NB job of the week
- Use the tools available to analyse details
- Grazed grass cheapest feed to produce milk
- Helps us deal with the volatility
- Big question is how far we can push the grazing platform SR
- Soil testing vital to keep on top of soil fertility



# Concluding Thought

*"You have to learn the rules of the game,*

*And then you have to play better than anyone else"*

Albert Einstein





**Thank You!**