

LMC WELCOMES LAUNCH OF SOIL NUTRIENT HEALTH SCHEME

The Livestock and Meat Commission has hailed the prospect of 700,000 soil samples being gathered from 24,500 farms across Northern Ireland, and then subsequently analysed, as being the start of a process that could help revolutionise the prospects for local agriculture. The work will be carried out as part of the recently announced Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (SNHS). Commission Chairman Gerard McGivern attended the launch of the project.

Image 1: Gerard McGivern LMC Chairman



He commented: “A budget of £45m has been allocated for the work to be undertaken, when the scheme formally gets underway next month.” Not only does this initiative represent the most in depth soil sampling survey ever undertaken in Northern Ireland but the accompanying Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) imagery will help elucidate the carbon storage levels within our soils and that of the entire biomass growing above them.”

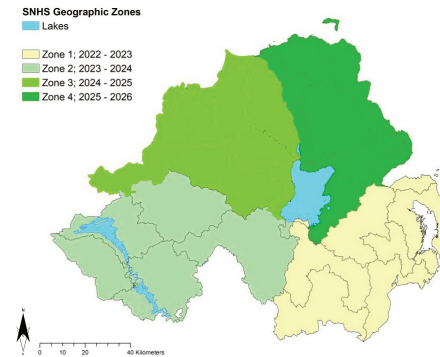
Gerard McGivern continued: “As a consequence, Northern Ireland will be taking the lead in a truly international sense when it comes to determining the true carbon sequestration potential of our farm land.

“The information gathered will also be used to allow all farmers to make best use of the slurries, manures and chemical fertilisers they need to produce food in the most efficient way possible.” The new scheme will be delivered by the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI). The contracts for the soil collection and analysis work have now been awarded and collection of soil samples from farms will be carried out under the direction of AFBI.

The SNHS will be rolled out in stages using a zonal approach, over the next four years. Four zones have been identified: the south east, the south west, the north west and the north east. Soil sampling will get underway initially in Zone 1 (the south east) during November of this year. Farmers in the region will be able to apply on-line using DAERA’s on-line services during May of this year.

Gerard McGivern again: “I would strongly encourage all farmers to support the SNHS project by applying on-line at the appropriate time.” The information that will be made available to farmers includes soil analysis results and farm maps: detailing the nutrient levels in each field;

Image 2: A map showing the sampling zones across Northern Ireland (Source: DAERA)



identifying fields prone to nutrient loss via run-off to waterways and an estimation of the amount of carbon stored in their soils, hedgerows and trees. Backing all of this up will be the bespoke training opportunities provided by CAFRE.

This will be a two-phase process. During the initial stage, participating farmers will be made aware of the principles associated with nutrient management at an overall farm level. This will be followed by the completion of bespoke nutrient management plans for each farm business.

According to the LMC chairman, SNHS is the first tangible example of a ‘farming for carbon’ strategy being rolled out. He further explained: “The results generated courtesy of SNHS can be used in the determination of progressive climate

change targets for local agriculture over the coming years.” The UK is committed to bringing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. Legislation now commits Northern Ireland to also play its role in this context.

“SNHS will also be used to help frame the future support mechanisms that represent a best fit for our farming sectors,” Gerard McGivern confirmed. “We are now moving towards an era where exact information, not supposition, will be used to guide agricultural policy decisions. “The scope of such a capability is immense. This is an opportunity that must be fully grasped, which is why I am calling on all farmers to actively participate in the SNHS project.

He concluded: “The cost of all the work undertaken courtesy of SNHS will be covered by the £45m available budget. The financial cost to participating farmers is zero, all that is asked is that farmers fully engage with the programme and ensure that Northern Ireland becomes a world leader in this important space.

“This represents a win:win scenario for agriculture in NI. “Providing farmers with the information that SNHS can deliver will help them more accurately match nutrient applications to crop need. “In turn this will increase the efficiency of their businesses, reduce excess run-off to watercourses and improve their economic and environmental sustainability.”

DON'T MINCE YOUR WORDS

A Senate committee of the Australian parliament has kick started a process which could see legislation introduced in that country to clearly determine how plant-based and cultured proteins (which are currently being presented as meat alternatives) can be defined, marketed and positioned in retail outlets – relative to animal protein-based foods.

Significantly, Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) Chief Executive Ian Stevenson believes that a similar debate should be encouraged in the UK and other countries around the world. He commented: “Some countries, for example France, have also looked at this matter in some detail. But in many other parts of the world, it’s a discussion that has yet to be had.”

Ian continued: “This is not a case of the beef sector saying that plant-based and other cultured products should be side lined. “But there must be balance in the way these products are marketed and their values communicated to the public at large. “For example, a number of these products already use animal and traditional meat related imagery as a focal components of their marketing activities. “In such instances the question has to be asked: is it fair that these products should be allowed to be associated with a genuine meat heritage that has been built up over many years? “Or to put it another way: a chicken-free chicken

burger should never be portrayed as a food item that is closely aligned to what is the real thing!”

Ian felt encouraged to comment on these matters following a recent presentation given to members of the Global Meat Alliance (GMA) by Australian senator Greg Mirabella. He is a member of the parliamentary rural and regional affairs committee that has investigated the fast-blurring lines between what constitutes a genuine animal-based food product and a plant-based or cultured alternative. Mirabella was also directly involved in the drawing up of the committee’s report that followed the gathering of evidence and opinions on these matters.



Mirabella used the opportunity of discussing the publication’s key themes with GMA members to reflect on how this debate may well evolve in Australia during the period ahead.

The senate committee report is entitled: ‘Don’t mince your words’. It contains a number of clear recommendations many of which have been directed at the Australian government. These include the development of a mandatory

regulatory framework for the labelling of plant-based protein products. This work would be undertaken in consultation with representatives from the traditional and plant-based protein sectors, food service industry and retailers.

The report also recommends that the Australian Government ensures that the application of a mandatory regulatory framework is applicable to cultured meat products, in preparation for the introduction of those products onto the Australian market.

Another key recommendation would see the Australia’s Competition and Consumer Commission reviewing the placement of plant-based protein products in retailers’ stores, including online platforms.

In addition, the Commission has been asked to develop a national information standard that defines and restricts the use of meat category brands to animal protein products. This standard should include guidance on the use of livestock imagery for labelling and marketing of plant-based protein products.

The work of the senate committee took place against the backdrop of the Australian meat industry expressing concern over the potential economic impact of plant-based operators using

meat terminology. Australia’s meat industry has invested very large sums of money over recent years into product branding, research, and marketing to ensure that its products can be enjoyed domestically and exported throughout the world. So it is not surprising that segments of the meat industry there are concerned that the use of meat terminology by plant-based protein producers could potentially undermine that trust and, that plant-based producers are reaping the rewards of work paid for by Australian livestock farmers and meat levy-payers.

Ian Stevenson again: “Australia’s meat industry has every right to protect the trust that it has built up with consumers in that country for many years. “And the same principle holds true here in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. Consumers must have full knowledge of the food products that they purchase. The need for clear and unambiguous labelling and placement of all foods is obvious.”

Ian concluded: “Great Britain will remain the largest single market for the beef and lamb produced here in Northern Ireland. Given these circumstances the need for a Westminster parliamentary committee investigation into the development, marketing and retail placement of meat alternatives is obvious.

FQAS Helpline

If you have had a recent inspection and need help and advice to rectify any non-conformances.
Contact the FQAS helpline: 028 9263 3024

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WEEKLY BEEF & LAMB MARKETS

CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 04/04/22	Next Week 11/04/22
Prime		
U-3	392 - 406p	392 - 410p
R-3	386 - 400p	386 - 404p
O+3	380 - 394p	380 - 398p
P+3	324 - 344p	324 - 348p
	Including bonus where applicable	
Cows		
O+3	280 - 326p	280 - 326p

Cow quotes vary depending on weight and grade. Pricing policies vary from plant to plant. Producers are advised to check pricing policies before presenting cattle for slaughter.

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Base quotes from the major NI processing plants for U-3 grade prime cattle strengthened mid-week with plants quoting 392-410p/kg. Similar quotes are expected for early next week however with reports of higher prices available producers should use these base quotes as a starting point for negotiation. Quotes from the plants for good quality O+3 cows have remained steady 280-326p/kg with a similar trade expected early next week.

Prime cattle throughput in NI last week totalled 7,912 head, an increase of 196 head from the previous week and an increase of 2,024 head from the corresponding week in 2021. Cow throughput last week totalled 2,232 head, an increase of 43 head from the previous week.

Imports of cattle from ROI for direct slaughter last week included 259 prime cattle and 89 cows compared to 223 prime cattle and 74 cows the previous week. There were no cattle imported from GB for direct slaughter last week. Meanwhile exports from NI for direct slaughter in ROI last week totalled 55 head and these were predominantly cows. Two prime cattle and 33 cows were exported from NI for slaughter in GB plants last week.

The deadweight cattle trade in NI last week saw increases across the grades. The average steer price up 2.9p/kg to 410.8p/kg while the R3 steer price increased by 2p/kg to 420p/kg. The average heifer prices in NI last week increased by 0.8p/kg from the previous week to 412p/kg, while the R3 heifer price strengthened 3.2p/kg to 421.4p/kg. The average young bull price was up 0.8p/kg to 392.6p/kg while the U3 young bull price increased by 0.8p/kg to 408.1p/kg. The average cow price in NI last week recorded an increase of 5.9p/kg to 313.1p/kg while the O3 cow price was up by 5p/kg to 338.2p/kg.

In GB last week the deadweight trade for prime cattle recorded an increase across the grid with the average steer price up 6.8p/kg to 427.7p/kg while the R3 steer price increased by 6.9p/kg to 433.6p/kg. This puts the differential in R3 steer prices between NI and GB at 13.6p/kg or £47.60 on a 350kg carcass. In the corresponding week in 2021 the differential was 17.2p/kg or £60.20 on a 350kg carcass. The average heifer price saw an increase of 6.1p/kg last week to 426.1p/kg, while the R3 heifer price was up 4.9p/kg to 433p/kg. The differential in R3 heifer prices last week between NI and GB was 11.6p/kg or £37.12 on a 320kg carcass. In the same week in 2021 the differential was 14.6p/kg or £46.72 on a 320kg carcass. The cow trade in GB last week was up 5.9p/kg on average putting the average cow price at 339.9p/kg, while the O3 cow price increased by 7.4p/kg to 363.7p/kg.

In ROI last week the R3 steer price increased 6.6p/kg from the previous week at the equivalent of 403.4p/kg while the R3 heifer price recorded similar increases to 406.1p/kg. The O3 cow price in ROI last week increased by 7.2p/kg to the equivalent of 342.1p/kg, 3.9p/kg ahead of the same price in NI.

LAST WEEK'S DEADWEIGHT CATTLE PRICES (UK / ROI)

	W/E 02/04/22	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	422.8	411.6	437.4	432.3	438.8	442.3	437.7
	R3	420.0	403.4	435.5	434.1	433.6	431.4	433.6
	R4	418.0	406.2	438.6	435.7	430.6	429.5	435.3
	O3	407.9	392.8	421.2	417.2	414.6	411.6	415.4
	AVG	410.8	-	433.8	427.7	425.4	423.0	427.7
Heifers	U3	426.6	417.7	444.2	441.7	446.0	444.5	444.3
	R3	421.4	406.1	436.6	433.0	432.8	430.5	433.0
	R4	417.0	409.0	440.1	433.5	430.3	430.5	434.9
	O3	407.2	398.7	422.1	416.9	409.0	411.0	413.1
	AVG	412.0	-	437.0	426.5	419.6	420.4	426.1
Young Bulls	U3	408.1	398.7	432.0	436.5	432.9	432.4	433.7
	R3	408.9	390.1	430.0	426.7	428.9	429.2	428.4
	O3	391.8	374.7	399.4	402.8	400.8	401.6	401.1
	AVG	392.6	-	417.9	417.0	410.6	419.7	414.4
Prime Cattle Price Reported	6,516	-	6,724	6,554	7,708	5,154	26,140	
Cows	O3	338.2	342.1	363.0	364.7	364.3	360.9	363.7
	O4	337.0	340.9	368.5	367.7	363.4	358.5	364.5
	P2	298.9	315.0	316.2	318.1	324.6	319.1	321.6
	P3	317.0	330.9	331.6	337.9	340.0	335.9	337.9
	AVG	313.1	-	357.7	347.6	337.2	328.7	339.9

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=84.28p Stg
(ii) Shading indicates a lower price than the previous week.
(iii) AVG is the average of all grades in the category, not just those listed

LATEST LIVEWEIGHT CATTLE MART PRICES NI

	W/E 02/04/22	1st QUALITY			2nd QUALITY		
		From	To	Avg	From	To	Avg
Finished Cattle (p/kg)							
Steers		255	278	265	210	254	228
Friesians		190	202	196	174	189	183
Heifers		240	273	250	205	239	220
Beef Cows		190	248	202	140	189	168
Dairy Cows		150	168	158	110	149	125
Store Cattle (p/kg)							
Bullocks up to 400kg		240	290	260	190	239	220
Bullocks 400kg - 500kg		220	261	240	185	219	205
Bullocks over 500kg		224	253	238	180	223	200
Heifers up to 450kg		225	262	242	185	224	210
Heifers over 450kg		220	273	235	180	219	200
Dropped Calves (£/head)							
Continental Bulls		300	455	370	200	295	260
Continental Heifers		300	425	350	175	295	225
Friesian Bulls		110	130	117	45	105	70
Holstein Bulls		45	110	75	15	35	25

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 02/04/22	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	423.1	426.5	407.4
R3	418.5	420.6	408.8
O+3	410.8	410.4	395.9

*Prices exclude AA, HER and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 02/04/22	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	236.1	251.9	265.5	280.4
P2	258.6	277.5	298.5	314.8
P3	260.8	301.9	316.4	320.3
O3	294.5	338.6	325.4	338.7
O4	-	-	329.7	337.4
R3	-	-	-	355.6

SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 04/04/22	Next Week 11/04/22
Hoggets up to 22kgs	560-590p	585-590p

REPORTED SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 19/03/22	W/E 26/03/22	W/E 02/04/22
NI L/W Hoggets	518.3	521.9	516.8
NI D/W Hoggets	547.6	555.6	568.3
GB D/W Hoggets	566.9	566.0	576.1
ROI D/W	589.7	588.1	606.7

Deadweight Sheep Trade

Base quotes from the major NI processors this week for R3 grade hoggets ranged from 585-590p/kg with plants paying up to 22kg. A total of 6,691 hoggets/lambs were killed in local plants last week, down 592 head from the 7,283 head killed locally the previous week. Exports of lambs/hoggets to ROI for direct slaughter totalled 6,383 head back 982 head when compared to the previous week. The average deadweight hogget price in NI last week was 568.3p/kg, a significant increase of 12.7p/kg from the previous week. In ROI last week the average deadweight hogget price was up by the equivalent of 18.6p/kg to 606.7p/kg.

Liveweight Sheep Trade

A strong trade was reported across the marts this week with increasing numbers of hoggets passing through compared to last week. In Omagh last Saturday 465 hoggets sold from 466-575p/kg compared to 211 hoggets the previous week selling from 474-568p/kg. In Kilrea on Monday 500 hoggets sold from 540-609p/kg compared to 250 hoggets last week selling from 436-570p/kg. In Massareene this week 513 hoggets sold from 504-576p/kg compared to 429 hoggets last week selling from 502-540p/kg. In Ballymena this week 1,417 hoggets sold from 500-572p/kg (avg 520p/kg) compared to 1,746 hoggets last week selling from 500-577p/kg (avg 520p/kg). A small number of spring lambs have also passed through the marts this week with prices ranging from 570-710p/kg. The cull ewe trade remained firm this week with top reported prices ranging from £180-288 across the marts.

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 02/04/22		Hoggets			
To: 07/04/22		No	From	To	Avg
Saturday	Swatragh	600	425	605	-
	Omagh	465	466	575	-
Monday	Kilrea	500	540	609	-
	Massareene	513	504	576	-
Tuesday	Saintfield	348	525	595	-
	Rathfriland	355	500	577	531
Wednesday	Ballymena	1417	500	572	520
	Enniskillen	350	510	578	-
	Armoy	524	485	560	-
	Markethill	730	520	546	-

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